

and Skoro. Such images offer a wonderful collection, enhanced by the astute editorial comments on the photos, such as the sometimes-snide remarks on the overt commercialism exhibited by some newer works featuring Baba Yaga. Such comments are welcome first because of their content, but also because they are much more entertaining to read and more thoughtful than the standard photo captions. They also draw our attention to another innovative feature of the book: rather than limiting itself to classical fairy tale illustrations or antique woodcuts, this publication is rich in contemporary renderings and even high-tech offerings. The up-to-the-minute illustrations reflect not only the diligence of the contributors, but also, more importantly, the vital role Baba Yaga continues to play in Russian and global culture.

Perhaps the most useful indirect feature of the book is its review of other books on Baba Yaga, providing interested readers with other avenues for their own continued study. The tangible tastes of humor throughout the text, the clever turns of phrase, and the elegant translations combine to serve up a feast worthy of Baba Yaga's bounteous table; the illustrations ensure that the reader, like Vasilisa, will find her way to the hut where Baba Yaga waits, ready to impart her wisdom or gobble up the overcurious. Forrester's collection ensures that the hut with chicken legs will remain in the woods, ready to delight and terrify all who encounter it.

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Genevra Gerhart with Eloise M. Boyle. *The Russian's World: Life and Language*. 4th ed. Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2012. xxx + 513pp. ISBN-10: 0893573809; ISBN-13: 978-0893573805 \$49.95. xxx + 513.

Now in its fourth edition (first published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in 1974), Gerhart's and Boyle's encyclopedic catalogue of "common knowledge" among "Russians" is a classic; readers of this review likely have at least one well-worn edition of *The Russian's World* on their bookshelf. Where else under one cover can one find the rules for "gorodki" (240-1), a guide to (Soviet) Russian clothing sizes — "take the bust or chest

measurement and divide it in two" (111), or the how-tos on visiting a Russian Orthodox church (270–80)? Abundantly illustrated with no-frills line drawings and black-and-white photographs (of uneven quality), with two color maps on the inside covers, the book's seventeen chapters and multiple appendices range from the physiological ("The Human Being/Человек") to the abstract ("Numbers/Числа"), with "Conduct/Поведение," "Names/Имена, Отчества, Фамилии," "Speech/Речь," "Clothing/Одежда," "Housing/Жилище," "Food/Русская пища, еда," "Medicine/Медицина," "Shopping/По магазинам," "Play/Отдых," "Holidays and the Church/Праздники и церковь," "Education/Образование," "Work and Money/Работа и деньги," "Communications/Связь," "Transportation/Транспорт," and "Nature/Природа" in between. The "verbose" table of contents lists chapter topics by key concepts in English and Russian; it is supplemented by a thorough index, and key words in Russian appear in bold print with accents. For its intended audience ("the traveler who might be happier or even healthier knowing what to expect" and "for those studying the language who are blessed with curiosity and [temporarily] tired of verb forms" [xxvii]), in terms of breadth of coverage or ease of use *The Russian's World* has no equal.

From the outset Gerhart and Boyle advise that "[m]ost Russians will agree with most of what is written here. None will agree with everything—the borders of common knowledge are not easily drawn" (xxvii). Nowhere in their work do the authors claim objectivity, and value-laden generalizations run throughout the text creating an unabashedly subjective view of the world, Russian or other. The section on "Sex (Половые отношения)" begins: "The girls pictured below are checking messages on their cell phones; note the very common squatting position. This particular pose is also useful when encountering pit toilets. They are going to need those muscles during attempts at procreation, as do Chinese and Japanese, where the woman is on top" (54). On Russian interior design: "Typifying the 'Russianness' of Russian décor is difficult. No one style seems to predominate; indeed, the Russian ego did not seem to extend to household possessions until the arrival of capitalism" (121–122). On the future of the USE (ЕГЭ) Gerhart quips: "I suspect the test will die of disrespect [. . .]. Tune in tomorrow."

