

Claire Warden

“A GLIMPSE OF ‘ANOTHER RUSSIA’”: ELISAVETA FEN’S CHEKHOV TRANSLATIONS

Since the first British production of Anton Chekhov’s play *The Seagull* in 1909, audiences have found the Russian’s plays both beguiling and frustrating in seemingly equal measure. After living in Britain some years, Russian translator Elisaveta Fen began to recognize the problem:

These plays are tragi-comedies: they are the stuff life is made of. They do not fit into any conventional category. Awkwardly presented, they can disappoint, baffle, irritate, or they can cast their spell over the spectator and make him feel he is watching real people, living real lives—on the stage.¹

Despite their ubiquity in twentieth- and twenty-first-century British theatre, Chekhov’s plays continue to bewilder audiences: they are tricky to define in terms of genre, and full of unpronounceable names and obscure references to places and cultures. Fen, the primary focus of this article, took up the unenviable challenge of making these plays more accessible to British audiences. Yet, she remains a marginal figure in British theatre historiographies; her name appears as “translator” on numerous programs and playbills but is rarely acknowledged further.

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Thanks to Mum, who found Fen’s Remember Russia in my grandparents’ book collection after their death. In many ways this article represents a loving continuation of my grandparents’ love of education and travel.

This article claims Fen as an overlooked figure, recovering her work in order to place her within narratives of British theatre. In so doing it identifies her distinct semiautobiographical, empathetic approach to the translation process. Her translations attempt to resolve a number of personal tensions—homesickness, her despair over the perceived destruction of her Russian idyll (and her frustration at British misunderstandings of this), and her concerns about fitting into British life. This article concurrently reimagines the history of Chekhov on the British stage by, first, making a case for the importance of usually marginalized women (in this case Fen and, later, Russian advisor Tania Alexander); and, second, by infusing the narrative with a deeper sense of transnationality through a performance-based reading of Jonathan Miller’s 1970s stagings of Fen’s translations. This analysis is performance-based in the sense that it focuses on particular productions but also, more broadly, on the embodied, live, experiential characteristics of theatre. The article tracks potential reasons why Miller chose Fen’s versions by reading the triumvirate of Miller–Fen–Chekhov as a transnational artistic collaboration, crossing temporal, generational, political, and geographical boundaries. Susan Stanford Friedman describes transnational scholarly strategies as requiring attention to “traveling ideas and cultural forms, transcultural dialogue, reciprocal influences and indigenizations, and the cultural hybridity that results from widespread intercultural communication and contact zones.”² It is more fluid than straightforward internationalist readings, as, in the case of Miller–Fen–Chekhov, the “contact zones” appear across temporal, spatial, generational, disciplinary, and experiential borderlands. This transnationality is a vital component of the argument, as it initiates questions about authenticity and accessibility, and about the dynamics of global cultural networks. As it does so, this article makes broader claims about the complex relationship among translator, subject, and interpreter.

Elisaveta Fen arrived in London on 10 September 1925. Born in Belarus (she refers to it as Byelorussia),³ she studied in St. Petersburg (Petrograd) and worked in Moscow, where she met a Quaker group that would eventually assist her in moving to England. Fen traveled to London in the hope that she could follow her dream of becoming a writer: “I knew that the only thing I really wanted to be was a writer, a gleaner of experiences and impressions, a seeker of meetings with unusual people, and I planned my life with that goal in view.”⁴ She worked for Soviet firms in London and taught Russian at Toynbee Hall, where she met her future husband, Meredith Jackson. She moved with him to Cambridge and endured a largely unhappy marriage. In 1934 Fen separated from Meredith, moved back to London, published a novel entitled *Rising Tide* in 1936, and retrained as a child psychologist. Though she authored a series of autobiographical books, her unfulfilled dream of writing stardom rankled throughout her life: “Ironically I became known mainly as a translator, a voice transmitting other writers’ feelings and thoughts. Even now, I feel rather sore about this.”⁵ As she ruefully notes, Fen’s artistic legacy, such as there is, remains largely as a translator.

