

Soviet Armenian Poetry

Compiled and translated by Mischa Kudian

SOVIET ARMENIAN POETRY

Armenian poetry dates back to the pre-Christian era, from which times fragments of epic songs were recorded in the fifth century. During the Middle Ages it was at first mainly sacred in character, but later it included secular themes also. In the period that followed, profane poetry came into its own giving rise to a number of notable troubadours.

The Renaissance of Armenian literature in the eighteenth century developed into two independent groups of writers, Western and Eastern. It was against this ancient background that many modern poets emerged. The present volume introduces some of the foremost poets of Soviet Armenia.

This is the first book of Soviet Armenian poetry to appear in English translation and is dedicated to the late Paruir Sevak on the occasion of his fiftieth anniversary of birth.

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SOVIET ARMENIAN POETRY

BOOKS BY MISCHA KUDIAN

RETELLINGS

THREE APPLES FELL FROM HEAVEN
THE SAGA OF SASSOUN

TRANSLATIONS

SCENES FROM AN ARMENIAN CHILDHOOD Vahan Totovents
THE BARD OF LOREE Hovannes Toumanian
TELL ME, BELLA Vahan Totovents

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Dr. Hovhann Hovhann
SOVIET ARMENIAN
POETRY

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Compiled and translated
from the Armenian by
MISCHA KUDIAN

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FOREWORD

Armenian poetry dates back to the pre-Christian Era. Fragments of it, known as *Goghian Songs*, have survived in the writings of Movses Khorenatsi, the historian of the fifth century. They are mostly fragments of long epic poems dealing with historic and legendary heroes, or mythological in nature. No written records of them have been discovered prior to the creation of the Armenian alphabet in the year A.D. 404 and it is assumed that they formed part of an oral literature, sung or recited by minstrels to the accompaniment of various musical instruments. These pagan songs are in a pure language and an elegant style.

The Armenian folk epic, *David of Sassoun*, which is well over a thousand years old, has its roots in biblical history. It has survived in verse form in over sixty fragmental variants, many of which are considerably modified and abbreviated. These variants were passed on from generation to generation by minstrels and simple country folk, and they were told in various dialects until the latter part of the nineteenth century.

During the Middle Ages, as in other Christian countries, Armenian poetry consisted of religious verse, mainly as hymns in the early period. Later, two poets stood out in particular, Gregory of Narek in the tenth century and Nerses the Gracious (Shnorhali) in the twelfth century. The former is noted for his mystical poetry and the latter, for his hymns and long poems with sacred and secular themes.

During the period between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries, and in particular after the fall of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, Armenian literature as a whole suffered a decline. But it was during this very period that profane poetry came into its own and gave rise to a number of troubadours whose poems gained considerable popularity. The most famous of these are Constantin Erzingatsi (thirteenth to fourteenth centuries), Nahabed Koutchak (sixteenth century), Sayat-Nova (eighteenth century) and later, Djivani (nineteenth century).

The Renaissance of Armenian literature at the beginning of the eighteenth century developed mainly in three centres: in Venice at the San Lazzaro Monastery founded by Abbot Mekhitar, in

Constantinople and in Tiflis. Until that time the literature was mainly written in ancient Armenian; but the politically separated nation, independently evolved two modern literary dialects: Western and Eastern. The Western Armenian writers came under the influence of French literature and the Eastern ones, under the Russian and German.

Modern Armenian literature has produced many poets. Among the outstanding ones in Western Armenia are Siamanto, Daniel Varoujan and Vahan Tekeyan. While some of the foremost ones in Eastern Armenia, now known as Soviet Armenia, are introduced in the present volume.

In view of the tragic car accident in 1971, which robbed contemporary Armenian literature of the talented and original poet, Paruir Sevak, a proportionately large number of his works are included in this volume, which is dedicated to his memory on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his birth.

M.K.

Hovannes TOUMANIAN

IN THE ARMENIAN MOUNTAINS

Sombre is our path, dark is our path,
Dark as the very night:
Yet upwards have we climbed
Endlessly through the long centuries,
In the Armenian mountains,
Those rigorous mountains.

Of old have we borne our such vast
And priceless treasures,
To which for centuries
Have our souls profound given birth,
In the Armenian mountains,
Those lofty mountains.

But frequently have the black hordes
Of the scorching desert
Come and struck hard,
Repeatedly, at our noble caravan,
In the Armenian mountains,
Those blood-stained mountains.

Yet our caravan, confused, terrified,
Plundered, massacred,
And torn asunder,
Ever bears its innumerable wounds,
In the Armenian mountains,
Those mourning mountains.

And our eyes turn their yearning gaze
Upon the distant stars,
Upon the limits of the heavens,
Wondering when a bright morn will break
In the Armenian mountains,
Those green, green mountains.

AKHTAMAR

From the hamlet on the shores
Of sprightly Lake Van,
A youth enters the water
Secretly every night.

Without a boat he enters,
And with his virile arms
Cleaves the water as he swims
Towards the island opposite.

From the dark island a light,
Bright and clear, beckons him,
Like a gleaming lighthouse,
That he may not lose his way.

The fair Tamar every night
Lights a fire on that isle,
And impatiently she waits
In a hiding place near by.

The lake is astir with waves,
And the youth's heart is astir;
The waters roar terrifyingly,
But the youth strives on untamed.

Now Tamar, with palpitating heart,
Can hear the splashing of the water
Close by, and she is set ablaze
All over with the intensity of her love.

In the silence, a black, shadowy figure
Stands on the dark shore of the lake . . .
It is he! They are reunited anew!
Oh, the mystery of the peaceful night!

The waves of Lake Van alone
Now gently caress its shores,
Subsiding as they retreat
With unintelligible murmurs.

They seem to be whispering softly!
And the stars from the sky vault
Glance down with slanderous eyes
At the immodest, shameless Tamar!

Their gaze disturbs the maiden's heart!
It is already time to part . . . and again
One of them enters the turbulent lake,
Whilst the other prays on its shore!

But once, some mischievous men
Learnt of the lovers' secret,
And they extinguished the fire
On a black, diabolic night.

The swimming youth in love was lost
In the darkness of the waters;
And the wind kept drifting across
His sigh of: 'Ah, Tamar . . . !'

His voice is near: in the gloom
Beneath the pointed rocks below,
Where the terrifying lake roars,
Now it is muffled and lost,
And now feebly heard calling:
'Ah Tamar . . . !'

The agitated waters of morn
Threw the body on to the shore;
At his cold and stiffened lips,
As if at the moment of death,
Two words had remained frozen:
 'Ah Tamar . . . !'

And thenceforth, for that reason,
The island has been called Akhtamar.

Avetik ISSAHAKIAN

MOUNT ARARAT

On the ancient peak of Ararat
The centuries have come like seconds,
And passed on.

The swords of innumerable lightnings
Have broken upon its diamond crest,
And passed on.

The eyes of generations dreading death
Have glanced at its luminous summit,
And passed on.

The turn is now yours for a brief while:
You, too, look at its lofty brow,
And pass on!

BINGOL

When the green doors of spring opened,
The fountains of Bingol turned into lyres;
The decorated camels went past in files,
And my love went to stay in the meadows of Bingol.

I yearn for the luminous face of my priceless love,
I yearn for her slender waist and abundant hair,
For her sweet tongue, her gentle words;
I yearn for that roe of Bingol with black eyes.

Before the chill waters, my parched lips do not open,
Before the radiant flowers, my tearful eyes do not open;
With my love still unseen, my heart does not open:
Alas, I do not care for the nightingales of Bingol.