Problems arise when subjectively presented information is misleading or incomplete. In the chapter on "Sex," which immediately moves to "Really Dirty Words," readers are admonished "[n]ever, ever use these words," then treated to a list that would make both Erofeevs blush, including references to "the major female obscenity," which gets translated as "vagina." Often in talking about everyday life the authors' lack of firsthand knowledge shows. Regarding window treatments (122), занавески are *not* heavier, nor do they admit less light than шторы (just the opposite is true). Among sports teams (238), of which the authors also lack firsthand knowledge, ЦДСА (the predecessor of ЦСКА) became extinct in 1960, and BBC, whose patron was Stalin's pilot son, Vasily, disappeared in 1953, but both are mentioned alongside existing teams (238). A much-needed description of the ritual of sitting down in silence before a trip omits perhaps the most significant detail: the youngest person in the group breaks the silence (36). When describing the game of фантики, the authors erroneously claim that the object is "to make one's фантик go farther," which makes little sense; rather the object is to land one's фантик on other wrappers (247). And while "женщина" as a form of address is cited with no explanation in the section on lines (218), the appearance of this word (together with "мужчина") as substitutes for "comrade" and the inadvisability of foreigners using it receives no mention in the section on address (75).

In part, the fourth edition was published to preserve phenomena that disappeared along with the USSR, and this information is invaluable, but some advice is just outdated and should have been removed: "Toilet paper туалетная бумага is commonly available in private homes . . ." (124). "If you want to rent anything from baby diapers to harps, consult the telephone book under Прокат" (220). As for new phenomena, when outside their areas of expertise, as in the section on computer jargon, Gerhart and Boyle founder, placing "кул," "топтать батоны," "резак," and "писюк" alongside "панель управления," "курсор," "файл," and "папка" as "computer jargon." Elementary mistranslations occur in both directions: "макияж" is not a "facial" (221); "ballet school" is an "училище," not a "спецшкола" (294); a "corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences" is a "член-кор," not a "член-коров." Not terribly grievous (in fact, somewhat entertaining) when considered individually, such inaccuracies are on the order of the "перегрузка" button Hilary

Clinton presented to Sergei Lavrov and should have been edited out long ago.

Before including *The Russian's World* in a required list for students teachers will want to consider what is missing as well as what is present. For example, the overview in "Housing," begins with constructivism, neglecting at least fifty years of private rental housing (доходные дома) that provided the setting for Dostoevsky's novels as well as those middle-class living spaces eventually carved up into the communal apartments of the Soviet era (117). "Доходные дома" built at the turn of the 19th–20th centuries, like other examples of modern architecture (e.g., the Riabushinsky House built by Fedor Shekhtel'), also inspired the architectural revival of Russia's nouveau-riche. The section in "Education," flawed insofar as it describes Russia's transition to four-year tertiary education five debate- and legislation-rich years before the transition was undertaken, also ignores a growing body of literature on post-tertiary degree evaluation between single-tier (US) and two-tier (RF) doctoral systems, summarily declaring a Russian кандидатская the equivalent of a US PhD (291–3). *The Russian's World* contains no mention of the flag of the Russian Federation or its origins. In fact, the book is practically devoid of all Russian state symbols, save a mention of President Putin (a symbol in his own right) in the Introduction (xxiv). Most significant, nowhere between its covers will students find a definition for the term "Russian," leaving them to infer from overall content (e.g., a half-chapter devoted to Russian Orthodoxy, only passing mention of Judaism and Islam, and no mention of Buddhism or shamanism) that what is implied is a one-size-fits-all ethnic "русский" and not just any citizen (россиянин) of the Russian Federation. True, some of these questions and other cultural phenomena are addressed in a companion volume, *The Russian Context* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2002), but price and sheer weight likely exclude both as "recommended" texts for students. In fact, price and weight (more than two pounds) constitute the greatest limitations to using *The Russian's World* in most contexts, particularly if travel is involved. In an age of handheld devices and economically priced eBooks, Slavica should consider producing a (meticulously edited) fifth edition in digitized format.

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Fyodor Dostoevsky. *The Meek One: A Fantastic Story: An Annotated Russian Reader.* Julia Titus, ed. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011. Illustrations by Kristen Robinson. 154 pp. \$22.00

***Selected Short Stories by Vassily Aksyonov. A Reader for the Intermediate and Advanced Student of Russian with Explanatory Notes, Exercises and Glossary.* Compiled and edited by James S. Levine. Introduction by Julie A. Christensen. Bloomington, Indiana: Slavica, 2013. 254 pp. \$24.95**

Both of these readers are excellent additions to available annotated readers for students of Russian that would be most appropriate after students have completed two full years of Russian.

The Meek One, as a single story, would be most appropriate as one of a number of texts for a 19th century literature class. The book itself has an informative brief biography of Dostoevsky as well as a well-laid-out two-column design with the text in the left column and lexical items glossed on the right. Titus also provides extensive explanatory notes that explain both cultural concepts and challenging linguistic formulations. In addition, there are also written vocabulary exercise, as well as activities for students to recognize related words by identifying their roots. The volume also provides suggestions for in-class discussion and writing assignments. There are keys to the exercise and quizzes included as well. I highly recommend the wonderful on-line expanded “digital version” which contains an introduction about Dostoevsky (in Russian and in English), the text in both audio and electronic written format with an excellent gloss, electronic flashcards for vocabulary study, and the same fill-in-the-blank exercises that are in the hardcopy, except that students can complete the exercise and get immediate feedback by checking their answers. This online companion appears to be available and free of charge. The online version, however, does not contain the extensive notes, or the suggestions for oral and written assignments. That said, it would be entirely possible for the instructor to use the hardcopy as a kind of “teacher’s edition,” with students working primarily from the online companion, as it appears to be available without a password and free of charge. Both the hardcopy,

and especially the online companion, could easily be used for self-study for more advanced students.

Unlike *The Meek One*, which would have to be included in a more extensive reading list, the volume by James S. Levine *Selected Short Stories by Vassily Aksyonov. A Reader for the Intermediate and Advanced Student of Russian with Explanatory Notes, Exercises and Glossary* could easily form the basis of an entire course for students who have had at least two full years of Russian. This is an exceptionally well-done reader that includes five stories by the young Aksyonov - *Samson and Samsonikha* and *Surprises* from 1959, *From Morning Until Dark* published in 1960, *Catapult* from 1962, and *Local Hooligan Abramashvili* from 1964; and one story, *The Lion's Den* by the mature Aksyonov written in 2003 after his return to Russia after more than 20 years in exile in the West. The five early stories all have young characters who are dealing with the kinds of common issues faced by young people even today, making some of the themes accessible and familiar to the student of Russian. Though the stories are set in a much different time and place, they provide the opportunity to explore the realities of life in the USSR during the 1950s and 1960s. *The Lion's Den* is a wonderful account of the author's visit to Pushkin's apartment-museum, providing rich material for discussion. The introduction by Julie A. Christensen places Aksyonov's life and work in context. Each text is superbly glossed (lines are numbered, glossed items run along the margin) and includes footnotes with cultural and linguistic information that the student is not likely to know already. One of the most difficult things for our students reading in the original is coping with participles and gerunds. After each text is a comprehensive list of all such forms, in the order in which they appear; given for each form is its infinitive and aspect, as well an indication of whether it is a verbal adverb or participle (past or present). For each text, there is an extensive list of questions about the text that serve to check comprehension and can easily be used to guide class discussion, a set of topics for written essays, and a section highlighting Russian word-building based on roots. There is also a comprehensive Russian-English glossary containing all the words that appear in the stories (with the exception of numbers, personal and possessive pronouns, and person and place names). This volume could be used to offer any number of courses, depending on program needs and student level: it may be used as the primary text for an author's course on Aksyonov himself, or it may

be integrated (in its entirety or in part, again depending on institutional context and student level) into a course on literature of the post-WWII period, the Thaw of the late-1950s-early 1960s, or 20th century Russian literature in general. There are very few readers available today that can be used as the main textbook for a course, either because they are single-story readers, or because though they may include a collection of stories, the supplementary material included in the volume is insufficient, requiring the creation of such material by the instructor. This superb volume is likely to appeal to instructors and students alike, for both its selection of stories and its approach to the material.

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Donna Oliver with Edie Furniss. *Peroyi Krug: Russian Full Circle*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013. 384 pp. \$85.00 (cloth)

Первый круг: Russian Full Circle is the first edition of a beginning Russian textbook that represents a contemporary communicative approach with an emphasis on grammatical and pragmatic competences. Additionally, it offers an open-source ancillary web site. The goals and objectives of the course are clear, challenging and feasible. The materials can be used in a traditional year-long language course or in an intensive summer language program.

The course consists of ten lessons consisting of vocabulary, grammar explication, conversation practice, and homework exercises. A unique feature of each chapter is the culture section that includes poetry, tongue twisters, and Soviet propaganda posters related to the chapter's theme. The slogans in the posters not only convey cultural knowledge, but also illustrate particular grammar points in an authentic and amusing way. Along with the posters, the book contains abundant popular Russian jokes, including contemporary political jokes, to provide the necessary element of fun.

Russian Full Circle includes the following features that make it stand out from most other elementary Russian textbooks: a full presentation of the grammatical system, authentic material from the Russian National Corpus, and a particularly high quality website. *Первый круг* presents each case's morphological and semantic paradigm in full within one chapter instead of fragmenting and dispersing the numerous case functions throughout the textbook, as is the case with other first-year texts. This systematic approach conveys important facets of Russian grammar in all their complexity at early stages, allowing learners to build their proficiency on a strong foundation. Moreover, it makes the book more accessible for review, as students can easily find information on a particular case in one place rather than searching through the entire volume.

One of the strengths of the book is the source of its mini-dialogues: the Russian National Corpus (ruscorpora.ru), which provides authentic speech patterns that are integrated in the speaking tasks that follow. In addition, the textbook includes fully glossed poems of classical Russian authors in each lesson to provide authentic reading practice.

In spite of the book's strengths, several significant elements are missing. The book lacks original listening comprehension exercises, though the web component of the book does provide links to other open sources with their own listening exercises. Moreover, pronunciation and intonation drills are absent, making that important aspect of Russian even harder to grasp for beginners. Instructors who adopt this textbook will likely need to supplement their courses with both listening exercises and pronunciation and intonation drills.

The ancillary web site is an entertaining component of the course, containing optional material appropriate both for classroom use and independent exploration. It is easy to navigate and immediately catches the reader's attention with a collection of relevant YouTube videos applicable to all levels of Russian learners, not only beginners. Unlike the illustrations in the textbook itself, the quality of which leaves a lot to be desired, the web site contains superb contemporary photos, authentic ads, menus, store signs, and so forth, used to promote reading proficiency in the exemplary PowerPoint presentations for each lesson. Students can listen to the pronunciation of all new vocabulary and textbook dialogues online. This supplementary component promotes independent work while

providing a rich contemporary cultural context. The absence of a traditional workbook makes *Russian Full Circle* more affordable. On the other hand, the number of homework exercises (around 20 per chapter) might be insufficient for the book's intensive and ambitious grammar coverage.

Notwithstanding the small number of shortcomings, *Russian Full Circle* provides an excellent compilation of lucid grammar explanations and practical exercises for the development of adult learners' language proficiency. The loose topical structure of the course allows for instructor creativity and easy tailoring of the material according to learners' needs.

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