

## THE FRAGILE BOUNDARY OF THE WORD: VALERY BRYUSOV IN VAHAN TERIAN'S TRANSLATION

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**Abstract:** This article presents an examination of all the poems by Valery Bryusov, a leading figure of Russian Symbolism, that were translated into Armenian by Vahan Terian, one of Armenia's most lyrical poets. These translations, spanning over a decade, reveal not only Terian's deep engagement with Russian Symbolism but also his unique ability to reimagine Bryusov's poetic world through the lens of Armenian lyric tradition. Rather than offering literal renditions, Terian's translations preserve the philosophical depth, emotional intensity and symbolic imagery of the original texts while transforming them with new rhythms, cultural references and spiritual tones. Through a close comparative analysis, the study explores how key themes, such as *solitude*, *memory*, *loss*, *the metaphysics of time*, etc. are reinterpreted poetically. The article argues that Terian functions not merely as a translator but as a poetic co-creator, whose works offer a rare example of artistic dialogue across languages, cultures and systems of symbols.

**Keywords:** symbolism; poetic translation; Armenian poetry; Russian modernism; lyrical transformation; metaphysical imagery; comparative analysis

### 1. Introduction

Translation is a dialogue between two cultures, a bridge not built of bricks, but of inspiration, memory and imagery. It is not a reflection in a mirror, but a rebirth in another body.

Vahan Terian was one of the first Armenian poets to introduce Valery Bryusov's poetry to Armenian readers. In the early 1910s, Terian translated Bryusov's poems with the aim of acquainting the Armenian public with the finest examples of contemporary Russian poetry. In 1912, two of Bryusov's poems – “Быть без людей” [“To Remain without People”] and “Грустный ветер” [“Sad Evening”] were published in *Husharar* magazine in Terian's translation. In 1913, he submitted eight translations to *Gegharvest* journal in Venice.

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Terian was not only a poet, but also a translator of rare sensibility, one who sought to convey not just the semantic content, but the spirit, rhythm and emotional architecture of the original. His translations are not mere reproductions. They are lyrical reinventions that preserve Bryusov's philosophical tone and symbolic complexity while integrating them into the Armenian poetic tradition.

This article explores the distinctive qualities of Terian's translation practice, focusing on his poetic style and the points of convergence and divergence between his translated versions and Bryusov's originals. Drawing on the method of comparative analysis, it examines how Terian's translations function not simply as linguistic transfers but as acts of creative transposition, where the original is reimagined rather than merely transcribed.

Well-versed in the works of Western Symbolists such as Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine and Maurice Maeterlinck, Terian approached translation as a poetic art. His renderings of Bryusov's translations are not only accurate but also expressive, keeping the spirit and style of the original while connecting with the emotional and symbolic depth of Armenian literature.

## 2. Reading Bryusov through Terian: A Comparative Poetic Analysis

The poem “Побег”<sup>1</sup> [“Escape”] (1901) belongs to Bryusov's mature Symbolist period. It is saturated with esoteric symbolism and Christian allusions.

Terian carefully preserves the overall structure and imagery of the poem while infusing it with an ‘Eastern’ melancholic tone and inner spiritual overtones. His translation is not a literal sketch but an interpretation filtered through his own lyrical temperament.

The central concept of the narrative is a sudden spiritual awakening. The lyrical hero emerges from sweet slumber and indifference, gazing upon life with new eyes. The opposition between darkness and light is masterfully rendered: from the ‘gloom’ of sleep, the hero plunges into the ‘fires of the day’ [“И потонул в палящем дне”]. Yet, this light is not comforting - it burns.

The hero sees “life in the myriad throngs,” [“Вся жизнь толпы многоголовой”] - an image that, for the Symbolists, evokes the chaotic and meaningless nature of the world. Hence arises the poem's sense of tragedy: an escape from the sensual, illusory world toward truth - a truth that not only liberates, but also brings suffering.

The poem opens with the following epigraph:

«И если, страстный, в час заветный,  
Заслышу я мой трубный звук...». (p. 178)

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<sup>1</sup> Valery Bryusov's poems are cited from *Collected Works in Seven Volumes* (1975), while Vahan Terian's translations and translation attempts of Bryusov's poems are taken from *Collected Works*, Volume 2 (1973). Both authors are listed in the references and the page numbers provided next to the excerpts correspond to those in the respective editions.

The epigraph is drawn from Bryusov's poem "Возвращение" ["Return"], included in his collection *Tertia Vigilia*. The title - Latin for 'the third vigil of the night' - refers to the hours between 3 and 6 a.m. according to Roman timekeeping, a period often associated in Christian mysticism with spiritual awakening and apocalyptic revelations (Rolfe 1913: 13).

This epigraph reads like a call to a future awakening. Terian chose not to translate these lines. Perhaps he believed they were too detached from the main body of the poem. Yet the inner logic of the poem calls for their inclusion. The epigraph seems to complete a circle, evoking the possibility of a new life in the spirit of modernist rebirth. Terian did not merely translate the words of the poem, he conveyed its structure, imagery, rhythm and intonation, preserving the essence of the original text.

The Armenian poet's translation preserves Bryusov's national identity. He does not imitate him word for word - nor should he. Terian works within the tradition of creative translation, which seeks to convey the original text's inner pathos, philosophy and musicality. He brings the same musicality into the Armenian version, maintaining a smooth, gently hypnotic intonation.