Fen’s name appears rarely in histories of British theatre or, indeed, in analyses of Chekhov’s work in Britain. Partly this is because she is a woman and, as a number of scholars have identified, women in the theatre have so often been neglected.⁶ But, I argue, she has also been ignored because she was a translator

rather than a playwright as such. Translators are often the shadowy figures of literary works, “those in the middle,” as André Lefevre puts it, “the men and women who do not write literature, but rewrite it.”⁷ But this becomes all the more acute in the theatre; as Patrice Pavis suggests, “theatre translation is never where one expects it to be: not in the words, but in the gestures, and in the ‘social body,’ not in the letter, but in the spirit of a culture, ineffable but omnipresent.”⁸ Fen’s case is doubly tricky because translation was merely one of her professional roles. While this is true for many translators, most are also writers, artists, or journalists rather than, in Fen’s case, a psychologist or, earlier in her career, an administrator. In a sense then, this article is an act of exhumation, an opportunity to examine Fen’s translation work afresh and determine what these texts say about broad, cultural issues such as Anglo–Russian relations and the image of “Russia” in a British context, and about artistic concerns such as the reception of Chekhov’s plays in Britain and the importance of challenging intercultural suppositions.

Migration and travel between Britain and Russia became relatively commonplace during the early to mid-twentieth-century period, and Fen embodies this trend, although to claim her as unequivocally part of a British-based Russian émigré community is problematic as she never seemed to engage fully with this group.⁹ Recent scholarship has discussed British responses to Russian art, politics, and culture in the early to mid-twentieth century.¹⁰ In all these texts “Russia” and “Britain” are not static concepts, but rather shifting signifiers of place, politics, art, culture, and people. Neither do these concepts exist as binaries; as Jonathan Pitches suggests, the reception of Russian actor training (and I suggest, in light of the focus of this article, playtexts) “are themselves products of theatrical grafting and cross pollination.”¹¹ I place Fen’s work and life in this broader history of transnational transmission, understanding “transnational” as Jessica Berman does in *Modernist Commitments* as a “web of social and textual interrelationships linking modernisms worldwide as well as an optic through which to see these links.”¹²

As a translator of Russian texts Fen can be read as part of a distinct trend. Rebecca Beasley suggests that “translation from the Russian might be understood as *the* translation project of British modernism” despite Russian literature’s “surprisingly limited impact on the development of modernist critical principles” in Britain, with British artists and readers/audiences looking far more to France than Russia.¹³ Fen began translation early, initially under the influence of US journalist and writer Frances Fineman, who traveled to the Soviet Union to study Russian theatre in the 1920s and met Fen in Moscow, where she acted as an interpreter for some of the plays Fineman attended. Fen’s introduction to translation, therefore, began in the theatre alongside an Anglophone traveler. Fineman apparently suggested that Fen translate some of the work of Russian writers into English. Fen considered Fineman’s idea:

If I had thought at all of translating before she made this suggestion, it would have been translating *into* Russian rather than *from* the Russian into another

language. I loved my own language most and had already spent years in improving my command of it in poetry and prose fiction.¹⁴

Despite this preference for translating texts into Russian, she followed Fineman’s lead and translated Leonid Leonov’s *Three Tales* while still in Moscow. Her first translations of Chekhov’s plays and short stories appeared in 1951 and were regularly reprinted until the 1980s.¹⁵ They were, in general, well-received for accuracy, comprehensibility, and potential for performance; “the translation, by Elisaveta Fen, is both idiomatic and true to the original, which makes it as suitable for stage-acting as for reading,” noted the *Western Evening Herald*.¹⁶

APPROACHING CHEKHOV: A SAMOVAR OR A COFFEE POT?

Chekhov’s plays have often been British audience members’ initial experience of Russian theatre. The first translated play by Chekhov to appear in Britain was *The Seagull* at Glasgow Repertory Theatre in 1909. It was translated by George Calderon, who had traveled to Russia in 1895 and later wrote a play on a Russian theme (*The Little Stone House*), performed alongside the Stage Society’s *The Cherry Orchard* in 1911.¹⁷ In the early 1920s, Constance Garnett produced her own versions of the plays, translations that have been, perhaps rather harshly, questioned in recent years, with David Magarshack suggesting they have left “a ghastly legacy of misconceptions and misrepresentations that made them synonymous in the mind of the English spectator with sadness, gloom and despair.”¹⁸ While recognizing the limitations of Garnett’s translations, I agree with Beasley when she suggests reading them as “a cultural fact of turn-of-the-century British culture,” rather than in terms of accuracy.¹⁹ As Patrick Miles details in his comprehensive study *Chekhov on the British Stage*, these Russian plays have always been mediated through a decidedly British lens; British audiences first discovered Chekhov’s work, not through the Moscow Art Theatre necessarily, but through small theatre society productions across Britain.²⁰ Miles’s seminal collection even claims a “British Chekhov,” a concept that “today’s practitioners reject, re-shape or re-embod[y].”²¹ George Bernard Shaw’s nod to Chekhov in his playwriting, Theodore Komisarjevsky’s innovative 1920s versions, and British acting style’s commitment to a Stanislavskian aesthetic (based on MAT’s 1898–1904 Chekhov productions) all illustrate the centrality of Chekhov’s work to the development of British twentieth- and twenty-first-century theatre.

