

Valentina Shulikovskaya

The Postgraduate Ballads

(Imitation of Kipling)

To my scientific supervisor who never stopped inspiring me to do this sorrowful work.

Preface to the English version

I had the bad luck to become a student in the former USSR just after its dissolution; that is, during the Big Grab time when humans were allowed to show the worst, the darkest parts of their nature. And the humans did it! That's why my *Postgraduate Ballads* are so angry and full of misanthropy.

The texts below are nothing but an interlinear translation, and I'll be happy if a person with better English rewrites them. My special gratitude to Kristina Shramkovskaya who has translated one of the poems. Please, forgive us for mistakes in English; we are not native speakers!

And let my professors and university mates forgive me!

The Invitation

(*Hyaenas*)

“As long as the human race exists, the ideal
is before it, and, of course, not the ideal of
rabbits and swine, which is to breed as fast
as possible”.

(Leo Tolstoy, translated by Leo Wiener)

After the heretics burned till the end
And the Holy Fathers left with pain,
Luminaries of science, its little Tsars
Loomed at a remote lane.

How one can be burnt for the sake of love,
Verity or one's ideas,
They are ignorant and aren't ready to know.
They belong to another genus.

They must give food to their mates and broods
As well as to their own throats.
(You fell in love many years ago;
Now pay when the love is over!)

Anyway, to grab the fattest piece,
Hands or soul must be mixed with dirt.
And to twist the words said by the dead
Is easy even for an idiot.

So they will have a lot of cars,
Garments and glittering pins.
(The creatures who live without soul
Need a lot of expensive things).

And the portraits have full of sorrow eyes,
All-forgiving and heavenly strong.
But who could them notice? They hang so high!
Only the non-existing God!

And we here have fun, have noise and hubbub,
Coins jingle and banknotes rustle.
The science is done by ... everyone.
Join our happy cast!

The Creativity Process

(Birds of Prey March)

"I research this subject only because I'm paid for
it. If payments stop, I'll leave it at once".

(A thesis abstract of an honest person).

"I'll never stop philosophy, even if I am executed
several times".

(Apology of Socrates, Plato)

"I think, this money is too much for you and you
should give me the half of it".

**(From a talk between a scientific supervisor and
his student).**

Oh, it's 'ard! The 'eavy drunken 'ead 'urts 'eavily, as usually.
Oh, it's 'ot! Where is beer, aspirin or validol?
Oh, it's difficult! For the sake of my career it's very important to make an air
As if I've discovered or invented some bloody stuff.

Cheer, Lord! Oh, give me money,
Much of money and be quick!
I'll find a family for myself, I'll cloth them,
I'll buy me many things.
More of cheers!
My wife and my children
Will 'ave golden earrings stickin' out of all their ears!

It was stupid to go into mathematical students.
I ought to come to a place overfilled with practical things.
Then I'd 'ave conducted 250 experiments,
Successful or not, no importance, it's all the same.

Oh, well, yeah right, one can also slap some stuff together 'ere.
If only my bloody supervisor wouldn't let me down!
One 'as to 'oe a couple of little formulas from this lousy book
An' to stick at least one little lousy integral in.

Wow! An integral over measure! (By the way, what does "measure" mean?)
Well, it doesn't matter: I'm sure, it's taken in that little book.

Let me modify the 93-th index into 101-th –
An' I 'ave an absolutely fresh and very important result!

Cheer, Lord! Oh, give me money,
Much of money and be quick!
I'll find a family for myself, I'll cloth them,
I'll buy me many things.

More of cheers!

I'll buy me good,
Sure and loyal friends!

Oh, pour me more!

I'll buy me brave,
Lovin' me people!

Don't be stingy!

My wife and my children
Will 'ave golden earrings stickin' out of all their ears!

Oh, pour me more!

Any of my wives
Will 'ave golden earrings
stickin' out of all 'er ears!
Will 'ave golden earrings
stickin' out of all 'er ears!
Will 'ave golden earrings
stickin' out of all 'er ears!

Light

(Boots)

To sentenced to the PC

The knowledge is light.

(A folk wisdom).

Letters whiten on the blue – that's how my thesis looks.

Thinner-thinner-thinner squeal – that's how my thesis sounds.

Light- light-light-light – into the inflamed eyes.

The scientist has no right to think.

Minus two and three halves more. Minus five diopters at once.

Six point eight and seven point six. In a year [I've got] minus ten.

Light- light-light-light – into the inflamed eyes.

The scientist has no right to think.

Don't-don't-don't-don't look at the flickering monitor.

(Light- light-light-light – into the inflamed eyes).

Hit-hit-hit-hit – hit the keys and more, and more,
The scientist has no right to think.

