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## Feature

### Three Anthologies

By Robert Chandler

About ten years ago I agreed to compile an anthology of Russian short stories for Penguin Classics. Nearly all the greatest Russian writers have written at least some short stories, but English and American readers still tend to believe that Russian literature consists only of enormous novels. Also, I had spent much of the previous ten years translating the work of the brilliant but highly idiosyncratic Soviet writer Andrey Platonov. I thought it would be good to remind myself that there are other ways of writing, to put myself through a short course in Russian literature as a whole.

The most important thing I learned through working on this anthology is how little real grasp we have of twentieth-century Russian literature. We do not yet know which writers have been neglected – or hyped – for purely political reasons; we have not yet recovered from the many confusions engendered by

Soviet censorship and both communist and anti-communist propaganda.

With the nineteenth century, almost all my choices were obvious ones: such masterpieces as *The Queen of Spades* and *The Greatcoat* clearly deserved their fame; there seemed no point in struggling to come up with more original choices. With the twentieth century, however, I ended up including several writers I had never even heard of beforehand. Joanne Turnbull sent me her translation of Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky's brilliant *Quadraturin* only a few days before my final deadline; I at once dropped a translation of Chekhov to make room for it. And the émigré writer Nadezhda Teffi – another writer I had never heard of before – is a true heir to Chekhov, as wise and compassionate as she is witty.



Illustration to Pushkin's *The Tale of the Golden Cockerel* by Ivan Bilibin, 1906 (SCRSS Library)

My very first publication, back in 1978, was of Andrey Platonov's re-tellings of traditional Russian *skazki* or magic tales. My second publication was of tales from Afanasyev (his *Russian Folk Tales* is the Russian equivalent of the collections by the Brothers

Grimm). Both these books have long been out of print, so I was delighted when Penguin Classics agreed, after good reviews of the short story anthology, to commission me to compile a collection of Russian magic tales. Pushkin was one of the first Russian writers to take a serious interest in Russian folklore, so I knew at once that the book should begin with Pushkin, that it should include Afanasyev and that it should end with my translations of Platonov's *skazki*. There has always been a lot of interplay in Russia between high culture and folk culture, so it seemed right to include both genuine folk tales and literary re-tellings. As well as Pushkin and Platonov, I chose to include Pavel Bazhov, who has been hugely popular in Russia throughout the last seventy years. These three, I believe, are the only Russian writers who have truly entered into the heart of the folk tradition and then created afresh from within it. I have also included several stories of a somewhat different kind by Teffi, who retained a deep interest in Russian folklore throughout her life. *Russian Magic Tales from Pushkin to Platonov* will be published this December.



Ink drawing of Anna Akhmatova by Yuri Annenkov, 1921 (SCRSS Library)

I am now working on a third anthology, *Russian Poetry from Pushkin to Brodsky*.

Russian poetry is little known in the Anglophone world. The tragedy of their lives has brought some degree of attention to Mandelstam, Pasternak, Akhmatova and Tsvetaeva, but nineteenth-century poetry remains a closed book. Tyutchev and Fet are barely known even by name; Lermontov is known only as a prose writer; and – in spite of Stanley Mitchell's outstanding recent version of *Eugene Onegin* – people carry on lazily repeating that Pushkin is "untranslatable". There is a clear need for a new anthology of Russian poetry in translation.

Translation is, inevitably, a hit-and-miss affair. It is hard to predict, especially with poetry, what will succeed in translation and what will not. It seems equally obvious that there is no single correct approach to translation; translation is an art, and there must, therefore, be more than one way to go about it. Russian colleagues sometimes ask me about my 'methodology'. My only honest answer to this is that I am willing, in my attempts to make a given poem come alive in English, to try anything from the freest of free verse to the strictest of strict forms, and that I am determined not to include any poem – no matter how great the original – if it does not come alive in English.

The happy surprise has been my belated discovery of a fine volume from 1943, *Poems from the Russian*, translated by Frances Cornford and Eva Salaman. Frances Cornford did not know Russian, but her versions – the product of a collaboration with the Ukrainian-born Eva Salaman – are unusually faithful in every respect. She is sure-footed in her command both of rhythm and of idiom. Since this year marks the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Borodino, I shall quote her translation of the first stanza of Lermontov's poem about this battle:

"Come tell me, was it all for nought  
That Moscow burned, although we fought  
And would not yield?  
Come, Uncle, tell the tale again  
Of how we fought with might and main,  
And men remember, not in vain,  
Our Borodino's field."

One of the sadder aspects of the world of translation is that, along with the many bad translations, the few outstanding translations all too often end up out of print and forgotten. It is a joy to be able to reprint at least a dozen of Cornford's graceful translations of Pushkin, Lermontov, Tyutchev, Nekrasov and Blok.



Pushkin self-portrait, 1826 (SCRSS Library)

Another joy is the occasional poem that seems almost to translate itself. Here is my own version of Annensky's *Spring Song*:

Not yet does the current hold sway,  
but it's drowning the blue ice;  
the clouds have not melted away,  
yet the snow is drinking in sunlight.

Through a half-open door  
my heart hears a whisper...  
You don't yet love, but no more  
can you keep your distance.

The Russian title is *Vesenny romans*; the original sings. A translation that does not sing would be worthless; and any sense of strain, any sense that the translator has been struggling to find rhymes, would be equally disastrous. Here, two pairs of rhymes – 'sway' and 'away', and 'door' and 'more' – came easily. The strong assonance between 'ice' and 'sunlight', perhaps the two most important words in the first stanza, also seemed like a gift. The difficulty was

with the last line: literally 'But you already cannot begin to love me.' Surprisingly quickly I came up with the version above. Too solid, too loud a rhyme, would have been wrong; this rather 'distant', 'whispered' rhyme seemed just what the poem needed to balance the more obvious preceding rhymes. Translation can be frustrating. One can work intelligently and conscientiously, yet end up, after long hours, with something fit only for the wastepaper basket. In this case, however, I did not feel I had done any work at all; I felt I had been given a gift.

