



Scotland Russia

No. 31 Summer 2014

REVIEW



Dairsie Castle by Richard Demarco

Aspects of cultural exchange



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Contents

Sir Malcolm Rifkind, SRF President Cultural relations with Russia	4
Jenny Carr, SRF Chair Chairman's notes	4
Andrey Pritsepov, Russian Consul-General Cultural Exchange	5
<i>The role of cultural exchange</i>	
Martin Dewhurst Cooperate or Boycott? Views of a Veteran	6
Ian Mitchell Cultural Exchange: some thoughts about the role of law	7
<i>Cultural exchange in practice</i>	
Siobhan Redmond The National Theatre of Scotland in Moscow	9
Irina Mashinski and Boris Dralyuk Cardinal Points: Roots, Branches, and Leaves	10
Olgerta Kharitonova "Ostrov" in Scotland	11
Richard Demarco Mikhail Lermontov on his imagined journey through the Scotland of his Scottish ancestor	12
<i>Book Reviews</i>	
Samantha Sherry Sheila Fitzpatrick, <i>A Spy in the Archives</i>	14
Holly Porteous Mark Lawrence Schrad, <i>Vodka Politics</i>	14
Mark L Penman Anna Aruntunyan, <i>The Putin Mystique</i>	15

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Editorial

The theme of this issue is "Aspects of cultural exchange", prompted by my reflections on the wide range of Russo-British cultural exchange in the UK, including Scotland, at any time and particularly in this year, the official UK-Russia Year of Culture.

We have articles reflecting a variety of recent cultural initiatives: Russo-Scottish (the NTS's successful visit to Moscow with "Dunsinane"), organisations with which the SRF has been involved for some time (the New York based "Cardinal Points" magazine and its work with translation of Russian poetry) or both – Olgerta Kharitonova's reflections on her recent visit to Scotland to attend various discussions and films on LGBT issues (co-organised by the SRF and others in February) and Richard Demarco's exhibition on the Lermontov's "imaginary journey to Scotland", illustrating the strong cross-European ties of Romanticism and in particular the influence of Scott and tales of Ossian on Russian literature in the early 19C.

However this has also been a year of escalating political tensions – starting with the LGBT issues exacerbated by the Sochi Olympics, since eclipsed by the ongoing situation in Ukraine and questions of Russian involvement there. As a result we have also asked the question "What is the role of cultural exchange in international relations?" – addressed briefly by our Hon. President Sir Malcolm Rifkind and the Russian Consul General, and in longer feature articles by Martin Dewhurst and Ian Mitchell.

Finally – I would like to thank all our contributors, our book reviews editor Lewis White and his reviewers, our advertisers, and not least our designer Totok Hartono. I now realise how much hard work our regular editor, Varvara Bashkirova (currently travelling), puts in and look forward to her return in the autumn.

Jenny Carr

Acting Editor for this issue

Cultural relations with Russia

Sir Malcolm Rifkind, Hon. President of the Scotland-Russia Forum

UK-Russia relations are at their lowest point since Russia emerged from the Soviet Union as an independent state. Given the deep freeze following the murder of Alexander Litvinenko in London, this is a sad and disturbing situation.

The Russian government has violated a sacred principle, namely that European borders cannot be altered using force and mendacity - on any pretext, let alone the idea that ties of 'blood and soil', or the common language of peoples across borders, can justify naked aggression.

But however many Russians may or may not support Putin's actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, those actions are not being done in their name, nor in their interests. The freedoms of ordinary Russians are being curtailed, and their economic prospects increasingly bleak. We must endeavour not to isolate them, even as we isolate those responsible for the Russian state's actions.

Cultural engagement with the wider Russian population does also serve an important function - as a means to resist Putin's deliberate strategy of stoking isolationism, xenophobia and feelings of victimhood that serves to legitimise his regime and its actions. Engagement with the Russian people helps to remind

ourselves, as well as them, that although Russia has a rich and distinct heritage, it is not a culturally autarkic civilisation, nor are its values antithetical to those in the West.

As we engage, we must be wary of glib equivalency about our two countries. When a free and open society engages with one that is subject to far greater control and infiltration by the state, there will inevitably be risks. British civil society groups are rarely afforded sufficient freedom to operate effectively in Russia. A few years ago the director of the British Council was hounded over absurd accusations of espionage, and Kremlin-funded 'cultural' delegations to Russia are notoriously politicised.

Ironically, given its place at the centre of the present crisis, Ukraine itself is frequently overlooked as we tend to be drawn to the Great Power politics of relations between Russia and the West. Our efforts to encourage cultural dialogue and exchange with Russia should be accompanied by similar initiatives with the people of Ukraine. It is important that we recognise Ukraine's history, culture and traditions not as a subset of those of Russia, and engage with the Ukrainians accordingly.



At a time of political turmoil, cultural engagement provides crucial opportunities for keeping the channels open for mutual understanding. Poor relations between governments should not be allowed to poison relations between our peoples. Indeed it is precisely at the time of heightened tensions at government level that maintaining societal and cultural ties is most important.

Sir Malcolm is Member of Parliament for Kensington, former Foreign and Defence Secretary and Chairman of the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament.

Chair's notes

Jenny Carr

We believe that there is a pressing need for a wider understanding of Russia, for more information. Information on as broad a spectrum as possible, accurate information, positive and negative. Is there a role for a small, voluntary, British organisation like ourselves in an area where other countries promote themselves? There is no real Russian equivalent of the official cultural programmes run by others and a plan in 2013 to set up an international network of "Pushkin Institutes" seems to have run into the sand. The SRF clearly does not have the funding or manpower to compete with the official programmes - and we are not trying to. As a British / Scottish organisation we believe that understanding Russia and the post-Soviet area is very much in the interest of the UK and Scotland. It is also in the interest of Russia and her neighbours

of course - particularly at a time when so many political developments in that area give rise to concern.

The SRF tries to raise the profile of Russia and her neighbours as a diverse, interesting and important area and to encourage debate. At the moment our lack of resources dictates reliance on the internet - our website, Facebook and Twitter pages are all regularly updated and attract a growing number of readers - but we are also able to publish this magazine and to organise a small but diverse programme of events. Our 2014 programme for example covers LGBT issues, Lermontov and Russian gardens.

We try to reach a wide audience in Scotland, not just people already interested in the area, and believe that it is particularly important that the Russian language and culture have a presence in

the school curriculum - otherwise generations grow up not only ignorant of Russia but believing it must be unimportant. In addition to our programme of "taster classes" in Scottish schools we are now developing a website on aspects of Russian culture for primary school pupils.