New versions of Chekhov’s works continue to play on the British stage, with many stretching the concept of “translation.” In keeping with (and rupturing) George Steiner’s proclamation that “every generation retranslates the classics, out of a vital compulsion for immediacy and precise echo,”²² “translators” have re-created Chekhov’s plays again for new audiences: John Byrne turned *Uncle Vanya* into *Uncle Varick* for his 2004 tangibly Scottish adaptation; Brian Friel’s *Afterplay* saw Sonya (from *Uncle Vanya*) and Andrei (from *Three Sisters*) meet in 1920s Moscow (2002); and Katie Mitchell’s 2014 version of Simon Stephens’s new translation of *The Cherry Orchard* compressed the play into two hours. Dan Rebellato, whose own *Chekhov in Hell* awakens the playwright

in twenty-first-century Britain (2010), confirms British theatre's continued fascination with Chekhov not only because "he's a great writer and his characters live in the imagination" but also because "Chekhov is a mystery."²³ Many of these productions, as Stuart Young notes, are intriguingly written by non-Russian-speaking playwrights rather than translators, as if they demand a dramaturgical approach rather than a straightforward translation of text.²⁴ Fen's versions of Chekhov's plays are, then, part of a tangible lineage of Anglophone British-based work.

Translating Chekhov is a decidedly fraught undertaking. Hungarian playwright and scholar Andras Nagy, who produced *Three Sisters* in 1991, reflected on the problem of translating Chekhov's work into Hungarian, both in terms of language and context:

What could ever substitute for a samovar? Would a kettle or a coffee-maker do? ... After endless hours of hesitating we had to confess—such efforts are hopeless. A *samovar* is a *samovar* is a *samovar*. And even if we understand hardly anything of Chekhov's hidden references, his contextual meaning, his indirect quotations and hints, this non-understanding is part of the richness of the play.²⁵

Nagy, like Rebellato above, approaches Chekhov's plays through methods of "non-understanding" or "mystery." Inevitably, this causes significant issues for a potential translator, such as Fen. Translation is not, of course, a case of simple transmission. If Steiner is correct in his postulation that "the schematic model of translation is one in which a message from the source-language passes into a receptor-language via a transformational process,"²⁶ then what sorts of "transformations" do Fen's translations of Chekhov's plays effect?

I suggest that Fen's translations attempt to resolve a number of broader tensions: political, aesthetic, and personal. Throughout her writings, Fen displays a sense of irritation with Britain's misperceptions of Russian culture. In an undated manuscript, "A Glimpse of 'Another Russia,'" Fen encourages her readers to explore the real Russia, "that great Russian Land" as she terms it.²⁷ Although Moscow and St. Petersburg are worth visiting, she says, "you will not be able to get the 'feeling of Russia' ... to the country you must go."²⁸ The real Russia Fen has in mind is decidedly rural and committedly pre-Revolutionary. These real people represent the communities of Fen's youth, now lost. Although Fen was deeply revolutionary as a teenager—she wrote in her diary that she would "dedicate my life to the struggle for the liberation of my country from tyranny"²⁹—she did not welcome the Bolshevik Revolution and mourned the loss of her family wealth and position, as well as the destruction of Russian identity. Upon arrival in London she was not part of that group of politically engaged Russophiles who looked to the Soviet Union as a utopian "Great Russian Experiment."³⁰ In 1939 she even proposed a book entitled *Russia—My Country*, which sought to counter prevailing political opinion in Britain, as she saw it. Chapter 10 of the proposed book (which was never realized) summed up Fen's attitude to the Soviet Union:

“A Glimpse of ‘Another Russia’”

The Bolshevik rulers have too crude a conception of human nature, and too naive a belief in the forces of environment. Propaganda, as a means of persuasion, can be overdone, and produce counter-suggestibility. Communism can provide a substitute for religion only up to a point. Bolshevism has some hold on the Russian mind, but is it a permanent hold? Is all Russia behind Bolshevism? The answer to these questions must be most emphatically: No!³¹

For Fen, Chekhov represented a pre-1917 time, a sense of the real Russia behind the propaganda. Fen even suggested Chekhov’s inadvertent (or perhaps active) participation in this unearthing of old Russia: “The generation to which Chekhov belonged lived on the eve of a tremendous social upheaval. Prophetically, it knew that it was going to be sacrificed, and it sought to discover the meaning of this holocaust in the hope of happiness for ‘those who come after us.’”³²

This desire to present her version of Russia accurately to Anglophone audiences even affected her choice of transliteration. For example, after writing an article entitled “Chehov the Physician” for the *British Medical Journal* in January 1960, a reader wrote to the editorial board asking why Fen used the transliterative rendering “Chehov” rather than the more customary “Chekhov.” Fen’s reply, in a letter to Dr. Ware of the *BMJ*, confirmed:

I spell “Chehov” without a “k” because “h” is the best phonetic equivalent to the sound represented by a Russian letter “x” . . . I think it is high time that the phantastic [*sic*] spelling of Russian names, frequently taken by the English from the German transliteration, were abandoned. . . . Then the English reader will be less likely to be put off by unreadable names in Russian novels as he is reputed to be.³³

She stood by this decision in her first published versions of the plays, with the earliest *performed* versions following her lead; the 1963 version of *Three Sisters*, for example, produced by actor-writer Fulton Mackay—later a favorite as a prison guard on the sitcom *Porridge*—retained this spelling of “Chehov” in its program.³⁴ In later editions, however, the publishing house changed the playwright’s name to the more recognizable and accepted “Chekhov.” There is a sense that in the language chosen for the translation, Fen was seeking a type of authentic Russia that also connected with Anglophone audiences/readers. A term such as “authentic” is, of course, highly loaded and troublesome. In this article I follow advances in feminist translation studies, which reconfigures translation “as a productive act of meaning-making . . . [that] undermines dichotomous gendered ideas about *translation* (when conceptualised as a copy, secondary and feminine), *original* (when conceptualised as authentic, primary and masculine) and *nationality* (that is conceptualised around claims of ‘authentic’ and ‘pure’).”³⁵ “Authentic” in this article, then, is not a repressive diktat but, rather, a reflection of personal, lived experience. It is not slave to “fact” or “accuracy.” Instead, the various searchings after “authenticity” in this article transform these texts into multivocal, palimpsestic works.

Fen's translation project aimed to uncover the author as well as the text and context. This was not a psychological study, however, nor an attempt to conduct a Freudian reading. Fen was clear in her intention to find Chekhov "the creative human being, seen within and with the products of his creativity."³⁶ One of her particular interests lay in Chekhov as doctor. In her *BMJ* article she wrote, "It is fascinating to speculate on to what extent Chekhov's [*sic*] own experiences as a physician found expression in his literary work. His profession certainly provided him with a very wide field of observation, and he liked portraying doctors in his plays."³⁷ She had pushed this inquiry further in a previous article, noting, "Chekhov was not just an objective medical man but re-created each character, making it live again. To do this he must have entered into every one of them, even into the least congenial to him, with a degree of sympathy, and in this he proved himself to be a true creative artist."³⁸

Fen acknowledges Chekhov's illness at age fifteen as another reason for the numerous doctor figures in his plays and, perhaps, for the deep sympathy he extends to them. Fen's own profession as a psychologist was surely one of the other reasons for her continued interest in Chekhov. Certainly her psychological training influenced her approach to Chekhov's plays; "Translating an author is a particularly searching kind of study," she said, "and I believe it gives one a special kind of insight into the author's personality."³⁹ In beginning her translations with a discursive introduction that describes Chekhov's life in detail, she clearly hoped her reader would join her in her "searching kind of study" and consider how aspects of Chekhov's life influenced his characters and scenarios. At a time when Soviet biographers were keen to promote Chekhov's revolutionary ways, Fen (unsurprisingly given her criticisms of Russian communism) concluded that Chekhov was not "an apologist or accuser of any one class of Russian society."⁴⁰ In voicing such a claim, Fen, as translator, searched for a less politicized version of Chekhov as a more empathetic critic of social conditions rather than a protorevolutionary figure. The translation process, for Fen, was clearly an act of extricating Chekhov from midcentury Soviet propaganda. In drawing attention to this in her introduction to the Penguin edition, she clearly wanted her readership to follow suit, discovering, in her opinion, a truer version of the playwright.