Another joy of working on this anthology has been discovering several great poets I had not known. I now see Varlam Shalamov not only as one of the last century's greatest prose writers but also as one of its greatest poets. It was, according to his own testimony, poetry that kept him alive during his fifteen years in the labour camps of Kolyma, and he himself clearly attached at least as much importance to the poems collected in *The Kolyma Notebooks* as to the stories in his later *Kolyma Tales*. Here is one short lyric:

And so I keep going;  
death remains close;  
I carry my life  
in a blue envelope.

The letter's been ready  
ever since autumn:  
just one little word –  
it couldn't be shorter.

But I still don't know  
where I should send it;  
if I had the address,  
my life might have ended.

This is enigmatic. I repeated the original to myself many, many times before I had any idea what it might mean. I now think that the possible addressee is God and that the 'one little word' is something like *khvatit* ('I've had enough!'). If Shalamov (an atheist, but the son of a priest) knew how to address his complaints to God, then he would be happy to die – but since God is elusive, Shalamov feels he has no choice but to keep going.

Another joy of this work is the possibilities it allows for collaboration with many other translators, poets and scholars. Soon after receiving this commission, I invited two Russian-American poets and translators to be co-editors: Irina Mashinski and Boris Dralyuk. Boris was only 8 years old when he emigrated to the USA in 1991; unlike either Irina or myself, he is truly bilingual. Irina also emigrated in 1991, but, being somewhat older, she retains a clear memory of the last decades of the Soviet Union and how important poetry was in that often stultifying world. Not long ago, she wrote movingly to me with regard to various poets from the Brezhnev era about whom we have been disagreeing: "In other words, such cases are not just about poetry, nor are they about the times per se, but about the place poetry held in those times, the role it played (sustaining our moral and aesthetic sanity, sustaining happiness, despite everything). I think this is what might make some of your Russian-born correspondents overly passionate at times. For them, it may be very personal, part of who and what they themselves were."

Boris, Irina and I each bring distinct qualities to this anthology. Boris has an unusual ability to move freely between Russia and the Anglophone world; I myself, I hope, have at least a relatively clear sense of what is most likely to be of interest to an English-speaking reader; and as for Irina, she has a deep, personal sense of the importance of Russian poetry, of what it was like to live in a world where poetry was commonly seen as something to live by. And she plays a crucial role in alerting me and other translators to subtleties and subtexts we have missed.

About one fifth of the translations in this anthology will be my own. I am including the work of at least thirty other translators. If any readers wish to submit work of their own, or tell me about already published translations that I may not have noticed, I shall be grateful – though space is, of course, limited.

*Robert Chandler is the author of 'Alexander Pushkin' (in the Hesperus 'Brief Lives'*

*series). His translations from Russian include Vasily Grossman's 'Life and Fate', 'Everything Flows' and 'The Road'. His translation of Hamid Ismailov's Central Asian novel 'The Railway' and his co-translations of works by Andrey Platonov have won prizes both in the UK and in the USA. His next collection of work by Andrey Platonov, an expanded edition of 'Happy Moscow', will be published by NYRB Classics in November 2012. His anthology of Russian verse for Penguin Classics will probably appear in late 2014. He teaches on the new UyluyE (Use Your Language, Use Your English) literary / academic translation course and also (part-time) at Queen Mary, University of London.*

## **SCRSS News**

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### **Valma Welch (1927–2012)**

The Society is sad to inform members that Valma Welch, a member of the SCR and SCRSS for over forty years, died in her nursing home in Streatham on 19 May 2012. Valma was a life-long supporter of the Soviet Union and visited the country many times. She was a regular attendee at SCRSS films and lectures, and in the 1970s and 1980s was the caterer *par excellence* for the SCR's regular New Year parties. Outside the SCRSS, she was an active campaigner for aboriginal rights in her native Australia, and for peace and socialism. She loved animals and her last cat was found a good home after she moved into her nursing home in 2011. The Society will very much miss Valma's lively presence.

### **Next Events**

**Friday 14 September 7pm**

**Event: A Commemoration of Professor James Riordan (1936–2012)**

An evening dedicated to Professor James Riordan, former Vice-President of the SCRSS, who died earlier this year. The event focuses on James's writings and

translations from the Russian. Special guests include Dr David Holohan, friend and former colleague of James at the University of Surrey, James's eldest daughter Tanya Riordan and a representative of the Gyngyz Aitmatov Academy. *Note: normal admission fees apply.*

### **Friday 28 September 7pm**

#### **Film: Mirror**

DVD screening of celebrated Russian film director Andrei Tarkovsky's most autobiographical work, in which he reflects on his own childhood and the destiny of the Russian people. The film intertwines real and family relationships (Tarkovsky's father, the poet Arseny Tarkovsky, reads his own poems on the soundtrack and Tarkovsky's mother appears as herself) with memories of childhood, dreams and nightmares. The film is a very personal view of life in the Soviet Union and has an extraordinary resonance that repays countless viewings. Directed by Andrei Tarkovsky, Mosfilm, USSR, 1974. English sub-titles, 102 minutes, colour and black / white.

*Note: Admission to this event is free (SCRSS members and non-members), but please contact the SCRSS to reserve tickets at least one week in advance.*

### **Friday 19 October 7pm**

#### **Lecture: Andrew Jameson on *Russian-English Translation – Trickier Than You Thought?***

Andrew Jameson is a former lecturer in Russian at Lancaster University, now a translator and researcher in Russian Studies. Andrew examines the peculiarities of translating from Russian to English, with some anecdotes about his experiences as a professional translator over the years. He looks at classic translation problems and outlines the actions translators can take when encountering these problems. The talk is intended as a very practical session and will include useful materials for the audience to take away.