I am lost, for these paths are all unknown to me,
These myriad lakes, rivers, and rocks are unknown to me;
I am a stranger here, these parts are unknown to me,
Tell me, sister, which is the way to Bingol?

FIRST TEARS

The spring sun with an infinite kiss
Called out the shoots and flowers of life,
And the violet with blue eyes
In artless innocence smiled at everyone.

The zephyr came and whispered
Into its virgin ears, and glided away;
The butterfly came and fluttered
In its bosom, and flew away.

And the violet remained looking
After them with deluding reveries:
And from its immaculate eyes fell
The pure tears of first love.

* * *

I will come when you are left all alone,
Melancholy beneath the shadows of evening;
When you bury your shattered desires,
And when you depart despondent.

I will come as some forgotten tune,
Woven with prayers, with love, and flowers;
Should there be grief in your dead heart,
I will call you towards other shores.

I will come when you are melancholy,
When your dreams die eternally,
I will hold your hand and grasp your grief,
I will kindle other lights in your soul!

* * *

You are far, my inaccessible, luminous dream,
But my heart secretly caresses you;
Your light is spread around and above me,
In the infinite world and in my meek soul.

I do not know the way to your distant land:
Perhaps, I have created you myself,
Have deified you, that I may pray to you,
Have ordered you, that you may reign above me.

It is pleasing to be a slave to your will,
To consider your evil as goodness,
To go against your sword with bared breast
And to kiss that death-dealing hand!

SUNRISE

I stand at the crest of the wild rock,
High, high up, far away and alone;
Down below, the fields and the valleys still slumber:
It is still dark there, stern and silent.
But soon beyond the distant peaks
The sun will pour down fire and gold,
And the fields will rejoice in peace,
As will the land, yearning for life and speech.
And, with the world awakened, you will sing before me,
You will echo my greeting laden with love,
I will hear again the tumult and the clamour,
And will delight in your daily fairy-tale.
It is silent and dark there, but in my heart
It is already dawn, resurrection:
Greetings to you, my brothers far away,
In the dark roads of the world and in prisons!

SLEEPLESSNESS

The horses are tramping, and tramping, and tramping,
Tramping in the dark, and thumping their shoes,
Thumping their shoes, thumping on the ground;
The night is endless and the path, unknown.
The horses are treading, and treading, and treading:
Now near, now far, they are thumping their shoes,
They are thumping their shoes within my temple now;
Unknown is the world, transitory, and with death!

AN EPIC MORNING

The twilight is looking at my eyes
Sternly and vigilantly today.
The morning will soon break
And my heart will feel happy.
How pleasant it is to rise early
And to see how, rending the fog,
The smoke from the chimney
Stretches itself upwards:
To feel that anxiety is waking,
That you will still be travelling
Along a road that still leads upwards,
An inaccessible road!

Thus did you appear in my mind,
You, my final maturity!
My path is most difficult now,
And I tread watchfully.
Anxiety is looking from across:
It is necessary to struggle long
That the task may be permanent
Like the midday sun.
The generations look from across
Reprimanding me to go heedfully;
Some invisible hand is keeping me
In this road.

I part from you with pleasure,
You, my rash carelessness,
My carefree days of childhood,
My extravagant youth.
I greet you joyfully
And not with bitter regret,
You, my final, very final daybreak,
My epic morning!

* * *

The days that have passed will not return now.
The days have brought us solitude and death:

Sorrows that in this life are without name;
The torment in my soul was dark, and the yearning, old.

In the fields of this world, far away and near,
Not a single dim light or fire has smiled upon us.

You did not know, my heart, that in the distant darkness
Your future must be lit with the fire of the world.

See over there, your future is aflame now, my heart:
But around you there is darkness, and fog, and death . . .

TOGETHER WITH YOU

Have you seen the vineyards at Oshakan
After the vintage, in the autumn?
The russet poplars in the distance
Are aflame like golden bonfires.
In the tawny trees the water glitters
Like hair-nets made of diamonds.
Would you like to come one day, my dear,
And let me take you to Oshakan?

There will be yet a second blow,
You must endure the first one now.
Drink the bitter-tasting wine
Of forbearance, and endure it.
In this world, summer and winter
Come after one another;
We have been granted a great deal of sun,
Endure this small amount of snow.

Alas, those journeys
That I have made without you!
Alas, those mornings
When I have opened my eyes without you!
Where were you, spring of my heart?
Why were you so delayed?
How did the poplar on the Heights of Nork
Grow so tall without you?

* * *

I have not had a childhood free from cares
And a youth of happy days:
The oak-tree of my early years was rocked
Unbridled by gales of stormy battles.

The flowers which would have grown
In the gentle sun of my green spring,
Are growing in the midday of my summer,
When it is already hot and time for harvest.

Perhaps that is the reason why, my heart,
You are so overflowing and so rainy,
So stormy and so changeable,
You are both spring and constant morning.

Nairi ZARIAN

PSALM OF DEPARTURE

Bid farewell to life,
Bid farewell.
And forget your unfading park
And your sea-side avenue,
Where the heroine of your dream was to walk,
Distributing smiles and fragrances to the flowers;
Where your golden-feathered grandchildren
Were to chirrup on the trees.
Bid farewell
To your chilly desert,
Where gasps your horse
Torn by wolves;
Where the winds groan plaintively
Like your lamented great-grandchildren.

Bid farewell
To your wondrous Erevan,
Which is growing with ecstasy
Decking itself out in the mirror of your eyes.
Bid farewell
To all the wonders to come.
Board your space-ship,
And gradually bid farewell
To your people,
With their glittering hopes;
To your journeys about the world;
To the limiting Milky Way;
And to this forsaken globe,
Above whose head ceaselessly pile up
Destructive atomic clouds.

Bid farewell humbly
To your friends and your enemies;
To all the people
Who must pass by this road;
To your sorrows, your ailments;
And to yourself, to you yourself
Bid farewell!

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SPRING

Never, never have I waited thus for spring;
I have not even thought of when it would come;
If it has been delayed, I have not said a word,
I have not even felt its presence or its absence.

I have always kindled my spring within my soul,
That bright flowering garden of my emotions,
Which I have watered with my tears and my love,
As a flower-bedecked world of the soul.

There have I spread a display of colours,
Roses of happiness and of sadness,
There have blossomed grief, compassion, and love;
I have not sensed the need for other springs.

Now the snowstorm of life has gone past
And the new snow has heaped up in my garden:
I have long forgotten the spring of my soul,
And I dream of the spring of the world.

MORNING

What a morning is lighting up!
May the new dawning bring happiness;
The breeze utters blessings
And the new day is born silently.

The clouds go past in the sky
And the mountains bow down,
And the birds with their songs
Adorn the fields and the trees.

Oh sun, with your hair of light,
Your majestic rising is magnificent;
May it not befall you to witness
The sorrows and the tears of mankind.

COLOURS

Colours decorate the whole world:
It is they that charm the human soul
When the flowers smile cordially
At everyone from the luxuriant gardens;

When the sea reflects the azure sky,
The sunrise with all its glorious colours,
Which sprinkles with its ardently-hued rays
The human soul standing upon the shore.

Oh, magnificent, bewitching world of colours,
You are eternally within the human soul.
If you should finally become lost in nature,
Know that you still exist within man.

A GAZEL TO EREVAN

So much yearning, so much fire will I leave in your dust,
So many veins with ardent blood will I leave in your dust.

Wanderings of a thousand thoughts and yearnings undefined,
So many songs and so many flags will I leave in your dust.

