

Classic Poetry Series

**Nikolai Stepanovich
Gumilev
- poems -**

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Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev(1886 - 1921)

Nikolay Stepanovich Gumilev was a Russian poet.

Nikolay was born on April 3rd in Kronshtadt, to the family of the doctor S.Y. Gumilev. In 1887, the Gumilev family moved to Tsarskoe Selo, where Nikolay began studying at the School of Gurevich. In 1900, the Gumilev family moved to the city of Tiflis in the Caucasus in order to improve the children's health. Nikolay attended the best school in the area, Tiflis One.

It was here that his first poem, entitled "I ran from the cities to the forest" was published in the magazine "Tiflis Listok". The poem was signed "K. Gumilev".

In 1903, the Gumilev family moved back to Tsarskoe Selo, where Nikolay entered the 7th class at the Nikolaevsky Tsarskoe Selo School. The Director of the school was the poet 'I.F. Annensky'. It was at this time that Gumilev began his acquaintance with his future wife A. Gorenko, the poetess who would come to be known as 'Anna Akhmatova'.

Having finished school in Tsarskoe Selo, Gumilev travelled to Paris. He studied French literature and art at the Sorbonne. While he was there, he had time to publish the first collection of his poems in 1905. It was entitled "Path of the Conquistadors". Gumilev thought of it as unsuccessful, and never had it republished.

In Paris in 1907, Gumilev began publishing a bi-weekly literary magazine called "Sirius," in which he printed his own compositions under various pseudonyms ("Anatoly Grant", "K-o", and "K"), and the compositions of the young poetess Anna Akhmatova. In all, Gumilev produced 3 issues of "Sirius".

In the beginning of the summer of 1907, Gumilev made his first trip to Africa. In January 1908, his second book, entitled "Romantic Colors", came out. It was dedicated to A. Gorenko.

In August 1908, Gumilev enrolled in the Legal College of St. Petersburg University, but he never finished his legal studies. In May of 1911 he submitted his petition of discharge, and began studying in the Romance and Germanic Languages Department of the Philological College at St. Petersburg University. He also became a member of the Romance and Germanic Languages Club.

From November 1909 to February 1910, Gumilev travelled to Abyssinia on an expedition organized by his colleague V. Radlov. His experiences there were the

foundation for his poems "Mik" (1914), and "Abyssinian Song". Gumilev went to Abyssinia a total of three times. The second trip was from September 1910 to March 1911, and the third trip was from April 1913 to September of that same year. On the third trip, Gumilev himself served as the trip's guide. The pictures and items found on his trips were later given to the Museum of Anthropology.

In the Spring of 1910, Gumilev came out with his third collection of poetry, entitled "Pearl". It was dedicated to V. Bryusov, and brought Gumilev much fame.

In August 1911, the "Poet Workshop" was formed. Gumilev and Gorodetsky lead this group. They put out articles lauding the appearance of the new artistic movement known as Akmeism. They also began publishing a magazine "Giperborey", which was edited by Gumilev, Gorodetsky, and Lozinsky.

In 1912, Gumilev came out with a new collection of poems entitled "Strange Sky". In this collection, Gumilev included not only his own poems, but also translations of Teofil Gothe's compositions. In the beginning of 1913, a group of St. Petersburg students put on an amateur presentation of Gumilev's play "Don Juan in Egypt". In March of that year, the play was presented in the Trotsky Theater.

In August 1914, WWI began. Gumilev volunteered for service, and served in the Leib-guard lancer regiment. He also served in the Gusarsky Alexandriskiy regiment, and was honored with two Georgievsky Crosses. He related some of his war tales in "A Cavalryman's Notes", which was printed in the daily newspaper "Birzhevy Vedomost" from February 1915 to January 1916, and a collection of poems entitled "Kolchan" in 1915.

During the October Revolution, Gumilev was abroad, where he had been stationed in May of 1917. He lived in London and Paris, studied Eastern literature, translated, and worked on the drama "The Ruined Tunic". In April 1918, he returned to Petrograd. Along with other renowned writers such as A. Blok, M. Lozinsky, and K. Chukovsky, Gumilev began working at the publishing house "World Literature", which had been founded by A.M. Gorky. There Gumilev served as the the head of the French Literature department. He was a member of a committee on poetic translation editing. Gumilev himself translated many works. That summer, Gumilev put out the books "Bonfire" and "Porcelain Pavilion (Chinese Poetry)".

