

The Scotland-Russia Forum *Review*



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Dear Readers,

This edition is devoted the successes of the Scotland-Russia Institute. Since opening last year, it has hosted many exhibitions (see adjacent page) and events, and has contributed to a growing awareness of Russia and her neighbours. See page 15 for a breakdown of membership, circulation and visitors.

Our publication this year has a record number of reviews: a book about Komi knitting designs, a history of Napoleon's venture into Russia, two volumes of contemporary Russian fiction, autobiographical tales of travel and the poetry of Mayakovsky, to name but a few.

Among our essays and articles, Jock Dempster writes an account of his summer trip to Murmansk, which was a rare opportunity to sail into the Arctic city via Norway and the Kola Peninsula. John Dunn summarises his inaugural paper at the Terry Wade Memorial Lecture. Andrei Rogatchevski finds parallels in the works of Marina Lewycka and reveals attitudes to immigrants from Eastern Europe. And in honour of St Andrew's Day, Maria Alferova tells of how more and more Muscovites are having a right old Scottish knees-up.

I would like to thank this edition's many contributors, without whom the SRF Review would simply not exist.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

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Editor

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William Carrick – Boatsmen, River Volga (1875)



William Carrick – An Abacus Seller (1860)

Exhibitions at the SR Institute

The SRF's latest exhibition is the work of **William Carrick** (1827-1878), an Edinburgh-born artist who made his career as a photographer in St Petersburg. Struggling financially, Carrick conceived his 'Russian Types' series, a collection of images of street-sellers, tradesmen and other capital dwellers. The pictures were designed as postcards for tourists, but to this day present a remarkable record of St Petersburg in the 19th Century. Carrick also travelled to the Simbirsk region on the Volga, where Lenin grew up, and returned with emotive and evocative images of provincial life. Many of these images are held by the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh, and the SRF, in association with the Gallery, is delighted to present a selection of them from December 4 to January 22.

Since June's edition of the SRF Review, the Institute has hosted exhibitions from artists such as Evgenia Gradova, Gennadii Gogoliuk and Maria Rud. Among the photography exhibitions was *Quiet Russia* by **Shamil Khairov**, lecturer of Russian at Glasgow University. Shamil's work includes a series of black and white photographs of provincial Russia taken over the last 20 years.

Looking to the future, in June 2010 the SR Institute will host an exhibition of photographs by **Craig Brandist**, Reader in the Department of Russian and Slavonic Studies at Sheffield University.

Our front and back pictures were taken by SRF member Simon Crofts and show the dancers of the Lviv ballet in Ukraine. A series of photographs taken backstage at the ballet – and even in the dancers' homes – featured recently in the *Economist's Intelligent Life* magazine, after which Simon was made a fellow of the Royal Photographic Society. The SR Institute hopes to exhibit some of Simon's work in the autumn of 2010.

www.scotlandrussiaforum.org/exhibitions



Craig Brandist – St Petersburg canal reflections



Shamil Khairov – about a boy



Shamil Khairov – blue village

Кейли, килты и Шотландские танцы в Москве

ШОТЛАНДСКИЕ танцы в России из года в год становятся все популярнее. Растет количество танцевальных школ, преподающих различные направления (Scottish Country Dancing, Highland Dancing, Ladies' Step, National Dance, Ceilidh) и ориентированных на различные социальные группы. Почти ежемесячно школы и клубы проводят балы и кейли, приглашают шотландских именитых преподавателей для проведения мастер-классов. Летом на набережных Москвы-реки несколько раз в неделю можно увидеть людей в килтах, танцующих Strip the willow и Duke of Perth. Традиционные вечера с танцами и живой музыкой проводятся в День Святого Андрея, Роберта Бернса, Самайн.

Впервые широкая публика в России смогла познакомиться с шотландскими танцами в 1993 году, когда образованное шотландскими бизнесменами Общество Святого Андрея в Москве, в числе прочего проводило занятия по Scottish Country Dances. В дальнейшем, после того, как основатели Общества покинули Россию, развитие увлечения танцами привело к организации Московской Школы Шотландского Танца (МШШТ) – официального филиала RSCDS и ее демонстрационного коллектива Dan Rùnach, впоследствии преобразованного в самостоятельную школу. От нее отделилась новая школа Shady Glen, а следом – клуб Tartan Dreams. Эти четыре московские школы, несмотря на активное соперничество, прекрасно дополняют друг друга. МШШТ проводит базовое обучение сетовым танцам, организует балы, мастер-классы и поездки на танцевальные школы в Сент-Эндрюс; Dan Rùnach – школа, специализирующаяся на Highland Dancing. В школе Shady Glen, нацеленной на выступления перед публикой, благодаря мастерству преподавателей и широкому кругу направлений шотландского танца ученики быстро выходят на «большую сцену». Клуб Tartan Dreams, образованный сравнительно недавно, объединяет свои усилия с



Кейли в Москве в ноябре

группой музыкантов The White Heather band, исполняющих традиционную шотландскую танцевальную музыку на балах и кейли.

В ноябре 2009 года в Москву был приглашен Patrick Chamoin – один из лучших преподавателей шотландских танцев Европы с мастер-классами по Scottish Country Dancing и Highland Dancing; а приуроченный к его визиту бал собрал на паркете около 150 участников из Москвы, Санкт-Петербурга, Киева. Недавно прошедший бал в честь Дня Святого Андрея, организованный МШШТ, Tartan Dreams и The White Heather позволил продемонстрировать отточенное на занятиях мастерство.

