

Five Poems

Moisei Fishbein

To Viktor Yushchenko

...there's still the warmth of Easter.
He looks for her from beyond the Jordan,
tortured, still alive, unmourned,
shining for Him from across the Dnipro,

glimpsing, past floodwaters, the land
garlanded, green, desired:
"I come and shall become for you
the touch of a dove's feather."

And shining in the darkness of centuries,
His tears, untarnished and imperishable.
And in His palm the flaming branch,

and a guelder rose bleeds over the infinite,
and there He is: falling to His knees,
kneeling by the Dnipro.

January 21, 1996, Altenerding

To Bohdan Boychuk

... And my lips are stunned,
and my burning soul has already
accepted the blistering hills of Jerusalem
and the burnt greenery of Kyiv.

O small drop, small ray, bee,
small pearl, o nearly invisible fate,
the untouchable rhyme of my being,
a sweet and inflamed sting,

bless me, let me keep
the haze above the Wailing Wall
and the spring slopes above the River.

Bless me, leave me these things
while I still walk this earthly road,
while I still have earthly memories.

February 5–6, 1989, Munich

To Hryhory Prossor

When we were immortal,
beyond the summer warmth of July,
when on our violins we practiced scales,
when the star had barely risen
and there was no calendar for us,
there, beyond the March snows,
beyond the torrents, Ravenna glowed,
untouchable and blessed,
Jerusalem shone in crystals,
the River flowed from the Lord's palm,
and our City gleamed on the throne,
and the star confessed to a bee.

December 14–15, 1996, Altenerding

I'm still begging the high guard:
my guardians from beyond the heavens,
let me touch the heavy wine-vine,
give me a draught of the sweet juice
there, where fish scales lie beyond the barren distance,
there, where the thunderstorm is purple and gray,
there, where the intertwining of the dreamscape ends,
where the weaving of the tracks begins...

May 25, 1999, Altenerding

To Olena Dobrovolska

Untouched and raped, abused
and impeccable—like a field
melody, intangible and virgin,
in the rye—I dreamt such words,

and the darkness swirls in a winterly way,
and the slush soaks our souls.
Come to me, my little words, my language,
untouched, raped, and holy.

November 7, 1993, Munich

Translated by John Hennessy and Ostap Kin

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