In November of that year, the Institute of Living Language was opened. Gumilev gave lectures there on poetic theory and history. He also began teaching in the

Institute of Art History and other literary schools. In the Spring of 1920, Gumilev was chosen as a member of the Reception Commission of the Petrograd department of the All-Russian Writer's Union. Later, in 1921, Gumilev was selected as the leader of the Petrograd department of the All-Russian Poet's Union.

In the summer of 1921, Gumilev had the poetic collections "Marquee" and "Pillar of Fire" published. The latter was dedicated to his second wife A.N. Engelhardt.

In August of 1921, Nikolay Gumilev's life came to a tragic end, Gumilev was executed by the Bolsheviks for alleged conspiratorial activities.

Agamemnon's Warrior

A queer and fearful question is tight,
Oppresses my soul and tosses:
Can one be alive if Atreus has died --
Has died on a bed of roses.

All that we dreamed of and everywhere praised,
All our longing and fear --
Were fully reflected in those calm eyes,
As were in a glass of a tear.

Ineffable power dwelt in his hands,
A saga of feet was retold;
A beautiful cloud he was for his land
Mycenae -- the country of gold.

What am I? A fragment of ancient dread,
A javelin, fallen on earth --
Atreus, the leader of nations, is dead, --
But I have been spared by death.

The down is full with reproachful flame,
The waters enticingly sing,
It's hard to exist with the horrible shame,
If one had forfeited one's king.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Annam

Look at the moon in the midst of
Vastly magnificent sky bed;
Hear the young winds among bamboo;
Feel the air – heavy with fragrance.
Families always are blessed!

While parents rest in the grove,
Drinking green tea, reading poems,
House's alive with commotion:
Children are busy with homework
Wishing the newborn won't cry.

If you enjoy this lifestyle,
You will achieve true fulfillment.
Why strive for fame and money
When you believe that your children's
Life must be longer than yours.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Children Song

Why is that quinsy's mouth red like fire?
Isn't it because it's chewing betel?
Let the new fiancée of my father
Hurry up so they can meet each other
He'll extend to her a hearty welcome,
Welcome her with rice, he will not hit her.
It's my mother who will poke her eyes out,
She will rip the guts out of her stomach.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Don Juan

My own dream is lofty, simple thing:
To seize the oar, put feet into the stirrups,
And to deceive the time, that slow tries to stir us,
By kissing lips, forever new and pink;

When getting old, to keep the law of Christ,
Cast down looks, put on sackcloth and ashes,
Put on the chest, as heavy obligations,
The iron Cross, that He died on for us.

And only when, amidst the orgy's madness,
I get my senses – a sleepwalker aimless,
Just frightened in the silence of his ways –

Then I recall: the worst of many others –
I had no children from a woman in my years
And never called a man a brother.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Dreams

By the hut, left by people and heaven,
Where the fence's black remnants are steeping,
The ragged beggar and black old raven,
Were discussing the dreams of the sleeping.

The old bird, with commotion's moans,
Was repeating in hot indecision,
That he had on the tower's stones
The unusual, fabulous visions;

That in flight, full of valor and air,
He, who lost their usual sadness,
Was a swan, snow white, sweet and fair,
And the beggar – a prince of the greatness!

The ugly pauper was helplessly wailing.
Heavy night was descending and reigning.
The old woman, while passing the dwelling,
Was unceasingly crossing and praying.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Eternal

I'm in the days' embracing limits,
Where even skies are ever gray,
Look through the ages, live in minutes,
And wait for Holy Saturday;

The end of soul's aimless travels,
Of lucks and troubles peaceful end.
O, come, my day when I'll be able
To Know, See and Understand.

My soul will be so new and broad,
All, that's alluring, will be mine.
And I will bless the golden road,
From blind worm and to golden sun.

And he, who went with me wherever,
Trough thunders and the silent peace,
He, who was kind to me in fever,
And cruel when I stayed in bliss;

Who taught me to a wisdom whole,
To fight, reserve, or overcome,
Will turn to me, and leave his pole,
And simply tell me, "We have come."

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Forest

In that magic forest, towering trees
Unexpectedly come forward from the haze.

Out of the earth, roots spring from other roots,
Like the arms of the dwellers of burial vaults.

