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Editorial information

Please send any news, comments, or contributions to the editor, Ben Phillips (B.G.Phillips@exeter.ac.uk)

Deadline for submissions for the March newsletter is 15 February 2021.

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 British Association
for Slavonic and
East European Studies

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President's Report

I hope this *Newsletter* finds BASEES members in good spirits. It has been an incredibly tough year for all of us.

The pandemic has taken over our lives and the world of academia has been transformed at unprecedented speed. Many of us are still battling through a grueling teaching term with so-called 'dual delivery', a mix of online and in-person tuition. As head of a large History department, I have seen first-hand how colleagues have risen to the challenge and rallied to support students in these extraordinary circumstances, often at the cost of their own mental and physical wellbeing. And, of course, this pandemic has left many deep scars on our private lives. It is all too easy to become numb to the daily statistics on infections and deaths. I know from personal experience that BASEES members have lost loved ones to this terrible disease and want to express my heartfelt condolences to everyone affected.

As the pandemic has taken a grip of the world, the region we study has seen significant, and often violent, political turmoil since the summer. For months now people in Belarus have bravely taken to the streets to challenge the authoritarian rule of President Lukashenko, Nagorno-Karabakh witnessed yet another escalation of armed conflict in the long history of territorial disputes over the region, and in Kyrgyzstan President Jeenbekov was forced to resign by protests following the parliamentary elections in October 2020. Debates over the geopolitical significance of these developments will keep scholars and political analysts of the region busy throughout the coming year.

The recent good news about vaccination developments have given rise to hopes that 2021 will see some return to what we liked to call 'normality'. However, while this renewed optimism is certainly helpful, we have to acknowledge that we still have many challenging months ahead of us. It remains to be seen when fieldwork and archival work can resume, and as far as academic conferences are concerned, the impact of the crisis will undoubtedly



be long-lasting. Virtual conferences and workshops have become the norm: ASEEES 2020 was held completely online and the organising team of the ICCEES World Congress, 'Bridging National and Global Perspectives', that was postponed to August 2021 also had to make the tough decision to hold it fully virtually. As someone who has been leading the organisation of the BASEES annual conferences for years, I can only imagine how difficult this decision must have been after working for years with the host Concordia University to put on a wonderful event in the city of Montreal. I would like to encourage our members to attend the Congress and make it a success: the Call for Papers has now **reopened**.

BASEES made the decision to not hold an annual conference in 2021 back in spring. As I reported previously, however, we continue to organise, support and sponsor several smaller events in 2021. First of all, I can now confirm that the **BASEES regional conference, 'Globalising Eastern Europe – New Perspectives on Transregional Entanglements'**, in collaboration with the Leibniz ScienceCampus 'Eastern Europe – Global Area' (EEGA) in Leipzig, Germany, will now go ahead in a hybrid format, with most of the programme being delivered online from 21st to 24th of April 2021. The conference will be free of charge.

We are also very excited that two new BASEES Study Groups have been created that will be holding events in 2021. The **Eurasian Regions Study Group (ERSG)** was created in November to bring together the considerable expertise among BASEES members on the Eurasian regions away from the Society's main focus on European Russia, including (but not limited to) the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Baltic States and Siberia. The Study Group runs regular events, hosts the wonderful blog **Peripheral Histories**, and will >>

New Books

New Books in the BASEES/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies

The BASEES/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies comprises original, high-quality, research-level work by both new and established scholars on all aspects of Russian, Soviet, post-Soviet and East European Studies in humanities and social science subjects.

New and forthcoming titles in this series...