ГОВОРИТ Анна Егорова, руководитель клуба шотландского танца Tartan Dreams: «Шотландские танцы доступны каждому человеку, поскольку не требуют поначалу особой техники исполнения, это утверждение, конечно, касается парных танцев кейли: полек, вальсов, тустепов. Вместе с тем, нет предела совершенству: исполнение элементов и фигур можно шлифовать бесконечно. Шотландские танцы – на редкость удачный компромисс между элегантными бальными танцами и

душевными сельскими.»

Рассказывает Мария Зотько, руководитель школы Shady Glen: «Каждый стиль шотландских танцев находит своих поклонников. Хайланд популярен среди молодых активных юношей и девушек благодаря своей спортивности, сольные женские танцы среди дам постарше, которые находят в этих танцах особую женственность и грацию. Парные танцы популярны среди людей, которые хотят пообщаться и весело провести время.»

Репертуар балов и Social dancing каждый раз обновляется. В списке танцев изредка встречаются незамысловатые или кейли – для новичков; каждый раз танцоры-завсегдатаи требуют усложнения фигур и повышения техничности танца. Ведь после нескольких лет активных занятий танцы становятся второй натурой человека!

В подтверждение этому высказался один из опытейших танцоров Игорь Гайсин: «Поначалу я запоминал, заучивал танцы, которые нам давали на занятиях. Когда счёт пошёл на сотни, я понял, что запомнить их все – абсолютно невозможно, да и не нужно, сердце подскажет.»

Мария Алферова

Helping Tbilisi's street children

by Kitty Sidworthy

THE word 'mkurnali' means healing – of body, mind and spirit. After war broke out in August 2008, Georgia was in need of help. Refugees flooded in large numbers to its capital Tbilisi from areas of fighting. Their immediate needs were met by the Red Cross, but with little knowledge of the city, its staff could do only so much. Thereafter, the children of Mkurnali – themselves living on the streets – stepped in, helping the refugees to find everyday items such as candles and buckets, cleaning shelters and making goods for the displaced families.

Mkurnali is a charity whose aim is to give street children a future. Among its many activities, it teaches trades such as mechanics, metal working and sewing. It was set up in 2000 by Father Giorgi Chachava, Nino Chubabria and Dato Chalabov. The charity was initially supported by the Department for International Development, and later received financial help from various international charities and from embassies. It has always been supported by Father Giorgi's parishioners and St Gregory's Foundation began supporting it in 2006.

Mkurnali operates out of modest premises, but its results are impressive. It provides training, crucial work experience and a wage. Some children are taught traditional Georgian enamel work, and many now earn their living by this craft. Girls are taught needlework, for which seed money and premises were provided by the abbess of a local convent. Boys are taught mechanics and one even married and set up house after training. The charity hopes to start teaching horticulture and the children have suggested setting up a professional car washing business.

THE other main thrust of Mkurnali's work is advocacy. Street children are often subjected to arbitrary arrest, and sometimes end up in prison for up to two years while awaiting trial. They are frequently refused medical treatment because they have no money. Father Giorgi and Nino have rescued many children by persuading the authorities to give them a conditional discharge, and themselves assuming full responsibility for the young offender, who may be entirely innocent. They also run prison educational projects and act as negotiators.

The children's willingness to help displaced families after the Georgian-Russian war shows the extent of their psychological healing. They

actively sought out the refugees, helped them to clean their shelters, and identified their needs – formula milk for babies whose mothers were too traumatised to breastfeed, candles, buckets to use as lavatories, basins for washing, children's shoes. The Mkurnali street children even helped set up a kindergarten for refugee children.

After time, some of the refugee girls began working alongside ex-street children to make cotton duvets, which a local sponsor then bought and donated to displaced families; and many of the refugee boys joined the Mkurnali's computer classes.

St Gregory's small scale support is consistent with its policy of working closely with partners on the ground, focussing on practical needs that have far-reaching results.

If you would like to help the Mkurnali project, donations marked 'Mkurnali' may be sent to George Guest, St Gregory's Foundation, 32 Wood Rise, Pinner, HA5 2JE (charity no.1002469).

www.stgregorysfoundation.org.uk

You can help give a Tbilisi street-child training, a trade and real hope for the future.



www.stgregorysfoundation.org.uk

31 Radnor House, 1272 London Rd, London SW16 4EA

tel. 020 3339 0796

Charity no. 1002469

Voyage to Murmansk

SRF member **JOCK DEMPSTER** sailed to Murmansk in the summer. Here he recalls his trip and the memories it invoked...

WITH two other 'elderly' Russian Arctic Convoy veterans, Geoffrey Holmes from Louth, Lincolnshire, and Len Dibb-Weston from Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset, I sailed on the July 22, 2009, from Harwich to Murmansk on the 'Discovery' cruise ship. We knew we would only spend one day in Murmansk, the other 13 days visiting Norwegian Ports, but appreciated that this would probably be our only opportunity to sail into the city that had so shaped our lives.

At Harwich we were waved off by a party of smart and enthusiastic local Sea Cadets, all aged about 16. Having myself sailed to Murmansk at that age, my memory cells were working overtime.

My first trip to Murmansk was on the M.V. San Venancio, a tanker. As we approached the Kola Inlet, north of Murmansk, we were greeted not by cheering crowds, but by German U-boats. The ship immediately ahead of us, the Horace Bushnell, was torpedoed; then minutes later the Thomas Donaldson, on our starboard quarter, was torpedoed. The guns on the merchant ships opened up at the sight of a periscope – everyone was shouting and yelling.