Armenian, being more syntactically flexible than Russian, allows Terian to preserve the rhythm and 'mist-like' quality characteristic of Symbolist intonation. The iambic tetrameter is retained in the translation. The vocabulary includes archaic elements (such as "ալկով" ["alcove"], "փայլակ" ["lightning"], "Էլա" ["I rose"]) that stylistically align with Bryusov's language.

Terian's translation is grounded not in a line-by-line rendering, but in a deep immersion into Bryusov's metaphoric meanings. He conveys not only the words, but also their energy. The poem's final lines are particularly powerful.

«Бегу от пышного алькова,  
Безумный, вольный и нагой!». (p. 179)

The liberation is almost mythical, like Orpheus's escape from the underworld. The original carries a tragic tone, while in Terian's lines there is an almost mystical yearning for light:

«Փախչում եմ շքեղ իմ ալկովից,  
Եվ ազատ, և մե՛րկ, և խելագար՝ ը...»: (p. 199)

Terian intensifies the existential pathos. In the line "Եվ ազատ, և մե՛րկ, և խելագար՝ ը..." ["and free, and naked, and mad"], the repetitive use of the conjunction 'and' makes the message more expressive.

Terian's translation is a vivid example of creative engagement in the process of interpretation. We might say it is an instance of intercultural poetic thought, where Bryusov and Terian meet not as author and translator, but as two mystical thinkers.

Bryusov's poem "Блудный сын" ["The Prodigal Son"] (1903) is a confession, an existential monologue in which the protagonist feels a deep longing for home and a lost sanctity. It is an inner journey where not only the content, but also the tone, intonation and emotional depth are of central importance.

Terian's translation is not a literal replication, but a poetic process - one in which Terian is not so much translating Bryusov as engaging in a dialogue with him. As Anton Popović notes, "The translator's work has the right to organically differ from the original as an independent creation provided that this independence enables the recreation of the original as a living work" (Popović 1970: 85). In "The Prodigal Son," the translator's active participation is evident, preserving his own value system and worldview, the emotional tension of the intonation and the existential weight of each word.

Bryusov writes:

«Я уходил, исполнен веры,  
Как лучник опытный на лов.» (p. 181)

Terian translates:

«Հավատով հարուստ հեռացա ես,  
Որպես ձկնորսն է գնում որսի»: (p. 200)

The meaning of the poem is preserved, yet the imagery has changed: "лучник" ["archer"] becomes "ձկնորս" ["fisherman"]. It is precisely here that the dialogue between cultures begins. The classical warrior is replaced by a figure closer to a biblical archetype with the fisherman being a familiar image from the New Testament, symbolizing the apostles (Smith 1959). This is not a 'translation error,' but rather an interpretation filtered through a different spiritual framework.

This is not merely a return to a place, but a moral turning point - a transformation of the person through time.

Bryusov writes:

«Где в годы ласкового детства  
Святыней чувств владел и я....» (p. 181)

Terian intensifies the lyricism and the inner drama:

«Ուր իմ սրտում էլ կար սրբություն  
Ոսկե մանկության լուսե զրկում»... (p. 201)

This is almost a Pushkinian recollection – 'childhood as a sacred point.' Terian enters Bryusov's sense of time, expands it and infuses it with Armenian lyricism. Bryusov's protagonist becomes self-aware only when confronted with loss and his words carry a sense of inner responsibility. In Terian's translation, this sense of responsibility is expressed even more sharply, especially at the end. Bryusov's line "В мгновеньях жизни потонуть!" ["To drown in the moments of life!"] is rendered as "Այրվեի՜ քոցե ակնթարթում..." ["To burn in a fiery instant..."]. Terian seems to have intensified the desire for longing through the use of the verb of "այրվել" ["to

burn”], the choice of which is justified in Armenian, otherwise the emotional suffering, the feeling of nostalgia would not be adequately transferred.

Terian employs a soft, melodic rhythm, making his text more melancholic than the original. While Bryusov’s poem is charged with emotional intensity, Terian’s translation leans toward contemplation and reflection. His lines are gentle and humble. This creates an intonational shift that is not a distortion of the text, but an enrichment adding new layers of meaning.

“L’ennui de vivre...” (1902) is one of Bryusov’s most sincere and profoundly existential works. It is a poem about the soul’s fatigue - the poet longs to free himself from every layer of memory, creativity, love, passion and thought. Here, Bryusov appears as a poet-Hephaestus, forging his verse in the fire of existential exhaustion. Terian’s translation is far more than a simple rendering into Armenian. It is the ‘mirror’ of Bryusov’s poem in another cultural code, in which the existential and philosophical depth is fully preserved.

In the translation, we see a clear preservation of the composition. Like Bryusov, Terian has divided the poem into thematic segments - disappointment with the human world, images from memory, woman as both body and soul, thoughts as visions and phantoms, books as both solace and curse and forgetfulness as the ultimate desire. All the core images - women, books, thoughts, blinding light, the reawakening of suffering - are preserved with precision, and Terian has also succeeded in conveying the emotional intensity to the reader.