Richard Morgan
The Making of Kropotkin's Anarchist Thought: Disease, Degeneration, Health and the Bio-Political Dimension (October 2020)

Jamie Freeman
From German Königsberg to Soviet Kaliningrad: Appropriating Place and Constructing Identity (November 2020)

Saulius Grybkauskas
Governing the Soviet Union's National Republics: The Second Secretaries of the Communist Party (November 2020)

Robert Horvath
Putin's Fascists: Russkii Obraz and the Politics of Managed Nationalism in Russia (December 2020)

Mirjam Galley
Building Communism and Policing Deviance in the Soviet Union: Residential Childcare, 1958-91 (December 2020)

Cathy McAteer
Translating Great Russian Literature: The Penguin Russian Classics (January 2021)

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>> publish a newsletter on its activities once every two months. Elsewhere, the **BASEES Study Group for Minority History (SGMH)** has announced its first major event, the very topical conference 'Being a Minority in Times of Catastrophe', which will be held at Birkbeck, University of London on 25-26 June 2021. Although the format of the event (online, hybrid or face to face) will be subject to the evolving public health situation, **the Call for Papers has been issued: the deadline is 14 January 2021**. For further details of both Study Groups, see page 4.

BASEES will use the unfortunately long time until the next big annual conference (in April 2022) to undertake a strategic review of its governance, communication and range of activities, with the aim of putting the association on a sustainable footing for the next ten years. We are particularly keen to identify shortcomings in the area of equality, diversity and inclusion and take appropriate action to address them in our core activities and governance. In spring 2021 we will consult our members and the wider constituency in the field through a major survey to feed into the review. The review was formally approved by the BASEES Annual General

Meeting in September 2020 and will take place throughout 2021; we aim to present the new BASEES strategy to our members at the Annual Conference in Cambridge in April 2022. This is very much supposed to be a membership-led review, so please feed into the consultation process.

I wish all BASEES members a restful Christmas, a happy holiday, and a good start to the New Year. Stay well and stay safe!

Matthias Neumann

For more details on conferences and events, visit: basees.org/conferences

News of the field

Return of the Anglo-Russian Research Network

BASEES is pleased to report the official revival of the Anglo-Russian Research Network (ARRN), a group not formally affiliated to the Society but undoubtedly of interest to many of its members. The ARRN was originally established in 2011 by Rebecca Beasley (Queen's College, Oxford) and Matthew Taunton (UEA) to bring together research students, scholars and members of the general public interested in the influence of Russian and Soviet culture and politics in Britain during the period 1880-1950. Over the years it has received support from Pushkin House and funding from the Leverhulme Trust, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and the English Faculty, University of Oxford. The ARRN is now convened by Ben Phillips (b.g.phillips@exeter.ac.uk), Nick Hall (nh348@exeter.ac.uk) and Anna Maslenova (am1237@exeter.ac.uk), all of the University of Exeter. Although there is no formal membership structure, requests

for mailing list subscriptions should be directed to Nick Hall. More information can be found on the **ARRN's website** and on **Twitter**. At present the convenors are putting together a programme of events for the coming year, and therefore invite proposals for reading groups on any aspect of Anglo-Russian history, art history, cultural relations and literary/translation/reception studies during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Presenters should speak for roughly one hour; access to reading materials will be provided to registered participants in advance. All events will be online (via Zoom) until further notice, although in the longer term the intention is to begin holding some in-person events (primarily in Exeter) as and when it becomes possible to do so. Finally, please note that contributions from Russian colleagues are especially welcome, since the ARRN is keen to build relations with the academic community in Russia. >>

News of the field



In Memoriam: Elizabeth Waters

The loss of Elizabeth Waters (31 October 1949-13 January 2020) earlier this year will be much felt among her friends and colleagues. She will, above all, be remembered as one of the very enthusiastic pioneers in the UK of promoting women's history. As a graduate student, she published in translation *The Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai* (1977) under the pseudonym Alix Holt, hoping that the latter would protect the family of her Russian husband. Described by Lynne Attwood as 'an enormously important book those of us interested in Russian gender studies', this volume earned Lizzie the lasting respect of her peers. When Lynne began her PhD at CREES in 1980, she 'was delighted to discover that one of my heroes was a fellow student.' Lynne viewed Lizzie as an inspiration, friend and mentor whose 'dedication to Soviet and Russian studies was infectious.'