So many bright morns and so many sunny noons,
So much yearning of eve will I leave in your dust.

So much fire, so much yearning, so many flames of flags,
And my name, as dust, will I leave in your dust . . .

YEARNING

Beloved, golden maiden, yellow like an ear of corn,
My maiden with the limpid eyes;
In vain were you carried away by the call of the rain,
In vain did you go away!

You lived in the bright fields of my soul,
You were an open flower;
You were a poplar tree, my poplar, my sister,
My flowering past!

Oh, after the rain into a rainbow you turned,
Resplendent, fiery and glorious;
You alighted on the hills, the free pastures,
And on the meadows!

Then, that too vanished: where are you my beloved one,
My golden-winged butterfly?
Were you a maiden or a gazelle, a mist or a mirage?
Were you a maiden, I wonder . . . ?

THE POET

It had been a limpid night,
A limpid night;
My mother had been a tender reed,
My father, strong.

The poplars had sung
Beside the waters,
Everything had been profound,
Everything, abundant.

And the song of the poplars
Had moved my mother,
While in the emerald fields
The crickets had sung . . .

Oh, crickets chattering
With the moon,
I was born because of you
Thus a poet . . .

* * *

I have not seen the old world
And I do not recall anything,
And I do not dream of it
In the mist of my memories.

But when I look at the paleness
Of my mother's calm face,
It seems to me that of old
Life was but a chill sorrow.

I have not seen the old world
And I do not recall anything,
But it has left a thread
In the mist of my mother's eyes.

* * *

To the Armenians in the Diaspora

Not a flower will the alien soil give you,
But should you blossom in alien fields,
If you have not a cup in the motherland,
Your wine is of tears to your lips also.

The alien land will not give you a cottage,
But should it give you a palace in the sun,
If you have not a hut in the motherland,
You are a forgotten orphan under an alien moon.

You may know a myriad languages in the alien world,
But should your mother tongue be foreign to you,
You are a bird in a cage with your tongue torn out,
And you are forever lost to your mother country.

Your motherland is the new Armenia,
Where even the barren rocks bear flowers,
Where the buried Mesrop Mashtots, through me,
Inquires after your destiny every day.

* * *

I put my heart in the old oak-tree,
And the bent oak-tree sprouted anew
Raised itself, stood against the gales
And, restored to youth, roared again.

And my tender heart, thirsting to soar,
I put under the decrepit eagle's breast:
The dying eagle took wing and flew away,
Hunting for prey of its youthful days!

MY GRANDFATHER

My grandfather planted
The saplings of our village;
My grandfather shoed
The horses of our village.
My grandfather built
The walls of our village
And alone mounted with flints
All the threshing-boards.
He watered his orchard,
He dug up the meadow,
And kept his family
By his honest sweat.
My grandfather tilled
And sowed the land,
While at harvest time
The wrist of his hand
That held the sickle ached.
My grandfather thought
And talked with the soil,
He cried with the clouds,
And flowed with the water . . .
One day when suddenly
His knees folded up,
He was petrified with surprise
And he blushed with shame.
He let go the plough
To save his breath:
The sweat on his brow chilled.
And my grandfather lay down
In the furrow and slept,
Blending with the very earth
That had nurtured him.

THERE REMAINED THE THIN THREAD OF THAT
WORN PATH

There remained the thin thread of that worn path
On the flanks and knees of the rocky cliffs.
There remained the fable of my first love
On the azure lips of the streams.

Now, when I grow weary or intoxicated,
Like a cloud perched on the rocky cliffs,
The streams and the path suddenly weep
At the tears that I shed so very pure.

THE EAR OF CORN

I came into the world
When the ancient gods were no more,
And there was no deity in the world;
The humid sky
Bowed deeply to the humble earth
And a fine, misty rain came down.
The ear of corn stood in the field
And beneath its eyelids so damp
Hid the mystery of eternity
And little by little it turned red
The suns of its unripe grains.
The ear of corn stood in the field
And, with its whispers worthy of deity,
Sent aloft its greatness into the heavens
Once inhabited by the gods,
And down its whiskers divine
It scattered blessings and thrills
Upon the earth and the rocks.
I came into the world
To glorify the mystery of the ear of corn
And, in this world,
Of the arm that creates
The strength of the ear of corn.

* * *

The cold has melted away
Through some gentle and kind breathing,
Some exceedingly precious presence,
Some invisible,
Silent tenderness:
Who is this passing like a ray
Through my life?

IN THE DISTANT BLUENESS

Spring will come
And the trees will blossom;
There will be a just and kind sun,
And there will alight near your open window
A small, invisible
Ship of rays.
And you will not see it,
You will not hear it,
But an unintelligible, an inexplicable
Damp sadness will envelop you.
And your vexed heart
Will call for someone,
And nobody will hear your voice,
And your voice
Will never reach anyone.
Spring will come
And the trees will blossom;
There will be a just and kind sun;
And a very slight,
An inexplicable restlessness,
And a damp sadness with no sun:
And from your window will depart
A small, invisible
Ship of rays.

* * *

I came into the world as if drunk,
And I walk a little confused,
With some difficulty,
A little grieved,
A little bent,
Dejected with bewilderment
And, absent-minded, deeply buried
In nameless anxieties.
I strive to rise to my feet
In the hugely growing waves
Of this fluctuating sea of yearning.
I am rocked left and right
By this merciless tiredness
And the rarefaction of this troubled air.
And I smile at you all
A little bewildered, a little confused.

MY LITTLE LOVE

My little love, my little love in a terrible world,
You are my little state lost in the world,
A slender ray of light in the desperate night,
The young shoot of a vine, a chill drop of water.

That is why, why it is difficult to keep you:
What is a single ray? It suddenly vanishes.
What is a tender shoot? It dries up forever.
And a drop of water disappears irretrievably.

My little love, my little love in this vast world,
Elusive, homeless, inscrutable, without sound,
You have confidence only in me in this world,
And lean only on my wings in this world.

You are silent like a fragrance, tuneful like a reed,
Slender like a stem, gentle like a breeze;
But I love you with the passion of a thirsty soil,
With the panting of an ocean, the violence of a gale.

A DESIRE

In this life, I should like to do the impossible,
Impossible works and unperformed deeds:
To embrace the mad, insane wind from the mountains;
To give a dinner party in the crescent of the moon;

To imprison in my arms the dreadful force of waterfalls,
To seize with my palm the fleeting tuft of a white cloud;
To destroy the chain of mountains under my feet;
And, with a single breath, to melt the eternal snows.

After all this I should like to do the unheard,
Oh, the most unheard of impossibilities:
To be with you in a distant cottage and silently,
Holding your hand, to gaze lengthily into your eyes.

THE OAK-TREE

Enraged by the gale, the oak-tree sobbed;
It split and caught fire from the terrible lightning;
Then the same gale grappled with its branches:
And it toppled to the ground.

The forest was filled with a deep sigh
And the solemn funeral march of Beethoven;
The oak-tree had fallen with its branches smashed
And its wounds smoking in misery.

The oak-tree was shattered, the oak-tree of centuries,
But it would still have set hope on its life
And would have resisted the lightning and the gale,
If it had only been . . . human.

* * *

You went away . . .