The Sloop HMS Lapwing, well off to starboard, was also torpedoed. The bow shot up in the air then sank in minutes, the stern went down soon after. As a tanker, we were the prime target on the convoy. The thought of death didn't frighten me, I was very religious at the time, a firm believer that there was a life thereafter, but I was terrified of being badly burned, losing a limb or my senses. Throughout all this action the stench and screech of burning and tearing metal, the screams of the wounded, filled the air. Men clung desperately to lifeboats and rafts, many were too cold and too sodden to hang

on and simply slid into the sea. These memories flooded back when our cruise ship sailed over the stretch of water where the ships lie. I made a point of being on my own and silently paid my respects.

Our spirits were lifted as we approached Murmansk, where the crews of Russian Navy ships, including an aircraft carrier, were lined from bow to stern paying their silent respects. As we berthed in Murmansk, the Russian Northern Fleet Brass Band were playing their hearts out and TV crews crowded closer, anxious to talk to us.

Coaches took us up to the Russian National Memorial, Alesha, where we were greeted by the Vice-Admiral of the Northern Fleet, the Mayor of Murmansk, a full top class Naval Guard of Honour, who were quite outstanding, and again the Naval Band. We listened to passionate speeches thanking the Russian Convoy Veterans for their sacrifices and the vital role they had played in helping Russia attain victory on the Eastern Front. Much stress was placed on the immense appreciation of the Russian People. I was privileged to make a speech, in Russian, reciprocating the appreciation of the veterans to the Russians and thanking them most sincerely for never forgetting us. Since 1985 successive Russian governments have awarded us commemorative medals every ten years and now, because our average age is 86 and our numbers are dwindling, the current government has decided to award us the medal due in 2015 five years ahead of time, in 2010.

The remainder of the day was devoted to wreath-laying and paying respects at the graves of allied seamen, some only 16 years old. The tour concluded with a visit to the nuclear-powered ice-breaker Lenin. Every one on the cruise agreed that the welcome received from the Russians was very wonderful indeed. The non-veteran passengers were amazed at the depth of appreciation so openly displayed by everyone we came into contact with.

On our return trip, a memorial service was held aboard ship and wreaths cast into the sea in memory of our shipmates who never returned. A Royal Air Force Nimrod flew over the ship to honour our shipmates who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Terry Wade Memorial Lectures

Terry Wade's contribution to Russian studies was enormous. His Comprehensive Russian Grammar, bound in black with red lettering, is the authority in its field. His most recent book, Using Russian Vocabulary, was published posthumously and continues his work in teaching Russian.

To commemorate Terry Wade, Glasgow University held the first in what is to be an annual event: the Terry Wade Memorial Lectures. Terry's interests extended into other Slavonic languages, especially Polish, and in honour of this, and to broaden the appeal of the lecture series, **DR JOHN DUNN**, opened the event on October 7 with a paper entitled: how many Slavonic lectures are there? Here is a summary of the lecture.

NO ONE has ever established universal criteria for what constitutes a distinct language. Is a language a dialect with an army and a navy? Or is it a dialect in which one can pass an examination? Or perhaps nowadays it is a dialect which qualifies for EU funding.

Any examination of this question will involve the consideration of at least three sets of criteria, relating to linguistics, politics and identity, and there will be many different and contradictory answers.

For instance, for some linguistic purposes it may still make sense to consider Serbo-Croat a single language, but the application of other criteria would suggest that Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian are now separate

languages. The status of Montenegrin is still being debated, while in Austria, Burgenland Croatian has official recognition and is evolving its own distinct standard. So, depending on how you look at it, Serbo-Croat is now one, three, four or even five languages.

This is an extreme case, but problems with status and function arise elsewhere, for example with Rusyn (in Ukraine), Silesian (in Poland) and Resian (in north-eastern Italy). And how does one classify surżyk, the mixture of Ukrainian and Russian widely spoken in Ukraine? Meanwhile, to return to one of definitions proposed above, it is worth remembering that anyone becoming a Russian Orthodox priest will have passed an examination in Church Slavonic.

It ought in principle to be possible to reach a definitive answer for the number of languages given some sort of official political or administrative recognition, but even here uncertainties (e.g. over Montenegrin) mean that we have to content ourselves with an approximation of 19-22. If we count all possible varieties of Slavonic languages – but this is somewhat exaggerated.

Even if we say there are 19-22 Slavonic languages, that may seem to some a little high; but this reflects not only recent upheavals in the Balkans, but also a more widespread process of 'language creation' which is characteristic of present-day Europe. This process has seen the replacement of the previous sharp distinction between 'language' and 'dialect' with a more complex paradigm of multiple degrees of standardisation, status and functionality. This process is furthered by the new electronic media, and especially the internet, which serves as an easily accessible forum for the development, propagation and standardisation of linguistic varieties not hitherto accommodated in the public sphere.

Invasion ... Ukrainian-style

ANDREI ROGATCHEVSKI, of Glasgow University, recounts Ukrainian author Marina Lewycka's visit to Scotland...and suggests how attitudes to immigration have changed.

ON August 25, the Scotland-Russia Institute, with Friends of Ukraine, welcomed bestselling author Marina Lewycka, whose first two novels, *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* and *Two Caravans*, describe the experience of Ukrainian refugees and migrants in postwar and today's Britain.

The first draws creatively on the story of Lewycka's Ukrainian parents, who came to the UK after suffering displacement under the Nazi occupation, and simultaneously, on some aspects of the story of Anna Nicole Smith, to produce a highly entertaining account of the highs and lows of a love affair between a relatively young Ukrainian divorcee and a much older Briton of Ukrainian origin.