### **Saturday 10 November 10am–5pm**

#### **Event: SCRSS Russian History Seminar**

This one-day seminar is aimed in particular at teachers of A-Level History and university students, but is open to everyone interested

in Russian and Soviet history. Speakers: Professor Geoffrey Roberts, Head of the School of History at University College Cork; Christine Lindey, lecturer and writer on art history; John Riley, writer, teacher, curator and broadcaster, specialising in film and music; Jane Rosen, librarian and speaker, with a special interest in Soviet children's literature. The day includes tours of the SCRSS library and there will be an accompanying exhibition to mark the 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Fee: £50 (£40 for SCRSS members), including lunch, tea / coffee. See the enclosed brochure for full details and an application form or download from the SCRSS website at [www.scrss.org.uk/russianseminar.htm](http://www.scrss.org.uk/russianseminar.htm).

### **Friday 23 November 7pm**

#### **Film: The Orator**

DVD screening. The film looks at the establishment of Soviet power in Central Asia, in particular the campaign to encourage Uzbek women to abandon the veil and Uzbek men to embrace monogamy. The director turns the story into an Eastern fairy tale about a poor man, Iskander, who inherits three, then four wives. As a fluent Russian speaker, he becomes an official propagandist for the new Soviet power in order to protect his wives. The tone of the film is light and satirical with colourful characters – like a peasant woodcut – interspersed with black / white documentary photographs in the style of Eisenstein. The film focuses on Iskander's wives, rather than him, and the dramatic changes brought about by being forced to abandon the veil. Direction and screenplay by Yusup Razykov, Uzbekfilm, 1998. English sub-titles, 85 minutes, colour and black / white.

*Note: Admission to this event is free (SCRSS members and non-members), but please contact the SCRSS to reserve tickets at least one week in advance.*

*Events take place at the SCRSS, 320 Brixton Road, London SW9 6AB, unless otherwise stated. Admission fees for films and lectures (unless otherwise stated): £3.00 (SCRSS members), £5.00 (non-members). Admission fees for other events: as indicated.*

# Soviet Memorial Trust Fund News

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## Next Events

**Sunday 11 November 12.30pm**

**Event: Remembrance Sunday Ceremony**

Further details will be circulated to the Soviet Memorial Trust Fund (SMTF) mailing list in due course. If you are not already on the mailing list and would like to be, please send your details to the Hon Secretary, SMTF, c/o 320 Brixton Road, London SW9 6AB or email [smtf@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:smtf@hotmail.co.uk).

*The Soviet War Memorial is located in Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park, adjacent to the Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ. The SCRSS is a founder member of the Soviet Memorial Trust Fund. Soviet War Memorial events are listed on the SCRSS website at [www.scrss.org.uk/cinemaevents.htm](http://www.scrss.org.uk/cinemaevents.htm), while information on its history is available at [www.scrss.org.uk/sovietmemorial.htm](http://www.scrss.org.uk/sovietmemorial.htm).*

## Feature

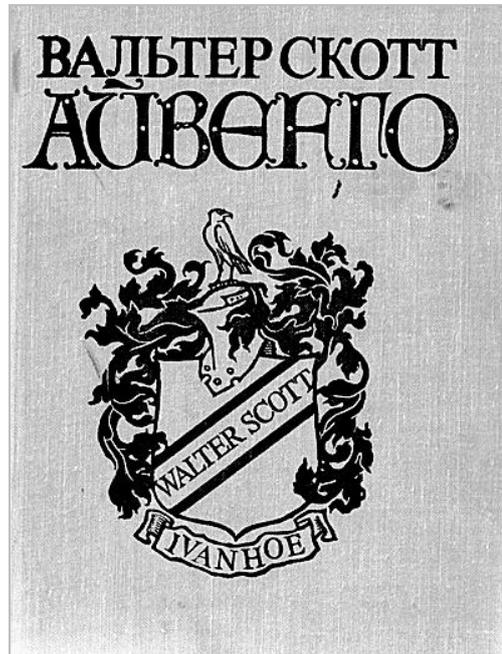
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### Translation: The Accommodation of Foreign Literature in Russia and the USSR

By Dr Emily Lygo

The history of translation in Russia is a subject at the intersection of literature, politics, and society, and provides a fascinating perspective on Russian culture, long caught between Eastern and Western models. For both Slavophiles and Westernisers translation has been the mechanism for the introduction of foreign ideas that have contributed to the development of Russia's national identity, either because they have been taken up and emulated, or because they represent all that is to be rejected by Russia. What is more,

an often suspicious attitude towards foreign influence has meant that translation has been subject to censorship and restriction, so translation has been a politicised and polemical practice from the eighteenth to the twentieth century.



Cover of Soviet edition of Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (SCRSS Library)

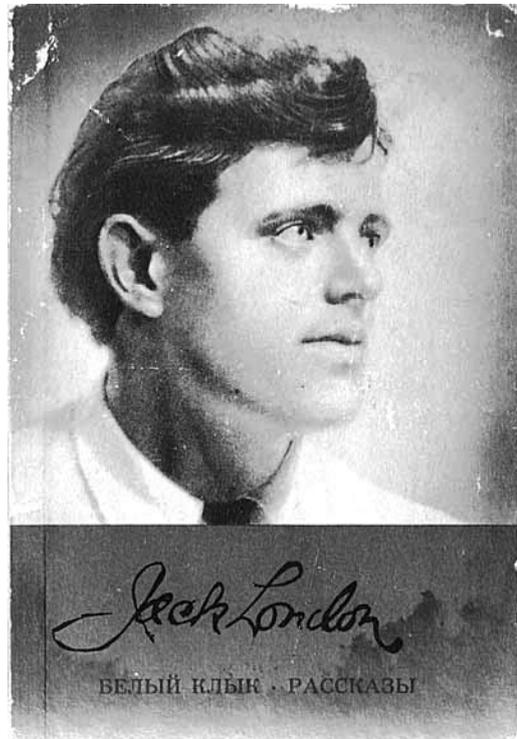
When a new literary translation appears in any culture, its effects may be far-reaching and significant for the development of that culture. One helpful way of viewing the process by which a text is introduced to a new culture is to see translation as the accommodation of a foreign text by a culture. The idea of accommodation is twofold. On the one hand, the text is adapted to a culture through the process of translation: small changes, some added 'native' concepts or references help the text fit into its new home. On the other hand, accommodation also implies that the text brings about change to the culture it has been brought to: a cultural space has to be made for it, the right language and genre must be found, an interpretation needs to be developed. The process of translation is dynamic, with implications for both the text and also the culture that receives it.