Under the cover of the blazing autumn leaves
Lonesome giants, trolls, and lions used to live.

Here sailors saw the tracks in golden sand
Left behind by a six-fingered human hand.

Peers of France and Arthurian valiant knights
Never set on this forbidden place their sights.

Nor the bushes ever hid a pirates' lair,
Nor a hermit ever made his lodging there...

Only once, they saw in a lurid tempest's light -
Cat-headed woman softly stepped into the night;

Doomed to wear a solid silver coronet,
She was lamenting and sobbing till the sunset.

No communion was given by a priest
When, by quiet dawn, she passed away in peace.

All this happened, all this happened in those years,
Which have passed without leaving any trace.

All this happened, all this happened in a realm,
Which would never come across your wildest dreams.

I imagined all of this by looking at
Fiery braids that always snake around your head,

Looking at your ever changing greenish eyes,
They're akin to Persian feverish turquoise.

Well, perhaps that forest is a soul of yours,
Well, perhaps that forest 's always my remorse.

Or perhaps, one day when we will die,
To this forest we will travel – you and I.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Giraffe

Today, I see, your glance is especially sad
And your arms, embracing your knees, especially thin.
Listen: far, far away on the Lake of Chad
Wanders a gentle giraffe.

He is endowed with slender grace and bliss,
And his hide adorned with a magical design
Which the moonlight alone, shattering and rocking
On the wide wet of the lake, dares to rival.

From afar he resembles the colored sails of a ship,
And his gait is smooth as the joyful flight of a bird.
I know that the earth will witness many wonders,
When, at sunset, he hides in a marble grotto.

I could tell merry tales of mysterious lands
Of a black maiden, a young chief's passion,
But you have too long inhaled the heavy mist,
You will believe in nothing but the rain.

And how can I tell you about a tropical garden,
Slender palms, the scent of inconceivable herbs...
Are you crying? Listen...Far off on the Lake of Chad
Wanders a gentle giraffe.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Happiness

My sailing boat, crafted of redwood, is swift,
My flute is carved out of jasper.

With water a stain is removed from the silk,
With wine – the worries and heartache.

And if you're the owner of swift little boat,
The wine and a beautiful woman...

What else can you ask for? In every respect,
To heavenly gods you are equal.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Home

The merciless fire devoured
The house of my childhood games.

I needed to overcome sorrow,
And sailed on the golden-mast boat.

I played on my beautiful flute to
The high rising moon in the sky.

The moon, by my singing, got saddened,
And covered herself with a cloud.

Then I turned my eyes to the mountain,
But had no more songs on my mind.

It seemed : all the joys of my childhood
Were burned in the flames of my home.

I wished in despair for the refuge
That water could offer to me.

A sudden reflection of a woman
Slid by like the one of the moon.

And should she sincerely desire
And should the moon kindly approve

I'm willing to build a new house
In th' woman's mysterious heart.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

It Was Not Once

It was not only once, it will go this way,
In our fight, which is deaf and destroying:
As it happened before, you rebuffed me today –
To return, like a slave, by the morning.

Therefore, don't be stressed, my inimical friend,
My friend - enemy, caught by black laces,
If the moans of love will be moans of pain
And the kisses will leave bloody traces.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

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Kha

Beautiful lassies, where are you now?
You who don't answer me anymore
You who forgot all about me;
Left me behind – now my weakened voice
Wakes up the echo in vain.

Have you been eaten by angry beasts?
Or by your lovers you're being kept?
Go on, answer me dearest,
I fell in love with you and I came
Down to meet with you here.

I caught a glimpse of you naked when
You were bathing in a clear lake.
And I came down thinking not
Of who you are – daughters of the moon
I – who am black robin's son.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Laos

Dear girl, your cheeks are soft and tender,
And your breasts, like little hills, are slender,

Fall in love with me and from this instance
We will never live apart in distance.

My piragua, we will board together,
And the wind will set our sail untethered.

Should you wish to ride an elephant, dear,
I will be your loyal karnak there.

Should you turn into the moon one evening,
I'll become a cloud so to be near you.

Should you be liana of the jungle
I will turn into a bird or a monkey.

On the mountain peak you climb, my dear,
Looking into the abyss with awe and fear

Even if they put my feet in irons,
I will climb that peak despite all tyrants.