From 1968-1972, Lizzie studied History in the School of European Studies at the University of Sussex, with Russian as her required language. She received her PhD, entitled 'From the Old Family to the New: Work, Marriage and Motherhood in Urban Soviet Russia, 1917-31', from CREES, Birmingham in 1985. Together with several other students at CREES who at the time were researching various aspects of women's lives, Lizzie founded the 'Women in Eastern Europe Group.' With no names given, the group translated articles written by dissident Russian women in *Almanakh zhenshchinam o zhenshchinakh*, 1979) under the title *Women and Russia: First Feminist Samizdat* (1980) and stood behind an edited volume, *Soviet Sisterhood: British Feminists on Women in the USSR* (1985), to which Lizzie contributed (again as Alix Holt) a chapter on 'The First Soviet Feminists'. When the four editors of the

Almanakh were stripped of their Soviet citizenship and sent into exile, the group hosted a visit to CREES by one of them, Tatiana Mamonova. In the 1980s, CREES remained a lively hub of evening seminars, with invited speakers talking about various aspects of the 'women's question' (zhenskii vopros), attracting students and lecturers from across the UK.

Lizzie's teaching career took her to Australian National University, where she was a lecturer in Russian and Soviet History from 1985 into the 1990s. Afterwards, back in the UK, Lizzie studied herbal medicine at the University of Middlesex and briefly practised in north London before returning to academia from 2000 to 2018 at the University of Westminster. After part-time contracts as a lecturer in IT Linguistics, she became a Principal Lecturer in the Department of Modern and Applied Languages, while still contributing to modules on history.

Her publications under the name of Elizabeth Waters include: 'Teaching Mothercraft in Post-Revolutionary Russia,' *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies* 1.2 (1987); 'Reconstructing the 'Woman Question': Perestroika and Prostitution,' *Feminist Review* 33 (1989); 'In the Shadow of the Comintern: The Communist Women's Movement, 1920-43' in Sonia Kruks, Rayna Rapp and Marilyn B. Young (eds.), *Promissory Notes: Women in the Transition to Socialism* (1989); 'The Female Form in Soviet Political Iconography, 1917-32' in Barbara Evans Clements, Barbara Alpern Engel and Christine Worobec (eds.), *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance and Transformation* (1991); 'Victim or Villain: Prostitution in Post-Revolutionary Russia' in Linda Edmondson (ed.), *Women and Society in Russia and the Soviet Union* (1992); 'Cuckoo Mothers' and 'Apparatchiks': Glasnost' and Children's Homes', in Mary Buckley (ed.), *Perestroika and Soviet Women* (1992); 'The Modernisation of Russian Motherhood, 1917-1937', *Soviet Studies* 44.1 (1992) and 'Heroism in the Frame: Gender, Nationality and Propaganda in Tashkent and Moscow, 1924-1945', in Melanie Ilic (ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Women and Gender in Twentieth-Century Russia and the Soviet Union* (2018). Lizzie's fascination with the USSR and Russia never waned. Her ongoing research project focused on Soviet visual propaganda from the 1940s to the 1980s. Her husband Garrick is looking into publishing in Russian some of her unpublished writings.

Mary Buckley, Hughes Hall, Cambridge
Melanie Ilic, University of Gloucestershire

Sobibór on the Screen: Cinematic Representations of a Nazi Death Camp

An online exhibition, *Sobibór on the Screen: Cinematic Representations of a Nazi Death Camp*, was launched on 14 October 2020 to mark the 77th anniversary of the prisoner revolt that took place there on 14 October 1943. Co-curated by two PhD students, Isabel Sawkins (University of Exeter) and Hannah Wilson (Nottingham Trent University), the exhibition examines films that have depicted the memory of the death camp, the experiences of those who survived, and the events of the uprising.