Terian does not translate literally. His Armenian poetic text is fluid and expressive, shaped by native versification, vocabulary and poetic traditions. His language is melodic, resembling a lament or a mournful song. For example:

«Я жить устал среди людей и в днях,  
Устал от смены дум, желаний, вкусов,  
От смены истин, смены рифм в стихах.  
Желал бы я не быть «Валерий Брюсов.»» (p. 193)

«Ես հոգնել եմ ապրելուց մարդկանց մեջ և օրերում,  
Փոփոխումից խոհերիս, փոփոխումից ձգտումիս,  
Ճշմարտության ձևերից, հանգերից իմ երգերում՝  
Չանձրացել եմ ու հոգնել իմ անունից, անունից...»: (p. 202)

Terian enriches the lyrical and dramatic qualities of the poetic text, as in the following example:

«Есть думы тайные — и снова в детской дрожи,  
Закрыв лицо, я падаю во прах...  
Есть думы светлые, как ангел Божий,  
Затерянные мной в холодных днях». (p. 194)  
«Խոհեր կան խոր ու թաքուն... Եվ ես նորից մանկան պես  
Գետնատարած ընկնում եմ, դեմքըս ծածկում դողահար.  
Խոհեր կան պարզ-լուսեղեն, հրեշտակներ լուսերես,  
Չեզ վաղուց եմ կորցրել օրերում ցուրտ ու խավար...»: (p. 203)

Both poets address the lost connection with the Absolute, with God, with the Ideal. Terian captures with precision the dual sensation - a yearning for the sublime and the defilement of lived experience - a tension that lies at the heart of late Symbolist poetry (Bryusov, Blok, Gippius, Annensky).

The most striking passage is the one about books. Here, both poets view the book not merely as a source of knowledge, but as a window into another reality - one so intense it blinds the soul. Terian inscribes this image with his own cultural mythos, presenting the book as a sacred vessel of collective memory:

«А книги... Чистые источники улады,  
В которых отражён родной и близкий лик, —  
Учитель, друг, желанный враг, двойник —  
Я в вас обрёл все сладости и яды!  
Вы были голубем в плывущий мой ковчег  
И принесли мне весть, как древле Ною,  
Что ждёт меня земля, под пальмами ночлег,  
Что свой алтарь на камнях я построю....». (p. 194)

«Իսկ գրքերը... Բյուրեղյա աղբյուրներ իմ խնդումի,  
Ուր ցոլում է հազարահատ և մտերիմ մի երես  
Ե՛վ ուսուցիչ, և՛ ընկեր և բաղձալի թշնամի  
Ամեն վայելք ամեն թույն ձեր մեջ, ձեր մեջ գտա ես  
Աղավիններ եղեք դուք իմ մոլորված տապանում,  
Որպես Նոյի՝ ինձ էլ դո՛ւք ավետեցիք, որ արդեն  
Պիտի գտնեմ հաստատ հող, արմավի տակ անդորր քուն,  
Որ տաճարքս ես քարի վրա պիտի հաստատեմ...»: (p. 203)

In both poets' works, the climax lies in the ending. Bryusov writes:

«О, если б всё забыть, быть вольным, одиноким,  
В торжественной тиши раскинутых полей,  
Идти своим путём, бесцельным и широким,  
Без будущих и прошлых дней.  
Срывать цветы, мгновенные как маки,  
Впивать лучи, как первую любовь,  
Упасть, и умереть, и утонуть во мраке,  
Без горькой радости воскреснуть вновь и вновь!..». (p. 195)

Terian translates:

«Օ՛, մոռանալ ամեն ինչ, լինել ազա՛տ ու մենա՛կ,  
Դաշտերի մեջ լայնարձակ և լռանիստ, և անդորր,  
Գնալ ճամփով մենավոր առանց իդձ ու նպատակ  
Եվ չընիշել, մոռանալ և՛ անցյալ, և՛ զալիք օր...  
Քաղել ծաղկունքն առանց վիշտ — կակաչների պես թեթև,  
Ծծել փայլեր ու ցոլքեր, որպես սերը առաջին,

Ընկնել, մեռնել ու սուզվել, սուզվել մթնում սևաթև,  
Առանց դառը խնդության զարթնել կրկի՛ն ու կրկի՛ն...» (p. 204)

In this passage, intonation, word choice, imagery and philosophy are in perfect harmony. As Yu. A. Sorokin notes: “Before anything else, I hear the intonation - a certain voice comes first, and only then do the words follow. The task is simply to ensure they align precisely with that intonation, without contradicting it”<sup>2</sup> (Sorokin 2009: 146).

When reading Bryusov’s “Колыбельная песня” [“Lullaby”] (1903), it becomes clear that we are not dealing with a literal (linguistic) or strictly interlinear translation, but rather with a subtly interpreted version of the poem. The choice of translation method depends on the type of poetry. As E. G. Etkind notes: “Depending on the type of poetry, the relationship between the logic of content, stylistic expressiveness and sound pattern shifts”<sup>3</sup> (Etkind 1963: 40).

Terian has reworked the text while preserving its emotional core, as well as its intonational, musical and imagistic structure. He adapted it to the poetics and cultural code of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Armenian literature. For example, Bryusov’s line “Спи, мечта моя!” [“Sleep, my dream!”] is rendered as “Նսջիր լուսերես” [“Sleep, light-faced”], which is not a literal translation (the word “dream” is missing in the Armenian translation). Instead, Terian has used the word “light-faced,” which emphasizes the angelic image of the girl. This is a hallmark of Armenian Symbolist poetics, where the abstract is replaced by a visible, luminous symbol.