Yet my skills are useless for tomorrow
I am destined for a bitter sorrow.

You don't love me; so I soon start perish
Like a bull deprived of juicy daisies.

With no single kiss that I could cherish
On that cheek of yours so fresh and rosy.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Like Undistinguishable Horses

Like undistinguishable horses,
Gleam by my ever-painful days,
As if fade all the living roses,
And die all living nightingales.

But she is, too, upset and saddened,
My single governess – my love,
And under her skin of a satin,
The poisoned blood is now moved.

And if I stand the world I live in,
That is because I have a dream:
Both of us, like two blind children,
Will go to the highland's rims,

Where clouds are so white and close,
Where only goats run the dales,
To seek forever faded roses,
And hark to lifeless nightingales.

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Moon Over The Sea

The moon relinquished sharp-edge cliffs at sea line,
And with transparent gold: the waters shine;
On board of their pointed boat, this evening
The friends enjoy their heated glass of wine.

When looking at the clouds passing swiftly
Through the reflection of the moonlight post;
Some of the friends will find those clouds closely
Resembling the holy women's ghosts.

Another group imagine those clouds
As heaven bound souls of pious men;
The third of friends insist without doubts,
The clouds resemble caravan of swans.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

My Thoughts

Why did you come, my thoughts, in instant,
Like thieves to rob my quiet habitation,
Like vultures, gloomy and malignant,
With thirst for dread retaliation.

My hopes are gone, and ran away my visions,
My eyes were opened by fierce agitation,
And, in the sacred books of new religions,
I read my words, my deals and plans for future actions.

For that, that I with looks so calm and quiet,
Watched them who sailed to victory and glory,
That with my lips I touched the lips in fire,
Which did not have the former sinning story,

That those hands of mine, my own fingers,
Didn't know a plough, were so thin and pliant,
And that my songs, the rambling meistersingers,
Could only sing, while making a sad sound,

For all this now came repudiation.
Blind men will smash the gentle, deceptive temple,
And thoughts will come into my habitation,
And strangle me, like thieves – a shabby tramper.

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Nature

How tranquil is this little mountain lake
It's filled with water like a cup
Bamboo looks just like little houses
And trees above – a sea of roofs.

Yet cliffs are sharp, encroached like pagodas
Among the flowers they rise
Eternal nature always learns from us –
That makes my heart and soul rejoice.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Oh, How Silent Is The Nature

Oh, how silent is the nature,
It only looks and only hears,
The people's spirit in a rapture
Clings to a freedom - fast and fierce.

This planet will forget offences
Of him who trades, of him who kills,
And, as in reminiscences,
Druids will teach from greenish hills.

And, as in olden times, the poets
Will lead men's souls up to heights,
Like Angel leads the dazzling comets
To a point, that is not in sight.

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Only Serpents

Only serpents let their skin be fallen
And a soul -- all grown up and old.
We, alas, change an eternal soul,
Leaving body in eternal hold.

Oh, remembrance, power, she-giant,
You direct a horse-life with a bridle,
You will tell me all these men about,
Who had had my body before I'd.

The first one was ugly, thin and tragic,
Loving darkness of the garden lane,
Falling Leaf, the child of gloomy magic,
Whose one word could fully stop the rain.

Second one -- he liked the wind from South,
Every noise for him was strings' accord,
He believed that life is just his spouse,
And the rag under his feet -- the world.

I don't like him: in his mind, he's roused,
To the crowns of the King and God,
He had hanged on entrance to my house
The signboard with a script "The Bard."

I do like the favorite of freedom,
Him, who used to sail in sea and shoot:
What a song he heard in water's kingdom,
What a cloud followed his routes!

I'm a builder, which is working smartly
O'er the temple, arising in a haze,
Seek for fame for my beloved country
As in Heavens, so on the earth.

Heart is scorched by non-extinguished fire,
Till the day, in which, as made of light,
Walls of New Jerusalem will spire
On the fields of my beloved land.

Then the queer wind will start to blow,
And the awful light will pour on us,
It's the Milky Way -- begins to grow
As a garden of the dazzling stars.

And the tiered stranger will appear,
Hiding face, but I will catch his dream,
Looking at a lion, going near,
And an eagle, flying straight to him.