Please help us if you can! We need authors for the website, people to present the tasters in schools, an advertising manager for this magazine, regular reliable administrative help, ... and the list goes on. We are also very grateful for financial support - so please renew your subscription in September, or consider joining us if you are not already a member.

JENNY CARR
SRF Chairperson

Cultural Exchange

Andrey Pritsepov, Consul General of the Russian Federation in Edinburgh

Once invited to write on importance of international cultural exchanges, I did not hesitate to give my consent – after all it is so obvious, who would argue against this message?

Now, giving it a second thought, it becomes clear to me that in fact nowadays it is not so evident to everyone any more. Cultural links and exchanges could be downgraded and even blocked at will by overzealous politicians and bureaucrats looking for another tier of punitive sanctions. The richer the culture – the easier it is to punish. Ballet tours could be cancelled, TV channels banned, use of language restricted, schools closed, University centres' activities discontinued, art exhibitions postponed. It is a shame we cannot ban Dostoevsky or Gogol. Or can we? After all only manuscripts do not burn, books can be easily incinerated in street bonfires. It has happened in Europe before and it could happen again if we fail to learn from our history but keep rewriting it.

Back in 1980s at the height of the cold war I served in Oslo, at that time as a Soviet

diplomat. Relations with Norway were imbued with mutual suspicion and almost at a standstill but cultural exchanges flourished. Speaking to a fellow veteran diplomat I once asked whether it was by chance. No, he said, when all doors and windows are shut, one last window in the backyard should be left open just in case someone would like to communicate. At that time cultural links provided us all with this emergency channel of communication. Maybe that is why the cold war never turned hot.

Indeed, there is no better means of communication than culture. Enjoying it requires no special skills, studies or training. Cultural exchanges enrich people intellectually and emotionally, broaden personal horizons and allow us to explore the world in all its diversity and beauty.

Of no less importance is the fact that cultural exchanges have a direct impact on strengthening the links between the countries at a people-to-people level, not just offering a unique insight into each other's values and tastes, but inviting others to

share them. This dimension is always crucial for building understanding and confidence between nations while breaking existing stereotypes.

Culture is so universal that it helps us to see ourselves as part of mankind united by common fundamental values and rights, paving the way to achieving stronger bonds between both individuals and nations. Culture is deeply national and personal however. Its diversity is its strength. We all are different – and only recognising and respecting the difference in opinions, attitudes and beliefs will enable us to find common and mutually acceptable solutions when necessity arises.

Cultural exchanges are the driving force for culture. By compromising them we risk robbing ourselves and our children not just of the greatest achievements of the past, but of the future. Yet, this year we have a chance to move forward by celebrating the Russia-UK Year of Culture, and no eager apparatchiks will deny us this chance.

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COOPERATE OR BOYCOTT? VIEWS OF A VETERAN

Martin Dewhirst,

Martin Dewhirst, former representative of the Great Britain-USSR Association in Glasgow and the West of Scotland. Mr Dewhirst was Lecturer in Russian at the University of Glasgow and is now Honorary Research Fellow at that university.

I have often been asked about the value of cooperating with the USSR (earlier) and the Russian Federation (more recently) in the fields of culture, education and sport. I always have to start with a 'full and frank disclosure', saying that I can't really be objective, because my own life was changed for ever, and very much for the better, as the result of a visit to Moscow in 1959 (only some two and a half years after the disgraceful Soviet-led invasion of Hungary and, as it turned out, only some three and a half years before the reckless attempt by the Khrushchev leadership to install missiles on Cuba) by the then British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan. One of the results of his visit was the decision to set up immediately an annual ten-month exchange of twenty Soviet and UK postgraduates, beginning in the autumn of that year. Being a first-year undergraduate, I thought I was ineligible, but the British Council, to whom I am eternally grateful, was unable, at this late stage, to find more than about 15 postgraduates willing and able to spend the forthcoming full academic year in the USSR. Applications were then opened to undergraduates, I was at the top of the reserve list, and, when the Soviet authorities were mean enough to keep on refusing to give a visa to a nephew of Boris Pasternak, I went off, two months late, to Moscow in his place. (Pasternak died the following year, no member of the Oxford branch of the family was able to attend the funeral, but I was there and have never forgotten this incredibly moving occasion.)

Another result of the 1959 Cultural Exchange Agreement was the decision to set up the Great Britain-USSR Association, of which the Scotland-Russia Forum is a descendent. At that time there were two organisations in London that were active-

ly involved in propagating Soviet culture and ideas in this country, but they were widely regarded as collaborating, rather than cooperating, with the authorities in the Kremlin. These two verbs are widely regarded these days as complete synonyms, but back then people like me always connected the word 'collaborators' with people in France under the German occupation who, for whatever reason, decided to work with the Nazi invaders rather than support General de Gaulle. One of the later directors of the Association (which had a branch in Edinburgh) has written an extremely interesting book about his attempts over two decades to cooperate, but not to collaborate, with the Soviet authorities (John C.Q. Roberts, 'Speak Clearly into the Chandelier', Richmond, 'Curzon Press', 2000, with a foreword by John le Carre).

Of course, it's sometimes difficult to be sure that one is cooperating but not collaborating with an odious political regime, whether Soviet or neo-Soviet. I thought the American 'reset' policy was very badly timed and in very bad taste, being announced only a few weeks (not two and a half years) after the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008, but I suppose the people responsible in Washington misunderstood the weak character of President Medvedev and – perhaps rather like Macmillan in 1959 – did not realise that a few years later Medvedev's predecessor and successor would think he could get away almost scot free after invading another part of the former Soviet Union.

Perhaps I was initially too uneasy about the UK's agreement to make 2014 the year of cultural exchanges between this country and the Russian Federation. The

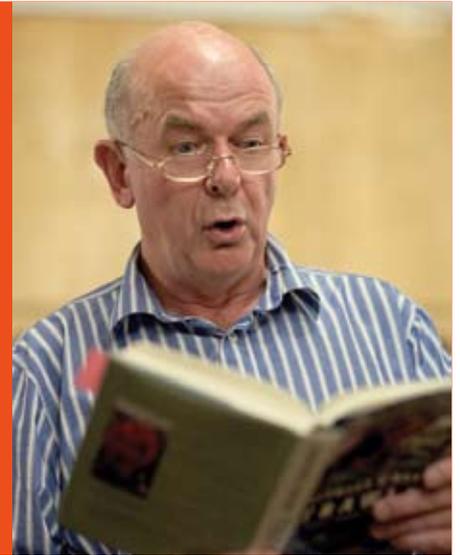
British Council is still unable (or unwilling?) to return to the earlier scale of its work in Russia (how well I remember its wonderful facilities in Nizhny Novgorod in 1999!), whereas both Russky Mir and Rossotrudnichestvo, and also RT ('Russia Today') and 'Voice of Russia' TV and radio stations are allowed to operate here in the UK without undue interference. And I was initially disappointed to discover at a meeting in London in late 2012 that nearly all the British input was centred on Moscow and St. Petersburg, rather than elsewhere in the RF. It now looks as though some of the great cities in provincial Russia are being treated to a small taste of the best of British culture, though this cannot compensate for the British Council's continuing absence from some of these places where its day-to-day work was so greatly appreciated by the local intelligentsia.