This model of translation as accommodation is fruitful for the study of Russian culture, where translation has been such a

significant ingredient in cultural development and change. In the early nineteenth century the works of Byron and Walter Scott were hugely important for the introduction of Romanticism to Russian literature. For Pushkin, especially, the English models introduced genre and a literary sensibility that he used to change the course of Russian literature. While Byron and Scott are hardly read any more in Britain, Pushkin, of course, has become the most important writer and symbol of the national culture for Russians. This is not because Russian taste for Romanticism has endured while British has not. It is because the translations of Byron and Scott provided Pushkin with a model that he not only imitated, but developed and responded to. His Romanticism is more complex, self-reflexive and ironic. The layers of meaning and ambiguities of *The Queen of Spades*, *The Gypsies*, *The Tales of Belkin* and other works represent a response to and development of Western literature. In the case of English writers, as well as German Romantics in the translations of Zhukovskii in particular, translation had a significant impact on the development of Russian literature. Later in the century, a similar process would happen with the introduction of French realist prose writers to Russia.

The discovery of a writer or work in translation can be such a great catalyst for change, it seems as though everybody was waiting for the translation to come along. It can even seem to writers that a certain inspiration or idea is missing in their time, and needs to be introduced to a national literature. Ivan Turgenev felt that Russian literature needed Don Quixote for its development. He was not in a position to translate Cervantes' work himself, but he wrote about the character in Russian before a Russian translation had been produced. His essay on Hamlet and Don Quixote helped to create the appetite for the novel, and it was translated into Russian some years later. Similarly, critics suggest that Edgar Allen Poe's works were 'needed' by Russian literature of the late nineteenth century: the figure of the author himself and his themes of death, the double, composition (and decomposition) were

taken up by Russian authors of the decadent Symbolist period and used as a model and interlocutor for their own development. It was not until 1924 that Poe's complete works were translated into Russian; when this happened, however, there was little cultural response to the publication. The translators in this case had missed the moment for Poe's entry into Russia, literary taste had moved on, and the edition had little impact.



Cover of Soviet edition of Jack London's *White Fang and Short Stories* (SCRSS Library)

After the Revolution literary translation was taken up as an important project by the Soviet government, which had ambitious plans to make the classics of world literature available to the new and growing Soviet readership. It also became crucial when the state deemed it desirable that new and existing literatures of the national minorities of the USSR were translated for the Russophone Soviet reader. Given the importance of translation for these state initiatives, one might think that translators enjoyed high status, pay and respect, however this was not really the case. Many were badly paid and did not enjoy the privileges afforded to writers of original works of literature. Nonetheless, translation became an important sphere of literary work

for a great number of canonical Russian and Soviet writers. As political pressure in the 1930s increased and it became more difficult to publish works that were not textbook examples of Socialist Realism, writers such as Anna Akhmatova, Boris Pasternak, Evgenii Zamiatin and Mikhail Zoshchenko found refuge in translation: it provided them with a means to earn a living and an official occupation.



Cover of Soviet edition of Ernest Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not* (SCRSS Library)

Translation was used for political ends in the USSR by both the state and liberals seeking to broaden the range of literature permitted in print. The selection of foreign works made available to Soviet readers was chosen to fit in with the politics of the USSR: writers sympathetic to the Soviet state such as Louis Aragon, Lion Feuchtwanger and Romain Rolland were published widely and celebrated, but there were also translations of those deemed left-leaning or at least innocuous, including Somerset Maugham and Jack London. It is for this reason that Russians who grew up in the Soviet period still today have a rather Soviet view of the canon of English literature, and are convinced that Somerset Maugham and John Galsworthy are two of our most canonical writers. It is clear why these

writers were seen as desirable or at least acceptable for publication; it is harder to explain, however, why Oscar Wilde was published consistently throughout the Soviet period, when his decadence and homosexuality were taboo or at least politically undesirable. These aspects of his work and biography were, of course, not discussed in criticism or forewords to his work; instead, emphasis was placed on his satire of bourgeois society and also on his exemplary English prose. In this way, Soviet editors and publishers managed to accommodate Wilde in the USSR.

During the Stalin period suspicion of the West led to a decrease in the number of translations, especially from contemporary writers; the lowest point for translation was the post-war period, with its Anti-Cosmopolitan campaign. During the Thaw under Khrushchev, by contrast, there was renewed interest in translation and Ernest Hemingway, in particular, had a huge impact in the USSR when his works appeared in translation. Hemingway's style of writing and subject matter, as well as his personality, were important for the development of Thaw culture. The authorities tried to accommodate him as a socialist and anti-capitalist, in tune with Soviet politics; readers, however, took from him an emphasis on informality, the cult of friendship and the importance of leisure. His influence is an example of the impact that translation can have at a key moment in time: one might suggest that the USSR was 'waiting for Hemingway' to provide alternative modes of being in the wake of the Secret Speech and the upheaval it introduced to Soviet culture.