37

CLEOPATRA

Weary from exhausting battles and invasions,
With scars and diadems and blood upon your brows,
Like thirsted Bedouins craving for an oasis,
Cleaving the seas and gales you come towards me!
Come! And in the way you go against enemy armies,
Girding on arm and armour, so will I arm myself
With all my enchantment and unquenchable lure.
Come! Though your progress in the seas is certain,
Yet in the treacherous waves of my luminous body
I will sink the deceitful sails of your design;
I will envelop in the night of my hair all your
Lighthouses of salvation, that you may not find the way
Towards the place on the shore, that in my darkness
The last guiding flame may be extinguished.
And if anyone tries with his arms unhesitatingly
To swim ashore in my sea of conflagration,
I will pierce him midway with the arrows of my lashes,
That he may never again reach the shore of salvation!
Come towards the bewitching curves of my body,
You, who have been victorious in the invasions of war,
Who have remained unshakable and stood like a rock
Against the storms of the enemy's arrows,
Like the pyramids of my land, indestructible for centuries;
You, who at the blinking of an eye, a glance of the ruler,
Have moved myriads of armies and regiments fully armed,
Have driven bands of prisoners into slavery;
I, under the dominating dagger of my fiery gaze,
Will bend down your noble, manly heads;
I, like the supple snakes of my boundless deserts,
Will coil around your chests and encircle you with my fearful,
Inextinguishable caresses, and with enchanting kisses
I will creep inwards, towards your weak-willed hearts.
And you, lordly men, beneath my red feet,
You will creep meekly and lovingly, like my feeble slaves,

Like the ancient Nile that meanders meekly at my feet,
When its golden-crowned queen takes a walk!
Come, kings, and though I am the King of Kings,
I am the station on your roads, yet also the beginning,
I am the mystery of eternity, I am the inexplicable eternity,
I am both a slave and a ruler, I am infinite, and I am a woman!

* * *

It is snowing,
It is snowing:
And a girl on the dark pavement
Is walking and crying silently!

Why is she crying in that way
And walking to and fro bewildered,
On this joyous New Year's day?

Perhaps her turn has come
To sense that life, alas,
Often brings also grief.

And for that reason she is crying,
Swallowing the snow and her tears,
Roaming on the dark pavement.

And she probably thinks
That fortune will return no more
And it has become irrevocable!

How would this lunatic know
That everything, like this snow,
Comes, that it may melt and go?
And in vain does she weep so!

It is snowing . . . !

NIGHT SCENE

The poplar is swaying and rustling to itself:
And hearing its sad serenade,
A dog whines on our roof;
Has it, perchance, seen dogs on the moon?

The bells are pealing and rumbling in the distance,
And the mountains seem like giant camels
Carrying old villages upon their humped backs,
On the long roads stretched through the centuries!

The sleepy poplar trembles, it feels cold!
The whole world seems to be seeped in slumber,
The river of the Milky Way alone flows silently
Through the blue pastures of the universe.

AT THE NIGHT-CLUB

It is all the same to me now:
Is not the most fearful end
Better than endless fear?
Let it happen what may, only let it be quick:
'*Matoutsogh*, some wine!'

The ashes of the victim
Are already mixed with the ashes of the executioner:
Everything was earth and has reverted to earth;
The voice of the strangled is no longer distinguishable
From the voice of the strangler:
'*Garçon*, some vodka!'

There is no longer any ending,
Or beginning!
Shall we ever see the end?
And is there anyone who knows the past
That will watch over the future?
'Boy, a stiff whiskey!'

Already there comes down
On to the pavements and the roofs
The poisonous atomic rain that in strands
Is to come down on to our graves:
'*Kellner*, a cocktail!'

'Bring some vodka,
Some wine,
Cocktails, and whiskey,
And the noise of jazz,
Without end,
Without beginning . . . !'

* * *

Motherland, you fury of rocks
And enraged waters;
Motherland, rapids of blueness
And rustling of couch-grass,
God ramming
Horn of mountain-rock
And rocky penance
Of remorseful precipices!

Motherland, white and prolonged
Complaint of snowstorms
And question of gales
Fallen into abysses;
Motherland, watery, blue bell
Down rocky cliffs,
Sorrow of petals
And tears of moss!

Motherland, scream of copper,
Groan of granite,
And supplication of beauty
Crucified on stone-crosses;
Motherland, before the sun
And before eternity,
You prayer on bent knees
And you soaring rite!

Motherland, I am your son,
For many centuries unceasingly
I have journeyed with you
Through precipices and heights;
I am the fury of the rocks,
The complaint of snowstorms,
The sorrow of petals,
And the tears of moss!

* * *

Oh, those rocks,
Those heavy rocks!

They have grown red and scorched from the sun of summer;
They are burnt with the craving for a drop of water;
They have cracked and split from the hard frost;
They have been lashed by the gales from the snowstorms.

Oh, those rocks,
Those dumb rocks!

I seem to hear from afar
Their groans and chuckles of pain!

How terrifying
Is the shriek of the dumb!

* * *

I go to the threshing-floor: the chaff-dust
Scatters its yellow reflections all around
And it seems that a silent laughter
Has spread in the whole troubled world.

Confused in the heat, the poplar inclines
And seeks its own blue shadow;
The brown skylarks fly up and down
And pour blessings from their wings.

Everything is so bright and serene,
Everything is ringing away merrily!
A barefooted, tawny bride stands
Winnowing wheat on the threshing-floor.

With the sieve full, she tosses skywards,
And the sun trickles from it in strands;
From every movement her soft breasts
Sway with a warm tremor in her bosom.

Golden chaff-dust has descended on her hair
Arched with a bright halo of light,
As if between heaven and earth
A fair-haired Madonna there stands.

The boy whistles on the threshing-board
As it flies round and the oxen pace away!
The roaming wind suddenly reveals
The warm folds of the Madonna's knees.

She is bathed in sunshine from head to foot,
The whole world is bathed in sunshine:
Peace to you, village of my motherland,
Peace to you, my native land . . . !

* * *

You tell me to leave you and go away:
Where shall I go, tell me,
How can I take myself away from myself?
My every atom,
Through the whim and decision of fortune,
Is filled with you,
With the ebb and flow
Of your irreconcilable soul.
I am not regretful
That the endless waves of your turbulence,
From the shores of my heart
The golden sands carry away to their floor,
But I am fearful
That this golden sand will be spent one day,
And your waves will lash against bare rocks!

* * *

Happiness is, perhaps, similar
To poetry:
It is born suddenly, even from nothing.
In my hard life
I have passed through so many wide roads,
But the happiness I have endlessly sought
I found today
Beside this very small path,
Where your hands
Suddenly with such warm devotion
Descended upon my shoulders . . .

* * *

The sea was so very clear!
The tremors of the slumbering waves
By the shore
Had woven countless Arabian patterns
Out of the fine sands.
I looked and had no heart to enter the water.
But how can one refrain from spoiling
Defenceless beauty?
I entered the sea,
And the water became blurred,
The fairy-tale woven pattern was destroyed.
I swam forward,
But the spoiling of those attractive patterns
Continued to weigh on my conscience.
Then,
Lying on the shore
I pondered for a long time:
How very easy it is in this world
To blur water and destroy patterns!

PEOPLE

The mountains are naturally lofty forever,
But it was people that came to your house at your birth;
When there has been need for help hurriedly,
You have called upon people and not the wind.

And when your time comes with imminence,
It is not the willow, but people that will cry with grief;
You will go there upon people's shoulders,
And if you are remembered, it is people that will remember.

WHEN YOU SUDDENLY GROW SAD

When you suddenly grow sad,
Think of the songs and the people you love;
Think of pleasantries, joyous events,
And think of the friends you love.
Remember that the good have always been numerous,
And life has been protected through them.
Remember that not many people can be sad properly,
And be pleased that you know how to be sad.
Compare your own small sorrow
With the sufferings tolerated by mankind.
Mountains have collapsed upon man's shoulders,
But he still lives and will live on eternally.
Remember that you must not live with trifles
And that there are no eternal sorrows.