I will scream, but who will hear my groan,
Who will save my soul from a crash?
Only snakes could let their skin be fallen,
People lose the soul -- not the flesh.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

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Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Poet

I heard from the garden a woman singing,
But I ... I gazed at the moon.

My thoughts never wondered about that woman -
Since I fell in love with the moon.

No stranger am I to the beautiful goddess -
I do sense her gaze in return.

And neither tree branches or bats in the darkness
Will ever conceal me from her.

She likes her reflection in eyes of the poets,
Who have long forgotten their wives.

They look like the glittering scales of the dragons –
The hallowed bards of the seas.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Porcelain Pavilion

Amidst the waters of a man-made lake,
A porcelain pavilion rises high.
The way to it is lead by jasper bridge
That's cambered like a tiger's back.

And that pavilion houses friends tonight,
They are attired for the holidays;
The dragon patterns on their chalices,
They glitter with the warmed-up wine.

Friends turn from chatting their happy chats
To jotting down their happy songs;
They push off foreheads their yellow hats,
And roll up their yellow sleeves.

Transparent lake reflects so clearly
The bridge curved in as if the jasper moon,
And friends who gathered at this hour
See their reflections upside down.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Reader Of Books

My dear friend, and I have tried to find
My paradise in serfdom of a soul,
I liked them all – the odd ways of a mind
Without hopes, or memories, or goals.

Promptly to glide along the brooks of lines,
To enter into straits of chapters, slow,
To watch a foam on the flows' spines,
And listen to a tide's increasing roar!

But at the night, oh, how fast they gloom –
The shades behind the images and drawers,
The pendulum, immobile, like the moon,
That o'er the glimm'ring quagmire hovers!

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Shame

May be, in my previous a-being,
I've cut the throats of my Mom and Dad,
If in this one – Lord of all the living! --
I have been doomed to suffering like that.

If I call for dogs of mine, aloud,
Or just try my own horse to see,
Not obeying all my signs and shouts,
They would promptly run away from me.

If I come to the enchanting foam
Of my native and well-known sea,
Then the sea would blacken from the woe
And fast go back, away from me.

My day looks like looks a man extinguished,
And my work – like somebody's else strife,
Mine – is only pine of undistinguished,
Non-platonic and unworthy love.

Let the deathly languor be in action,
I'll not stop to wait the time, when
In my future version of creation,
I'll become a gallant knight again.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

She

I know her, her bitter silence,
Her tiredness of her words and cries,
Lives in the secret changing brightness
Of widened pupils of her eyes.

Her heart is opened with craving
Only to music of the verse,
Before the life of joy and playing,
She stands aloof and won't converse.

Her steps aren't heard or ever hurried:
They're quiet, oddly smooth and fine,
She can't be called a beauty, starry,
But keeps all happiness of mine.

And, if I might be selfish ever,
Or brave and proud, as I could –
I'll learn the pain, so sweet and clever,
In her delirious, dreamy mood.

A source of light in pine and sadness, --
She carries lightning in her hands,
Her dreams are clear, as clear the shadows
On flaming paradise's sands.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Sonnet

I'm sick, for sure: deep darkness holds my heart,
I'm bored with the people and the stories,
And dream of treasures of the kingdoms, glories,
And yataghans, all covered with blood.

It seems to me – and this is no fraud –
A Tartar, squint, was one of my begetters,
That fierce Hun. And the infection's fetters
Through length of ages, are my steady bond.

I'm mute. I pine... They vanish – walls of home:
There is a sea in spots of silver foam,
The sun of evening – on the stones' lead,

The city, with blue domes, like its wardens,
With flourish and decor of jasmine gardens,
We'd fought right there... Oh, yes! And I was killed!

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

The Clever Demon

My old good friend, my faithful Demon,
Had sung the little song to me:
All night of hell the sailor sailed on,
But drowned by the morn in sea.

Around him waves stood like domes,
They fell and loomed again above,
And before him, whiter than foam,
Was flying his unrivaled love.

He heard the call, while he was flitting,
"I'll not deceive you, trust in me."
Remember, -- said this Demon, witty, --
He drowned at the morn in sea.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

The Conquistador

Conquistador, set in the iron armor,
I gaily follow the outgoing star,
I go over precipices, harbors
And rest in joyful groves, so far.

Oh, how wild and starless heaven's shelter!
The haze is growing, but, silent, I must wait.
Conquistador, in iron armor set,
I'll find my love, find it sooner or later.