Translating Chekhov's works was, then, a very personal act for Fen: "Translating Chekhov's [*sic*] plays, reading his letters and books about him, I came to feel as if I had known him personally, known the kind of man he was, and the sort of thing he liked and disliked."⁴¹ There is the sense throughout her writings that, through translation, Fen was trying not only to address British misapprehensions about Russia, but also to resolve her own heritage. She clearly admired Chekhov, but, more than this, he provided a connection with a personal lost past. Despite her obvious talents and achievements, Fen struggled to settle into English life. This tension appeared particularly in her marriage to Meredith:

I realise now that I had underestimated the cautious, sensible, truly English side of my lover's character and that to me, a Russian, who had grown to adulthood in most precarious conditions, the material aspect of existence

was much less important than to an English person, brought up in normal circumstances.⁴²

Not to overstate the point, but Fen’s translation work resolved some of her own personal tensions as an émigré Russian. Through Chekhov’s scenarios, characters, and settings, for example, she seemed able to access her own memories. Her “Introduction” to the plays mentions that “the Chekhov children had the run of the estate when they stayed with their grandfather, and loved it,” a description that might just have easily referred to her own moments of idyllic rural childhood.⁴³ Compare this to the scenes that greeted Fen during her visit to Russia (probably in 1932) when she saw a new industrial town arising near “Nijni” (probably Nizhni Novgorod), “as grim as any new settlement can be . . . not a blade of grass, not a flower anywhere. There is no time to think of beauty.”⁴⁴ Translating Chekhov’s plays can almost be read as an act of nostalgic excavation for Fen, an unearthing of a lost and disappearing rural Russia, one far away from her geographically or experientially.

Materially, one can see all these facets of Fen’s approach in the translations. They are decidedly readable, committedly Anglicized to ensure understanding. There is both a feeling of the melancholic as so often present in English renderings of Chekhov’s works, and a sense of humor and warmth one would expect from a translator who admired the playwright so much. There are many instances one could choose to illustrate this, of course. It is evident, for example, at the end of *The Cherry Orchard* in Firs’s (or, as Fen calls him, “Feers”) final lines. Firs’s concluding description of himself as “daft!” uses a comedic, decidedly British, colloquialism.⁴⁵ This differs from Calderon’s (published 1912) tricky-to-understand translation as “job-lot” (by which I understand him to mean “shoddy,” “cheap,” “easily disposed of”)⁴⁶ and Michael Frayn’s Anglophone (published 1978) but childish “sillybilly.”⁴⁷ Constance Garnett’s 1923 rendering—“I’m good for nothing”—has a decidedly more despairing tone and potentially grants the actor less freedom to bring nuance or comic pathos to the role.⁴⁸ In his 1937 version S. S. Kotliansky retains the Russian transliteration *nyedotyopa*, which, while drawing attention to the difficulty in translating this word, provides few clues for the Anglophone audience.⁴⁹ His earlier footnote casts some light on this word: “*Nyedotyopa*—a duffer. A word coined by Anton Tchekhov that has become popular and widely used.”⁵⁰ Fen’s choice of “daft” exhibits the British colloquial feel that makes her plays so accessible and is a closer translation of Chekhov’s Russian term; “daft” and “duffer” both contain the element of the absurd so vital to Firs’s character. Fen’s choice here also gives the actor a term which, performed with different tone and shade, could be understood in a range of different ways.