Sobibór death camp, established in occupied Eastern Poland, functioned between 1942 and 1943 as part of 'Operation Reinhard'. It was constructed with the sole purpose of killing those who arrived at the site. It is estimated that at least 170,000 people died at Sobibór. However, for several reasons, including the closure of the camp before the Soviet liberation of the area in July 1944, the smaller number of survivors (approximately 48 Sobibór prisoners are believed to have survived), and the much later commemoration of the camp site, the Sobibór death camp is generally less well known to the general public than that of some of the larger Nazi concentration camps such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, Majdanek and Bergen-Belsen. *Sobibór on the Screen* addresses this gap in public, and academic, awareness, by examining how Sobibór functioned as a death camp, the events surrounding the prisoner revolt that took place there, and the memorialisation of this camp through films during the late-20th and early-21st centuries. It was often through these films that awareness of the camp entered the public domain and reached international audiences.

The films featured in the exhibition include the television series *Escape from Sobibór* (1987), a collection of films by Claude Lanzmann – *Shoah* (1985), *Sobibór, 14 October 1943, 4 p.m.* (2001) and *Shoah: Four Sisters* (2017) – and the Russian film *Sobibór* (2018). Through a closer study of each film, the exhibition narrates their context, production, and reception, and how they were shaped by the time and country within which they were released. To complement the main exhibition, blogposts are also published twice a month (www.sobiboronthescreen.com), written by experts from across the world on topics linked to the death camp. These include an analysis of the Netflix >>

News of the field

>> documentary series *The Devil Next Door*, as well as an exclusive interview with German actor Hartmut Becker, who played SS Gustav Wagner in the 1987 film, *Escape from Sobibór*.

The co-curators would like to sincerely thank the South, West and Wales Doctoral Training Partnership for funding the exhibition.

New BASEES Study Groups

BASEES is pleased to announce the creation of two new Study Groups: the Eurasian Regions Study Group (ERSG) and, from 2021, the Study Group for Minority Histories (SGMH).

Open to all BASEES members, the Eurasian Regions Study Group will bring together the considerable expertise among BASEES members on regions which fall within the Society's geographical scope but might be deemed peripheral or supplementary to its dominant interest in European Russia. Such regions include, but are not limited to: the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Baltic States and Siberia. The ERSG has grown, in part, from the Digital Humanities project *Peripheral Histories*. It aims to foster discussion and research collaboration, particularly within interdisciplinary or comparative frameworks, between scholars working on Eurasian regions; to publicise new research on Eurasian regions and encourage public engagement; to offer special support to postgraduate and early career researchers studying Eurasian regions, to build foundations for a successful future in this branch of area studies, and to play a part in advocating for area studies and the humanities as critical components of public life and democratic debate; it will also publish a newsletter on its activities once every two months. The ERSG is convened by Dr Catherine Gibson (University of Tartu), Dr Siobhan Hearne (University of Durham), Dr Jo Laycock (University of Manchester) and Dr Alun Thomas (Staffordshire University): for membership and other enquiries, and to subscribe to the newsletter, please contact eurasianregions@gmail.com and Dr Alun Thomas (alun.thomas@staffs.ac.uk).

The Study Group for Minority Histories will be devoted to the study of all minority groups in the national and regional histories of Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe from the Napoleonic era to the contemporary past. The group's principal aim will be to assist academics currently working in

this area of historical enquiry by fostering international networks to help share their research. It also seeks to encourage more collaborative forms of scholarship across different aspects of minority history such as the evolution of identity, diaspora-formation, inter-communal engagements, development of cultural institutions, relations with states and state actors and the impact of regional conflicts. In addition, the SGMH seeks to promote the use of new methodologies, interdisciplinary approaches and theoretical frameworks in the study of minority histories. The SGMH is convened by Dr Samuel Foster (UEA, Samuel.foster@uea.ac.uk) and Dr Olena Palko (Birkbeck, UoL, o.palko@bbk.ac.uk). For further information, please visit the [SGMH's website](#) and follow on [Twitter](#).