From the Thaw until the end of the USSR more and more translations were produced that went a long way to bringing the Soviet Union up to date with developments in foreign and especially Western literature. The arrival of new works in translation at times prompted a reassessment of Russia's own literary heritage: the many translations of Western poetry in free verse, for example, led to debates about why Russian poetry had not developed in this direction, and a partial rehabilitation of some avant-garde

poets who had become anathematised during the Stalin period. In the late 1980s the remaining texts that had hitherto been considered unacceptable for translation and publication in the USSR found their way into publication: from George Orwell's *1984* to the work of William Burroughs, to the many genre and pulp fiction titles that Russians had not been exposed to previously. This latter wave of translations, in particular, again had a significant impact in Russia: on the development of the Russian book market and reading tastes.

Just as literature in Russia is often said to be more than literature, translation in Russia has always been more than just translation.

*Dr Emily Lygo is Lecturer in Russian at the University of Exeter. Her research interests include the history of literary translation in Russia, twentieth-century Russian poetry and Anglo-Soviet cultural relations. Her first book 'Leningrad Poetry 1953–75' was published in 2010. 'The Art of Accommodation: Literary Translation in Russian Culture', edited by Leon Burnett and Emily Lygo, is due for publication by Peter Lang later this year.*

## **Feature**

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### **Working as a Freelance Translator**

By Christine Barnard

The popular view of the translator seems to be 'girl (languages being a girls' subject) with keyboard skills and foreign language qualification'. This leads to much hilarity for tourists confronted by signs translated into their language by said 'girl', but is not much use to companies looking to impress overseas clients.

So out with the first misconception: in the UK serious translators only translate *into* their native language. No decent translation agency would contract them to do otherwise

and their professional indemnity insurance would not cover them if they did.

This presents a problem for Russian native speakers wanting to be professional translators. Hot competition over rates means that some UK clients head straight for Russia, where rates are lower. However, the better agencies employing the better translators will pay for quality.

Which leads neatly to the next point: there are many translators, but not many good ones.

So what do you need to be a good translator? Honesty is a good start: the honesty to admit that something is outside your subject area or ability range, or that you can't guarantee to meet the deadline. No matter how much you'd like the money, if you mess up, you've lost a client.

From the client's point of view, reliability is number one. Reliable translators always meet deadlines, turn in good-quality translations and keep clients informed of any problems, linguistic or practical.

An excellent grasp of the language you're translating from is vital, as are good writing skills in your own language; if you got C's or 3's in school for your native language, you probably shouldn't be a translator. You might regard grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors as acceptable, clients will not. Expect to work at your foreign language. Be warned: a degree is only the starting point.

Just as important as language skills are having the patience and curiosity to research. This is part of the translator's job. If a private client comes to me with a medical report, it's not enough for me to bash through it, just translating the words. The UK doctor must be able to make sense of it. This means that *I* need to understand it. Enter friend Google. By 'googling' a Russian phrase and/or rough English translation, I can find almost all the background information and terms I need.

Always proofread your work, even if the agency uses separate proofreaders. This will save you from the embarrassment of misreading «уладить» as «удалить» or failing to see little words like «не». Never forget: if it doesn't make sense, it's wrong. That includes illogicalities in the text.

If you're an extrovert, you might worry that it's a lonely life. It's the introverts who should worry: good people skills matter. If you're friendly on the phone and sound efficient, clients are more likely to ring back. You'll also find it easier to network at translation events.

Will you make a living? How do you find clients?

Most translators work for a mixture of agencies and direct clients, sometimes charging the former slightly less. However, don't make the mistake of demanding high rates until you're established. You can use lower-paying agencies to gain experience, as well as references. The same goes for translator websites and agencies that invite you to bid for work. Needless to say, the lowest rates win. How much should you charge? Initially consider £50–£60 per 1,000 words. Into-Russian translators charge more than into-English, but don't forget that you may be competing with translators in Russia.

Some translators specialise in one field; maybe they've worked in it, have a particular interest or just happened to get lots of work on one subject. Real enthusiasts do an extra qualification in law, computing, etc. Before choosing, research which subjects are in demand for your language combination: Russian–English and English–Russian differ.

If you're starting out, you'd be well advised to do an MA or Diploma in Translation. The University of Westminster offers both. As well as language skills, you'll learn about machine translation, translation memory software and other wonders. However, avoid courses where students peer-mark each other's work (mentioning no names).

Consider learning another language, Slavonic or otherwise, but check it's in demand first. Don't give up the day job unless you can afford to. I survived on a mixture of teaching, interpreting and translating.

Finally, join the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI) as an Associate member ([www.iti.org.uk](http://www.iti.org.uk)). This will give you access to advice, contacts and training. Later, full membership will bring you clients.

*Christine Barnard is a freelance translator, specialising in business, law, arts and humanities. She also teaches Russian at the University of Westminster on the Open Language Programme. Email Christine on [rtstrans@aol.com](mailto:rtstrans@aol.com).*

## Reports

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### Manchester–St Petersburg Friendship Society

By Cath Pick

In the 1970s and 1980s Manchester had one of the largest regional branches of the British Soviet Friendship Society (BSFS), active in fostering contacts with the Soviet Union and particularly with Manchester's long-twinning city, Leningrad (now St Petersburg). After the break-up of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, the BSFS and almost all its branches dissolved. However, in June 1992 the Manchester members, with strong encouragement from St Petersburg, decided to reconstitute themselves as an independent Manchester–St Petersburg Friendship Society.

In the early years the new Society organised, in partnership with the Association for International Co-operation in St Petersburg, a programme of very successful 'non-currency exchanges'. Each Society would take turns, year by year, to host a group from the other city and arrange for them a sequence of interesting events,

activities and contacts. Support for these exchanges dwindled as individual travel between the UK and Russia became simpler. The Society then focused, within a limited budget provided by members' subscriptions and donations, on helping various charitable, educational, medical and other initiatives linking the two cities; on circulating a bi-monthly *Bulletin* of Russia-related information to members; on organising talks about Russia for the general public; and on using events in Manchester, such as exhibitions of Russian art or the showing of Russian films, to provide opportunities for members to get together socially.