Colloquialism can be seen elsewhere in Fen’s version of *The Cherry Orchard*. “Time flies, I say,” Lopakhin laments when they first arrive at the house.⁵¹ Frayn uses the closer translation “I say the time goes by” (which is similar to Kotliansky’s “Time, I say, is passing”), but the sentence does not have the same conversational feel as Fen’s.⁵² “Do stop blubbering,” Gayev admonishes Varya,⁵³ retaining Garnett’s original rendering of “blubber” rather than choosing

Calderon's "howl," Julius West's "cry" (1916), or Koteliansky's "whine."⁵⁴ "Blubber" has a childish onomatopoeic quality, suggesting Varya is not merely upset but that her features are distorted or swelling with her tears. There is something rather comedic about the image that fits well alongside Gayev's typically verbose, humorous discussion of the Countess' dubious character.⁵⁵ "The bridges are burnt," says Trofimov when he feels the fate of the estate is sealed.⁵⁶ The latter is a particularly interesting choice. The Russian, as Koteliansky more accurately renders, means the "path is obliterated"—a sense retained by Calderon and Garnett ("the path is overgrown"), West and Frayn ("the path's grown over").⁵⁷ Although Fen's translation clearly does not retain the original Russia imagery, it does, I suggest, have a deeper meaning for British audiences, escaping the indistinct poeticism of the original and suggesting, instead, a business transaction. The change reflects both the context (after all, Trofimov is speaking about the sale of the estate) and Trofimov's character, which, though idealistic, is taken to making broad proclamations about the situation; Madame Ranyevskaia rebukes him for "look[ing] ahead so boldly."⁵⁸ While Fen could here be criticized for poor translation, her choice connects directly with the onstage and offstage contexts. Despite this, Fen's translation of *The Cherry Orchard* remains unashamedly Russian—for example, she retains Lopakhin's request for "kvass"⁵⁹—but the Anglophone colloquialisms give it a pleasantly localized, comedic feel. This is one example from Fen's translations, but it enables broader conclusions about her intentions.

Magarshack criticizes Fen's translations as confirming the "Chekhovian sadness-cum-despair syndrome": "Fen has become the victim of the general lunacy which is so characteristic of the Chekhov cult," he says.⁶⁰ One of the examples he chooses to analyze is Fen's deliberate mistranslation of the Russian word *toomba* in Chebutykin's rendition of "Tarara-boom-di-ay" in *Three Sisters*. Fen translates *toomba* as "tomb" ("I'm sitting on a tomb-di-ay"),⁶¹ thereby introducing deathly connotations, rather than using the more linguistically accurate "bollard" or "curbstone." It is a tricky line to translate. West reenacts the traditional music-hall roots of this song by translating the line as "Tarara-boom-deay, it is my washing day";⁶² Frayn simply repeats the "Ta-ra-ra boom-de-ay" and, in his "Note on the Translation," cites it as particularly difficult to make sense of.⁶³ Frayn, here, mentions Donald Rayfield's useful work on songs in Chekhov; Rayfield's analysis of this line enables, I suggest, a new reading of Fen's choice that counteracts Magarshack's assumption. "Tarara-boom-deay" started as an English music-hall song and contains a sense of sexual innuendo that can be read in Chekhov's version. Yet, Russian renderings of this song, says Rayfield, have a deeper sense of melancholy, understood as a warning about depravity and seduction, as well as deeply connected with military marches.⁶⁴ Fen's choice of "tomb," then, is not necessarily emblematic of the "Chekhovian sadness-cum-despair syndrome" as Magarshack suggests but, rather, as so often in Fen's translations, an attempt to draw out a deeper sense of meaning while retaining the readability she wanted.

In his introduction to Fen's translations, A. D. P. Briggs says they "retain great value in terms of their accuracy and well-judged English."⁶⁵ Contemporaneous reviewers were largely positive about these new translations:

“It’s funny that many people should think of the Russian dramatists as dull, heavy fellows,” said the reviewer of *The Weekly Telegraph*; “these witty, exciting plays show how wrong they are.”⁶⁶ As this critic confirmed, Fen’s translative choices regarding elements such as local colloquialism and Russianist motifs seemed to contribute to the success of the translations. However, as with all plays, it is in performance that these translations are fully realized. The final section of this article examines Fen’s Chekhovs on the British stage and unpacks some of the reasons a director might have had for choosing her translations over the others mentioned in this analysis.