When you suddenly grow sad . . . But why should you,
When there are so many things to remember?

THE GIRL AT THE WINDOW

At whom are you looking thus, I wonder?
For whom are you waiting, I wonder,
In the happy dream that you are having?
Of whom are you dreaming, I wonder?
Perhaps, suddenly remembering somebody,
You have grown drunk with memories;
Or you will go to meet somebody,
Or you have only just met him.
You are more beautiful than many
With your simple youthfulness.
You do not know me and do not look at me,
But I am happy that you exist.
Through your open window,
Smile at life and the world.
With whom are you in love, I wonder,
With which fortunate young man?

OPEN UP YOUR BARK

Open up your bark, tree,
And take me inside it.

There passed days singly,
There passed days in pairs,
We savoured love,
And suffering, and mourning.
Days of plenty and of privation
Have already tired me;
The guilty and the innocent
Have already tired me;
This scattered sadness
And these miserable yearnings
Have already tired me:
So, open up your bark, tree,
And take me inside it.

Take me inside your bark:
In this flowerless century
I will blend with you
As a lesser spring.
As some latent sorrow,
In the depth of your leaves
I will shine sadly
And enter into a deep sleep.

And if the winds come
To seize me from your hands,
I will awake, my tree,
And we will thunder together.

I will bend with you,
I will strive with you,
And from the hands of the winds
I will be saved with you.

And one secret night,
When everyone is asleep,
I will repeat to you
Words of enchantment.

We will rise in all secrecy
And will go very slowly
And in her sleep
We will render her sleepless.
In her dream
A tree of enchantment
Will take human form
And with a human tongue,
As a bright legend,
Will whisper to her
Of a vanished, infinite love
And an endless yearning.

Then, little by little,
With our shimmering sorrows,
Like vanished visions,
We will bury ourselves in the ground.

* * *

And together with spring in transparent sadness
And with the yearning of innocent orphans,
We went towards the distant mountains,
Towards the distant abodes of the clouds.

And with explosive buds of grief
And countless visions of childhood,
Alpine violets with bells
Went down the mountains ringing.

The wild ducks screeched with frenzy,
From the lakes submerged in the peaks,
And the sounds of daily anxieties were drowned
With sombre echoes in those screeches.

The doors of freedom, open and free,
Quivering with the peace of freedom,
Swayed with the pealing of fountains
In the narcissus-scented days of freedom.

The winged yearnings of intimacy
Soared in the blue whispers of the ether:
Were we lying down,
Were we asleep?
We were not there
Behind the veil woven
By the twittering of sparrows.

* * *

Yesterday sad, today happy,
I clap like the waves,
Yesterday, towards uncertainty,
Today, I go towards the shore.

I smile at the young and the old
Silently, or laugh like a madman;
I distribute myself to the sands,
Like a river in the desert.

I distribute myself without remainder,
Where are they taking my smiles?
In my laughter every passer-by
Washes his tired soul.

Tomorrow when it is misty
And tears are born from pain,
Perhaps someone will bring me back
A tiny spark from my laughter.

CURSORINESS

When the twilight thrusts itself into the clouds like a comb,
And the sniffing, gentle wind, like a small dog, stops
In front of every bush, every tree, every clod, and every man;
And when the youthful cold already reveals its strength,
Forcing one to button-up shirts and mutter words of discontent;
And when the barking of day grows deaf in the velvet of night,
While the dotted lights seem to turn into a pattern of old,
I become naïve once more,
I believe in justice,
And it seems to me that I will die a natural death!

UNCERTAINTY

You, of the 20th and, undoubtedly, of the jubilee,
Of the atomic,
As if of the essential,
And as if even more rational,
But also equally insane century,
Oh, citizen, powerless and powerful,
You are ailing from the disease of uncertainty,
The incurable disease of uncertainty
That is germinating in your cells,
Even blossoming in both your pupils,
Strangling your nerves with its branches taut,
And bringing its poisonous foliage
To mingle even with the hair on your head.

You are ailing from the disease of uncertainty,
The terrible disease of uncertainty!

And how are you to live only in the past,
If your present also
Is not spent on anything other than
Thinking vacantly about the morrow . . . ?
What is to be expected for this planet?
What are you to answer?
What is to happen to this world?
How are you to know?
What is to grow in this miserable soil?
And in what language are they to speak here . . . ?
You have fallen into the fire from the hands of thought.
There is no escape. And there is no ending.

There is an enormous uncertainty,
Which, like the Torricellian vacuum,
Is never filled.

There is a boundless uncertainty,
Which creeps through like air wherever
There are perforations.

There is a certain uncertainty,
Doubly-moulded like a walnut.
And how is one to live
In the airless interstices
Of poisonous and hard moulds:
How is one to live . . . ?

Salt is also familiar with tearfulness
And with blindness,
Through humidity,
As is man with the shoreless
Ocean of uncertainty.
But where are the land and dryness . . . ?

What is called cement
Breathes properly in water only.
While the poor thing suffocates
With its own dust,
As does man with uncertainty.
But where is the water . . . ?

The sun's rays try to penetrate
Also the dense thickets of nettles,
But, being stung, they are refracted aside.
Let them show even a thicket of nettles
That is not shadowed with uncertainty,
And you would turn that thicket
Into a dwelling place!

If you were a tree,
You would have cried with your own resin
And, enclosed within your bark,
You would have cured yourself.
But your tears
Gnaw at you like quicksilver,
And against the ailments of this world,
You are a barkless tree in the form of a man,
And on that barkless tree there now remain
Your more or less healthy eyes,
Full, completely full of uncertainty!

You are ailing from the disease of uncertainty,
The rancorous disease of uncertainty
That craves for your death.
But you have no death:
One must have luck
Even to die decently!

And do not ask in vain, 'What is one to do then?'
I will not give you the answer.
Those like myself have come into this world
And will henceforth come into this world,
That they may show with their lives what *not* to do.
That is all.
As for the rest, you must resort
To that disease once more,
The uncertain disease of uncertainty!

LOVE

1.

It always comes by paths unknown—uncharted—
As does water from the rain or the thaw.

It is love.

The Dutch seize land from the sea,
The almighty sea;
They snatch it morsel by morsel, wafer by wafer.

It is love.

When the enormous ship slowly approaches
The low bridges of the navigable river,
They erect both their wings,
As if surrendering themselves at once.

It is love!

2.

You are conversing with someone, you answer him
Sensibly and in a proper manner, like a machine,
While mentally you endlessly talk to one
Who is far away from you:
Only the name is near,
Like a passport that is not stamped.

It is love.

The pulse of your carotid artery is like a drip,
The drip that indeed perforates a stone.
Sleeplessness endlessly weaves a close-meshed net,
With which they do not catch fish,
But strangle people!

It is love.

You have become so delicate
And grown so vulnerable,
That you seem to be living without a skin.

It is love.

Two eyes pursue you endlessly,
Two eyes like a pair of stamps
Put their indelible marks
On your life, on the water you drink,
On the whole world,
And even on your blood corpuscles—
Two eyes:
Stamps,
Seals,
Brands!

It is love!

IN A BIG CAMEL'S SMALL EAR

At some period,
Before our time, people unknown to us
Have sat down and thought out various things:
To do this,
Not to do that;
To consider this right,
To reject the other:
To establish certain priorities,
To name honour and duty!

