

NEW RUSSIAN WRITING

BOOKER

WINNERS

III OTHERS

# GRIGORY MARK

## Poems

### New Year's Eve

A gilded clustering of domes,  
Soldered to the frozen sky.  
God's temple, on the edge of Moscow,  
Over icon lamps, smouldering air.  
Two old women in meek despair,  
Cursing the Kremlin's own Cain.  
In the Saviour's palm, nails—  
Like blood. And yellow stars, drear,  
Like lost souls suspended in the window.

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Corpulent wives sit around the tables.  
An anaemic righteousness is sleeping  
in their bowed semi-circular faces.  
At their breasts they hold their chubby babies  
who suckle and smile dreamily...

A lispng, silly, blessed wind,  
swollen with sonority, groans,  
licks at the children's round heads.  
Air in the corner over the icon moulders,  
The Divine Countenance shines tenderly on them.

And the millenium draws to a close...

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Piece by piece we'll auction off  
All of the Third Rome.  
And chaos will descend  
And take root within us.  
The sum of evil  
Shall exceed its own limits.  
And all things will return  
To God, their owner.

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### Petersburg Song

Into the night, to the outskirts,  
To your desolate home, go. As before,  
Maddened, restless, by the entrance  
A street-lamp sheds the blood of air.

Here the only hint of salvation  
Is this town, lamp, this make-believe...  
Say a prayer and humbly lay down  
Cleansing words in your innermost being.

The air's wound, seared with iodine,  
Dress solicitously with your gaze.  
And with your chapped lips touch  
The sore and pallid flesh.

Healing then shall be granted,  
And at once your senses will stir  
With the knowledge your life is bonded  
To this town: Leningrad, Petersburg.

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## The Last Cape

The Last Cape. Glassy water.  
Dreams come out of the cabins onto the shore.  
And exhausted narrow little boats,  
Glumly squinting, are warming themselves in the sand.  
I have forgotten it all. Insomnia. Words.  
The faded trees at the start of fairy-tales.  
And women with dreams clinging to them  
Walk silently in the warm whiteness,  
Their transparent feet slashing through the fog.  
As if in an old black-and-white movie,  
The film flares up in a freeze-frame:  
It's the sun rising over the Last Cape.  
And women carry their infants  
To swallow fog at land's end.  
They walk single-file, stretching their necks,  
And the petrified boats watch wistfully  
As the white infants float by  
In the solemn silence of sunrise.

Amidst the blue trees applauding  
The sun rises over the Last Cape.

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**Grigory Mark**, born in 1942, lives in St Petersburg and until quite recently published his poetry only in the West, in such emigre magazines as *Vremya i mi*, *Novoye Russkoye Slovo*, *Slovo*, *Novy Jurnal*, *Strelets* (USA), *Grani* (Germany), *Russkaya Mysl*, *Kontinent* (France). The last few years he has been widely published in Russia, all the principal literary journals have published his poems. Two collections of his poetry came out in the USA: *Engraver (Graver)*, Effect Publishing, New York, 1991; and *Among Things and Voices (Sredi Veschei i Golosov)*, Hermitage Publishers, Tenafly, N.J., 1995.

Both books as well as his journal publications were enthusiastically received in Russia and abroad.