In the wake of the completely illegal annexation by the Putin regime of Crimea, calls have naturally gone out for a boycott of Russia similar to the partial boycott of the Olympic Games in the USSR in 1980, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Both then and now I felt and feel that we should do the opposite and go to Russia if we have the chance, realising that whatever the polls tell us, there was and is some difference between the frightful political regime and many of the people who live under its sway (see, if you can, Sergey Chernov's article, 'Local Promoter Speaks Out Against Boycotts', The Moscow Times, May 13, 2014; also on Johnson's Russia List, No. 106, May 13, 2014, item 36). But do remember the difference between cooperating and collaborating!

Cultural Exchange: some thoughts about the role of law

Ian Mitchell

*Ian Mitchell is the author of a study of the judges in Scotland, *The Justice Factory*, which is available on www.amazon.co.uk. He lives in Russia where he is working on a history of the Russian legal system. His previous books include *Isles of the West* and *The Cost of a Reputation*.*



The subject of “cultural exchange” is seldom thought to include the field of law. But I think that in the modern world it should. In order to make sense of the phrase in that context, it seems to me useful to distinguish (as lawyers say) “culture” and “civilisation”. I suggest that, in the broadest terms, you could argue that culture is what societies do, from art and etiquette to commerce and industry, while civilisation is the structure of rules and conventions which govern how they interact while doing it.

In a short article, I must over-simplify so let’s take head-hunters and cannibals by way of illustration. Though both are considered barbarians, there is a world of difference between them. To me, head-hunters are not civilised. They are not known to have any significant organising or restraining structure to their murderous activities, much less any conventions of mercy or mitigation. But head-hunters could possibly be considered cultured. Some have highly-developed, “artistic” ways of displaying or even venerating the scalps of their defeated neighbours. Others use them in spiritually therapeutic religious ceremonies. But their relationship with the tribes from which their victims come is no more civilised than Hitler’s relationship was with Poland after Stalin gave him the green light to go scalp-hunting there.

Cannibalism, by contrast, can in certain strictly limited circumstances take a civilised form. Leaving aside the arguably “cultural” example of Christianity, in which the Eucharist centres around a spiritually nourishing ceremony of symbolic crypto-cannibalism—eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ—

there is the ancient “custom of the sea”. It was long accepted by many legitimate authorities, including for example the US Circuit Court of the District of Pennsylvania in 1841 (*US v Holmes*), that starving castaways could in the most extreme circumstances lawfully kill their fellow shipmates for food so long as they followed recognised procedure (obtaining consent, drawing lots, lack of animus, etc.).

It is true that this so-called “law of necessity” was rejected by the High Court in London in 1884 in what is now the leading case on the subject (*R v Dudley and Stephens*), but that was because no consent was given. Many lawyers have argued in a variety of contexts, including under the law of nations, that necessity is the highest law. Popular sentiment often supports this, as it did on behalf of Dudley and Stephen after they had eaten a cabin boy who was already past consciousness and therefore unable to give consent. His murder—and that was what the court found it to be in the absence of consent etc.—saved two lives rather than allowing three deaths. There were arguments on the other side too. If we feel uneasy about those non-opportunists in the siege of Leningrad who resorted to cannibalism to stay alive, or the people Solzhenitsyn wrote about in *The Gulag Archipelago* who ate their fellow zeks, I suggest it is perhaps because civilised procedure appears not to have been followed in those cases either.

In the world of practical law today, another useful over-simplification would be to say that litigation in Russia has aspects of head-hunting to it, while the British system is closer to cannibalism. In both,

the higher you go the truer this is. There is little to choose between District Courts in Russia and Magistrates or Sheriff Courts in England or Scotland—beyond, of course, the governing laws and procedure. I have attended trials in all three jurisdictions and can honestly say that I do not see a vast difference in the extent to which justice is, or is not, done—given the state of the law.

But at the highest level this is not the case. The Russian system of *ручное управление* (personal administration) has often been characterised in the legal sphere as “telephone justice”. The judge hears the evidence, then gets on the phone to the man in the Kremlin and seeks guidance on how to view that evidence. The result of this, combined with the brutality of Russian prisons, takes the victim closer to the head-hunter’s cooking pot than most civilised people would normally prefer to go. If you are like the late Sergei Magnitsky, you will find yourself actually in the pot. In his case, due to the practice of lengthy pre-trial detention and the absence of habeus corpus, he did not even enjoy the conventional preliminary courtesy of a trial.

Our system is more civilised. I had a brief holiday in London in October 2011 and used every spare moment to sit in the public gallery of Court 26 of the Rolls Building in Fetter Lane watching Roman Abramovich give evidence in his case against Boris Berezovsky. While my Russian companion went to see the cultural sights, I preferred to watch civilisation at work, under the eagle eye of the elegant but sharp-witted Lady Elizabeth Gloster. This was financial cannibalism at its most spectacular, red in tooth and contract.

There was nearly \$6 billion at stake, and the costs of the whole case eventually came to around £100 million. Abramovich's leading counsel, Mr Jonathan Sumption QC, earned £8 million for his attendance and was allowed by the authorities to delay taking his already arranged seat on the United Kingdom Supreme Court for a year (he is now Lord Sumption) so that he could bank his fee from this exceptional case.

No-one would suggest that Lord Sumption PC, QC, OBE is anything other than a profoundly civilised man, with spare-time interests that include medieval history. He is half-way through publishing a highly-regarded five-volume account of the Hundred Years' War. That is no mean achievement, especially as much of it was written while running a commercial law practice that was said to have earned him more than £1 million a year.

Sumption observes the procedural niceties of both the law and (presumably inadvertently) the custom of the sea, the most important of which is consent. It was, after all, Berezovsky who started the case. Sumption's client, Abramovich, did not ask to be sued. In fact he tried hard to avoid going to court. But when there, he behaved in a way which suggested, to me at any rate, that he had benefited from having had a sophisticated QC—an Old Etonian and a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford—who could explain to him the importance of not giving the impression on the witness stand of being a sort of head-hunter in a suit.