And if the stars are void of midday words,
I shall myself create them for the worlds,
And warmly charm them by the songs of battles.

I am a brother to the gulfs and storms,
But I will plait into my uniforms
A lily -- the blue star of flourishing valleys.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

The Descendents Of Cain

He did not lie – the ghost, so sad and thoughtful,
That from a star took his name by a chance,
When he had said, "Don't fear the Lord", to us,
"Just try the fruit and be like Him immortal".

All routs for youths were opened in glow,
And all forbidden works – for older ones,
And amber fruits -- for gaily girls, at once,
And the rhinoceros forever white as snow.

But why we lean, bereft of any strength,
And feel that someone has forgot all us at length,
And grasp the dread of the old lure, if only

By an easy hand of someone, by a chance,
Two little sticks (flag's poles, leaves of grass)
Will be united in the cross infirmly?

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

The Gates Of Paradise

The eternal entrance into Eden
Is not locked with seven precious seals;
It has no charms nor light of heaven,
And the people don't know that it is.

It's a doorway in a wall forgotten --
Stones, moss and nothing more else,
Near stands a beggar; and the rotten,
Keys are hanging at his gaudy waist.

Paladins ride by in agitation,
Trumpets wail, and minted silver chant;
Nobody spares his attention
To the Peter -- the Apostle, the saint.

They dream: There, by Sepulchre of Savor,
Paradise will open doors for us;
At the footing of the Mount Thabor
The committed hour will thrust.

So by the armored monster goes;
In the air the trumpets ring and wail;
The Apostle in the tattered cloth,
Like a beggar, looks and poor and pale.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

The Lost Tram

I walked an unfamiliar street
And suddenly heard a raven's cry,
And the sound of a lute, and distant thunder,-
In front of me a tram was flying.

How I jumped onto its foot board,
Was a mystery to me,
Even in daylight it left behind
A fiery trail in the air.

It rushed like a dark, winged storm,
And was lost in the abyss of time...
Tram-driver, stop,
Stop the tram now.

Too late. We had already turned the corner,
We tore through a forest of palms,
Over the Neva, the Nile, the Seine
We thundered across three bridges.

And slipping by the window frame,
A poor old man threw us an inquisitive glance-
The very same old man, of course,
Who had died in Beirut a year ago.

Where am I? So languid and troubled
The beat of my heart responds:
'Do you see the station where you can buy
A ticket to the India of the soul?'

A sign...Blood-filled letters
Announce: 'Zelennaya,'-I know that here
Instead of cabbages and rutabagas
The heads of the dead are for sale.

In a red shirt, with a face like an udder,
The executioner cuts my head off, too,
It lies together with the others
Here, in a slippery box, at the very bottom.

And in a side street a board fence,
A house three windows wide, a gray lawn...
Tram-driver, stop,
Stop the tram now.

Mashenka, you lived here and sang,
You wove me, your betrothed, a carpet,
Where are your voice and body now,
Is it possible that you are dead?

How you groaned in your front chamber,
While I, in a powdered wig,
Went to introduce myself to the Empress
Never to see you again.

Now I understand: our freedom
Is only an indirect light from those times,
People and shadows stand at the entrance
To a zoological park of planets.

And a sudden, familiar, sweet wind blows,
A horseman's hand in an iron glove
And two hooves of his horse
Fly at me over the bridge.

That faithful stronghold of Orthodoxy,
Isaac's, is etched upon the sky,
There I will hold a service for Mashenka's health
And a requiem mass for myself.

And my heart goes on forever in gloom,
It is hard to breathe and painful to live...
Mashenka, I never would have dreamed
That such love and longing were possible.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

The Other One

I wait for, full of thoughts provoking,
But not a gay and pretty wife,
Not the sincere and gentle talking
About the old time and life.

And not a mistress: I am bored
With languor whispers, languor looks,
And with delights, a lot and more,
And more tortures that I took.

I wait for him, who's sent by Deities,
Who is my friend by sacred rights,
Because my heart has pined for centuries
For silence and for heaven's heights.

And how wrong was he, the merciless,
Who lost eternity at once,
By taking for the iron fetters,
The dreams that were uniting us.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

The Prophets

There are the modern prophets here,
Though altars totally are felt,
Their eyes are very deep and clear –
In them, the flame of future set.