And so now peacefully we pass through
The museum of those absurdities,
And we tear to pieces not our clothes
But our poor souls,
At the base of which
There is something as unbearable
As sand in our shoes,
Or sharp thorns under our nails.

And the needle of life
Travels along
The circular groove of the record,
Always extracting that same
And ever tormenting tune,
Which has long been without an author
But considered
To be an irreproachable authority.

And some strange,
Most unusual and burning desire
Persecutes me
And pursues me in broad daylight:
I am willing (and on your behalf)
Not only to purr or growl,
But to bellow vehemently like a wild beast,
Perhaps, with my muzzle at this stone,
Or this modern round table.
And I do not pity, but despise
Those miserable animals
Which bear the label 'domesticated',
In their view, as an epaulette,
But in my view
As a deeply branded disgrace.
You prefer the huge camel, do you not?
Whereas I seriously favour
The very mouse, and even the rat,
That have not hitherto become domesticated!

And when in your nightmares
The rats gnaw at you fondly
And you wake up, think for a while
Whether it is worth for centuries constantly
To sleep in a big camel's small ear!

GOOD DAY

'Good day!'

I utter those two little words
Like showing a stamped passport,
Like telling an autobiography,
Or like filling in a questionnaire.

And I would want,
I would want so much
Those two words indeed to become a passport
In the whole world,
For everyone.

And I would want,
I would want so much
Those two words likewise to become
A new and a real 'Open Sesame'.

'Good day,'

If you could say to the train,
The ship,
Or the aeroplane
And go in,
With your 'Good day' as a ticket.

'Good day,'

If you could say to a strange woman,
And she loved you at that very moment
Or said with a smile of regret
That others had greeted her before you.

'Good day,'

If you could say, and the clear sky
At once came down with rain, if necessary.

'Good day,'

If you could say to the silent earth,
And it sprouted and produced ears of corn.

'Good day,'

If you could say even to death,
And it understood, that by approaching you
It had hurried,
Hurried a great deal!

If 'Good day' could turn into a real, a new 'Open Sesame!'

And if then you said even to the bear:

'Good day,'

It, too, at that very moment
Turned into a toy for our child
And into such a kind of toy
That needed no winding and was not easily broken.
And if in the same way, the snake
Turned into a walking stick for the old;
The crocodile turned into a container for toys;
The wild stag turned into a clothes-rack,
And the storm into a company of dancers,
While man indeed turned into Man!

There is nothing impossible in this world,
If in this world there reigns goodness,
Which in our mouths has turned into:

'Good day!'

Therefore, like showing a passport,
Like telling a biography,
Or like filling in a questionnaire,

'Good day,'

To you
And
To you all,
My known and unknown dear ones!

Let the impossible become possible
In the whole world,
For all of us,
Let it become possible tomorrow and even now,
Let it become with the two little words:

'Good day . . . !'

Parvir SEVAK

PROPOSAL TO THE COMPUTERS
AND PRECISION INSTRUMENTS
IN THE WHOLE WORLD

You compute, and compute . . . !

Compute then,
With what wavelength, in how many seconds,
How many grams of blood flow from a girl's heart
Towards her abashed cheeks,
Producing that thermo-nuclear flash
Which until now we had naïvely called a blush?
And what currents of cosmic rays flow
Through our atmospheric eyes
When they suddenly touch other eyes?
And is this reciprocal radiation
Dangerous for our hearts,
Or beneficial?

You compute, and compute . . . !

Compute then, how many kilowatts of current
We have transferred with our palms
To children's soft hair and tiny hands,
To the supple bodies of our loved ones,
To our grandmothers' bent shoulders?
And how much less is what we have received,
Or how much more?

Otherwise, you compute and compute and compute . . . !

Will you, please, compute also
That, at least, for one of us during his lifetime
At how many women he has looked with desire,
At how many, with pure admiration,
At how many, merely with brotherly tenderness . . . ?
Indicate also the places of those women
Who could have loved us deeply,
But whom we did not meet in that way.
And state the number of those children
Which we could have had in our lifetime,
But did not and will not have;
And the number also of those children
Which would have been ours it seems,
But did not become ours!

Otherwise, you compute and compute and compute . . . !

We do not even properly know yet
Why it is that man laughs,
Only man,
And no other living creature.
You tell us then
The wavelengths of our laughter:
Reveal their various colours,
And explain to us the difference
Between a smile and loud laughter!

With your powerful electronic skulls
And radiating, whiteless, Cyclopean pupils,
Analyse then yearning also,
And synthesize also that invisible smoke
Which always comes away from that yearning;
And where does it go . . . ?

Otherwise, you compute and compute and compute . . . !

Indicate now the date,
Merely the approaching, impending year,
When, at last, the wounded nations
Will revive or be healed,
And the wounding nations will receive
Their just and irrevocable retribution.
Otherwise, many people for many centuries,
Having abandoned all hope from inexorable God,
Will be waiting still.
They will be waiting still.
You, the new gods of the new era,
Do not you, at least, be false, at least you!

Compute then and state the number
Of bridges that link together countries,
Those bridges over which
We would like to have crossed also,
But have not yet crossed
And will not be crossing!

Reveal the number
Of those dreams and reveries,
Which are thus named in life
For the sole reason
That they are not fulfilled!

Indicate the undoubted number of those doubts,
From which we have often matured,
And more frequently, prematurely withered!

Reveal the line of disillusion
And let us hope
That, at least, it is not in the shape of lightning!

And show the line of disappointment also,
Which would be such a pity if it formed
A very parallelism with our lives,
As, I believe, a parallel
Does not intersect a parallel!

And state the number
Of innumerable hours
That we wasted during hard and easy times
In various queues
And in marches
And in the reading of those multilingual newspapers
From whose black-flamed capitals
Every morning
The single eyes of guns look at our two eyes,
The submarines sink the desires within our souls,
The hydrogen bombs want,
From the red blood of our veins,
To give birth to white water!

After all this, you must compute
And state that after splitting how many more tons of atoms
Would it be possible to split the nucleus of this globe also?
You must compute
That after giving birth to what weapons
Mothers will be deprived of the ability to bear children?
If you state this much
It would not be necessary to state also
The weight of the deprivation of faith:
It would only remain for you to clarify
That with what miracle,
Under that burden of deprivation of faith,
We are not thrust into the ground to our necks, like stakes?

State also in a friendly way,
How often there will come into the world
The Anderson child
From whom
The kings will learn
That they are naked?
And, please, will you also add
Whether, upon learning it,
The kings
Cover up their nakedness,
Or whether they continue to remain naked:
And those who want the contrary
Or those who are simply ashamed,
Do they compel them
To live blindfold in the world . . . ?

And perhaps you would state
Whether Beethoven-like deafness
Is never linked
With those horrifying explosions
That are now taking place in the world
And above the world.
And if it is linked up, would you, please, clarify
Whether the world now
Would be happier with countless Beethovens,
Or whether the number of the deaf would simply increase . . . ?

Compute also, last of all,
In what manner,
And with what favourable assistance of machinery
Would it be possible to retain man as man
Or to turn man only now into Man . . . ?

THE ONE-EYED MAN

I look at life with one eye.
(My second eye is of glass.)
And with this single eye
 I see a great deal:
While with the second one I see even more,
 Because
With the sound eye I can see,
While with the blind eye I always dream!

THE ONE-LEGGED MAN

I am without one leg,
So that, instead of your two,
I have three.
With the two legs,
Which you have not and simply call 'crutches',
I punctuate the pavements,
That he who is capable of reading pavement writing
May be able to read easily the story of human life;
While with the third leg,
For which they call me one-legged,
I save on my personal expenses,
By always ordering, instead of your pair of shoes,
A single one.