PERFORMING FEN’S TRANSLATIONS

In his introduction to a later publication of Constance Garnett’s translations, actor John Gielgud confirmed “so much depends of course on the timing, personality, and teamwork of the individual actors and the skill of the director, and one can never be sure how a passage will sound most convincing until one has heard it spoken in context by skilled performers.”⁶⁷ This is true of theatre in a general sense, of course, but perhaps particularly in Chekhov’s mysterious, musical, complex textual tapestries. My consideration of Fen’s translations acknowledges Gielgud’s truism. Fen’s versions demand to be understood *in performance*. This approach uncovers original ways of reading the plays: through new transnational, medical, and aesthetic approaches that challenge the conventional marginalization of the translator, particularly the female translator. These transnational meeting points challenge the solidity of borders: they are deeply influenced by travel and immigration, and they cut across language difference and periodization. This transnationality is also a transdisciplinarity, a meeting of three creatives taking on substantively different though overlapping roles—translator, playwright, producer—where the sites of meaning for an audience are found in the combination of the three (alongside myriad other considerations, such as location).

Many of the 1950’s reviews of Fen’s new translations pointed to a significant characteristic: that is, their usefulness for the British stage. “Fen’s versions tend to be a little more colloquial [than Garnett’s] and promise to act well,” said the *Manchester Guardian*, chiming with my above reading of the play.⁶⁸ In her unpublished master’s thesis, Ekaterina Neugodova acknowledges that “it is a rather challenging task to trace all of the performances of Chekhov’s plays that use Fen’s translations. A separate study might be dedicated to this topic.”⁶⁹ I have no intention of providing a complete history of these translations in production; suffice it to say, directors and producers have used Fen’s versions regularly. The BBC seemed particularly fond of her translations, perhaps because of their clarity. In 1965, for example, BBC Home Service produced a radio adaptation of her version of *Three Sisters* with Lynn Redgrave and Ian McKellen.⁷⁰ Anthony Hopkins played Andrei in a 1970 film version of Fen’s *Three Sisters* for the BBC’s Play of the Month series⁷¹ and, later that same year, played Astrov in her *Uncle Vanya*.⁷² The next year the BBC used Fen’s version of *The Cherry Orchard*, with Jenny Agutter as Anya.⁷³ Much later, and into the twenty-first century, Fen’s translations are still being mounted. In 2005, for example, the

Galleon Theatre produced *The Seagull*⁷⁴ at its home, Greenwich Playhouse, returning to Fen's translations five years later for its staging of *The Cherry Orchard*.⁷⁵ In a description of the production, the company makes their translation choice clear:

The translation by ELISAVETA FEN still stands as one of the very best because of its poetical use of the English language, its judicious sense of period, and formidable ability to create for the reader and audience a rich and complex sense of Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century. Significantly, it also avoids the tendency, often found in contemporary translations, to forcibly Anglicize and modernise Chekhov's painstakingly drawn world.⁷⁶

Complex "authenticity" and accessibility, as well as the artistry of language attracted this company to Fen's translations. By acknowledging the shadowy presence of translator Fen, I aim to cast new light on two seminal British productions of Chekhov's plays: 1970s performances of *The Seagull* and *Three Sisters*, directed by Jonathan Miller. In so doing, I demonstrate the importance of acknowledging Fen's translations for a deeper understanding of Miller's approach to Chekhov in these influential performances, and to identify them as embedded in multifaceted transnational networks.

Miller first turned his attention to Chekhov's plays in 1968, producing *The Seagull* at Nottingham Playhouse. He directed this play again in May 1973 for the Chichester Festival Theatre (revived at the Greenwich Theatre, London, in January 1974). In April 1976 he turned to *Three Sisters* at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford.⁷⁷ The latter played in the Cambridge Theatre, London, in July 1976 for one hundred performances, breaking the record for London's longest-running performance of a Chekhov play.⁷⁸ For these productions Miller used Fen's translations. This was, in keeping with Miller's meticulous approach to directing, not an arbitrary decision. Indeed, John Shrapnel (who played Andrei in *Three Sisters*) confirmed, "there was a fairly disparate group of people, and we spent several afternoons at his [Miller's] house prior to rehearsals looking through Chekhov's short stories and discussing which version of the play to use, which broke the ice well before we actually started work."⁷⁹ This was a decision for the ensemble cast. Miller confirmed the organic way the cast approached the text: "[W]e spent a lot of time here for the first 10 days, just having coffee and reading the play very gently, mumble-mumble-mumble, so there was just a faint warmth arising, out of which the edges of characters began to appear."⁸⁰ So, why choose Fen's translations over, say, those by Garnett or Calderon?