To mark the launch of the SGMH, it is planned to hold an inaugural workshop on 'Being a Minority in Times of Catastrophe'. This will focus on moments of historical disaster, natural and man-made, and the responses these engendered from specific minority communities, like the provision of relief and medical aid, or the roles these groups assumed in response to such catastrophes. Proposals from across the historical spectrum, and in particular papers examining the impact of, or reactions to, specific environmental and public health emergencies, such as famines, earthquakes, flooding, or epidemic disease, since 1789, are welcome. The workshop will take place 25-26 June as part of the 'Public History Festival' organised by [The Raphael Samuel History Centre](#), subject to the UK's evolving public health situation. If you are interested in presenting a paper (or simply wish to join the study group) please submit a 250-word proposal and a short academic biography to sgmh.basees@gmail.com by 14th January. Selected papers will also be considered for future publication as part of a post-workshop volume (details to follow).

XVII International Congress of Slavists, Paris, August 2023

The XVII International Congress of Slavists is to take place at the Centre Malesherbes in Paris from 28 August-1 September 2023. Further information, including a list of the linguistic, literary and cultural subject-areas to be included in the Congress will be available [on the website](#) from December 2020.

Applications to organize panels ('thematic blocks') are invited by the deadline of 1 May 2021. A thematic block should

consist of 3-8 participants, of whom not more than 2 may be from the same country. The organizer of a thematic block must ensure that there is an introductory paper lasting not more than 20 minutes and that the other papers last not more than 15 minutes; discussants should speak for not more than 5 minutes.

When submitting an application for a thematic block, the organizer must send in a subject outline and 2-page abstracts of the papers (not longer than 1000 characters including spaces). Applications and abstracts should be sent to Temblok2023@orange.fr before 1 May 2021; please copy for information to the UK representative, Mary MacRobert (catherine.macrobot@lmh.ox.ac.uk). The contact for enquiries is Professor Sylvie Archaimbault (sylvie.archaimbault@orange.fr). Organizers will be asked to arrange for fuller, 5-page abstracts of papers for accepted thematic blocks to be made available on the Congress website in advance of the Congress itself.

The deadline for applications to give individual papers in thematic sessions is likely to be 1 May 2022; details of how to apply will be circulated in the coming year. Individual papers should either deal comparatively with more than one Slavonic language / literature / culture, or should have a theoretical dimension. Prepublication of papers is no longer required, but 5-page abstracts of accepted papers must be made available on the Congress website in advance of the Congress itself. It is assumed that papers will be published, preferably in peer-reviewed journals, either before or after the Congress, and national representatives are asked to provide lists of these publications.

Individual papers are subject to the national quota (which does not include speakers in thematic blocks) and applications must therefore be forwarded via the national representative on the International Committee of Slavists, with an indication of the appropriate thematic section. The quota of places for UK delegates at the Congress is 15, and the national representative is Mary MacRobert (catherine.macrobot@lmh.ox.ac.uk). Please let her know if you plan to organize a thematic block or to contribute an individual paper. ■

Generation '89

Witness seminar and Czech/Slovak reunion 30 years after the Czechoslovak revolution.

On 22 November 2019, a major event, 'Generation '89', was held in Cardiff on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the peaceful overthrow of Communist rule in Czechoslovakia in November 1989.

To mark this important anniversary and to promote deeper understanding of the complexity of the 1989 Czechoslovak revolution, Generation '89 brought together leading Czech and Slovak figures from the Czechoslovak revolution of November 1989 to offer their testimony in front of a live audience and to create a film resource for future generations. The event included as witnesses prominent leaders not only from the revolutionary student Strike Committee, Civic Forum and Public Against Violence, but also the Czechoslovak Communist Party leadership of the day. The event was held in the Marble Hall of the Temple of Peace, a place built to promote international understanding. The format of the day was inspired by the BBC Radio 4 series 'The Reunion'.

