

FOUR RUSSIAN POEMS: Pushkin and the 'Silver Age'

**Aleksandr Pushkin (1799-1837)**

I loved you once: that love may not have yet  
Lost all the power that I felt before,  
But leave it now behind lest you forget  
I promised you no troubles anymore.

I loved you silently, without a chance,  
Tormented by timidity, by envy;  
I tried to prove my love with every glance –  
God grant you're loved that way again as can be. (1829)

{Ya vas liuBIL, liuBOF, eshSHO byt mozhet,  
VduSHEH maYEH uGASla ne saf FSEM...}

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**Anna Akhmatova (1889-1962)**

My chest lost any sense of love,  
Though my feet tripped lightly as could be;  
I tried to pull on a left-hand glove  
Where I knew for sure that my right should be.

It seemed the stairs went down forever,  
Though I knew that there were only three.  
Among the maples – soft as ever –  
Your autumn voice said, "Die with me..."

...My cursed and winding, evil way  
Betrays in everything I do."  
I answered, "Dear one! You must stay!  
I am ready now to die with you!"

This then is the song of our last meeting.  
I turned to trace the way we came:  
In a bedroom, candles flickered, fleeting,  
With pale, indifferent, yellow flame. (1911)

{Tak besPOmashna grud khulaDELa  
No shaGHEE moEE byLEE lekKEE...}

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**Osip Mandelshtam (1891-1938)**

Your image, tormenting and uncertain,  
I couldn't make out in the blinding mist.  
"Oh, God!" I let slip, like an awkward burden,  
Not grasping why it was that I should resist.

That name on wings rose up like a bird  
Flying out from deep inside my mind,  
As a cloud before me formed the word  
That left my chest's empty cage behind.

(1912)

{Obraz tvoy mooCHEEtelnee ee ZYBkee  
Ya ney mog v tuMANyeh asyaZAT...}

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**Boris Pasternak (1890-1960)**

Winter Night

Snow whirled and whirled the whole world round  
In every corner.  
A candle burned on the table top,  
A candle burned.

Just as in summer, moths in a crowd  
Fly to a flame,  
The snowflakes dashed themselves in clouds  
At the window frame.

Frigid wind then pasted to the panes  
Circles and arrows.  
A candle burned on the table top,  
A candle burned.

Projected on the ceiling's plane  
The shadows showed  
The twining arms, the twining legs,  
Fates together flowed.

Two slippers fell with a muted clop  
Like a soft caress,  
And wax in tears from the table top  
Dripped upon a dress.

And all was lost in a snow-filled haze,  
Blowing white and grey.  
A candle burned on the table top,  
A candle burned.

The flame in the draft from a corner tossed  
And temptation's tricks  
Rose up, an angel's two wings crossed  
Like a crucifix.

Snow swirled about in the coldest month  
While on and on  
A candle burned on the table top,  
A candle burned.

(1946-53)

{MehLO, mehLO pafSAY zeemLAY,  
Vaf FSAY preeDEHly...  
SveeCHA gaREHla na staLAY,  
SveeCHA gaREHla...}