

translations stand out for their vivid diction and strong feeling for discourse and register. His version of Nikolai Zabolotskii's "The Wedding," for instance, brilliantly captures the poet's luxuriant weird beauty: "A long ray gushes through the window"; "A dainty leg of celery / descended on him, like a cross."

This second *Penguin Book of Russian Poetry* will create many new readers of Russian poetry. The editors' presentation is authoritative and expansive, drawing helpful comparisons for Anglophone readers: Afanasii Fet and Emily Dickinson, Lev Gumilev and Ezra Pound, Aleksandr Vvedenskii and Samuel Beckett. Special appeal, though, lies in gorgeous translations that, indeed, read as stand-alone poems: Chandler's rendition of Andrei Tarkovskii's "First Trysts," Dralyuk's rendition of Fet's "By the Fireplace," and many more. This anthology speaks from and to a world where canon is a relative concept at best, and where national boundaries only encourage intertextuality and cross-cultural exploration.

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Calligraphy Lesson: The Collected Stories. Mikhail Shishkin. Trans. Marian Schwartz, Leo Shtutin, Sylvia Maizell, and Mariya Bashkatova. Dallas: Deep Vellum Publishing, 2015. 169 pp. \$14.95, paper.

Mikhail Shishkin (born in 1961) now lives in Switzerland, but unlike some other well-known Russian expatriate authors he chooses to write in Russian. He is increasingly prominent; his novel *Венерин волос* (2005) was published in Marian Schwartz's translation as *Maidenhair* in 2012 to very warm reviews. The question of what a writer does when no longer writing at home turns out to be central to the works in *Calligraphy Lesson: The Collected Stories*. The authorial auto-commentary is just one reason why the stories are engaging, informative and worth reading.

The eight stories in *Calligraphy Lessons* were translated by several hands (most often Schwartz, along with Leo Shtutin, Sylvia Maizell, and Mariya Bashkatova). The texts have been well-edited, and though the stories are various, the voice is persuasively consistent. The stories display two basic tendencies: the first is a pensive, parautobiographical tone that reminds this reader somewhat of W. G. Sebald: these stories dwell on the weight of history and identification with the past that an individual life carries, while the individual's experiences (set in a foreign country, as Sebald's often are) overwrite that history in telling ways. The narrative organization is often untraditional, though the stories satisfy the reader. The second type of story is more of an essay, an intellectual discussion, offering interesting thoughts about something, often with a more optimistic tendency than that of the stories. "The Half-Belt Overcoat" (trans. Shtutin) does end with a moment of joyous transcendence, explaining why writing even about sad things might cheer up both author and reader, and frustrating the reader's expectations of what the story will tell us: we never hear how the mother's affair with a dacha neighbor ends, though it must have ended before her much later death from cancer. Shishkin tends not to be sentimental or idealistic—indeed, he is usually quite the opposite—and this gives the more positive or transcendent moments extra punch. The final story in the volume, "In a Boat Scratched on a Wall" (trans. Schwartz) brings out the author's experience as a Russian émigré in Switzerland, the power of imagination, and the gains and losses of an émigré author. Shishkin might also be read as suggesting that today a huge number of people in the world, whether living in Russia or abroad, are in fact émigrés from the Soviet Union, even if they never physically left. A Young Poet reading this piece could profit from

its advice: “If you are to build your own Russian literary ark, you have to become a hermit. Go somewhere. Anywhere—to the Alps or inward. And take along only your lived experience of love and loss and ten centuries of Cyrillic” (162).

Schwartz’s afterword to the titular story, “Calligraphy Lesson,” both points out the source of the women’s names that occur in the story (they are the heroines of famous works by Aleksandr Griboedov, Aleksandr Pushkin, Fedor Dostoevskii, Lev Tolstoi and Boris Pasternak) and sums up her own experience of work with the author: “Translating Shishkin means maintaining his virtuosic tension between complex detail and deeply felt emotion” (47). Her two-page text gives useful hints about how to read Shishkin, and the press is to be praised for including it here, drawing on a community of experience in reading the author.

Shishkin’s stories (at least the more essayistic ones) include many thoughts about other authors (both implied, as in “Nabokov’s Inkblot,” and explicit when he mentions other writers, such as Robert Walser (2). As a complete collection or individual stories, these make it useful for teaching Russian literature and discussing the connections between generations of authors as that literature evolves and develops.

Deep Vellum is a recently founded press that has been printing interesting works in handsome editions. Shishkin is a major contemporary Russian writer, whom people will want to have in their personal and institutional libraries both for teaching and for pleasure. The press is praiseworthy too for highlighting the translators in this volume along with the author: they are listed on the cover and in the table of contents as well as after each story, making it possible to use the book to examine a particular translator’s *oeuvre*.

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Aleksandr Nikolaevič Radiščev (1749–1802): *Leben und Werk*. By Peter Hoffmann. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2015. xvi, 332 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Chronology. Index. €64.95, hard bound.

This monograph does exactly what the title advertises by providing an account of Aleksandr Radishchev’s life, work and activities from cradle to historical legacy beyond the grave. The larger part of the book concentrates on Radishchev’s life set against the backdrop of a Russia in which Enlightenment policies and intellectual advances struggle to gain momentum. Chapter 2 covers the subject’s years in Leipzig, a seminal period in his education and the formation of his sensibility and ideas about philosophical friendship (the subject of his consolatory essay on his classmate Fedor Ushakov). The narrative folds in much useful information. It contains lists of the names of his fellow students, a digest of the coursework, a snapshot of the book-trade between Leipzig and Russia that brings into focus some of Radishchev’s reading.

While the method does not allow the author much space in which to expand on individual episodes, there are useful comments on the impact of the teachers Radishchev encountered such as Ernst Platner and Christian Gottlieb Seydlitz on his ideas. Of particular interest is the discussion of Radishchev’s work in the Customs Office. Hoffman notes that Radishchev left no direct explanation about why he sought employment there, but suggests plausibly that as a civil servant he wished to play a useful role and contribute to the rational management of his country, and that the job afforded him relatively greater freedom than he enjoyed during his stint at the Senate where proximity to the throne meant greater caution. The fact is that the customs job allowed him to observe first hand how aspects of political economics such as trade