Witnesses who gave live testimony at Generation '89 included a 1989 Czech student leader, Civic Forum founder, Communist Party leader, Slovak dissident

and first post-1989 Czechoslovak ambassador. These witnesses, who came from different regions and represented different age groups and political outlooks, were asked to share their testimony at a special witness seminar held in front of a live audience of around 70 scholars, undergraduates, postgraduate students and members of the general public. Additional virtual testimony was provided for the event by prominent Czech and Slovak actors in the 1989 revolution. Academics with particular expertise in the 1989 Czechoslovak revolution (David Green and Michal Pullmann) led cross-questioning. Simultaneous translation was provided by Ilona Klemm. Questions from the audience and general discussion were chaired by Mary Heimann, the event organiser and founder of the Central and East European Research Group at Cardiff University, and by Jiri Priban, co-sponsor of the event and director of the Centre for Law and Society, also at Cardiff University.

Witnesses consented to have their testimony (the morning session) filmed and stored in the Czechoslovak Special Collection currently housed at Cardiff University (the rest of the day's discussion followed Chatham House rules and was not recorded). A resulting two-hour film of the witness testimony presented to Generation '89 is available for Cardiff University students and visiting scholars to view as part of the Czechoslovak Special Collection housed in Special Collections, Arts Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) Library at Cardiff University. Books, archival materials and revolutionary ephemera were donated to the Czechoslovak Special Collection at Cardiff University and are available for scholarly use by students and scholars studying Czechoslovak history at Cardiff and elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Generation '89 was created by Mary Heimann and co-sponsored by the School of History, Archaeology and Religion and the Centre for Law and Society at Cardiff University. It was made possible by generous funding from BASEES, the Czech Embassy in London and the Slovak Embassy in London. The event was attended by the Slovak honorary consul in Wales, students and scholars at Cardiff University, members of the BASEES Czech and Slovak Study Group and members of the general public. It is hoped that the event, which brought together former allies and opponents, in some cases for the first time in thirty years, has helped to sharpen the memories and promote greater understandings of the events of November 1989. The witness testimony deposited in the Czechoslovak Special Collection will remain as a permanent scholarly resource as well as record of this unique meeting which took place one generation after the successful anti-Communist revolution in Czechoslovakia.



Book Reviews



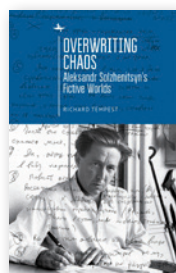
Alexander Pushkin, *Selected Poetry*. Penguin Classics, 2020. 280pp. ISBN: 9780241207130. £10.99.

Antony Wood's new translation of Pushkin's poetry, published by Penguin Classics in 2020, is magnificent. This selection of lyric poems, ballads, fairy tales and narrative verse captures, for perhaps the first time in English, both the brilliance of Pushkin's insights and the irreverence of his imagination. Not only is Pushkin's poetry finally accessible to Anglophone audiences: better yet, it's enjoyable. The immediacy, freshness and vibrancy of the original texts shine through these translations: Wood is careful to avoid padding out the English to match Russian line lengths, although he aims to preserve scansion, metre and rhyme wherever feasible. In the 1828 poem "Thou and You", Wood reverses the order of the first two lines in the first quatrain, and rewrites the next two quite freely, changing word order and subject nouns: yet the meaning and rhythm as well as the joyous spark of the original Russian all survive. This is particularly challenging in a slight poem which plays on the contrast between the formal and informal second person pronouns, a difference long since obsolete in English. Contrasts between Pushkin's own poems are skilfully conveyed by the chronological order of selection. That rowdy youth of 1819 or so who described drunken revels and planned 'priapic enterprise' with willing females, yet also indignantly denounced his nation's 'shameful, deadly laws' in enduring verses like "Liberty: An Ode" and "On Chaadayev", would author, within a decade, solemn, almost mystical lyrics like "The Prophet" and "The Upas Tree". The final two sections of the anthology include six narrative poems (including Pushkin's Romantic masterpieces *The Gypsies* and *The Bronze Horseman*, and the cheeky satire *Count Nulin*) and four verse fairy tales, notably the *Tale of Tsar Saltan* with its shape-shifting bumble-bee.

