

Throughout *Adaptation as a Symptom*, Fedorova provides thorough, well-informed, and persuasive discussions of the films, fruitfully examining how each filmmaker interprets the given author, what aspects of the source text s/he highlights, and what other intertexts are involved. Her descriptions of the adaptations' post-Soviet contexts at times do not fully detail the relevant political circumstances. More could be said, for instance, on the recent conflicts that, along with the Russo-Japanese War, may have indirectly shaped Shakhnazarov's *Anna Karenina*, and the specifics of the Boris El'tsin and Vladimir Putin eras that have given Dostoevskii's *The Devils*, as she notes, such contemporary political relevance. These reservations notwithstanding, Fedorova has made an important contribution in this volume, and her research should be of great value to scholars of post-Soviet film, adaptation theory, and trauma studies.

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Air Raid. By Polina Barskova. Trans. Valzhyna Mort. Ugly Duckling Presse, 2021. 160 pp. Notes. \$16.00, paper.
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The context for my reading these poems changed in the midst of reading them as Russia launched its war on Ukraine, and their primary subject, the siege of Leningrad, shifted in my mind from a “holy place” (святое место) that one does not touch but with reverence to something murkier and more ambiguous. After Kharkiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, and Mariupol (I hope the list will not have grown any longer by the time these words appear in print), it is hard to imagine anyone approaching the 900 days in quite the same way as before. Perhaps these poems will help.

In the author-translator exchange that serves as both a mutual interview and an afterword to the volume, Polina Barskova notes, “I want, ideally, translations of my poems to be wild” (138). With the exception of a small handful—for example, “Catullus 68A Lisbon,” which could be used in a comparative stylistics course for advanced language students looking line by line—she gets her wish. Indeed, occasionally the translated versions of the Russian poems are so adventurous that some readers might wonder whether the term “translation” adequately describes them. For these moments, an advanced translation seminar with a group of experienced poet-translators would provide the ideal audience, as questions of interpretation and poetic invention become central.

The range between these two approaches is thus quite extensive, with some lines appearing conventional and easy to parse in terms of the ways they correspond to the source text and others reaching for sounds and senses that are, one presumes, personal associations of the translator, Valzhyna Mort, with what she has read and felt in Barskova's poems. This is what I mean by the centrality of interpretation and poetic invention, and it is a translation strategy elaborated on and endorsed by the poet and her translator, where Mort tells the poet, “What can be read as my ‘liberties’ and ‘creative license,’ to me are moments of most semantic fidelity to the freedom and creativity of your poems.” To which Barskova adds: “My main requirement, and mostly for myself, rather than for my translator, is that of freedom—I need to feel that we are free in this process, that the translator has their unique, idiosyncratic relationship with my text” (137–38). Fidelity, then, is fidelity to freedom, and the translator's “idiosyncratic relationship” with the source becomes especially important.

In practice this means these often feel like two sets of poems, one Russian, which came first, the other English, which came second. There are a number of correspondences between the first and the second, some quite close; others distant enough for the latter to be read in places as poems “after” their sources rather than versions of them. Indeed, by contrast to the vast majority of translated poetry published today, there is no indication on the copyright page regarding the “first appearance” of the source poems: this is their first appearance as a collection unto themselves, and they are of a piece with the translations appearing *en face*. The Table of Contents, moreover, makes no mention of the Russian versions, only listing the English titles, though the Russian version comes first for each pair. These are not subtle distinctions, it seems to me: *Air Raid* can be read as a bilingual collection of twenty poems by Polina Barskova and Valzhyna Mort.

Attempting to trace the correspondences between them provides some of the fascination of reading the collection, as one looks from one side to the other (a constant temptation) and finds both delightful surprises and occasional mysteries. Sometimes the surprises are simply apt lexical turns, such as the single-word hesitation line “Hy” that reads “Erm” (24–25) in the English; or the forceful “History crams a lesson down your throat,” which takes off from “Historia навязет вам урок” (12–13); or the lovely “kins” suffix that Mort uses as a diminutive to render деточка as “childkins” (27–29), милая девочка as “sweet girlkins” (30–31), or Пунешенька as “Sweetpoochkins” (28–29). In such cases, as in a well-selected rhyme pair, it would be very difficult to decide which came first if we were not thinking of these as translations.

