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Translation Of Selected Poems By K. Balmont

K. Balmont

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became more demanding; his poetry was described as a magnificent translation from an unknown original, though always praised for its musicality. He himself translated poetry from numerous languages; authors he rendered from English included Blake, Poe, Shelley, Whitman, and Wilde. Balmont emigrated to France in 1922 and lived there in poverty, as did most émigré poets; he suffered a gradual mental decline that limited his ability to write and died in 1942.

Verblessness

[Безглагольность]

In the nature of Russia there's some weary tenderness,
The unspeaking pain of a deep-buried sorrow,
Ineluctable grief, voicelessness, endlessness,
A high frozen sky, and horizons unfolding.

Come out here at dawn to the slope of the hillside—
A chill smoking over the shivering river,
The massive pine forest stands darkly, unmoving,
And the heart feels such pain, and the heart is not gladdened.

There the motionless reeds. There the sedge doesn't tremble.
Deep silence. This verblessness lying at rest.
The meadows are running away, far away.
There's exhaustion in everything—all mute and deaf.

Come at sunset, like moving into chilly billows,
To the cool overgrowth of a deep village garden—
The trees are so twilit and strangely unspeaking,
And the heart feels such sadness, the heart is not gladdened.

As if the soul's pleading for something it longs for,
And someone has caused it this undeserved misery.
And the heart keeps on pleading, but the heart begins aching,
And weeps, and it weeps, and it weeps without ceasing.

1900

TRANSLATED BY *Sibelan Forrester*

[Будем как Солнце!]

Let's be like the Sun! Let's forget about who
Is leading us over the roadway of gold,
Let's only remember that we're brightly striving
To reach for the different, the new and the strong,
And to reach for the evil, in our dreams of gold.
Let's always address our prayers to the unearthly
In all of our earthly desiring!
Let us, like the Sun who's eternally young,
Touch the flowers of fire with tender caresses,
The transparent air, and everything golden.
Are you happy? Then may you be happy twice over,
May you be incarnated as quick-risen dream!
Only don't tarry in motionless stillness,
Farther and on, to the line that is hidden,
Farther, we're drawn by the fateful equation
To Eternity, where new blooms flower and flare.
Let us be like the Sun, for the Sun is youthful,
And that is the bidding of beauty!

1902

TRANSLATED BY *Sibelan Forrester*

[Я в этот мир пришел, чтоб видеть Солнце]

I came into this world to see the Sun
And the deep-blue horizon.
I came into this world to see the Sun
And mountain summits.

I came into this world to view the Ocean
And the splendid valley flowers.
I've caught the world up in a single gaze,
For I'm in power.

I've vanquished cold forgetfulness,
With my new-created dream.
I'm every moment filled with revelation,
I always sing.

They awoke my dream of suffering,
But for that I'm loved.
Who's equal to me in my powers of singing?
No one at all, none.

I came into this world to see the Sun,
And if day has fled,
Still I will sing . . . I'll sing about the Sun
The hour before death!

1902

TRANSLATED BY *Sibelan Forrester*

[Я—изысканность русской медлительной речи]

I am the refinement of Russian sluggish utterance,
 Other poets before me all warn of my coming,
 It was I first uncovered this speech's declivities,
 Polyphonally, wrathfully, tenderly tolling.

I'm a sudden fracture,
 I'm the playful thunder,
 I'm a translucent creek,
 I'm for all and I'm no one's.

A multifoamed intersplash, torn-up-continuous,
 Stones semi-precious of earth aboriginal,
 Sylvan roll-calls in the green month of May—
 I'll grasp it all, take it all, steal from the others.

Ever young as a dream,
 Mighty, for I'm in love
 With myself and with them,
 I am—refined verse.

1902

TRANSLATED BY *Sibelan Forrester*

Autumn
[Осень]

Autumn. Dead space. Deepening sorrowful distances.
The ultimate murmur of winds that rustle the leaves.
Why are you not with me, friend, in these nights, in their sorrow?
So many stars shine in them, harbingers of winter snows.

I sit by the window. Restless shutters slightly tremble.
And endlessly, endlessly—somebody's plea in the stovepipe.
On my face rests a kiss—oh, yesterday's, it's still so recent.
Through the woods and the fields, the path of fate stretches away.

Far, far along on the path that was long ago beaten,
The little bell sings, overflowing, and the troika races.
The old house is emptied. Someone pale stands on the threshold.
That man weeping—who is he? Ah, and a yellowed leaf rustles.

This leaf, this leaf . . . It's torn loose, and it flies, it is falling . . .
Twigs beat at the window. Night again. Day again. Night.
I can't bear it. Who is it I hear out there, sobbing so madly?
Please hush. Oh, I beg of you! I cannot, I cannot help you.

Is it you yourself speaking? To yourself—and rejecting yourself?
Little bell, please come back. I'm frightened to stay here with phantoms.
Oh deepest night! Oh, cold autumn! Unspeaking autumn!
This inscrutable fate: to be parted, to suffer and love.

1908

TRANSLATED BY *Sibelan Forrester*

Translations:

In Markov/Sparks; Obolensky; Yarmolinsky/Deutsch.