Wood's erudite yet immensely readable preface is an entertaining introduction to Pushkin's life, poetic achievement, and later reception for the general reader; and an excellent resource for the undergraduate student, complete with bibliography and recommendations for further reading. Here we meet the major and minor figures in the poet's life (from

the Rayevsky sisters, with each of whom he fell in love in turn as a young man in exile, to his '[e]xceptionally, magnetically beautiful wife' Natalya, whose beauty would be Pushkin's downfall). Pushkin's prose has been splendidly rendered in English by Robert Chandler and Stanley Mitchell; now, almost two hundred years after the poet's death, Antony Wood has at last made his poems exceptionally, magnetically readable in English.

**Muireann Maguire
University of Exeter**



Richard Tempest, *Overwriting Chaos. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's Fictive Worlds* (Academic Studies Press, 2019). 750pp. ISBN: 9781644690123. \$45.

This is the most ambitious and significant book in English on Solzhenitsyn to appear this century; at over 700 pages, it is also one of the longest ever written on the subject, exceeding the dimensions of some (though, of course, not all) of Solzhenitsyn's best-known epics. *Overwriting Chaos* covers all of Solzhenitsyn's fiction, from late Stalinist juvenilia to the under-studied stories written after his return to Russia in the 1990s. Lengthy chapters are devoted to each of the major novels, including nearly 140 pages on *The Red Wheel*, while shorter works of prose, poetry and theatre are grouped by time of writing and/or publication. Surveys of Solzhenitsyn's biography and of his overarching aesthetic bookend the account. The only omissions are Solzhenitsyn's publitsistika, understandably given the focus on 'fictive worlds', and *Gulag Archipelago*. Though the latter would have stretched the work's considerable length still further, it would have been fruitful to compare this 'literary investigation' with Solzhenitsyn's more conventionally literary works. Still, this account offers the most comprehensive English-language coverage of Solzhenitsyn's oeuvre, and conveys a vivid sense of the man and his beliefs. Indeed, the author had extensive access to both Solzhenitsyn and his widow Natalia: the appendix contains transcripts of three of his interviews with the writer, a useful resource in their own right.

Many scholars have organised their works on Solzhenitsyn chronologically, to reflect the seismic events that punctuated his life and the trajectory of his intensifying political opposition and moral outrage. From within the familiar chronological structure used here, two key themes emerge: Solzhenitsyn's avid mining of his life experiences for literary material, and his consistent experimentations with form and genre. The final chapter, by far the best in the book, deftly and persuasively presents Solzhenitsyn as a writer who 'learned to employ Modernist means in order to pursue anti-Modernist ends'. However, this emphasis on formal experimentation, also adumbrated in the title, shifts in and out of focus in the rest of the book, as do the theoretical frameworks for narrative analysis (chiefly drawn from Genette and Bataille). Instead, much of the textual commentary consists of detailed plot summary and exuberant character description, which those who have read or studied the texts might find somewhat redundant. Readers may also feel uneasy with the frequent use of epithets such as 'sexy', 'nubile', 'slinky', 'saucy' and 'pert' in descriptions of female characters, though there are some interesting insights into the under-appreciated themes of masculinity and sexuality in Solzhenitsyn's work.

Tempest's prodigious knowledge of Solzhenitsyn's oeuvre, and of his connections and polemics with a vast range of writers and philosophers, is evident throughout. Images (particularly bestial, geometric, corporeal and facial tropes) and intertexts are picked out from dozens of works, and often enumerated over several pages. Particularly valuable is the tracing of the organisation and constriction of space across Solzhenitsyn's narratives. This motif, and the other key tropes and strategies identified here, may well have been more clearly and concisely illuminated via a thematic, rather than chronological, approach. By the end of the book, the reader has gained an almost overwhelming sense of the texture and density of Solzhenitsyn's 'fictive worlds', but less so of the 'overwriting [of] chaos' also promised by the title.

**Polly Jones
University College, Oxford**

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