Berezovsky, by contrast, who employed a QC who came from Johannesburg and charged only £1.8 million for the case, was disdainful of the conventions of civilised behaviour in court. Lady Gloster wrote in her judgement that she “found [him] an unimpressive, and inherently unreliable, witness, who regarded truth as a transitory, flexible concept, which could be moulded to suit his current purposes [and who] would have said anything to support his case.” That is head-hunting on oath. Both he and Abramovich had been commercial scalpers in 1990s Russia, but had chosen to change country so they could enjoy the fruits of their enterprise in the land of the cannibals. However, only one of them made the cultural adjustment required for success in the courts of the flesh eaters and blood-drinkers.

From a procedural, and therefore a civilisational point of view, this was the polar opposite of the Magnitsky case, which most respectable cannibals thought of as barbaric. No-one, I am sure, wanted Boris Berezovsky's scalp in any literal sense—not Mr Abramovich, and certainly not Mr Sumption. They just wanted the money. And when they got it, Mr Berezovsky appears to have thought he could not go on living without it. Though the causes were different, the result in both jurisdictions was the same. *Caveat barbarus.*

Though this is only one case, and an unusual one at that, I think it illustrates a very profound truth, namely that despite the outward appearance of “procedural” difference between Britain and Russia we are all much the same behind the credit card. Nonetheless, appearances are still crucially important, as Abramovich seems to have understood. You could plausibly argue that procedure is appearance in civi-

lised societies. It can be used as a cloak behind which, with enough patience, politeness and hypocrisy, you can get away with almost anything. I suspect that if Mr Putin had had Mr Sumption advising him on the Crimean referendum, he could have conducted it in a way which would not have landed him in the difficulties that he is experiencing today.

In a recent programme on BBC Radio 4 called *The Unmaking of the English Working Class*, the professor of human geography at Oxford, Danny Dorling, made this point in a striking way: “If you look at the 10:10 ratio, the income of the best off tenth to the poorest tenth, we [in Britain] are almost identical to Russia. But Russia achieved that in just twenty years of incredible corruption. We achieved that over a thousand years, so it doesn't look like theft.”

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Picture by Ka Lam

The National Theatre of Scotland in Moscow

Siobhan Redmond

The NTS and Royal Shakespeare Company took "Dunsinane" to Moscow in May as part of the UK-Russia Year of Culture. It was the NTS's first visit to Russia and Siobhan Redmond, who played the role of Gruach (Lady Macbeth), writes about her impressions .

You'll understand that these answers are based on one week's residency at one theatre in one Russian city and so they're rather narrow in scope...

Working at the Mossovet was a great pleasure: it felt very much more familiar than the theatres we experienced in China, Hong Kong or Taiwan in terms of backstage routine and etiquette. Theatre staff were friendly wherever we went but the people in Moscow were particularly welcoming and helpful. The only anxious moments I had were during our first show, when the audience sat in total silence throughout the play- so much so that I actually wondered if the surtitles were working. Lines that have never failed to elicit a response in Scotland, England or in any other country where we've played were received in utter quiet. At the end of the piece, however, the audience was wildly generous with applause, cheering and giving of flowers and I wondered which of these responses was more truthful. On the following evening and at every subsequent performance there were laughs where there have always been laughs and the warm reception at the curtain call continued to be as enthusiastic as it had been on the first night. I don't know what was really happening during that first show but I'm glad the audiences in Moscow seemed to value the play as much as people here and in the East have done.

Of course the fact that I speak no Russian coupled with the beautiful manners of all

the theatre people I met while in Moscow means that I am actually no better informed as to what they thought...

It's not really surprising that at our press call there was some blurring of Scottish/English borders – this was NTS's first show in Russia – and a degree of uncertainty about whether or not Dunsinane purported to be a continuation of Shakespeare's play Macbeth or even, for heaven's sake, an improvement on it: I know theatre is of great importance in Russia and I'm sure that whatever may have been thought or said about our show before it opened, once seen it stood on its own merits and was appreciated for what it actually is.

We met some of the Mossovet company backstage and they were charming- some of our cast saw some Russian theatre and enjoyed it very much. It's one of the pitfalls of touring that you can visit a country and have no opportunity to see home-grown work and that's the situation I found myself in in Moscow which was frustrating but predictable. Over the last couple of years I've seen some Russian shows in Britain and found the work engaging and delightful even though I can't understand the language.

We did as much sightseeing as possible and loved it- some of our company had been in Moscow as much as ten years ago and found it felt much more open now. I would love to visit Moscow again- a week

is barely long enough to acquaint yourself with a place or its people.

I was terrified of inadvertently causing some kind of international incident- not that I'm in the habit of doing so, but the subject matter of our play, the changing situation between Russia and Ukraine and my desire to avoid making any of the charming people I met in Moscow feel uncomfortable meant that I was nervous about asking questions.

Before we went to Russia it seemed probable that the character I play in Dunsinane might be identifiable with Ukraine: we were told, however, that some of the dialogue (Boy Soldier to Gruach- "Is it true that you eat babies?") suggested that my character could be more readily identified with Mr Putin. I have no idea whether that is in any way accurate but it certainly means that the same kind of rumours have been being spread about neighbours in conflict since time began.

One of the lovely things about Dunsinane is that we get to work with local drama students wherever we go and the Russian students were brilliant: despite having to cope with not only English but also Gaelic they were totally capable, diligent and enthusiastic. And they talked about art, poetry and emotion in a way no British boys their age would ever do, even in their own language! I hope they enjoyed their Scottish experience as we did our Russian one.



Irina Mashinski and Boris Dralyuk are co-editors, with Robert Chandler, of the literary journal Cardinal Points, as well as The Penguin Book of Russian Poetry (Penguin Classics, Feb. 2015).

Irina Mashinski is a bilingual poet and translator. She has authored eight books of poetry in Russian; her most recent collection is Ophelia i masterok [Ophelia and the Trowel] (New York: Ailuros Publishing, 2013). Irina Mashinski's work has appeared in Poetry International, Fulcrum, Zeek, The London Magazine, and other literary journals and anthologies. She is the co-editor (with Robert Chandler and Boris Dralyuk) of the forthcoming Penguin Book of Russian Poetry (2015), as well as co-founder (with the late Oleg Woolf) and editor of the StoSvet literary project. She received, with Boris Dralyuk, First Prize in the 2012 Joseph Brodsky/Stephen Spender Translation Prize competition.



Boris Dralyuk has translated and co-translated several volumes of poetry and prose from Russian and Polish. His translation of Isaac Babel's Red Cavalry is forthcoming from Pushkin Press in November 2014. In January 2015 he will join the Russian faculty at the University of St Andrews.