For them, the calls of fame are alien,
They're pressed by mass and depth of words,
All they are frightened, pale and sullen
In tombs of stony abodes.

And sometimes in the fits of sadness,
A prophet, just repelled by us,
Rise up to skies his look of greatness –
The look of clear and beaming eyes.

He says that he's in bonds of madness,
But that his soul's a light for us,
That he has seen in depths of sadness
The shining face of Jesus Christ.

The dreams of Lord have many faces,
Kind is a hand of him, who gives,
Not just the one, like him, in grace is,
And as a knight of kindness lives.

He says that World is not such fierce,
That he's a prince of Future Dawn.
But just the towers' black spirits
Listen to him with mock and scorn.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

The Right Way

Birth of the word is by agony molded,
Through earthly life it is quietly going,
It is a stranger, which drinks from the golden
Pitcher the drops of the savages' mourning.

Go to Nature! The Nature is hostile,
All here is frightening, all is in fullness,
There are the trumpets here, singing the docile
Psalms to the Lord, apathetic and useless.

Death? But before you must weight with exactness,
This tale of poets, and be very clever –
You won't be sorry for light and life's greatness
But – for a thought which is reigning forever.

There is the way that is high and severe:
Bitterly cry with the winds, wild and bitter,
Live with the beggars in dens of a bear,
Frame the dark dreams in a mold of the meter.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

The Road

I stared at the unfolding road,
Beneath the shadow of grand oaks, -
Such a familiar old road,
Surrounded by flower fence.

The evening fog starts slowly setting,
Uneasy sadness brings me tears,
When every pebble on this road
Seems so familiar and dear.

Why would I ever take the road –
It will not bring me to the place
Where air gets stifled in my throat –
The house where my beloved lives.

When she was born, her feet were strangled
They put them in the iron gyves.
And she grew up to be a stranger
To shady roads' calling vibes.

When she was born, her heart was strangled
They put it in the iron gyves.
And she, who's been my heart's desire,
Will never be my dear wife.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

The Sixth Sense

Fine is the wine that is in love with us,
The goodly bread we wait for from the oven,
And woman whom we have possessed, at last,
After we've suffered under yoke her own.

But what to do if a red sunset freezes
Above a sky that's drowning in cold,
Where there is silence and unearthly peace,
What can one do with the immortal ode?

You can't eat it, or drink, or even kiss ...
The moment fled, and next one now hovers,
And we wring hands, but yet once more miss -
We are condemned to miss and miss it over.

Just as a boy, forgetting games and friends,
Sometimes beholds the girls bath in a river
And, knowing nothing of the loving trends,
Is yet tormented by a hidden fever;

As once in time on overgrowing banks
The moisten creature holed in despair
Of self impotence, feeling on its back
Wings - still unformed and very feeble pair, -

So century after century - when, O Christ?
Under the knife of liberal arts and nature
The flesh breaks down and the spirit cries
As they bear organs of the sixth sensation.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

The Trees

I know: to the trees, but not to us,
Perfection of the life is given, whole.
And on the Earth – the sister of the stars –
We live in exile, while they do at home.

In latest falls, in sad and empty fields,
The red-brass dawns and amber-clad sunrises
Teach to the hues, dissolved in thinnest films,
These people – green and free forever masses.

Moses exists among these oaks, tall,
And Mary, too – among the palms for ages ...
Their souls send to the others quiet calls
With waters, run in darkness, void of edges.

While polishing and brushing stony gems,
And grinding rocks, the springs babble in a chore:
They sing a song, or mourn a broken elm,
Or praise the leaves, which dressed a sycamore.

Oh, if I might be ever blessed to find
The place, where, lost of singing and bewailing,
I would rise silently up to the heaven height
For the millenniums, unending.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

The Word

In the days when the God eternal
Was declining face to the new world,
By the Word they stopped the sun's inferno,
And destroyed the towns by the Word.

And an eagle was falling at the ground,
Stars were backing to the moon in fright,
If, as made from orange flames a cloud,
Word was sailing in the heaven's height.

Figures were involved in low action,
As the tamed, domesticated herd,
Just because all set of comprehension
From the clever figure could be learned.

The white-bearded patriarch, wish found
Good and evil by his own hands,
Deciding not to use the sacred sound,
Drew a figure by a cane in sands.