Bryusov’s poem is written in quatrains, with a clear, calm rhythm - a true lullaby in form and tone. Terian preserves this structure, yet he makes it even more musical through the use of allegory, euphony and internal rhyme. For example:

«Նանիկ է, օրոր-նանի՛կ,  
Որ հյուսել էմ ես...» (p. 205)

Here, the words “նանիկ է” and “նանի՛կ” do more than simply rhyme. They evoke the very soundscape of a lullaby. “Նանիկ է” is an Armenian phrase used in lullabies. It is derived from ‘նանի,’ a traditional word used to soothe a child to sleep, much like ‘lullaby’ or ‘hush-a-bye’ in English. “Նանիկ է” roughly means ‘it’s a lullaby’ or ‘hush now,’ carrying a tender, soothing tone meant to calm a child. “Նանի՛կ” is a sweet, diminutive or elongated form often used in singing or cooing to a baby, similar to saying ‘lulla-lull’ or ‘sleepy-sleep.’ The Armenian version, at times, is more melodic than the original. In the Russian text, the corresponding lines are as follows:

«Песня колыбельная,  
Сложенная мной...» (p. 202)

<sup>2</sup> Translated from Russian by the author.

<sup>3</sup> Translated from Russian by the author.

Terian renders it more intimate with the phrase “որ հյուսել էմ էս” [“which I have woven”]. In Armenian, ‘հյուսել’ [‘weave’] typically carries the connotation of craftsmanship. It refers to something made by hand, like knitting or braiding. In a literary context, however, it takes on a metaphorical meaning, suggesting the careful, loving creation of something delicate and meaningful, in this case, a lullaby woven with tenderness. This metaphor brings a touch of personal warmth and artistic nuance, enriching the emotional depth of the text.

Terian enriches the symbolic imagery of the text. Let us turn to the following lines for comparison:

Bryusov writes:

«А была алмазная  
Радуга огней!». (p. 202)

Terian renders:

«Մաքուր գնհաւ էր ու լույս,  
Ծիածա՛ւ ն ու հու՛ր...»: (p. 205)

Here we find a whole array of symbols: the word “գնհաւ” [“precious stone”] symbolizes spiritual purity, “լույս” [“light”] is often used in Armenian literature as a synonym for the divine principle, while the “ծիածաւն” [“rainbow”] and “հուր” [“flame”] represent the contrast between harmony and passion.

Both Bryusov in his poem and Terian in his translation sing of a love that is fading, marked by elements of farewell. However, Bryusov’s tone is more philosophical:

«Песня одинокая —  
Вся любовь моя!».» (p. 202)

Whereas Terian’s translated version is tragically personal imbued with intimate sorrow and emotional immediacy that draws the reader into the depth of individual loss.

«Ե՛րզ է, մի՛ ե՛րզ մենավոր  
Իմ սէրը բոլոր...»: (p. 205)

Here, the word “մենավոր” [“solitary”] carries an existential weight, closely reflecting Terian’s worldview. In his poetry, solitude is not simply a state of being alone, but a deep metaphysical condition that defines the lyrical self.

Terian’s translation of this poem by Bryusov not only preserves the artistic essence of the original, but also enriches it with new symbols, rhythms and intonations deeply rooted in the Armenian sensibility. It serves as a compelling example of how Western European Symbolism can be reinterpreted through the lens of Armenian lyricism. This translation is a vivid instance of poetic recoding, where rational Symbolism is



transformed into an emotionally and spiritually charged image. It is not merely a translation, but a poetic dialogue, a space where Symbolist Bryusov is reimagined by Symbolist Terian, and longing becomes part of a shared language of cultural melancholy and beauty.

Bryusov's poem "Одиночество" ["Solitude"] (1907) is more than just a poem, it is a dialogue between cultures, unfolding across time periods, between poets and, most importantly, between the 'I' and the 'You.' The poem is shaped as a poetic conversation, and the Armenian translation not only interprets it but also reimagines it lyrically. The motifs of *solitude*, *memory*, *sisters* and *return* take on the shape of shared cultural archetypes, finding their voice in both Russian and Armenian. The sisters play a central role in the poem - ghostly female figures, ranging from concubines to queens, from messengers of suffering to bearers of consolation. Their appearance is accompanied by a ritualistic intonation, evoking a sense of sacred presence and timeless mystery.