Cardinal Points: Roots, Branches, and Leaves

Irina Mashinski and Boris Dralyuk

If we were to accept the assumption that the circle of important ideas across cultures at any given point is limited, the notion of cultural exchange can be understood as the exchange of various manifestations of these ideas. After all, the chemistry feeding the roots of any culture is more or less the same, no matter how much these cultures may differ. Yet literature, and art in general, are all about differences – more about branches, leaves, and flowers than about roots. Within each individual culture a given idea is transformed in a manner unique to the cultural moment and, most importantly, to the personality of the artist, and it is these transformations that have such an enormous effect on us readers.

The Russian-language literary journal *Storony Sveta* (Russian for “cardinal points”), conceived by poet and writer Oleg Woolf (1954-2011), has evolved into an institution, winning critical praise and a wide circle of dedicated readers both in Russia in abroad. The project underwent a major transformation in 2010, when the English-language issue (#12) came out in two volumes under the name *Cardinal Points*. Our original idea was to publish just one English issue, which would offer some good translations and essays reflecting on the exacting art of translating classic and contemporary Russian literature. The reaction was nothing short of astonishing. We were both humbled and inspired by the responses we received from English-speaking readers on both sides of the Atlantic. We realized just how deeply and genuinely interested these readers were in Russian literature. This is how the *Cardinal Points* acquired a life of its own as a literary journal – a leafy offshoot of a sturdy tree.

Today *Cardinal Points*, published in New York and co-edited by Irina Mashinski, Boris Dralyuk, and Robert Chandler, is part of the broader *StoSvet* project, which also includes the *StoSvet* Press publishing house, the annual *Compass Translation Award* (Russian poetry in English), and, of course, the Russian-language *Storony Sveta*. *CP* features new translations and essays on Russian and non-Russian au-

thors, as well as original work by leading poets and writers. We have provided a venue for some of the most talented and sensitive translators of Russian literature, including Angela Livingstone, Robert Chandler, Peter Daniels, Elaine Feinstein, Sibelan Forrester, Peter France, George Kline, and the late Stanley Mitchell and Daniel Weissbort, as well as leading poets such as Ilya Kaminsky, Glyn Maxwell, and Alicia Ostriker.

Robert Chandler once described the journal's mission in a characteristically clear and incisive manner: “The journal fulfills several very important functions. It helps to bring writers and translators together. It helps to encourage translators in the first stages of new projects. It helps to spread the word about new publications. It is a place for open and straightforward discussion about questions to do with literature and translation that tend, today, to be treated only in an over-complex and over-theoretical manner.” A few years later, in his tribute to Oleg Woolf, he wrote that *Cardinal Points* “seems like a city square, somewhere you can meet people, chat briefly to a group of them and then go off to a cafe with one or two of them for a more serious conversation that in some cases, at least, will lead to a new and unexpected project.”

It is also extremely important to us that *Cardinal Points* be more than just a literary and cultural project; we see our journal as a tribute to the victims of the Soviet regime, of censorship, and of political repression everywhere. We would like to make the work of such giants as Joseph Brodsky, Vassily Grossman, Osip Mandelstam, Andrei Platonov, Varlam Shalamov, and Marina Tsvetaeva accessible in translations that do justice to the mastery and power of the original texts. We sincerely believe that dignity and talent ultimately overcome oppression, and our project serves that end. The *CP* website (www.stosvet.net) openly states that the journal is “dedicated to destalinization of the air”: without free air, no culture can flower, and no exchange is possible.

“Ostrov” in Scotland

Olgerta Kharitonova

We came to Scotland armed with all the cultural stereotypes about the country and its people. Robert Burns and Walter Scott of course, and ruined castles, beautiful lakes with monsters, and endless rain. When I was young I really liked Burns’ poetry. The line “My heart’s in the Highlands, my heart is not here” had particular resonance for me because I lived in the Urals, not far from the mountains. Walter Scott’s novel “Ivanhoe” was read and reread by my brother and me until it fell apart – we made knights out of modelling clay and staged tournaments in our grandmother’s garden. When I read Stefan Zweig’s “Maria Stuart” I sympathised for her execution as a woman, not as a queen. And of course I wanted to meet the Loch Ness Monster.

However we didn’t come for tourist excursions, but to meet people who were interested to hear at first hand about the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) situation in Russia after the recently passed homophobic law, which forbids the distribution of information about non-traditional family relationships to young people. According to this law it is forbidden to talk to children about their sexuality, you can only talk about the traditional family with a mother, father, grandmothers, grandfathers, grandchildren and children. Despite the fact that fewer and fewer children now live in such families. The institution of the family is experiencing a crisis in Russia, as in many other countries. Men are reluctant to marry and die early, so a father in the family is a rarity. Despite this our members of parliament insist on the strengthening of the traditional family, on the return to traditional values, and on Russia’s unique path of development.

People who do not agree with this government policy take part in protests, organise opposition demonstrations and meetings, write blogs in the social media and publish in unofficial “samizdat” channels. The problem is that if this is not cleared with officials it can be considered as a violation of the gay propaganda law and can lead to civil or criminal prosecution. Russia has neither freedom of speech nor of association nor of conscience. All the signs are that fascism is growing in Russia and that there is no longer any question of democracy.

It was to talk about all this that we came to Scotland, where in February there were a series of events in Glasgow and Edinburgh about LGBT rights in Russia. “We” means “Ostrov” (the Island) project: a samizdat journal which has been published in Moscow since 1999, the website journal-ostrov.info

info, and the organisation of various events in support of women – for example literary readings, discussions, lectures, workshops and so forth. Most of our work is in Moscow, although we do visit other cities and countries for conferences and discussions, or to give lectures. As on this occasion we were invited by the Scotland-Russia Forum to events in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

On 11 February in one of the ancient lecture halls of Glasgow University there was a discussion on “LGBT Equality and the Geopolitics of Human Rights. Insights from Russia”. Apart from us, the editors of “Ostrov” (Olgerta Kharitonova and Liza Korolyova), the panel included Glasgow University sociologists Dr Francesca Stella, Dr Vikki Turbine and Dr Matthew Waites. There were about ninety people in the auditorium – undergraduate and postgraduate students as well as interested members of the public. They turned out to be well informed about the situation in Russia and after the panel presentations asked very thoughtful questions. There was a lot of discussion about the role of the Orthodox Church in the Parliament’s lawmaking, and about the criminal character of the Putin regime.