Lewycka's second book takes its migrant workers (who include not only young Ukrainians from Kyiv and Donetsk but also characters from Poland, China and Malawi) from strawberry-picking to a chicken factory and a nursing home,

to examine the impact of global migration on rural and urban Britain. A comparison of the British attitudes to the migrants of the generation of Lewycka's parents, on the one hand, and the migrants of today, on the other, seems to be in favour of the former: Lewycka believes that after the war people were kinder to the likes of her parents than they are to East European (and other) migrants now. Interestingly, the scenes of cruelty to chickens in *Two Caravans* have provoked more reaction from the British readers than the scenes of cruelty inflicted on human beings.

The event was extremely well attended. After reading passages from both *Tractors* and *Caravans* and talking a little about her latest novel, *We Are All Made of Glue*, which develops the theme of displacement and alienation by exploring British links to the Middle East (all three books were on sale in the adjacent room), Lewycka answered a large number of questions from an eager audience.

She also revealed that a film script of *Tractors* is looking for funding and that there are plans for an opera based on *Caravans* (virtually every character in it, including a dog, has its own distinctive voice as if asking for a leitmotif). Lewycka said her next book was likely to be about the credit crunch. There is little doubt that it will be well worth reading ... even if there are no Ukrainians in it.

Gentlemen of the Jury, Ostap Bender Rides Again!

THIS BRAND-NEW EDITION OF THE LITTLE GOLDEN CALF, one of the greatest Russian satires, is **the first English translation of this classic novel in nearly 50 years**. It is also the first unabridged, uncensored English translation ever, and includes an introduction by Alexandra Ilf, daughter of one of the book's two co-authors.

The novel resurrects the con man Ostap Bender, "the smooth operator," and follows him and his three hapless co-conspirators on a hilarious romp through the Soviet Russia and Central Asia of 1930.

So many quotations from this novel have entered everyday Russian speech that it stands alongside the works of Griboyedov, Pushkin, and Gogol for its profound effect on Russian language and culture. The tale overflows with legendary literary episodes, offering a portrait of Russian life that is as funny and true today as it was when the novel was first published.

For decades, foreigners trying to understand Russia have been advised to read the adventures of Ostap Bender. This fresh new translation by Anne O. Fisher (copiously annotated, to give readers full insight into the authors' myriad of cultural references) makes those adventures more enjoyable than ever.

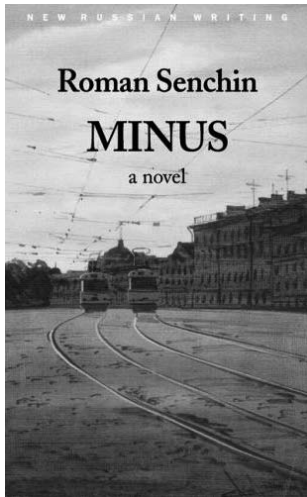


"A grand satirical novel... There is more of Russia in this book than in a dozen treatises by foreigners."

— NEW YORK TIMES (1932)

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*Available online at russianlife.com and amazon.com



by Roman Senchin,
Glas New Russian Writing,
2009, pp. 256, £8.99

Minus

Reviewed by
Wendy Muzlanova

THE time is post-USSR. The place is the aptly-named town of Minus.

The book reeks authenticity and is autobiographical. Little wonder, then, that the author looks so god-damned miserable on the back cover.

Roman Senchin is an unfortunate Russian refugee from Kyzyl: 'Several Russians were stabbed to death, and a lot more were just stabbed, including my father.'

He is the present-day Gorky. His book is not an easy ride. Spare him some sympathy, though. We might not like it, but at least we don't have to live it.

However, just for the time being ...

...you will experience Senchin's life right there with him, drinking the same *samogonka*, the optimistically and romantically named 'Gypsy Girl': 'I haven't heard of anyone being seriously poisoned,' he writes.

The book, like the town itself, is claustrophobic and oppressive: 'In Minusinsk, the rhythm is laboured and sluggish, like blood in old veins.'

This is not to say that you will not be thoroughly absorbed by the book. When you finally put it down, you may well be glad that you have, but it will leave you wondering about Senchin and all his friends: 'Where are they now!?'

I know that I just cannot leave the story behind after the reading. As you progress through the book, you will become Senchin. You will see his friends through his eyes: 'His pinched little face looks like a thoroughly desiccated skull.' You will inhabit the same stinking, noisy, hopeless hostel. You will lust after the same girl and you will hope, always hope, that she will be there when you look for her. 'I need to look into her eyes. I've needed to look into her eyes for a very long time,' he pleads.

It's a hugely voyeuristic journey into the life of a man. The object of Senchin's desire – and she is very much an object – wears her hair in a green velvet band which 'They sell them in the market at ten roubles for five'.

The author's casual and understated reportage of domestic violence and homophobia in *Minus* says far more than hyperbole ever could. These things are simply a way of life: 'she had a miscarriage with only a couple of months left to go. Perhaps Sanya overdid it one time he was drunk.'

'We're wary of getting too pally with the male actors ... because most of them are queers.'

Senchin himself was on the point of being seduced by one such 'festive' thespian and recalls: 'I didn't punch Lyalin like you're supposed to if you're a man.'

Well, apart from wife-battering and gay-bashing, there are other, smaller cultural details which the non-Russian Slavophile will find fascinating.

On cards: 'Lyokha, let's play Durak.'

On *narkotiki*: 'Actually, I like Kuzmich and Managa a whole lot better than taking a joint.'

On drinking: 'I flick the side of my neck to indicate a need to imbibe.'

I am so glad that this is the only example of Russian Sign Language in this work. It could all have been so much nastier ... and a whole lot ruder.