«Քնքշագ ի՛ն, քնքշագին իմ քույրեր, մանկուց եմ ընդունել ես երդում՝  
Լոկ ձեզ հետ լինում եմ երջանիկ, հարազատ եմ լինում լոկ ձեզ մոտ»: (p. 207)

In the Armenian version ("իմ քույրեր, քնշագին իմ քույրեր" ["my sisters, my tender sisters"]), the sisters become more physically intimate, yet at the same time mythic. They are embodiments of the hero's historical and cultural memory and it is before them that he finds his true voice. The connection between time and space is especially important to note. We see the evening, the ebbing tide, the sunset, the moon, the smoke - all of these symbolize the passage of time, but not its disappearance. Space is not a mere geographical setting. It is the chronotope of memory, longing and return. The hero is not simply remembering, he is reliving. The line "մանկուց եմ ընդունել ես երդում" ["I swore an oath in childhood"] signifies that his past is being reinterpreted in the present. The final lines are as follows:

«Իմ քույրեր, ոչ ոքի չեմ հայտնի անուններդ հավետ սրբազան»: (p. 207)

This passage is especially significant. Here, the name becomes something moral and sacred and preserving it is an act of inner fidelity. In this work, Bryusov and Terian as poets, the languages as expressive forms and the protagonist together with his sisters all take part in this dialogue. It is a polyphony of souls, cultures and eras, where solitude turns into illusion for even a whisper of another's voice is heard nearby. Only within this poetic exchange does a true return to the self become possible.

Both versions are built on a smooth, melodic rhythm, enriched with vivid visual imagery and contrasts ("թագուհի-հարճ" ["queen-concubine"], "ալմաս-ծաղիկ" ["diamond-flower"]). In both, the level of lyricism and intimacy is remarkably high. The translator makes a conscious effort to preserve the original's gentle, meditative intonation. In the Armenian version, the language feels more delicate and melodic, due to the interplay of vowels and soft consonants.

In contrast, the imagery in the Russian original is more dramatic and vivid, at times even harsh (“воспалённые веки” [“inflamed eyelids”], “лицо утомлённым от пыток” [“a face weary from torture”]). Some images are freely interpreted in translation. For example, the original line “То в алмазных венцах, то в венках полевых маргариток...” [“Now in diamond crowns, now in wreaths of field daisies...”] with its distinctly Russian national imagery becomes in Terian’s version “Մերթ ալմաստ թագերով շողշողուն, մերթ ծաղկե պսակով լուսեղեն...” [“Sometimes with a sparkling diamond crown, sometimes with a radiant floral wreath...”]. The phrase “полевые ромашки” [“field daisies”] is replaced by the more ethereal “ծաղկե պսակ” [“floral wreath”], which generalizes and elevates the image.

The final stanza in Armenian is suffused with softness and calm, whereas in the Russian original the sister seems almost repentant and hurries to speak. The tone is more emotional and dynamic. The Russian text leans toward melancholy and drama. The Armenian version, by contrast, conveys sadness and serenity.

The Armenian imagery is symbolic and airy, while the Russian is more vivid and concrete. The Armenian translation has musicality, rhythm and a restrained vocabulary, whereas the Russian original is more expressive and emphatic.

Bryusov’s poem “Быть без людей” [“To Be without People”] (1907) is a gentle meditation on solitude, a tender and peaceful longing, in which love unfolds as a quiet dialogue with a distant beloved. The poem is infused with Symbolist imagery, wrapped in sorrow and affection.

In his translation, Terian retains this tenderness, enhancing it with greater musicality, smoother intonation and deepened lyricism. He transforms the emotional tone into a kind of Eastern delicacy, where solitude becomes both passion and melancholia.

Bryusov’s poem explores metaphysical solitude - the inability to connect with the world, a sense of intellectual imprisonment and spiritual torment. It is, in essence, an existential drama. Terian preserves this philosophical depth while enriching it with his own personal experience of loneliness. He does not merely translate the words, but conveys the metaphysical architecture of the poem, bringing it closer to Eastern mysticism.

At the heart of Bryusov’s poem lies a desire for solitude, not as absence, but as a final dream, a longing to be one with nature and time. The tone is laconic, with symbols of evening and wind hovering gently through the verse, creating a sense of merging with them.

Terian broadens the emotional spectrum, introducing intimate nuances and religious-philosophical subtexts. He builds his own poetics of solitude - one that preserves Bryusov’s spirit while enriching it with new layers of meaning.

Terian is not simply translating Bryusov, he weaves Bryusov’s motifs into the fabric of Armenian Symbolist tradition, expanding the emotional palette of the poem through new allusions. His translation clearly reveals a desire to preserve the internal rhythm and imagery of the original text, while deepening it through elements of Eastern metaphor and lyricism.

In Bryusov’s poem, solitude appears as a rational choice, in Terian’s translation, it becomes a state of being. This shift underscores the differences between two cultures

and philosophical traditions, yet rather than disrupting the meaning, it expands the poem's semantic field.

Terian's translation maintains the original's musicality and melody - a quality essential to poetry, particularly to poems with a lullaby-like rhythm. He heightens the tenderness, even the mysticism, transforming solitude from a social condition into a metaphysical experience.

Bryusov's poem "Час воспоминаний" ["The Hour of Memories"] (1908) is steeped in the themes of memory and return to the past. The memories evoke tenderness, sadness and an inner conflict within the lyrical hero. Images of the sea and navigation serve as metaphors for the journey of life, the struggle with fate, and the quest for self-understanding and meaning. Bryusov employs complex symbols, such as "тишь" ["stillness"] and "две женские тени" ["two feminine shadows"], which create an atmosphere of mystical reflection. Tones of sorrow and melancholy are intertwined with inner tension and dramatic emotion.