This year has provided a number of such opportunities. 2012 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Manchester–St Petersburg sister city link and the Society has worked closely with Manchester City Council to celebrate this event. A civic delegation visited St Petersburg and a delegation from St Petersburg City Administration, together with musicians and academics, visited Manchester in March and April. Members attended a civic reception and two concerts by Russian musicians.

In celebration of the fifty-year friendship of the people of Manchester and St Petersburg, an exhibition dedicated to the history of the links between St Petersburg and Manchester, using photographs from the Society's albums, was held at the Zion Arts Centre. *Contemporary Manchester* and *Contemporary St Petersburg*, an exhibition of artwork by art students from St

Petersburg was mounted in Manchester Town Hall, while art students from Manchester School of Art exhibited their work at the new Russian National Library in St Petersburg.

On International Women's Day the Society staged an event to increase awareness of Russian culture, with particular emphasis on women's lives. Each January the Society stages an event to celebrate Russian Christmas and each May helps organise Victory Day celebrations to honour British and Russian victims of the Second World War.

And the celebrations are not yet over. In October Catherine Danks, historian and Chair of the Society, will give an illustrated talk on fifty years of Manchester–St Petersburg co-operation and, as part of the Manchester Literature Festival, there will be two talks on books about Russia co-promoted by the Society.

See [www.manchesterstpetersburgsoc.org.uk](http://www.manchesterstpetersburgsoc.org.uk) for more information about the Manchester–St Petersburg Friendship Society and details of future events.

*Cath Pick is Secretary of the Manchester–St Petersburg Friendship Society*

## **Shakespeare Drama Festival, St Petersburg**

By Sergey Kogan

Shakespeare is close to nearly every Russian's heart. As such, one of the most popular youth programmes of the Association for International Co-operation and the English-Speaking Union (ESU) in St Petersburg is the annual Shakespeare Drama Festival, which started in 1993.

The festival's main objective is to promote world literature and drama studies by attracting young people's interest to and giving them a chance to present their own interpretations of Shakespeare's masterpieces. It also aims to revive the

tradition of school theatres and stimulate co-operation and exchanges between them.

The experience of past years has shown that the festival is of great importance for Shakespearean studies. Staging extracts from Shakespeare's plays in a non-competitive, creative spirit has proven to be a rewarding way of approaching and understanding the content and language of Shakespeare's works. Participation in the festival helps today's youth to develop their confidence and acting skills and appreciate British culture, and thus plays an important role in the development of cross-cultural communication.

Ten to twenty theatre groups, from schools that offer an advanced course of English language, take part in the festival. Performances are always in the original English. There is no age limit for participants. They are assessed for the quality of their acting, level of English and understanding of the main ideas. The judges are renowned specialists in the field of drama and English language. Sponsors are also invited.

Participants receive diplomas and other awards as a token of recognition and as an encouragement for their creative activities. A number of companies have been sponsoring the event for many years and their support is considered a valuable contribution to the success of the festival: Dirol Cadbury LLC, The European Book Company, Cambridge University Press and the St Petersburg English Language Teachers Association.

The original venue for the festival was Friendship House at 21 Fontanka. For the last ten years it has taken place at school № 213 – the first school to offer an advanced course of English language in then Leningrad. Tatyana Bogdanova, a teacher at this school, is the Festival Director and its heart and soul. Tatyana is also a stage director for the school's English Theatrical Society which has staged English and American drama since 1975.

The festival has led to a joint project with the ESU in the USA: *Shakespeare Across*

*Borders*. Talented students from American and St Petersburg schools show their skills on stage, paying tribute to their favourite writer. For a number of years now they have gathered at their computers on 23 April, William Shakespeare's birthday, to write sonnets online and stage Shakespeare's plays on the Internet using a special program *Stage Struck*.

Next year the Association is planning to change the format of the festival, borrowing an idea from the Shakespeare *Bard-a-Thon* marathon run by the ESU USA (Richmond). The intention is to take one Shakespeare play (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*) and offer participating schools the option to stage one scene each, then joining all the scenes into a single performance. Joint rehearsals and master classes are expected to be held. There are also ideas to stage Shakespeare via a video link-up with participation from British and American schoolchildren and to run a webinar *Shakespeare in the Global World*.

Thanks go to Julia Volkova, Executive Secretary at the Association, for making possible the continuation of the festival. She administers the event, attracts schools and sponsors, and sends out press releases and guidelines. As a result, more and more schools are participating in the festival every year.

*Sergey Kogan is a member of the St Petersburg Association for International Co-operation and a postgraduate student at St Petersburg State University of Culture and Arts.*

## Reviews

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### Sheffield DocFest 2012

Sheffield's International Documentary Film Festival, held in June, showed four films by the legendary Soviet documentary filmmaker, Dziga Vertov. One would have thought Vertov's work essential viewing for the hundreds of young filmmakers at the

festival, yet these remarkable films showing Soviet life in the twenties and thirties were very poorly attended. Perhaps classics like these smack too much of film school to today's young documentary filmmakers. They clearly preferred the contemporary films on a wide range of topics – from the environment to the problems of Latin America's indigenous peoples confronting the might of US multinational companies, to the Arab Spring, drugs, alcoholism, the economy and many other issues of present-day concern.

Vertov's *Enthusiasm: Symphony of the Donbass*, his first sound film made in 1930, is a lesson in how to use striking and dramatic images to convey the enthusiasm of the early post-revolution years. Once seen, one can never forget the almost balletic movement of the steelworker snatching long red-hot strips of steel from the furnace, rhythmically moving his body and his tongs to place the strip into the adjacent rolling mill. Simply magnificent. The film begins with scenes of people kissing icons in a church and crossing themselves fervently, followed by dramatic shots of the crosses being pulled down from church roofs and carried, together with church icons, out into the street. Vertov brilliantly captures the fight against religion, the establishment of collective and state farms, and the enthusiasm of those post-revolutionary years when the Soviets had done away with the oppressive tsarist system that had held the majority of the people in ignorance and poverty for so long.