Buy the book. I recommend it wholeheartedly. There must be one 'hard-to-buy-for' irritant remaining on your Christmas list.



by Natasha Perova,
Glas New Russian Writing,
2009, pp. 400, £12.99

War & Peace Contemporary Russian Prose

Reviewed by
Susan Geddes

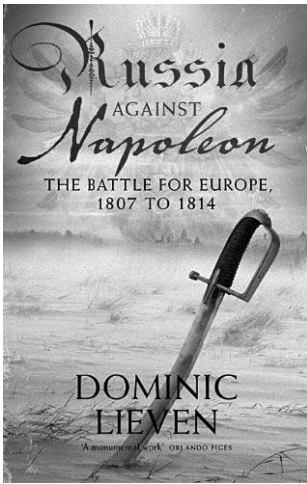
THIS is a must-read for anyone interested in Russian writing; twelve 'state of the nation' stories by a new generation of writers. There are seven 'war' stories, which

are mostly autobiographical and focus on the continuing conflict in the Caucasus. In very different styles the authors convey their army experiences with searing honesty and graphic detail of the discontent, corruption and savagery. I found Dmitry Bykov's two futuristic stories particularly fascinating and moving.

The 'peace' stories exploring themes of love, children and family but also of aging, the generation gap and violence towards women.

Again, they are all very different. 'The End of Summer' has a mystical quality, 'The Secret of the Unread Note' is reminiscent of Chekhov, and 'Alive Again' is based on harrowing personal experiences.

As a female reviewer, I might have appreciated one or two more 'peace' stories and one or two less 'war' ... but really that is a minor complaint. This collection has introduced me to several new writers whose works will be finding their way onto my Amazon wish-list.



by Dominic Lieven,
Allen Lane, 2009,
pp. 672, £30

Russia Against Napoleon

Reviewed by
Paul Dukes

MANY of us have formed our views of the theme of this book from Leo Tolstoy's War and Peace, in which the vainglorious French invader meets the determined

opposition of the Russian army, emboldened by the wily Field-Marshal Kutuzov.

Lieven sets out to demonstrate how Tolstoy was wrong, although there is much more to his attempt to tell the story of Napoleon's defeat in a more truthful way. For many years, he has wanted to do justice to 'the regiments of the Imperial Russian Army who fought, suffered and triumphed in the great war of 1812-14' (to quote his dedication). These

included some of his own ancestors as well as some of his heroes. In particular, to give just one example, he seeks to rehabilitate one of the Russian leaders who received short shrift from Tolstoy, Barclay de Tolly (after whom he has named his dog). Although he mentions Tolly's Scottish ancestry (from Towie Barclay in Aberdeenshire), Lieven points out that in reality he was a member of the Baltic German professional middle class.

More could have been made of native-born Scots, in particular of James Wylie, physician to Tsar Alexander I as well as a major contributor to the development of Russian medical science. But the book's major emphasis is on strategy rather than gore, and there is much to be said for Lieven's assertion that the year 1812 needs to be appreciated in the context of the two subsequent years, that the battle of Leipzig was as significant as Borodino.

Altogether, this book is not only the labour of a long-held love, but a scholarly account of a subject of great importance to the history of Europe, giving emphasis to the basic point that Russian and European security depended on each other. 'That is still true today,' says Lieven in his conclusion.

Of course, Russian and European literature have depended on each other, too. There would have been no Leo Tolstoy without Walter Scott, and those of us misled by reading War and Peace might at least have had our appetite whetted for historical truth via a supreme work of fiction.

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Mostly Mittens: Ethnic Knitting Designs from Russia

Reviewed by
Marion Watson



by Charlene Schurch,
Martingale and Company,
2009, pp. 112, £16.99

BEING a life-long knitter interested in design, my joy at finding this beautiful, colourful book dedicated to

the knitting of mitts was truly wonderful.

What knitter has not spent evenings producing mitts for the family and trying to vary them for identification purposes; using the same old patterns but trying to vary the colours and insert initials, etc.?

No more! Now we have a book dedicated to giving

us so many designs that we are spoiled for choice. The designs in this book have been inspired by the Komi, whose homeland is in north-eastern European Russia. There is a section on the Komi with photographs, in which Komi knitting is discussed and how this inspired the beautiful Fair Isle tradition of Scotland.

There is a section on the combining of Komi patterns, some of which may be more suited for basic knitters. Yet another section gives Basic Guidelines followed by another giving General Mitten Instructions.

In all, there are instructions for 35 pairs of mittens, each of which has its own particular easy-to-follow chart. There are also variations on the cuffs which allow for colour combinations, ribbed effects and incorporation of the main pattern. There are four sizes from child's medium to large adult.

Besides all of this, the author has included four patterns for caps; a Komi Fez with Tassels, a Komi Cap, a Ribbed Cuff Cap and a Komi Earflap Cap, each of which uses the same traditional patterns and beautiful colour combinations of the mittens.

This is a beautiful addition to the books already published by Charlene Schurch.



Contemporary Russian Fiction

Reviewed by
Magdalena Stafiej

by Kristina Rotkirch,
Glas, 2009, pp. 200, £8.99

ROTKIRCH'S book presents the reader with an overview of the most notable authors of contemporary literature and their works. Among these, we can find names such as Grishkovets, Limonov, Pelevin, Petrushevskaya, Sadur,

step outside their public personae in order to give us a glimpse of the real person behind the acknowledged author. It is through this method that we are given the chance to understand why Akunin viewed his creations not as a literary art but an outlined project, varied by the contrast of Yin and Yang or what made Mamleev decide not to enrol in any institute of humanities and what was his perception of returning to Russia after fifteen years of expatriation.