The female images - passionate and alluring, tender and grieving - symbolize the different facets of memory and feeling. Terian captures Bryusov's metaphors with great precision: "հիշողությունը համբուրում է աչքերը" ["memory kisses the eyes"], "երկու կանացի ուրվապատկեր" ["two feminine silhouettes"], attesting to his deep understanding of the original. The translation preserves the tone of tenderness and sadness, revealing the protagonist's inner struggle with his memories and fate.

Terian enhances the text's fluidity and musicality, sharpening its melancholic atmosphere. He uses rich yet clear language, characteristic of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Russian classical poetry. His translation opens up the hero's inner world - his confusion and contemplation - while emphasizing the motives behind fate and the inevitability of life's course, staying fully aligned with Bryusov's philosophical vision.

Terian's rendering makes Bryusov's poem more accessible to the Armenian reader without losing the original's complexity and depth. By intertwining Russian modernist symbols with the traditions of Armenian lyrical poetry, the translator builds a bridge between two cultures. He succeeds in transmitting the artistic subtleties without sacrificing the spirit or mood of the source text.

In this translation by Vahan Terian, Bryusov's poetics are preserved and enriched with cultural and emotional nuances. The reader experiences Bryusov's philosophical lyricism over again, made intimate and accessible within a new linguistic and cultural space.

In the original, we read the delicate metaphor "Воспоминания нежно целуют глаза" ["Memories gently kiss the eyes"], in which memory is portrayed as something living and emotionally charged. Terian translates this as: "Հուշերն են քնքուշ մի քախիծով / Աչքերս համբուրում" ["The memories, with a tender sorrow / Are kissing my eyes"]. This is a faithful rendering of the original image, preserving its lyrical intimacy. Terian conveys both 'tenderness' and 'sorrow,' highlighting the emotional complexity of the line. It is both aural and visual, reflecting the hero's emotional state.

Bryusov continues: "День / Струёй чуть слышной льётся к устью, / И на душу ложится тень." ["The day / Flows in a barely audible stream toward the mouth, / And a shadow falls upon the soul."]. Terian renders it as: "Յերեկն իրա / Անլուր կոհակն

է լեցնում մի ծով. / Ստվեր է իջնում հոգուս վրա” [“The day / Pours its silent ripple into a sea. / A shadow descends upon my soul.”].

In the translation, the metaphor is slightly transformed. Here the “ripple” is the murmur of waves transmitted through “stream,” which preserves the natural imagery, conveying the natural flow of time, while preserving the atmospheric quietness. Though the imagery is adapted, the emotional and symbolic essence remains intact.

Bryusov’s poetic quatrain reads as follows:

«То с дерзкой дрожью сладострастья,  
С бесстыдным отблеском в зрачках,  
Манят меня виденьем счастья,  
Забывтого в холодных днях.» (p. 296)

Terian translates as follows:

«Մերթ դողով տարփոտ և անպատկառ  
Աչքերում կրքի հուրն անհագուրդ  
Դյուրթուն են բախտի տեսիլքով վառ,  
Որ մոռացված է օրերում ցուրտ»: (p. 209)

The phrase “Աչքերում կրքի հուրն անհագուրդ” [“The unquenchable fire of passion in the eyes”] renders passion in a more daring and candid way, while still preserving the intensity of the original text. At the same time, it introduces a new emotional nuance - one that deepens the expression of desire and inner turmoil.

Bryusov’s text is as follows:

«Но кто-то шепчет мне упорно,  
Что жребий свой я выбрал сам». (p. 296)

Terian translates:

«Բայց շշնջում է մեկը համառ.  
Դու ինքդ ես ընտրել վիճակըդ, դո՛ւ»: (p. 210)

In the original text, the verb “шепчет” [“whispers”] appears and it is carefully preserved in the Armenian translation as “շշնջում է.” This word evokes the image of a ‘*whisper*,’ adding psychological depth and tension while reinforcing the protagonist’s inner dialogue. Terian masterfully uses sound repetitions to enhance the musicality of the text. For example, in the line “Հուշերն են քնքուշ մի թախիծով / Աչքերս համբուրում” [“The memories, with a tender sorrow, / Are kissing my eyes”], the repeated *շ* and *չ* consonants create a soft, consonantal harmony that mirrors the melody of the original.

The translation skillfully blends contemporary and classical vocabulary, maintaining a balance between accessibility and poetic depth. Terian does not simplify

the original metaphors. On the contrary, he expands their semantic scope, introducing new emotional nuances.

Vahan Terian's translation is not merely a precise rendering of the poem's meaning; it is the creation of a new poetic space, where Bryusov's distinctive symbolism is interwoven with the cultural traditions and lyrical textures of the Armenian language. The translator makes a unique artistic contribution without losing the depth and philosophical richness of the original.

Bryusov's poem "Грустный вечер" ["Sad Evening"] (1907) is built around an atmosphere of sorrow, melancholy, autumnal gloom and deep inner solitude. Phrases like "Грустный сумрак, грустный ветер, ветер умер, умер гул в дубах" ["Sad twilight, sad wind, the wind has died, the murmur in the oaks is gone"] are delicately translated as "տխուր խավար, տխուր քամի, հոգմը մեռավ, լռություն մեռած," preserving the original mood with striking precision. Terian masterfully conveys the tone by choosing images that are both sonically and semantically close to Bryusov's.

