life,—an instructive misfortune.
Charon conveying couples across to the grove
is such a picturesque water-scene!—
a washed up plate of unclean food—
all translations are acts of falsehood.

NOTES
Nikolai Zabolotsky (1903—58) was one of a group of poets in Leningrad associated with
the OBERIU literary movement. Arrested in the late 1930s, he survived the gulag and
went on to translate the Old Slavic epic “Lay of Igor’s Campaign” into modern Russian.
Queen Tamar (1186—1213) ruled during the period of Georgia’s greatest power and
prestige. The supreme literary achievement of this age was Shota Rustaveli’s epic poem,
“The Knight in the Panther’s Skin.”
The poet and novelist Boris Pasternak (1890—1960) is also famous as a translator of
Shakespeare. He translated Hamlet, and a well-known poem of his own (included in Dr.
Zhivago) is written in Hamlet’s voice.

When There Is No Moon
Dandelions put on
snow-white diving suits,
dandelions trumpeted
gilded fanfares!
Earthworms
crawled out,
gloomy
as rails,
and into them dandelions
thrust their steel rapiers!
Baby-spiders, hooligans,
dipped flies in sour cream;
wise poppies sawed the air
after fighting.
And the barricade of apples
twinkled when it
fought with
the brigade of cucumbers!
Beans were beating drums!
I’m making my way with caution,
field to field, along impassable roads
(the furrows tilted)
and in a pale sky—
there’s no moon.
Who tore up
its flame?
Who will reconcile the bottomless world,
the exorbitant world of plants,
jammed with darkness?

House of Hopes
House without a nail or board.
Million-carat diamond.
Floodlights are dropping
petals on the house, at night.
There a scarlet moon is sizzling,
hams are smoked,
in swimming pools, on crystal tiles
concubines are nude.
Fruit trees and berries! Laurel!
The roar of dairy cattle!
The loyal barking of dogs,
a supply of reflecting fish.
And so,
the House of Hopes is overhead!
It’s wise like the course of comets.
No slanderers there,
no blockheads,
how many things not there!
- No loners.
Infamy,
power and flattery won’t entice.
And there’s no me there,
although, in general, I am.

Leaving the Seaside
You, you don’t need to cry—we’ll be like seagulls from Egypt...
My thoughts are silly—I can’t figure them out.
My thoughts have no abode—not even in the sky.
Sleep, oh, sleep, pan-pipe, like beasts,—your echo has frozen.
You, woman, are the love of a childish Don Juan!...
Sea gulls, more sea gulls. And the sea in a wet soutane.
The salted sun crawls, tickles the cheeks,
or are these my blood-drops from the sea?
Fog. A familiar sign of the moon in the ocean,
a warm shadow of the last desert pine on the sand.
You, you don’t need to cry,—this is my face at the bottom of the goblet
in that buffoonery sea, blood-drop of wine.
Fog—the running of a white- hoofed horse.
The third bell will also pass. Time to make the sign of the cross.
(There was a buffoon—become a monk. Revenge on fashion).
Where’s the fourth? It isn’t to be. We won’t hear it.
You, woman, you don’t need to cry, we both are only embraces...

Maiden-Fish
You walk like a fish on its tail. The floor is red.
We have a room, but in communal rocks.
A chocolate cupboard. The desk in coins.
The window is electric oil.
Fish, I’m your brother; we’re both sea beasts.
You’re stretched out on a blue blanket.
Embracing bellies and blindness of amorous
ravings!... Our lamp will go out.
Is it despair? Or is it jealousy marching through
the lymph like the Alexandrian cavalry? We’ll leave
these pastures... We have a room; we are fish,
there are two of us. We will choke here...
For tomorrow, the labor of hooves and Pegasus’ wings,
Censorship, and coldness of bread,
we will clink kneecaps in toasts,
have champagne ripples of a fish-scale!
Oh, the howl of a fish! We need tails, as in combat,
Muscles in nodes, and a yell and prattle,
we need fingers—five and five on waists!
I kiss... Hickeys on nipples
from both fingers, and responding kisses
and gills stuck to face-gills.
And in between leg flaps,
we’re sucking mucus with tongues
sinister... To learn is to hate.
To love is not to know. We recall—knew all:
there’s no intuition, not a single capillary
that hasn’t caressed somebody’s loins;
we can untangle neither all the hair of all the bodies,
nor dishonorable whips nor the evil of a buss;
Or simply—no sin in a sin, no temple in a temple.
A boom from the moon. Petersburg avenues.
Fish, we swim away into canals and it’s easier
Day of Hopes

This day of mine, full of dressing!
Put on a broad rapier.
Put a wide rug on narrow teeth.
Put a girl without gloves on the demon.
Put a bra on eyes (hers)—better than glasses!
Didn’t put on pants—the girl had been put on already!
Not enough clothes yet. Approached the fur coat.
The girl won’t get off; sits on the demon
as if in stirrups.

Oh well, oh well.
I’ll also put a wool shawl
on my back, on her breast.
She doesn’t see, shrieks:
Don’t put it on, I’m a nudist!
That morning I was sitting
with the girl put on in such a way
you couldn’t unscrew her.
Like that about five hours.
Then we both put on delirium
and came unscrewed.
We lay shivering!
Ate yogurt from a leg.
Thank God, by night
I managed to put on something furry.
This “something furry” was a sister of hers. Hence, a hope
for warm relations.
And a third sister lay beneath us like a sofa.
Thus, these tri-athletes dressed me, without my help.
It wasn’t by mind that I conquered them.
By demonism? Charisma? A hat to the shoulders?
The first sister’s flat as a wall, the second, like dividers,
the third—a hairy sofa.
And me. Under a multi-stringed moon
we sang awfully
in a retort-like room.
That was some kind of festival!—remembered or not.

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