The title of the book might be misleading to an extent, leaving the prospective reader with an impression that the book contains nothing but a series of interviews. This is not completely correct. A few of the writers were not interviewed. Instead, the author included their written responses, as in the case of Pelevin and Ulitskaya.

The essay by Ludmila Petrushevskaya 'The Making of a Soviet Writer (An Attempt at Confession)' truly stands out. Written in a light tone and with a touch of irony, this text presents to the reader not only Petrushevskaya's private journey to literature but also the reality of written art under a communist regime.

'Contemporary Russian Fiction: A Short List' is a book I would recommend to anyone interested in literature of the 20th Century. Through the eyes of a number of authors, it paints a picture of the art of the word in living memories of times of communism and of many paths that led well-known Russian authors to take up the pen, as well the events that shaped their styles into those by which we now recognise them. Anyone interested in Russian literature should consider adding this publication to their home library.

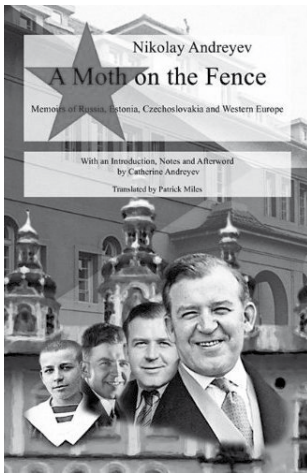
Sorokin, Ulitskaya and Tolstaya.

The brief biographical notes preceding each interview work excellently to give the reader a greater understanding of the author and references that might be mentioned later.

The contrast not only in style, but also in life experiences and outlook towards life of the authors presented in the book, lends it a width of perspective which few books can offer.

The reason this publication stands out is the fact that it reaches above being simply a compilation of facts. Rotkirch's interview technique urges the writers to

Contemporary Russian Fiction and a large number of other books published by Glas are available to borrow from the Scotland-Russia Institute Library.



by **Nikolay Andreyev**,
Hodgson Press, 2009,
pp. 282, £12.99

A Moth On the Fence

Reviewed by
Scott Telfer

YEARS ago, my late grandfather recorded an oral history. It was a crackling epic of his Scottish Horse Regiment training, leaving Greenock for Egypt, losing friends at El Alamein, the invasion of Sicily, firsthand descriptions of the Yalta Conference and

wrapping up with the streets of the Greek revolution. Unfortunately, this recording was lost before it was ever transcribed and edited, never mind translated. Fortunately, the same can not be said of Nicolay Andreyev's fascinating 'A Moth on the Fence'.

These memoirs follow the life in emigration of Andreyev, a son of Russia's pre-Revolutionary liberal intelligentsia, and describes how his relationships, mental and physical liberty, migration, education and career were all irreversibly shaped by the events of the 20th Century.

Like all good primary sources and oral histories, 'A Moth on the Fence' challenges your preconceptions of a period. Stories such as the Whites' kindness during the Civil War or a glittering prosperous Petrograd in January 1917 defy many proscribed notions of Russian history. Personal observations are well balanced with wider historical events: Andreyev's musings are an invaluable snapshot of emigre life and turn-of-the-century Russia, and provide absorbing insights into the incarnation of the Czechoslovak Republic and newly independent Estonia. In rare instances, some detailed passages feel heavy (such as the intricate methodology of Icon research or the trappings of the Khondakov Institute) and possibly obscure – but nonetheless are essential to understanding the man, his passions and life.

The challenging of historical inevitability is one of the overriding themes of the work and is an important reminder to us all that chickens should never be counted – even after they are hatched. Widely felt notions and certainties that the Dictatorship of the Proletariat would only last two weeks or that Prague would be razed to the ground were all scotched by the unpredictable process of history. This paralysis of the unknown is particularly poignant during Andreyev's post-war interrogation and imprisonment by the organs of Soviet power.

The text is not verbatim and some of the more amorous and superfluous passages of the recording

have been removed. Despite this editing, Patrick Miles' translation captures beautifully the spontaneous spoken style of the memoirs and, in some rich winding sentences, one can almost see Andreyev creaking back in an old leather chair recounting his travails. Only occasionally does the prose exhibit the stilted features than often riddle such translations and in these rare instances it is clear that Miles was torn by the compromise between the accuracy of the historical source and the author's distinct spoken style.

The book is footnoted and interspersed with photos of Andreyev's life. Dates are given in both Julian and Gregorian and each stage of his migration is accompanied by a clear contemporary map – a nice addition might have been to overlay maps to include imperial or Soviet era borders.

The framing of the work by Andreyev's daughter is touching and her introduction and afterword create a more rounded, integrated and involving story, adding much more depth to the text than many, often stapled-on afterthoughts.

'A Moth on the Fence' captures excellently the grim coincidence of survival, hope and weight of history which dominated Andreyev's life along with hundreds of thousands of others across Eastern Europe. It was a pleasure to read and within Andreyev's reflections most Slavophiles will find much of interest.



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THE RUSSIAN COUNTESS

EDITH SOLLOHUB

by Edith Sollohub,
Impress Books, 2009,
pp. 304, £18.99

The Russian Countess

Reviewed by
Dairmid Gunn

THIS book, the memoirs of a Russian countess, is both a social history, embracing life before and during the 1917 Revolution, and an exciting adventure story. Born in 1886, the daughter of a distinguished Russian

diplomat, Edith Natalie de Martens, the memoirist, spent a happy childhood in St Petersburg and the family summer estate in Livonia (present-day Latvia.)

