

## Module 7: Poetic Prose

### Translation 1 (translated by John Malmsted and Robert McGuire, 1978)

Nikolai Petrovich Tsukatov had spent his whole life dancing, and now Nikolai Petrovich was dancing that life to a close. He was dancing it out inoffensively, without vulgarity. No cloud darkened his soul, which always shone, as did his bald spot, which glowed like the sun, or as did his shaven chin between sidewhiskers, which looked like the crescent moon between clouds.

Everything in his life had always gone dancingly.

He had begun to dance while still a boy. He danced better than anyone else. Toward the end of his Gymnasium days new acquaintances had danced into his life. Toward the end of his university days he had danced himself out of the circle of acquaintances into a circle of protectors. Nikolai Petrovich launched into dancing out a career. He danced an estate down the drain, and he launched into balls. With remarkable ease he brought into his house his helpmeet Lyubov Alexeyevna. The helpmeet proved to have a dowry, and Nikolai Petrovich now danced in his own house. He had succeeded in dancing out the birth of two daughters and their education.

So that now he was dancing himself out.

### Translation 2 (translated by David McDuff, 1995)

Nikolai Petrovich Tsukatov had danced his life away; now Nikolai Petrovich was dancing his life to a close; doing so lightly, inoffensively, without vulgarity; not a single small cloud darkened his soul; his soul was pure and innocent, like this bald patch that burned like the sun or like this smoothly shaven chin between side-whiskers, like the moon looking out through the clouds.

Everything went dancingly for him.

He had begun to dance when he was a small boy; had danced better than any of the others; and he had been invited to people's homes as an experienced dancer; towards the end of his course at the high school acquaintances had danced into his life; towards the end of his days at the Law Faculty a circle of influential patrons had danced itself of its own accord out of an enormous circle of acquaintances; and Nikolai Petrovich Tsukatov set about dancing a career in the civil service. By that time he had danced away an estate; having danced away the estate, with frivolous simple-heartedness he started going to balls; and from those balls brought to himself with remarkable ease his companion in life, Lyubov' Alekseyevna: this completely accidental companion turned out to have an enormous dowry; and ever since then Nikolai Petrovich had danced in his own home; children were danced out; then the children's education was danced out – it was all danced easily, unpretentiously, joyfully.

Now he was dancing himself to a close.