Make your brain to dream about something else.
(Oh, my Lord, help me in going lunatic!)
Light- light-light-light – into the inflamed eyes.
The scientist has no right to think.

Don't for-get that life is different somewhere else,
O-ther-wise you'll have forever pouring light,
Light- light-light-light – into the inflamed eyes.
The scientist has no right to think.

One can live-live watching blood and watching death,
But not-not-not-not this terrifying light,
Light- light-light-light – into the inflamed eyes.
The scientist has no right to think.

If I only could make out the jumping text,
But through pus and tears only light is seen,
Light- light-light-light – into the inflamed eyes.
The scientist has no right to think.

He who wrote his thesis knows perfectly:
It's not-not ideas, thoughts and clever words
But light- light-light-light – into the inflamed eyes.
The scientist has no right to think.

The Testing

("When Homer smote his blooming Lyre...")

Translated by Kristina Shramkovskaya

"He hasn't enough mind to know that he has a mind."

(G.K.Chesterton)

And as soon as the speaker decided to start
The professor with bushy beard smiled.
And he sighed every time with his papery smart
When the gray-head coworker snored tired.

Everyone understood: it's a plagiarism.
Everyone recognized his ideas,
And the drumming report was nothing for them,
Who desired to leave this capias.

All of them recognized that the speaker's a thief
And the speaker knew that but was loud.
Only an *academic* swished like a leaf:
"I had better to write, it was wowed".

Defense

(Danny Deeever)

"I'm dreadin' what I've got to watch", the Colour-Sergeant said.

(R.Kipling)

"For what purpose have we come here?" – said members of *Soviet*¹.

"Oh, we'll vote and go away," – the Secretary said.

"Shall we vote 'Yes' or how?" – said members of *Soviet*.

"Oh, only 'Yes', oh, only 'Yes'!" – the Secretary said.

You see, the well-known *aspirant*² is defending today;

He has shown an outstanding talent so many times;

His [scientific] supervisor is a real monster and giant.

Can we really vote 'No'?

"He did our lecture work for us," – sighed members of *Soviet*.

"And gave credits [to students] as well," – the Secretary said.

"He could compose formal papers," – sighed members of *Soviet*.

"Oh, who will write them now and then?" – the Secretary said.

Yes, the well-known *aspirant* is defending today;

However, let him cut his damned report for our sake;

It's ridiculous to hear all the stuff and each time.

Or otherwise we'll just up and vote 'No'!

"He helped me in apartment renovation," – marked a member of *Soviet*.

"Glued wallpaper, laid tiles," – the Secretary said.

"He was listed [as an employee] in my company," – marked a member of *Soviet*.

"Not only in yours, not only in yours," – the Secretary said.

OK, the well-known *aspirant* is defending today;

He asked us so much to come to got finally the quorum;

He promised to reimburse all expenses with pleasure.

Can we really vote 'No'?

"Of course, the subject isn't new," – whispered members of *Soviet*.

"And easy as two times two," – the Secretary said.

"A pointless and hard work," – whispered members of *Soviet*.

"As everything that happens here," – the Secretary said.

However, the well-known *aspirant* is defending today;

His [scientific] supervisor is a real monster and giant;

The banquet table has long been set, a line of bottles is ready.

Can we really vote 'No'?

¹ The Russian word standing for the Scientific Council.

² The usual name for a postgraduate student in Russia.

Afterword

(If)

Man exists not for living but for swimming in the sea.

(An ancient wisdom)

If at the dawn of your life, through a rose-coloured smoke,

You suddenly said with the ringing childish voice

Words clearly felt by your heart:

“I am born to find the answer of a definite question;

I need no honour, I need no awards,

I cannot be helped, I must understand;

To refuse is impossible, I cannot be back

As I cannot stop love, as I cannot stop breathe”;

If later while growing up you suffered with realizing

That any knowledge must be paid for,

That you had to cross out as if throwing on a sacrificial knife

Your home, family, health, the capability of friendship;

If you felt how, through the freezing darkness,

As a fate, which comes one night,

It knocked really into your heart, it knocked really into your heart,

The icy and cruel secret;

If, having gathered all your courage in advance,

You opened the door and let it in,

And this secret led you into the unknown,

As far as you had enough strength to follow;

If one day, not recognizing yourself, you realized:

There was a new strength in you and a new power;

And, longing for the former destiny, you began

To curse this gift but could not;

If, having seen that people didn't need your thoughts

For the life was so nice and joyful without them;

If, having heard how the beloved voice, through your dreams,

Begged you to renounce and forget all;

You kept calm, and tried on your crown of thorns,

And didn't retreat an inch from your truth,

It means that you can think, my son.

It means that you are doomed.