The word "шелест" ["rustle"] is translated as "շրշուն," which is not only accurate but also highly evocative. The original is rich in consonance and euphony, creating a soundscape of whispering, silence, and sadness. In the Armenian version, Terian preserves this acoustic atmosphere through the repetition of soft sounds "շռւկներ," "շրշուն," "շրշում," "շռնջ," lending the poem its musicality and conveying the intended emotional tone typical of his poetry.

In the original, the lyrical speaker turns to a mysterious voice - an inner "You" in the line "В тишине кто скажет тихое: люблю!" ["In the silence, who will say the quiet word: I love you!"]. Terian renders this as "Ո՞վ կսսի ինձ «սիրում եմ» — լռիւ այս միգում" ["Who will say to me 'I love you' - in this silent mist"], adding a layer of intimacy and longing. There is a slight shift in interpretation here. The original phrasing is more universal, while the Armenian translation introduces a more personal tone through "ինձ" ["me"]. This nuance makes the line more emotionally direct without compromising its core meaning.

Terian's translation is highly faithful in terms of both meaning and emotional effect. It retains the central imagery, rhythmic patterns, and sound qualities, creating a cohesive and aesthetically rich rendering. The small liberties he takes are a response to the linguistic and poetic structure of Armenian and serve only to enhance the poem's emotional resonance. These adaptations do not distort the meaning.

The poem "Благословение" ["Blessing"] (1908) is marked by a tense, even paradoxical lyricism - the idea of blessing is expressed through suffering, poison, darkness and pain. This creates a powerful atmosphere of tragic love and agonizing passion. Terian's translation faithfully preserves this tone of inner conflict and dramatic emotional experience.

Each line carries emotional metaphors. For instance, the line "Твоих объятий серп благословляю!" ["I bless the sickle of your embrace!"] is a powerful poetic image. Terian renders it as "Գրկախառնումը օրհնում եմ ես" ["I bless your embrace"], precisely conveying the sense of tragedy. In Bryusov's line the embrace is not tender, but cutting - a painful, decisive blow. Terian seems to have softened the image by omitting the word "sickle."

Terian uses archaic and poetic Armenian words such as “qngnu” [“sealed”], “արբեցնում” [“intoxicates”], “հավեւ” [“forever”], which reflect the elevated, almost classical style of Bryusov’s original. He also makes use of consonantal alliteration and rhythmic repetition, particularly the recurrence of the word “օփնիք” [“bless”] and the “h” [“h”] sound, which lend the translation a sense of rhythmical completeness and ceremonial solemnity.

The final image in particular is rendered with great success:

«За то, что влѣлся за тобою к Раю,  
За то, что стыну у его дверей!» (p. 301)

«Որ կոչեցիր դեպ Եդենն ու եւ Փակ դռան առաջ ստոչում եմ հար...»: (p. 212)

This line reveals the tragic fate of the lyrical hero - one who never reached happiness but remained in a state of eternal waiting. Terian heightens the stylistic and religious resonance of the passage by opting for the term “Եդեն” [“Garden of Eden”] in place of “heaven.” He further intensifies the imagery through the insertion of the adjective “փակ” [“closed”] before “door,” absent in the source text, as well as by introducing the archaic modifier “հար” [“continuous”].

The epigraph “Que tes mains soient bénies, car elles sont impures!” [“May your hands be blessed, for they are impure!”] is taken from *Oraisons Mauvaises* by Remy de Gourmont. It links ‘blessing’ to the French Symbolist tradition and elevates the theme of paradox and duality - the coexistence of blessing and impurity. This intertextual nuance is partially preserved in the Armenian translation, though the rendering leans more toward the poetic. As Bryusov himself once wrote: “There are poems in which it is not the images that dominate, but the sound of words or even the rhyme. The most important task for the translator is to identify the essential element in the poem being translated” (Bryusov 1955: 195).

Bryusov’s poem “Городу” [“To the City”] (1907) is a dithyramb in the classical sense, a hymn of praise to the city, yet filtered through the lens of ambiguous imagery. The city appears at once powerful, intimidating and enchanting embodying both industrial might and deep social contradictions. Terian’s translation preserves the genre’s structural and ceremonial tone, yet infuses it with lyrical vibrancy and emotional richness characteristic of Armenian poetry. The precise translation of technical vocabulary, such as “լարեր” [“wires”], “գազ” [“gas”], “ջուր” [“water”] underscores the industrial dimension of the city without sacrificing poetic imagery.

Bryusov’s poem is written in a meter characteristic of classical Russian poetry, with alternating stresses. Terian carefully conveys this rhythm into Armenian by using the features of the language, preserving melody and fluidity. This is especially noticeable in his use of consonance and assonance, through which he creates powerful images of urban life. French linguist Jules Marouzeau, in his article “Translation” notes, that the translator must preserve the meaning, structure, and style of the original poem. He adds that a person reading the translation should feel the same as the one reading the original, and it is practically impossible (Marouzeau 1959).

In his poem, Bryusov reveals the dual nature of the city - it is both a creator (“Дворцы из золота, праздничные храмы” [“Palaces of gold, festive temples”]) and a place of suffering (“В ней Злоба, Нищета” [“In it - Malice, Poverty”]). Terian preserves this duality while adding his own poetic cadence.