On 13 February we presented the “Ostrov” journal in the Glasgow Women’s Library. About twenty five women gathered in their small premises to listen to us. They were particularly interested to hear about the phenomenon of Samizdat, about other lesbian publications in Russia other than “Ostrov”, and about the problems faced by the LGBT community in contemporary Russia after the law forbidding the promotion of non-traditional sexual relations among adolescents was approved. After a lively discussion the women looked at the journal. We had brought with us a complete collection for the library. Although not many people in Glasgow read Russian we could see from our conversations in the library and the university that the topic is of interest to future researchers. The material in “Ostrov” about the lives of lesbians in Russia during the Putin age will be a very valuable source. The atmosphere during the event was extremely open, warm and interested.

On 14 February under the auspices of the Festival “Notes from the Underground. Queer Russian Cinema” there was a day of short films from Russia. Before the films we, together with Olya Kurachova, representing the “Bok-o-bok” (Side by side) Film Festival, Francesca Stella and Vikki Turbine discussed the LGBT situation in Russia with the audience. The questions from Latvian participants resonated sharply with us/our



concerns. (Latvia has a similar law against ‘gay propaganda’)

In the film festival programme of films on LGBT rights in Russia and Lithuania, “Ostrov” showed all three parts of Katya Razumnaya’s film “Word to the World”. In the film LGBT people respond to the questions “How do you feel when Putin says that there is no anti-gay discrimination in Russia?”, “What can Russian activists do?” and “What can international society do?” The somewhat hesitant answers from LGBT Russians interviewed in the films engendered a lively response among the audience.

“Ostrov” is very grateful to all the organisers of “LGBT Lives in Russia and Lithuania: Queer Cinema and Associated Events” in Glasgow and Edinburgh.”

Apart from these events we did manage to go to Loch Lomond, explored Linlithgow Castle where Mary Queen of Scots was born, and walked in Glasgow and Edinburgh. We liked the kindness of the Scots, their interest in foreigners and those who are different in any other way too. In Russia, unfortunately, xenophobia seems to be on the increase. We were also amazed by the bare legs of some Scottish teenagers, girls and boys, when the temperature was freezing and we, coming from the snows of Moscow, were wrapped in scarves.

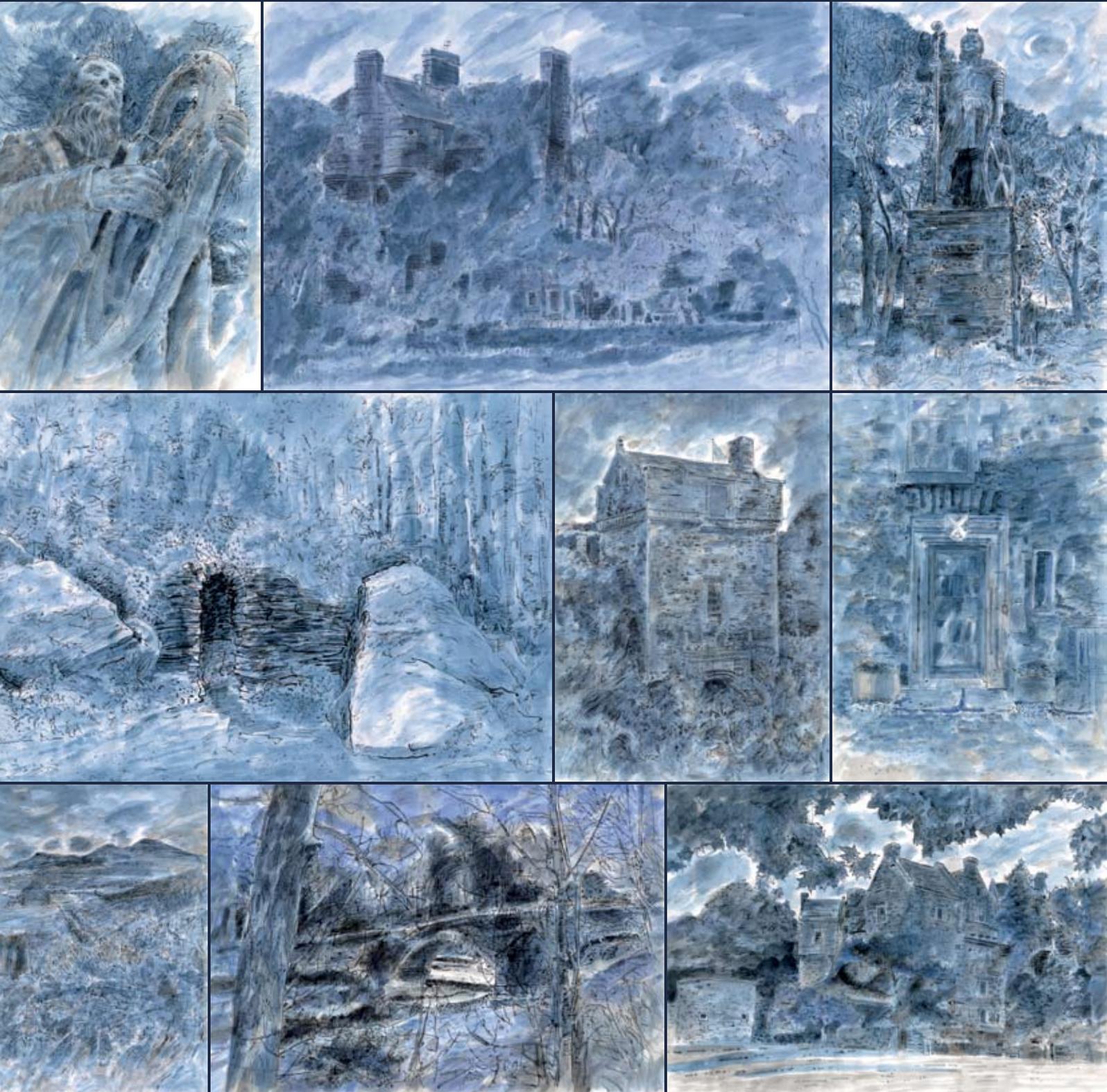
On 17 February we flew out of the rainswept, dark and very mysterious stone city of Edinburgh, taking with us our “mysterious Russian souls” and the certainty that in the question of LGBT rights there are no mysteries for either the Scots or for Russians – on that we understand each other even though we speak different languages.