Do you not envy me?

ONE DOES NOT LOVE ANEW,
ONE LOVES AGAIN

Who was it that said one loved anew?
One does not love anew, one loves again!

And when even from the flour (still warm)
You recall the same body by instinct;
When the smell of coffee also reminds you of her
And, instead of your colourful dream,
White sleeplessness is spread out;
When with their rounded comb the stars
Comb your hair, while you feel once more
The same comforting fingers
In your hair accustomed to caresses;
When the approximate likeness
Of a stranger's movement or face
Seems to put your feet in plaster,
And to break up your mind as decisively
As from the glistening of lights
Railway lines appear to smash up;
When from the rain the ground seems to turn sour,
And forces you to sense with the nostrils also
That you are alone like a . . . letter Y:
Whilst in some place or next to your very self
There is another letter X, without which
You would neither form nor solve a problem;
The same feeling always surrounds you,
Invariably without gaps or doors,
And you understand that man, in the end,
Does not love anew, but loves again:
For there is an obscure interdependence
Of nerves and blood, of the soul and passion;

For in the problem to be solved we do not put
The signs of subtraction and addition;
For, even though it is we who seek fortune,
Yet it is fortune,
Fortune,
Fortune that selects us!

Therefore, even a soul abundant with love
Does not love anew, but loves again!

BORN WITH CLOTHES

I have left my work
And am making
New clothes for you,
Because I do not know
What you are wearing now.
And spring,
That new and old,
That skilled weaver,
Upon my order and for your sake,
Like a maiden serf
Is weaving silken cloths
And various magnificent brocades,
Untouched by human hands:
And I seem to have fallen
Into a mysterious, multi-fragrant world
Like . . . like a pharmacy.
And it seems
That to select clothes for you
Is as easy
As asking for an ordinary medicine
From a well-stocked pharmacy,
As simple and easy
As uttering one's own surname.
But . . . a little later I understand
That it is as easy
As looking with both one's eyes
At the same time.
Have you tried it?
Try it then!
And now, having put aside
My efforts to clothe you,
I ponder
That there are women
And girls in this world,

Whose bodies seem to scream and beg
To be freed from the bonds of clothing:
Even though always wrapped in clothes,
They seem to walk about naked.
But you . . .
You are different, quite different!
You seem to have been born
Just as you are, with clothes!
Even your own shadow
Seems to envelop, wrap you up,
Like some mysterious cloak!
No coarse thoughts or desires
Ever attain you,
For when they reach you,
They rebound upon touching you
And injure
The very owners of those thoughts and desires,
Debasing them in their own eyes!

You are different.
Those like you are simply loved,
And loved.
Whatever they name those like you,
Those like me always call them . . . Mariam.

ANALYSIS OF YEARNING

My yearning so very gloomy I know,
As a blind man knows his old dwelling!

I do not even see my own movements,
The objects hide their appearance from me,
But already faultlessly and unerringly
I move in that place,
I live there,
Perhaps like a self-winding watch,
Which even after its hands are broken
Continues to work without showing
Either minutes or hours any more!

And oscillating between darkness and solitude
I want to analyse yearning
Like a chemist, that I may understand
Its nature and profound mystery.
The water from a roof gutter laughs
From afar at my aspirations, my efforts,
From the inexpressible distance,
From the inaudible distance.

A town bird with liquid warbling
Turns its wretched existence into a wordless song,
From the inaudible distance,
From the elusive distance.

The words begin to hurt me,
Because they echo me
From the elusive distance,
From the intolerable distance.

I pace from wall to wall, and the sound
Of my steps seems to come from afar,
From the intolerable distance,
From the impossible distance.

Although I am not in the least blind,
Yet I look around me
And I cannot see anything,
Because our eyes often separate from us
And move away and reach that place
From which we are now so distant,
Impossibly distant,
Exceedingly distant!

We ourselves chase after ourselves
And we cannot reach ourselves.
And we cannot reach ourselves . . . !

And is that not the very thing called yearning . . . ?

USELESS SEARCH
OR
HAPPY DISCOVERY

Oh, in vain,
In vain is the search for all those things
Which mankind has lost
Upon the roads that it has travelled,
With all its pockets
Long worn out and full of holes.
And the earth is kind, like an old grandmother:
Whatever becomes lost
It immediately hides away
Under its grandmotherly skirt—
In a covered hollow,
Beneath the dust,
In the eternal ice,
Even in its layers of coal!
While the roads are careless
Like youths—
Whatever becomes lost,
Quickly disappears under the very loser's feet,
Under the wheels of a car,
Under the hoofs of a horse or a mule,
Even in the black-imaged copy of a cloud,
In that shadow
Which is a plundering robber of old!
And in vain,
In vain is the search for all those things
That down the road of centuries
Mankind has lost
With all its pockets
Long worn out and full of holes!

And indeed happy is he,
Fortunate is he alone,
That in the roads of centuries
At some narrow crossing,
Without searching at all,
Inadvertently and suddenly
Finds one of poor mankind's losses,
Through the mediation
Of the sun's or his eye's treacherous rays.
He finds it but does not hide it,
Instead, he gives it to its owner,
Mankind,
Thereby restoring a fragment,
A relic
Of its lost beauty,
Or goodness,
Or kindness,
Or love.

It is only thus that may be found
Any one of poor mankind's losses;
Otherwise, in vain, indeed in vain is the search,
Hopeful and confused, for all those things
Which upon the roads that it has travelled
Mankind has lost
With all its pockets
Long worn out and full of holes . . . !

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

HOVANNES TOUMANIAN was born in 1869 in the village of Dessegh in Armenia. He went to the Nersessian Secondary School in Tiflis for three years. Then, he became secretary to a consistory, and studied on his own, attaining a high degree of scholarship. He devoted a great deal of time to try and bring about peace in the Transcaucasus. His first book of poems appeared in 1890, followed by other volumes of his works, which have been published many times and in many languages. He is considered to be the national poet of Armenia. He died in 1923.

AVETIK ISSAHAKIAN was born in 1875 in Alexandropol (now Leninakan) in Armenia. He went to the Gevorgian College at Etchmiadzin and, in 1893, to the University of Leipzig in Germany for his studies. In 1911 he again went abroad, living in Paris, Berlin, and Venice, finally settling in Armenia in 1936. His first volume of verse, published in 1898, brought him immediate fame as a lyric poet. His books of poems, ballads, legends and tales, have been published many times and in many languages, and they have all enjoyed popularity. He died in 1957.

VAHAN TERIAN was born in 1885 in the village of Gandza in Georgia. He went to school in Tiflis, then, in 1899, to the Lazarian College in Moscow. In 1906, he entered the Faculty of History and Philology at the Moscow University and graduated in 1913, then he studied for four years at the Oriental Faculty of Petersburg (now Leningrad) University. His first book of verse, published in 1908, at once established him as a talented lyrical poet. Subsequent series of poems were published many times, including his fiery, revolutionary ones. He died in 1920.

YEGHISHE CHARENTS was born in 1897 in Kars in Western Armenia, where he spent his childhood. In 1915, he fought the Turks as a volunteer on the Caucasian front. Then he went to Moscow and, in 1917, joined the Red Army. His books of poems have been published many times in Armenian and in other languages. In 1919, he was in Armenia and participated in the establishment of Soviet orders in 1920. After studying in Moscow, he returned to Erevan, where he became the director of the State Publishing House. His poems after 1917 were imbued with revolutionary fervour and gained immense popularity, as did his lyrical verse. He died in 1937.