Did we not forget in troubles own:
Only Word is blessing in the world?
In the Gospel, sent to us by John,
Is the saying, that the Word is God.

We designed for it the limits, gladly –
The scant limits of the life and thoughts,
And like bees in empty hives smell badly –
Badly smell the dead forever words.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Theater

All of us - righteous and sinners,
Born in prison, raised at the altar,
All of us are funny actors
In the theater of the Creator.

The Lord sits on His throne,
Merrily follows the show.
Brightly on His sumptuous gown
Sparkles and golden stars glow.

Oh, how easy and pleasant
Is the empyrean staging!
Mary the Virgin is content,
Finds the libretto engaging:

- Hamlet? He has to be pallid.
Cain? He should be audacious...
Audience takes in angelic
Shiny victorious trumpets.

God leaning forward is watching,
He is caught up in the drama...
Pity if Cain is crying,
Hamlet will have blissful moments!

That goes against His intentions!
To avoid deviations,
God will entrust the production
Into Pain's hands, a deaf titan.

Now the pain's shooting higher
Cunningly webbing and freely,
Those who choose to retire,
Are castigated severely.

Tortures grow out of proportion
Fear and dismay - even greater;
What if continues His celebration
In the theater of the Creator.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Three Wives Of A Mandarin

Lawful wife.

There is still some wine left in the chalice,
And the plate that's served is nests of the swallows.
Since the birth of time, the legal spouse
Is respected by her mandarin-husband.

Concubine

There is still some wine left in the chalice,
And the plate is served – duck: fat and heavy;
Should a mandarin be deprived of children -
Concubine is needed for a mandarin.

Maid

There is still some wine left in the chalice,
And the plate is served - preserves and marmalade.
Why the two of you are in his house?
Every night a new woman he desires.

Mandarin

There is no more wine left in the chalice,
And the plate that's served is hot red pepper.
Silence! O you: bunch of silly blabbers,
Dare you laughing at the poor old mandarin.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

To A Poet

Let verse of yours be flexible, but strong,
Strong as a poplar under valley's cover,
Strong as the earth under a plough, long,
Strong as a girl, who never knew a lover.

Reliably preserve severity at length,
Your verse need not be fluttering or booming,
Although the Muse has very easy steps,
She's not a dancer, but a goddess, ruling.

Frolicsome din of interrupted rhymes --
Temptation for decline, so free and so easy --
Just leave for use by jokers in a dance
On city streets for people who aren't busy.

And going out on the sacred paths,
Bring to melodiousness your chosen damnation.
You know, she's a mistress of the mass,
She craves embraces, as a dearth -- donations.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

To The People Of The Future

This single link was else respected
By people of the days that gone –
There's written on its tablet sacred
That Love and Life is one.
But you're not they, you live like arrows
Of dreams that fly through skies and earth,
And in your flight, unite, my fellows,
The Love and Death.

They said in their pledge eternal
That they are slaves of the bad past,
That they were born in dust infernal,
And will return again to dust.
Your heedless brightness was aroused
By songs of lyre, mad and fine,
Eternity will be your spouse,
The world – a shrine.

All folk were utterly believing
That they must live and love with smiles,
That woman is a child of sinning,
Who's marked by sins a hundred times.
But different, unearthly sounds
Were brought to you by running years,
And you will take to Snow Crowns
Your gentle friends.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Union

The moon climbs graciously the evening heavens,
And there affectionately rests her beauty.

The evening breeze is canvassing the lakeshore,
To spread the kisses to the happy water.

Oh, how heavenly would be a union
Of people who are destined for each other.

Yet those who are destined for each other
Can rarely, alas, enjoy their union.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Wanderer

Wanderer, far from his homeland,
You are poor and you are alone,
For the time, deprived of listening
To the music of mother tongue.

Yet here nature is so magnificent,
That you're not entirely lost.
Singing birds on the trees around you –
Would you call it a foreign tongue?

Only listening to the autumn flute,
The cicadas iridescent chime;
Only noticing of the dragon-shape
Big white clouds up in the skies, -

You'll embrace what you have inherited –
The eternal sadness and pain.
In your dreams, you'll sail away back home
With your eyes shielded from the sun.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev

Young Girls

Girls are enchanted by rupee's tails
They bear an image of firebirds;
The girls leave behind their parents' home,
Follow the Frenchmen obediently.

Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev