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Review: *The Russian's World: Life and Language*

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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,