Olgerta Kharitonova is editor of “Ostrov”
www.journal-ostrov.info

Mikhail Lermontov on his imagined journey through the Scotland of his Scottish ancestor, Thomas Learmonth of Erceldoune, known as Thomas The Rhymer

Richard Demarco, The Demarco Archive

Richard Demarco's exhibition opened in Moscow this summer. It is inspired by an imaginary journey taken by Mikhail Lermontov from Russia to the Scotland portrayed in the writings of Sir Walter Scott. This was the Scotland inhabited by Thomas the Rhymer, the historical and legendary figure who was said to have possessed magical powers given to him during his seven year sojourn with The Faerie



Queen in her underground kingdom that lay deep in the heart of the three-peaked Eildon Hill. The Eildons overlook the small Border town of Melrose not far from Sir Walter Scott's Abbotsford, his beloved Scottish Border home. Thomas The Rhymer was the probable ancestor of Mikhail Lermontov; as a member of the Learmonth family, he was also the Lord of Erceldoune, the medieval name of the present-day Border town of Earlston where the ruins of his small castle still stand, as does the stone marking the site of the long-living blackthorn tree associated with his powers to foretell the future. Thomas The Rhymer travelled well beyond his birthplace and is associated with a wide range of locations in Scotland. He was a source of inspiration to his contemporaries as well as to those who lived long after him, to fellow poets such as Sir Walter Scott but also to historians and all those fascinated by Scotland's rich folkloric heritage.

The road from Edinburgh to Earlston leads to nearby Bemersyde Castle, the ancestral home of the Haigs of Bemersyde. Above the main doorway to this castle is inscribed in stone "Tyde what may", the first three words of Thomas the Rhymer's prophecy, 'whate'er betyde, Haig shall be Haig of Bemersyde'.

Thomas The Rhymer epitomises the folkloric Scotland described in the Bardic tales of Ossian, son of Fingal, the legendary warrior king associated with the Celtic Kingdom of Dalriada which linked Scotland to Ireland. It is the world which inspired Felix Mendelssohn's Hebrides Overture following his visit to Fingal's Cave on the island of Staffa. Mendelssohn's Road to the Isles inspired the renowned German artist, Joseph Beuys, to follow in his footsteps in the 20th century to create, with the Danish artist-composer Henning Christiansen, the masterwork entitled Celtic Kinloch Rannoch: The Scottish Symphony in which they linked the nomadic culture of the Celts with that of the Tartars in the mountains of the Caucasus as the cultural realities defining, on the one hand, the extreme eastern frontier of where Europe meets Asia and, on the other, the complementary sea-girt western Atlantic edge described by its Celtic coastlines.

In order to take the most direct route from Russia to Scotland, Lermontov would have had to sail from the Baltic across the North Sea to land at the historic promontory of Fife Ness in the Kingdom of Fife. It is within walking distance of Balcomie Castle, the aristocratic seat of the Learmonth family. The Russian side of the family was founded in the 17th century when the Scottish soldier, George Learmonth, served first in the Polish Army and then decided to go over to the Russian side.

From Balcomie Castle, one can imagine Lermontov continuing his journey via the Royal Burgh of St. Andrews where one of his Learmonth ancestors occupied St. Andrews Castle in his capacity as Archbishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh. Lermontov would continue from St. Andrews via the Fairy Glen near to Falkland Palace, making a detour to nearby Dairsie Castle, another residence of the Learmonth family built by one of the sons of Thomas The Rhymer. Lermontov would continue to Perthshire to visit Ossian's Cave and Ossian's Hall by the fast-flowing waters of the River Brann. He would then visit the Castle of Fingask with its stone sculpture of Ossian and Russian Orthodox Chapel, and then on to Edinburgh's Arthur's Seat, the fabled volcanic hill strongly associated with the Arthurian legend.

Lermontov would have been impelled to journey southwards from Edinburgh towards the house of Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford and to Thomas The Rhymer's town of Earlston. His return route to Edinburgh would most likely have taken him to Moffat, following the footsteps of the exiled Grand Duke Nicholas of Russia who stayed in this small Scottish Border town as the guest of the Earl of Hopetoun in 1817.

The road which would have been taken by Lermontov, is the same route as that taken by many other individuals who followed the cultural links between Scotland and Europe. It is the royal road of the imagination that links the Caucasus to the Scottish Highlands and Islands. Since the early 1970s Richard Demarco has used this road to introduce visual artists, poets, novelists, academics and students to Scotland as "Edinburgh Arts" participants exploring the physical reality of Scotland. He called it The Road to Meikle Seggie, as it was a road to a farm of that name and the name of one of countless "lost villages".

It makes good sense to imagine Mikhail Yuryevitch Lermontov using this road to support an exploration of the cultural and historical links that can be used to honour him in Scotland and Russia in this special year celebrating the 200th anniversary of his birth.

The Demarco Archive is a source of academic research. It contains the names of distinguished twentieth century Scottish poets and artists as well as European writers and playwrights and embodies partnerships with a number of Scottish and other UK academic institutions.

There will be a special focus on the Lermontov exhibition, when it returns from the State Library for Foreign Literature in Moscow, in the programme planned for the 2014 version of Edinburgh Arts. This will take place in collaboration with Bath Spa University in September. In October the exhibition will be presented at Summerhall Arts Centre in Edinburgh during the programme devised by the SRF and others in celebration of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Mikhail Lermontov.

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A Spy in the Archives: A Memoir of Cold War Russia

by Sheila Fitzpatrick

London: I. B. Tauris, 2014, £22.50

After Stalin's death, the 'Iron Curtain' began to fracture; books, music and people began tentatively to move once again between the two camps. Large-scale events like the 1957 Moscow Youth Festival allowed personal, even friendly, contacts to be established between Soviet citizens and their Western counterparts and a system of official exchanges allowed students to visit and work in the Soviet Union, albeit under careful control. Such formal and informal intercultural contacts are explored in Sheila Fitzpatrick's memoir.

Fitzpatrick, now Emerita Professor of history at Sydney University, is renowned for her revisionist take on Soviet history, especially her critique of the 'totalitarian' school of thought, which has deeply influenced the field. Her scholarship was surely influenced by the experience of

her research trips to Moscow in the late 1960s, where she worked on a DPhil thesis about Anatoly Lunacharsky, the first Soviet Commissar of Enlightenment. Fitzpatrick formed friendships with many of important players in the cultural scandals of the time, including members of the editorial board of *Novyi mir*; her closest friend was Igor Sats, Lunacharsky's secretary and brother-in-law, and a member of *Novyi mir*'s editorial board. Here, Fitzpatrick's not-quite-insider status provides a fascinating new perspective on stories that have perhaps become somewhat stale in their frequent retelling since 1991. The account of her relations with Russians are undoubtedly the most interesting part of the memoir, peppered with the small details of everyday life that add colour and a richly nuanced vitality to our image of the Brezhnev era, so often seen through a Cold War lens. Thus, we learn of the impossibility of obtaining colostomy bags after surgery and the sometimes flirtatious but always highly dangerous approaches of KGB agents assigned to monitor foreign students' activities. These details bring the late Soviet

era to life.