The correspondences are rarely formal in any strict sense. For instance, Barskova only occasionally rhymes, and Mort does so even less frequently. More common are various kinds of sound painting that tend to open up palettes of variation between the poems, as in the couplet Наша Маша / С ума сошла, which becomes “Our Masha / brain-mashed” (42–43). And all bets are off when Barskova even more occasionally uses a regular meter, such as in the poem “Таксы,” which opens with two quatrains of four-footed anapests in couplet rhymes. Mort’s corresponding “Dachshunds” begins with a single stanza with nine unrhymed lines of unequal length in which even locating images from the source can be a challenge. This might be the most adventurous translation per se in the collection, as sound painting and repetitions in the English (for instance the parenthetical “brrr” of line four or the all caps “BRRRR!” in the third stanza) are present in the source, if they are present, only in the associations that become explicit in the English poem, while lines and references disappear or are re-worked altogether, as in the final stanza:

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| Как Снегурочка таял, и таял и тлел | Her son, no/more dead than no/more alive |
| Черный жемчуг смарагд или дал. | receives her howl into his human mold: |
| Восемь месяцев тихо и гордо болел, | a snow maiden, he melts and molders, |
| И еще полтора умирал. | ruby black pearl beryl (34–35). |

Some of the distance between the two stanzas is due to the almost inevitable re-arrangement that takes place as a translator might try to incorporate material that appeared earlier; this is how the son ends up in the first line of the English and the snow maiden in the third. Rhymes and sound painting are also relatively easy to account for. The absence of the explicit time markers in the second text and the final line’s use of white space are where more elaborate interpretive questions come into play.

Barskova provides another clue to reading such passages in the poet-translator exchange mentioned above. The opening poem of the volume, “Солнечное утро на площади,” ends with the line “Когда умрешь, скажи. И я с тобой,” which she

refers to with a rough English version that reads “when you die, let me know, I’ll follow you there.” This she characterizes as her own “rather awkward” line, expressing a preference for Mort’s English: “and you crack like a glass Christmas star. Arrr arrr” (12–13). On a first reading, my thought here was of an echo, where the rhyming end sound suggests a yearning for something beyond (perhaps including the rhymes of the source), here expressed in the cliché of a star. But Barskova suggests that what the translator has done is to begin “a horrific beautiful game of sounds—which,” and this is key, “I had left underdeveloped” (138). Here a poet is clearly reading the work of another poet who, in turn, heard something as she herself read that poet’s work and then “translated” it. It is hard not to agree that the result is “a new, other life” (138) for this poem and for the collection as a whole.

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The Death of Vazir-Mukhtar. By Yury Tynianov. Trans. Anna Kurkina Rush and Christopher Rush. New York: Columbia University Press, 2021. xxxii, 632 pp. Notes. Glossary. \$40.00, hard bound; \$19.95, soft bound.
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The Russian formalist and writer Iurii Tynianov is having a long overdue moment in the spotlight. A collection of his seminal essays on literary theory came out in English translation in 2019 and won the 2022 AATSEEL Prize for Best Scholarly Translation; an English translation of his historical novel *Kliukhla*, based on the life of the Decembrist poet Wil’gel’m Kiukhel’beker, came out in 2021, and two translations of his historical novel based on the life of poet, playwright, and diplomat Aleksandr Griboedov, *The Death of Vazir-Mukhtar*, have come out in recent years, the first in 2018 and the second, in 2021. The latter, translated by Anna Kurkina Rush and Christopher Rush, is the focus of this review. The novel is fascinating in a number of respects. First, it represents a wonderful example of formalist-inspired literariness at a time when formalism was coming under attack in the Soviet Union. It was perhaps not enough for Tynianov to present contemporary readers with realia from early nineteenth century Russia, let alone the Caucasus and Persia; his prolific use of unusual metaphors and colorful epithets estrange virtually everyone and everything that enters the novelist’s purview. Here are just three somewhat randomly selected examples: “the fingers are studded with rings, like shish kebabs on spits” (210) and “In a musical sense, Persia was a key, while the Caucasus was a string” (243), and “The man’s face was shaven bluish-gray, like a dove, and was ruddy-colored under a tan, like a ham that had started to go bad” (252). Second, it is difficult to resist the temptation to read this novel about the 1820s as a commentary on the Soviet 1920s, a temptation fed by Tynianov’s use of the phrase “the twenties” and his frequent shifting into the present tense. The novel’s experimental style and complex plot present real challenges for the translator, and the Rushes do an extremely admirable job. The only glaring infelicity in this almost 600-hundred-page novel is, in my view, their decision to render *izvestnoe litso*, a recurring reference to Tsar Nicholas I, as “Famous Face.” While face is of course the primary meaning of the word, it is typically rendered in administrative discourse as “official” and in legal documents as “entity.” Here, I might have gone with *personage*. (The translator of the 2018 English version, Susan Causey, rendered the phrase as “famous person.”) On rare occasion, an attempt to render a complex Russian sentence into readable English results in a dangling modifier: “Birds’ heads glittered on the brand-new buttons—the emblem of