Terian’s translation of Bryusov’s “To the City” conveys the philosophical tension and social critique of the original with clarity and poetic power. It preserves the core semantic and aesthetic elements of the original, maintaining its high artistic value, rhythm, and musicality. The translator infuses the text with the color and emotional depth characteristic of Armenian poetry.

Valery Bryusov’s poem “К Арапату” [“To Ararat”] (1916) appears as a fragmentary translation placed in the “Translation Attempts” section of Volume II of Vahan Terian’s four-volume collected works. It opens with the line “Գոհուրքուն և փառք, Քրոնոս սրբազան...” [“Praise and glory, holy Chronos...”]. This translation stands out as a rare instance where the target language not only transmits the original meaning but also elevates it, situating it within a new cultural and mythopoetic framework. In this process, Terian ceases to be a humble mediator and emerges as a co-author and continuator of Bryusov’s vision, animating the imagery of the source text with renewed vitality. In Bryusov’s poem, Ararat is seen as a sacred and historical summit - an archetype of power, time, and poetic eternity. In Terian’s translation, the figure of Chronos remains intact, preserving the ancient metaphysical context. This is a rare reference in Armenian poetry and signifies a high level of cultural synthesis. Terian speaks the same language as Bryusov - the language of time and eternity. His translation of the opening line approaches a cosmological image: the mountain does not merely stand, it sets the heavens in motion. This is a biblical metaphor. For Terian, Ararat is not a landscape but a subject of the cosmos. Bryusov’s line “В огромной шапке Мономаха” [“In the great cap of Monomakh”] is translated by Terian as “Մոնամարոսի թագով վեհագին” [“with Monomakh’s majestic crown”]. This is a brilliant example of precise and ceremonial translation, in which both the historical reference and the poetic weight of the original are fully preserved. The word ‘թագ’ [“crown”] sounds no less impressive than “գլխարկ” [“cap”] as used in the Russian original. It carries both political and cultural connotations and in the Armenian historical context, and can be interpreted as a symbol of kingship and collective memory.

As Alexander Fraser Tytler once said: “An ordinary translator sinks under the energy of his original: the man of genius frequently rises above it” (Tytler 1791: 27). In Terian’s hands, Bryusov is no longer a distant or foreign voice. He is part of the Armenian poetic tradition. If Bryusov sees Ararat as the sacred axis of time, Terian reclaims that axis for his own people, grounding the image in Armenian cultural memory and national emotion.

Through his translations of Bryusov’s poems, Terian created a kind of “second original,” acting as a co-author. This is what happens in true dialogues between great poets.

### 3. Conclusion

Valery Bryusov was one of the central figures of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Russian Symbolism and Modernism. His poetry is distinguished by complex symbolism, profound philosophical subtexts, rich imagery, and musicality. Translating such works is a demanding task that requires not only linguistic precision but also artistic sensitivity - the ability to convey the tone and stylistic features of the original. Vahan Terian, a gifted poet and translator, demonstrates not only linguistic competence in his translations of Bryusov but also a deep understanding of the author's texts. This allows him to preserve both the meaning and the emotional and aesthetic impact of the poems.

In all the translated poems, including "Sad Evening," "Blessing," "To the City," and others, Bryusov's characteristic tone of darkness, tragedy, and philosophical reflection is clearly preserved. Terian maintains the original mood by carefully selecting vocabulary, syntax and poetic devices appropriate to the Armenian language. For instance, in "Sad Evening," the mood of melancholy and solitude is conveyed through epithets such as "սխուր խաղար" ["sad twilight"], "ծառերի շրշուն" ["the rustling of trees"], "կորս ծ իմ երազ" ["my lost dream"], which closely mirror the original expressions "грустный сумрак," "шелесты в дубах," "погибших снах."

Bryusov often employs specific symbols - огонь [fire], тьма [darkness], ветер [wind], сумрак [gloom], яд [poison], мрак [shadow], крылья [wings], рай [paradise], etc. Terian transmits these images with care and fidelity.

He makes deliberate use of consonance, assonance and repetition, creating rhythmic and acoustic harmony that echoes the source text. In "Sad Evening," the repetition of words like "սխուր" ["sad"] and "շշուկներ" ["whispers"] makes the wind's sound almost audible. In "Blessing," the repetition of "օրհնում էմ" ["I bless"] evokes the cadence of a prayer. These choices reflect Terian's deep understanding of poetic language and its musical functions.

Bryusov's poetry often contemplates fate, suffering, love, loss, and eternal searching. Terian retains all of these elements, including the philosophical tension between passion and suffering, and the unattainability of the ideal.

He frequently draws on archaic and ceremonial constructions, which bring him closer to Bryusov's Symbolist style. At the same time, his translations are not weighed down by overly bookish vocabulary and remain vivid and accessible to modern readers.

The use of epigraphs and cultural references, such as the quote from Remy de Gourmont in "Blessing" reveals Terian's awareness of and respect for the cultural codes embedded in the originals. He adapts these elements to the target language while preserving their depth.

Vahan Terian's translations strike a rare and successful balance between fidelity to the original and artistic independence. Rich in linguistic, stylistic, and philosophical value, they preserve the spirit of Bryusov's Symbolism and stand as outstanding examples of poetic translation. Terian does not simply reproduce meaning, he recreates the musicality, atmosphere and emotional world that define Bryusov's poetry.



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The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

## Ethical Standards

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

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