As a child she was fascinated by country life and enjoyed riding, shooting (with a small bore rifle) and fishing; she liked music and played the violin well and was blessed with a loving and capable nanny from Archangel, who could have rivalled Pushkin's Anna Rodionovna. Russian was spoken in the nursery and French at table. She was soon to add English and German to her repertoire of languages.

In 1906 Edith married Count Alexander Sollohub, who had received his education at the elite Lyceum in St Petersburg. Although there was a family estate near Kursk, he had bought his own estate south of St Petersburg

The young countess, a formidable shot, welcomed the opportunity of hunting in three very different areas of

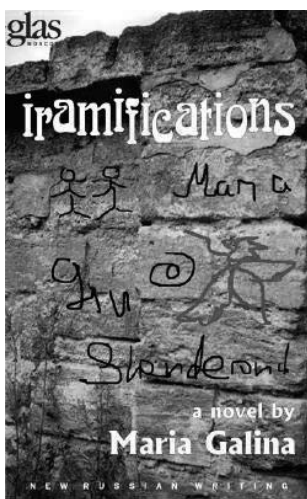
Russia. Her descriptions resemble in lyricism those of Turgenev's *A Sportsman's Sketches*. Frequent absences of her husband on matters pertaining to local government brought her into close contact with her estate workers. She learnt much from them and developed lasting friendships that were to prove invaluable in harder times.

The harder times came with the Revolution in 1917, when she had to cope single-handed with the requisitioning of the town house and the nationalisation of the estate. Her husband was with the White forces elsewhere. She managed to escape to Estonia with her three sons but had to return alone to St Petersburg to sell what she could to raise money for their upkeep. The following two years were spent trying to escape again from Russia to rejoin them.

After adventures in St Petersburg, including a visit to the Bolshevik headquarters at the Smolny Institute, she made her way to Moscow to be adopted by a Polish aristocratic family and obtain a new identity. This channel of escape was blocked by a house raid by the Cheka, who imprisoned her for weeks in both the Lubyanka and the Butyrki prisons.

With another change of identity, this time Russian, she joined an entertainment group bound for western Russia as a violinist. Later, as a Red Army nurse in the Polish Soviet War she reached the front line town of Wolkowysk, which was eventually overrun by the Poles. After her release in Warsaw she was eventually reunited with her sons in Estonia. Before finding them, she was to say: '...if I could see them grow up honest and strong and freedom-loving, this would be my reward.' Her wish was granted.

She owed her remarkable escape to a network of friends, old and new, a proficiency in languages, a self sufficiency born of country life, and her own resourcefulness, courage and innate charm.



by Marina Galina,
Glas New Russian Writing,
2009, pp. 300, £8.99

Iramifications

Reviewed by
Susan Geddes

IN this off-the-wall but strangely compelling novel, Maria Galina weaves together a bewildering collection of myths – Hellenic, Jewish and Arab – with references to popular legends and modern superstitions.

For good measure she also throws in such diverse ingredients as the Elizabethan

descendants, the mystical book of Raziel and even a herd of Nubian asses. Finally, into the mix go a couple of hapless shuttle traders, one so hapless he isn't even supposed to be there – he has been tricked. The traders are cheated by their Turkish partners and while giving chase, find themselves involved in the theft of a precious stone tablet and transported back in time to the mystical city of Iram. Galina read a massive number of books and documents in order to create this world all its own which exists only in 'Iramifications' – and yet the book does not seem to take itself too seriously.

'...all the cheeky comedy of Ilf and Petrov with just a touch of Gogolian barminess,' said Robert Porter, a Rossica Prize judge. (The exceptional English translation won this prize this year.) The traders seem almost to be bluffing their way through their adventure, and even the mystical beings have an air of resignation and irony about them. When negotiations go badly, occasionally a handy crowbar appears to help things along.

Galina also explores serious themes: confrontation between kings, the effects of power and ultimately how 'upon the conduct of each depends the fate of all'. But it is also really quite a good read.

astrologer John Dee, the English occultist Aleister Crowley, djinns, UFOs, the infamous brigantine Mary Celeste, a Throne, an Abyss, fallen angels and their monstrous

Pro Eto – That's What

Reviewed by
Wendy Muzlanova



by Vladimir Mayakovsky,
Arc Publications, 2009,
pp. 174, £11.69

I REFUSED defiantly to be shame-faced, although the young Slavophile gentleman – standing beside me, but then maintaining a decent distance away from me – was aghast! I felt like I had expounded the Virtues of Capitalism to an innocent, fresh-faced Young Pioneer. What heinous act had I committed?

My crime was to suggest reviewing Mayakovsky.

My Slavophile, Sasha, felt that I should review the *edition* of Mayakovsky's 'Pro Eto – That's What', rather than the poetry itself. Now, I do understand where my little *priyatel'* is coming from. This Arc Publications edition contains the Alexander Rodchenko photomontages created especially for this work by Mayakovsky. You will read no review of Rodchenko from me. Even I have my sacred cows.

This is a wonderful publication. Read with friends, read alone, read drunk or sober (if you must), laugh, wallow in self-pity – but don't kill yourself, as Mayakovsky did.

Vladimir Vladimirovich Mayakovsky was incarcerated several times. He wrote his very first poem in Butyrka prison. This is not it.

'Pro Eto' is 'Dedicated to her and to me'.

The question: how did a romantic, idealistic, passionate soul like Mayakovsky survive the times he lived through?

The answer: he didn't. Read his work with respect. He's not faking it.

He writes of the desperation of being in love and the dread of losing his love.

...I go round and round
feeling more and more alone
praying for it not to stop...

He advocates for the universality of his theme.