The other Vertov films screened were *Lullaby*, *Man with a Movie Camera* and *Three Songs of Lenin*. *Lullaby* celebrates motherhood and shows the state's new network of maternity homes and nurseries. *Man with a Movie Camera* (1928) documents twenty-four hours in the life of a Russian city, using 1,775 separate shots! All the fascinating minutiae of life is there, caught by Vertov and his brother, who travelled about carrying the heavy and unwieldy movie camera and tripod to register Soviet life as it was at that time. *Three Songs of Lenin* (1934) shows heavily veiled Uzbek women before the Revolution,

using terms like “faces in darkness” and “blind” to describe their plight. The film, made ten years after Lenin's death when Vertov must have been well aware of the increasing personality cult around Stalin and the start of the repression, is a eulogy to Lenin, showing the people's love for him in places as culturally different as Uzbekistan and Russia.

There were no contemporary Russian-made films at this year's festival. *Putin's Kiss*, by Danish director Lisa Birk Pedersen, features a young girl, Masha, who joins Putin's United Russia party's youth movement *Nashi (Ours)*, only to become disillusioned by the bully-boy tactics by some of its members to silence opposition. Who was responsible for beating up Oleg Kashin, an independent journalist and Masha's friend? The film does not give an answer, but the inference is that *Nashi* is responsible. The film shows that there is no ideology behind *Nashi* save that of Russian nationalism, leading to anyone who does not agree being branded an “enemy”. Certainly, the scenes of *Nashi* demonstrators stamping in an orchestrated way on photo-placards of independent or opposition journalists were a chilling reminder of where fanaticism can lead.

A web documentary *Bielutine – the Mystery of a Collection*, by French director Clément Cogitore, shows the fascinating art collection housed in the flat of the Byelutuns, a Russian couple. It interviews art historians from Russia and other countries as to the authenticity of the collection, which, according to the Byelutins, includes works by Titian, Van Dyck and Rubens, among other ancient masters.

*!Vivan las Antipodas!* Is a cinematographic masterpiece by Russian director Viktor Kossakovsky. It takes the intriguing idea of people who live in four pairs of antipodes – Lake Baikal and the far south of Chile, Argentinian Patagonia and Shanghai, Spain and New Zealand, Hawaii and Botswana. With no narration, this gentle but sumptuously filmed journey depicts the daily lives of the ordinary people who live at these opposite, and often very isolated, points of

our planet. One is left with a sense of wonder at the beauty of our earth and a recognition of the need to preserve it. This film, shown in the festival's biggest cinema, was packed and the audience stood on its feet to applaud.

*Kate Clark*

## **Stalin's General: The Life of Georgy Zhukov**

**By Geoffrey Roberts (Icon Publishing, 2012, ISBN: 978-184831442-9, Hbk)**

Of all the Soviet commanders of World War II – or the Great Patriotic War as it is known in Russia – Marshal Georgy Zhukov remains the most famous. Veterans of that titanic struggle say simply, “Where Zhukov went, victory followed”, and today he still has the highest reputation for ensuring the Red Army's destruction of the forces of Nazi Germany. In this excellent new biography Geoffrey Roberts charts his progress from promising Civil War officer, his victory over the Japanese at Khalkhin-Gol in 1939, to his great successes on World War II's Eastern Front and finally his chequered post-war career, when he fell out of favour with both Stalin and Khrushchev.

There is much to enjoy in Roberts's account. Fresh archival material and the insights of Zhukov's family are deployed to good effect, and the judgments on Zhukov as military leader are nuanced and well balanced. Zhukov's outstanding gifts, his resolve in a crisis, and quick and confident grasp of strategy, are placed alongside his brutal ruthlessness and his rivalries with other Soviet marshals, particularly Konev and Rokossovsky. In the calamitous months following the opening of the war, it was Zhukov's resolve that shored up the defence of Leningrad and then – in his most remarkable achievement – forged a coherent fighting force that turned the tables on Hitler's previously invincible Wehrmacht at the gates of Moscow. Zhukov's grasp of strategy shone to good effect as the Red Army counter-attacked at Stalingrad in November 1942, surrounding the German Sixth Army, at Kursk in July 1943, when

Hitler's last great offensive was repulsed, and in Operation Bagration in the summer of 1944, when the whole of the German Army Group Centre was destroyed. The Red Army had vanquished the Wehrmacht – as much through growing skill as weight of numbers and military hardware – and in April 1945 Zhukov led the final assault on Berlin, capturing the capital of the Third Reich and overthrowing Hitler's regime.

As Roberts shows, these later victories were often collective achievements, and not all of Georgy Zhukov's endeavours – particularly the bloody fighting at Rzhev, nicknamed ‘the meat-grinder’, in the autumn of 1942 – were successful. Here, most of all, Stalin's general can be criticised for needlessly throwing away the lives of his soldiers. But in this incisive survey, the positives far outweigh the negatives, and rightly so. Roberts pays particular tribute to Zhukov's sheer will to win, and this Soviet commander's mastery over such a terrible foe, in the war of annihilation on the Eastern Front, remains an outstanding triumph.

*Michael Jones is the author of 'Total War: From Stalingrad to Berlin' (John Murray, 2011)*

## **Putin**

**By Chris Hutchins with Alexander Korobko (Matador, 2012, ISBN: 9781780881140, 333pp, Hbk, £20.00)**

It is twelve years since Vladimir Putin was first elected president of Russia at 47 years of age. In March this year he was elected Russian president for the third time, for a longer period of six years with the option of standing for a further six years after that.