However, other moments in the book are less compelling, raising the question of the memoir's intended audience. Fitzpatrick's account of her time in Oxford and the tensions between her and the 'Sovietologists' – her mentor Max Hayward is portrayed in particularly unflattering terms – hardly seem relevant to the general reader. And while I certainly identified with her many bureaucratic struggles in the state archive – some things have not changed so much since the Brezhnev era – I am not sure how many others would say the same. Nonetheless, this is for the most part a captivating account, which does not simply reproduce what we already know of the late-Soviet era, but approaches it from a new, perhaps unique, perspective.

*Reviewed by Samantha Sherry
Samantha Sherry is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at University College, Oxford, specialising in the history of Soviet censorship.*

Vodka Politics: Alcohol, Autocracy, and the Secret History of the Russian State

by Mark Lawrence Schrad

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, £22.99

Vodka Politics begins with a queasy depiction of Stalin's private parties, which entailed the dictator's closest comrades being coerced into keeping up with round after round of vodka toasts. Although ostensibly they were an opportunity for merriment lasting long into the night, Stalin apparently used these occasions to encourage his comrades' suspicion of one other and "keep his inner circle off balance", both literally and figuratively.

Taking a long view of Russian statehood, Mark Lawrence Schrad argues that the prevalence of vodka in Russia is much more than an accident of history, and relates it to the country's tendency towards autocratic government. He essentially argues that Russia is historically a state at odds with itself: because so many leaders

have been loath to forgo the easy revenue attached to vodka, attempts to address the social, health and demographic consequences of alcohol have been seriously hindered.

Schrad's style is vibrant and energetic, and he peppers relatively short chapters with both infamous and lesser known stories. For example, Yeltsin's by now notorious misadventures in the 1990s sit alongside a portrait of Brezhnev deep in discussion with the *tsar-kolokol*, the world's largest bell, in the Kremlin courtyard after a few too many at a World War Two victory banquet. Yuri Andropov's attempt to curb alcohol use in the early 1980s, argued to have inspired Gorbachev's reforms later in the decade, are also discussed. During one crusade Andropov takes on the role of a kind of Soviet-era *Undercover Boss*, carrying out surprise factory visits to check for workplace drunkenness.

This is an ambitious book which traces the origins of 'vodka politics' right back to the sixteenth century and the state-owned *tabaks* (taverns) established by Ivan the Terrible. By the final chapter, the reader has encountered everything from politi-

cal analysis, to the opinions of cultural giants such as Turgenev, to statistics-based policy investigation, to accounts of rural life in tsarist Russia. Perhaps as a result of the attempt to look at the role of alcohol in so many different periods, some parts of the book seem to support Schrad's approach more forcefully than others.

However, *Vodka Politics* is an engaging read for anybody with an interest in Russian politics, history, culture or, of course, alcohol policy. Schrad closes the book by putting forward Swedish-style municipal alcohol control as the most useful approach to the issues he has raised. However, pointing out that a similar policy was mooted by Russian politicians as far back as 1898, and signposting the links of the present day Putin government to vodka production, he concludes on an enthusiastic (if not entirely optimistic) note on the prospects for change in relation to this particular mode of statecraft.

*Reviewed by Holly Porteous
Holly Porteous is currently completing her PhD at the University of Glasgow in Russian gender studies.*

The Putin Mystique: Inside Russia's Power Cult

by Anna Aratunyan

London: Skyscraper Publications, 2014, £16.99

The publication of Aratunyan's book, an exploration of Putinism and its social determinants, is particularly timely as the world, and particularly the Western media, reflect once again on Russia's global role. One of the critical aspects to this has been the desire to better understand the motivations of Russia's President, Vladimir Putin, the man whose guiding hand has done more to shape the state of Russia's post-communist body politic and geopolitical approach than any other.

Events in Ukraine have once again prompted much discussion about Russia's nascent or pseudo democracy. Largely unchallenged, bar the interventions of Russian state-controlled broadcasters, Putin is once again cast in the role of arch autocrat, a Stalinesque figure with a murky KGB past who is intent on bringing forth a new Cold War between Russia and the West. While there is much discussion of Putin's abuse of state power, both politically and economically, including his disregard for the current world order and the prevalence of corruption in his state apparatus, broadly absent from the analysis is an understanding of why he retains a certain level of popularity amongst the Russian populace.

At best admired, at worst treated with indifference, huge swathes of the Russian population have not only supported Putin's actions on the world stage but have elected him time and time again. The view of the Russian population as 'under Putin's control' both disenfranchises and infantilises, and it is precisely this point which Aratunyan sets out to explore. What is the nature of this relationship, a relationship Aratunyan identifies early as "love-hate", between Putin and his electorate?

While Aratunyan makes reference to the works of numerous prominent academics throughout the text, including those of Shlapentoch, Sakwa and Galeotti, she makes clear from the outset that her work should not be viewed with an academic or strictly political lens. A journalist and lecturer, her approach is best described in the epilogue as an attempt to "see past the politics". Aratunyan's non-academic caveat seems misplaced as she begins with a hypothesis about Russia's "patrimonial-irra-

tional state"; however, concepts like patrimonialism and feudalism are approached in very general terms and the success of Aratunyan's work does not rely on the identification or defence of a particular political model.

The triumph of the book is in gaining deeply personal insights from unusual sources. Where many would begin with an examination of polling data, political attitudes and carefully conducted focus groups, Aratunyan has exhaustively interviewed the people whose lives have been touched directly by the Putin experience, those who have particular opinions about life in Putin's Russia. In some cases, she draws on those who have personal experience of, or insights into, the man himself. Aratunyan's interviewees are people who have interacted with various institutions, at various levels, in Putin's Russia and whose experience of Putin's proximity to their lives can be either real or imagined. At various times Putin is presented as: a father of the nation figure, a true sovereign proudly embodying the state; a soulless, micromanaging bureaucrat; an all-powerful autocrat; or a powerless leader unable to control the sprawling reach of his own

apparatus. Similarly the "Putin Mystique" can be interpreted as everything from a cult of personality to a quasi-religious feeling experienced by those in his presence. If the book has a failing it concerns structure: Aratunyan's selection of interviewees can feel a little ad-hoc, and her peppering of the narrative with references to Russian literature detracts from the coherence of the argument. The slightly disjointed nature of the text also raises valid questions about Aratunyan's intended audience: it is both insufficiently rigorous for academic audiences and, at times, too rambling for the casual reader.

Aratunyan's work is an extremely worthwhile contribution to the debate, one which takes a novel approach to demystifying the Putin phenomena. Putting aside minor concerns about coherence of its narrative, this book provides an interesting assessment of the social dynamics which underpin Putin's relationship with his people and one which many in the Western media would do well to read.

Reviewed by Mark L. Penman.

Mark L. Penman is a public affairs consultant based in London and a graduate of Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities



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