If the planet Mars
has just one humanoid
inhabitant,
then he as well
will squeak out the same tune,
and his din
will sound
very much
like my rant.

Mayakovsky longed to be unbound. He compares the cosy domesticity of his house during the festive season to a prison.

Без решеток окошки домика!
Это вас не касается.
Говорю - тюрьма.

The little house's windows have no bars.
But that's immaterial.
It's a gaol I tell you.

The poet's words are translated skillfully by Larisa Gureyeva and George Hyde.

The reader will not miss too much by reading this work solely in English.

The cook lazily rises
and goes
mumbling and coughing.

She looks like a cider apple
with thoughts wrinkling her brow.

I laughed out loud (as I wrote this review in the pub) when I read brutally accurate descriptions of the poet's friends and the parties in which they floundered around. I wondered to myself: 'How could he know my friends – and me – so well?!'

A pair of drunks emerged from under the table.
Trying hard to understand
they creep
from under the cupboard.

A little bit later on, the words (and the party too, one must presume...) assume an hallucinatory quality and the reader is treated to the most deliciously vivid images.

Geraniums slither
up your nostrils
from flowerpots.
Genial grannies crawl
from photo albums.

Within the confines of this meager space, it is impossible to do justice fully to either 'Pro Eto' or to its translation. I will say, however, that in addition to love, fear and frustration, Mayakovsky writes lucidly of jealousy, confinement, religion and politics. At other times, his words seem less lucid.

But hey ... that's life ... or at least, life as it was for Vladimir Vladimirovich.

In the section entitled 'Romance' there is a chilling foreshadow of his eventual suicide.

Прощайте...
кончаю...
прошу не винить...

Farewell...
I'm putting an end...
Please don't blame me...

Chair's report

WE WERE delighted to welcome Sir Brian Stewart, former chairman of our benefactors S&N plc, to the Scotland-Russia Institute recently. Without their generous donation we would not have been able to open the Institute and it was a pleasure to be able to thank him in person.

The figures below show what a huge difference having our own premises has made to progress towards our main aims: to raise interest in Russia and her neighbours and to promote mutual understanding.

And we continue to grow. Since September we have welcomed a large number of new members, started language classes, presented the UK premiere of Dmitri Boyko's 'Bloody Mary' on stage in Edinburgh (and are now planning to tour it to Pushkin House in London and then to Cambridge in the spring), and the new SRF business networking group met in Glasgow for the first time.

Recent events included a large student party and a very well-attended and thought-provoking lecture by Professor Geoffrey Hosking on the Russians in the Soviet Union. Highlights of our exhibitions programme were Genadii Gogoliuk in August,

part of the Edinburgh Art Festival, and our current joint exhibition with the Scottish National Portrait Gallery of Russian photographs by the 19 Century photographer William Carrick.

We could not have got this far without the financial help of S&N at the beginning – or without the day-in-day-out efforts of all our volunteers and committee since then. And we cannot carry on without more of both! We are urgently seeking both financial support from new donors and ways to increase income generation from our own activities and services. We also need more volunteers.

When we opened the Institute in September 2008 we did not dream that we would be so busy or see such growth across all our activities. This success makes us all the more determined to continue. And all the more convinced that it is possible to interest people in Russian culture, and that an independent and unaligned organisation such as the SRF has a vital role to play in the fostering of mutual understanding between our countries.

Jenny Carr, December 2009

Increase in activity since opening the SRI in September 2008

Year	Membership at year end	Events attendance (est. total)	Events (no.)	SRI visitors	New sletter circulation (average per issue)	E-bulletins (average circulation)	Website hits
2003-4	126	410	11	na	100	100	na
2004-5	151	390	12	na	150	200	unknown
2005-6 (18 months)	180	445	14	na	150	350	unknown
2006-7	180	320	9	na	200	400	unknown
2007-8	220	315	9	na	300	450	6,821
2008-9	278	1122	40	1880	350	500	10,411
% increase 2007-8 to 2008-9	26	256	344	na	17	11	53

Notes:

1. All figures are based on a combination of our records and conservative estimates
2. 2005-6 figures reflect activity over 18 months because we changed our subscription year-end from January 31 to August 31
3. Visitors estimated at 30 per week from SRI opening in September 2008, 125pw during August 2009, SRI closed for 2 weeks
4. SRI = Scotland-Russia Institute

Interpreting Robert Burns

photo: Jamie Meikle



From left: wife of Consul Tatiana Krutikova, new Consul General Sergei Krutikov, winner of Burns essay competition Serafina, her teacher Frida Zaitseva, Jenny Carr

The Scotland-Russia Institute welcomed Russia's new Consul General, Sergei Krutikov, to an art exhibition of interpretations of Robert Burns' poems. The exhibition is a partnership between Petersburg Forum (Scotland), the St Petersburg Association for International Friendship and the SRF.

Around 160 pupils from across St Petersburg took part in a competition to paint a picture using as inspiration the poems 'My Hearts In The Highlands', 'Address to Edinburgh' and 'Auld Lang Syne'.

A special showing of some of the pictures took place in November, featuring the winner of the World Burns Essay Competition Seraphina Nechaeva from School 61.

In search of a prince ...

Amateur scholar of Russian Art History seeks any illustrated work of reference showing the work of Prince Grigory Grigorievich Gagarin (1811-1893).

Research to date indicates a book in Russian 'G.Gagarin' by A. Savinoff, Moscow, 1950. Of particular interest are clear images of his drawings and paintings of Lermontov and contemporaries, circa 1840, and those works of art labeled 'Lermontov delineavit, Gagarin pinxit'.

Replies to SRF Box No.123 in the first instance.

Message from SRF member

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