To Western eyes this appears like a return to the one-party system of Soviet times. Within Russia itself the election result has been contested by many parties, including the Russian Communist Party. Putin's reaction is to pour scorn on their protests because, despite irregularities, his party United Russia still won a sweeping majority.

Former journalist Chris Hutchins examines the rise to absolute power of Putin, regarded

by some opponents as a murderous dictator. He portrays a man who prefers to be behind the scenes, who trusts few and who has a determination to serve his country and save it from disintegration.



SCRSS Hon Secretary Jean Turner introduces Vladimir Putin to Eric Yates of the SMTF at the Soviet War Memorial, London, 24 June 2003

Putin was the only child of hard-working communist parents, survivors of the Leningrad siege. They lost two sons before he was born, one shortly after birth, the other during the siege. Christened in secret by his mother, his father being an atheist, he was cosseted by his parents due to his small size and delicacy. Kept from school until he was 8 years old, he learned to deal with bullying there by becoming a fighter. He even joined a gang and carried a knife. His delinquency was channelled by a tutor into the martial arts at which he excels.

The book describes how Putin, inspired by Felix Dzerzhinsky, joined the KGB and rose to the rank of Major, living with his wife and daughters in Dresden. After the fall of the Berlin wall he returned to live in Leningrad. The collapse into anarchy and corruption following the counter-revolution in the USSR gave Putin a chance to practise his intelligence skills. He wove his way through the rise and fall of political leaders in the post-Soviet era. Eventually he became prime minister under President Yeltsin, who named him his successor.

However, as Hutchins points out, when Putin was elected president in 2000, he

proceeded to systematically clear up the mess left by Yeltsin. His strong-arm tactics to end the Chechen war gained him popular support but also enemies, especially within the media. His confrontation with the oligarchs, who controlled much of the media, shook them. He threatened them with criminal charges unless they paid tax on their ill-gotten gains and stayed out of politics. This was also a popular move, while the increase in state income helped to stabilise the economy.

Today Putin is developing a strong capitalist state in Russia with controlled international investment. Having eschewed Communism as an ideology, he is now a practising Christian.

Chris Hutchins depicts a man who can charm world leaders, is an astute politician and is tolerant racially. Putin loves his country but can be ruthless when required, especially when threatened by US interference on or near his patch.

*Jean Turner*

## Listings

### Art

#### **A Soviet Design for Life: the Catherine Cooke Collection of 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Russian Architecture and Design**

University Library, University of Cambridge,  
Web: [www.lib.cam.ac.uk/deptserv/slavonic/exhibitions/cooke.html](http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/deptserv/slavonic/exhibitions/cooke.html)

Until April 2013. New exhibition based on the extraordinary collection of books, posters, journals and ephemera that Dr Catherine Cooke, a former SCRSS Vice-Chair, left the University Library in Cambridge. Related displays of art by Ukrainian artists Ulyana Gumeniuk and Feodosii Humeniuk are on show in the Entrance Hall (see [www.lib.cam.ac.uk/deptserv/slavonic/exhibitions/entrancehall.html](http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/deptserv/slavonic/exhibitions/entrancehall.html))

for more details). Free admission, open to the public and library readers.

## Events

### 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Manchester–St Petersburg Town Twinning

A number of special events take place during the Manchester Literary Festival 2012:

Wednesday 10 October 6.30pm: literary event presented in partnership with the St Petersburg Association for International Co-operation and Oxygen Books. Readings from Edward Docx, author of the prize-winning St Petersburg-based novel *Self Help/Pravda* and a talk by publisher Heather Reyes about the new city-pick St Petersburg anthology. Venue: International Anthony Burgess Foundation, Manchester. More information: [www.oxygenbooks.co.uk](http://www.oxygenbooks.co.uk). Tickets: £5.00 (£3.00 concessions). Booking: 0843 208 0500.

Saturday 13 October: Catherine Danks, historian and Chair of the Manchester–St Petersburg Friendship Society dips into the archives relating to Manchester City Council's long-lasting links with St Petersburg. Venue: City Library, Elliot House, 151 Deansgate, Manchester M3 3WD.

Tuesday, 16 October 7.30pm: New Zealand author Sarah Quigley reads from her bestselling novel *The Conductor* about the performance of Shostakovich's *Seventh Symphony* during the siege of Leningrad in 1942. Musicians from RNCM close the event with a performance of Shostakovich's *Eighth String Quarter*, a score dedicated to the victims of fascism and war. Venue: Royal Northern College of Music. Tickets: £10 (concessions available). Booking: 0161 907 5555 or [www.rncm.ac.uk](http://www.rncm.ac.uk).

### Sutton Russian Circle

Friends Meeting House, 10 Cedar Road, Sutton, Surrey SM2 5DA

Friday 21 September 7pm: *Fabergé* (film); *Illustrated Lecture: Putin's Russia* (Ralph Gibson).

Friday 19 October 7pm: *Russian Ballet – Anyuta Part II* (film); *From a Russian Childhood to International Composer*,

*Illustrated by her Own Compositions* (Maria Antal)

Friday 16 November 7pm: *200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Russia's Great Triumph in 1812*, including *Illustrated Lecture: The Battle of Borodino* (Bob Dommett), film and music.

Friday 21 December 7pm: *Illustrated Lecture: The Mineral Wealth of Russia* (Jolyon Ralph) and Russian Winter Party. Admission to all events: free (Sutton Russian Circle members): £8.00 (non-members). Refreshments available.

## Publications

### Da! A Practical Guide to Russian Grammar

New publication from Hodder Education. Clear and concise combined reference grammar and workbook for intermediate-level students of Russian, suitable for classroom use and self-study. Inspection copies available to higher education lecturers whose class size is greater than twelve students – contact Megan Mondie (Email: [megan.mondie@hodder.co.uk](mailto:megan.mondie@hodder.co.uk), Tel: 020 7873 6460) to request a copy.

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