NAIRI ZARIAN was born in 1900 in the village of Kharagonis in Western Armenia. His parents were killed in the 1915 Turkish massacres and with thousands of fugitives he went to Eastern (now Soviet) Armenia, where he sheltered in various orphanages. He graduated from the Faculty of Historiography at the Erevan State University in 1927. After a post-graduate course in literature in Leningrad, he returned to Erevan in 1933. His first book of poems was published in 1926, followed by many more. He has also written a number of plays and novels. His works have been translated into various languages, and he received awards for his literary and social work. He died in 1969.

GEGHAM SARIAN was born in 1902 in Tabriz in Iran. He went to the Armenian school there and then became a teacher. In 1922, he moved to Soviet Armenia, where he took to teaching again. He has had a number of books of verse published over the years and his poems have been translated into Russian and other languages of the Soviet Union. He has also written some plays and has translated works of other poets into Armenian. He has been elected deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. and has won various awards.

GOURGEN MAHARI was born in 1903 in Van in Western Armenia. He was four when his father was killed and, in 1915, together with thousands of Armenian refugees fleeing from the massacres, he made his way to Eastern (now Soviet) Armenia, where he took

shelter in various orphanages. He became one of the first students at the newly-opened State University of Erevan. His first book of poems was published in 1923, followed by others. He has also written novels and memoirs. He received various awards for his work. He died in 1969.

HOVANNES SHIRAZ was born in 1914 in Alexandropol (now Leninakan) in Armenia. He lost his father before he was six. After his schooling, he worked as a weaver in a textile factory, where he began writing verse. His first book of poems was published in 1935 and brought him popular recognition. In 1937, he went to Erevan and entered the Faculty of Philology of the State University in 1941. Then he studied in Moscow at the Gorki Institute of Literature. He has had a number of books of his poems published in Armenian and other languages.

HAMO SAHIAN was born in 1914 in the village of Lor in Armenia. He spent his early childhood years as a shepherd boy. After attending the village school, he went to Baku in 1927, where he studied at the Armenian Secondary School and, in 1935, at the Pedagogical Institute, graduating in 1939. He became a teacher, then a journalist and editor, and during World War II he served in the Soviet Navy. He began writing in 1935. His first book of poems was published in 1946, followed by many more in Armenian and in Russian translation in subsequent years.

MARO MARGARIAN was born in 1915 in the village of Shoulaver (now Shahoumian) in Georgia. After her schooling, she studied for a year at the Academy of Painting in Tbilisi in 1933, and then transferred to the Faculty of Philology at the Erevan State University, graduating in 1938. After a post-graduate course in Armenian folk lore, she gave up her scholarly studies to devote herself to writing. Her first book of poems was published in 1940, followed by many others. A few of her books have also appeared in Russian translation.

HRATCHIA HOVHANISSIAN was born in 1919 in the village of Shahab (now Mayakovski) in Armenia. The family moved to Erevan in 1926 and, after finishing a secondary school there, he began a course in Russian literature at the Faculty of Philology at the Erevan State University, but he interrupted his studies to go to the front in 1941. After the war, he worked in broadcasting and then became editor of the literary weekly *Grakan Tert* for some years. He has published many volumes of his poems from 1948 onwards, also a volume translated into Georgian.

SILVA KAPOUTIKIAN was born in 1919 in Erevan, capital of Soviet Armenia. Her father died before she was born. After finishing her secondary school, she entered the Faculty of Philology at the Erevan State University and graduated in 1941. She studied for two years at the Gorki Literary Institute in Moscow in 1949. Her first book of poems was published in 1945, followed by many more over the years. She won a State Prize in 1952, and she enjoys wide popularity. Her poems have also been published in a number of languages of the Soviet Union.

GEVORG EMIN was born in 1919 in the village of Ashtarak in Armenia. He spent his childhood in Erevan. He graduated in 1940 from the Hydrotechnical Department of the Erevan Polytechnic Institute. He has also worked at the Institute of Ancient Armenian Manuscripts. He was editor of the magazine *Armenian Literature* (in Russian) for four years. His first book of poems was published in 1940, followed by many others in Armenian and in Russian translation in subsequent years. He won a State Prize in 1951 and is very popular. His poems have also been published in a number of other languages of the Soviet Union.

VAHAGN DAVTIAN was born in 1922 at Arabkir in Western Armenia. The family moved to Soviet Armenia in 1925. After completing his secondary school in Erevan, he served in the Red Army during World War II. In 1943, he entered the Faculty of Philology at the Erevan State University and graduated in 1948. He has worked on various journals, including the literary journal *Grakan Tert* and *Haireniki Dzain*, both of which he edited for a

few years. His first book of poems was published in 1947, and a number of other books of verse have followed since.

PARUIR MIKAEELIAN was born in 1924 in the village of Voskehask in Soviet Armenia. After graduating from the Pedagogical Institute of Erevan, he became a teacher of Armenian language and literature at his native village, and in World War II he served in the Soviet Navy. He studied German at the Military School of Foreign Languages and, in 1957, went to the Gorki Institute of Literature in Moscow for two years. He has worked as an editor in the Hayastan Publishing House of Erevan, and he has had a number of books of poems published.

ARAMAIS SAHAKIAN was born in 1936 in the village of Bashkend in Soviet Armenia. He graduated from the Faculty of Historiography at the Pedagogical Institute of Erevan and, in 1967, from Moscow in advanced literary studies. He has been on the editorial board of youth journals in Armenia for a number of years and has won two youth awards for poems. He has had four books of his verses published.

RAZMIK DAVOYAN was born in 1940 in the village of Mets Parny in Soviet Armenia. He graduated from the Medical School in Leninakan (Armenia) in 1958. After working for a year, he studied at the Faculty of Glossography at the Pedagogical Institute of Erevan and graduated from it in 1964. He was on the editorial board of the literary weekly *Grakan Tert* for a number of years. He has had three books of poems published.

PARUIR SEVAK was born in 1924 in the village of Chanakh-chee (now Sovetashen) in Soviet Armenia. He graduated from the Faculty of Philology at the Erevan State University in 1945; then he took a post-graduate course at the Literary Institute of the Armenian Academy of Sciences, specialising in ancient and medieval Armenian literature. He also graduated from the Gorki Institute in Moscow, where he became a senior lecturer. From 1963 onwards, he was a senior scholar at the Literary Institute of the Armenian Academy of Sciences in Erevan. In 1967, he was

elected deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. and was awarded a State Prize for his poetry. In 1970, he gained his Doctorate in Philology. He has had numerous books of his poetry published in Armenian and in other languages. His tragic death in a car accident in 1971 robbed contemporary Armenian literature of a talented and original poet.

Mischa Kudian, writer and translator, has written prose, poetry and plays, but he specializes in English renderings of Armenian literature and allied subjects. His translation of Vahan Totovents's SCENES FROM AN ARMENIAN CHILDHOOD was an outstanding literary success. A selection of Armenian folk-tales, THREE APPLES FELL FROM HEAVEN, retold in English by Mischa Kudian and published in London in 1969 was also highly successful. This was followed by his retold version of the thousand-year-old great Armenian folk-epic, THE SAGA OF SASSOUN, which was similarly acclaimed, as was his translation of a selection of works by the Armenian national poet, Hovannes Toumanian, under the title THE BARD OF LOREE, which was also published in London in the same year. A selection of his translation of some of the finest short stories by Vahan Totovents, TELL ME, BELLA, published in London in 1972, was again well received and widely appreciated.

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