I suggest a few potential reasons that mostly act simply as interesting resonances, enabling new perspectives on these performances. First, Miller and Fen share a decidedly medical approach. In her 1960 article "Chekhov the Physician," Fen cites Chekhov's famous quip that medicine was his "legal spouse" and literature his "mistress."⁸¹ Chekhov's medical experience clearly influenced his writing of character. Fen, too, took a medical approach as a trained psychologist. Miller's background reflected a similar dualism, training as a doctor at university. Actor Robert Stephens, who played Trigorin under Miller's direction, claims

he is a “doctor/director in the same way that Chekhov was a doctor/writer. There was none of the usual melodramatic fat on the production—it was so clean that it was like a skeleton.”⁸² Reviewers noted this “medical” approach; “it does seem on this occasion,” said Irving Wardle referring to Miller’s 1968 Nottingham production of *The Seagull*, “to have allowed Chekhov the doctor to slam the door on Chekhov the student of the human heart.”⁸³ In a 1974 article entitled “Doctor’s Dilemma,” Michael Billington described Miller as a “one-man X-ray unit exposing the structure and sinew underneath the work’s surrounding flesh.”⁸⁴ Undoubtedly it is too easy to read Miller’s Chekhov productions only through his clinician background. But it is interesting to acknowledge that these productions marked the joining of three medical minds: Chekhov, Miller, and of course Fen.

Fen’s Russian background, as established above, directly influenced her approach to translation. Her admiration of the Russian countryside provided a nostalgic context for approaching Chekhov’s plays; its “great simplicity, the infinite expanse of its landscape, with its transparent air and the intense blue of its horizon, leave one with an unforgettable impression of grandeur which has in it a touch of sadness.”⁸⁵ The Prozorov’s house in *Three Sisters*, for example, may well have reminded Fen of childhood homes. This hypothesis is substantiated by her inclusion of a footnote for “ballroom” in the opening stage direction of this play: “A large room, sparsely furnished, used for receptions and dances in Russian houses.”⁸⁶ The English term “ballroom” seems to refer to something far grander—think the Empress in Blackpool, which holds thousands—and Fen is concerned to retain a sense of the authentic Russian meaning by including a footnote.

Miller’s own Russian ancestry acts as a similar “footnote” to these productions; his grandparents were Jewish émigrés to Britain, escaping the anti-Semitism of tsarist Russia. Kate Bassett, reflecting on comments made by actors who have worked with Miller, note that many believe Miller and Chekhov to be soulmates of sorts, not simply because of their medical interests but also due, perhaps, to a deep association with Russia, its landscape, and its people.⁸⁷ Here the transnational morphs into a transtemporal sensibility as Miller and Chekhov “meet” in Russia despite the clear separation of a century. In essence, live performance is unique in this regard; the play is, in essence, “rewritten” by each performance, engendering a deeper sense of collaboration than that between, say, the novelist and the reader, or the painting and the viewer. Bassett goes on to cast some doubt on this rather romantic reading, suggesting that Miller is reacting more to the perceived errors in British versions of Chekhov’s plays than to any familial connection. However, in a similar way to Fen, Miller certainly wanted to infuse his versions with a sense of Russianness: “There should be a lot more of the eruptive gaiety that is characteristic of Russians—floods of tears followed immediately by hysterical laughter,” Miller said.⁸⁸

In order to achieve this characteristically Russian feel, Miller turned to Tania Alexander (1915–2004), a Russian aristocratic émigré who, like Fen, had moved to Britain to escape the Bolshevik regime.⁸⁹ Like Fen, Alexander remains a background figure in twentieth-century British theatre history; she is yet another “lost” theatrical woman to be uncovered and studied. In her *Guardian* obituary Miller

recalled, “I needed the reassurance that I was getting ‘Russian’ right. . . . She also brought to the rehearsal room an air of conviviality, graciousness and elegance—it was like having an aristocratic imprint on a product.”⁹⁰ Alexander is referred to as the “Russian Adviser” in the program for the 1976 *Three Sisters*.⁹¹ Through her mother, Moura Budberg, a towering and fascinating presence in her memoir, she developed close friendships with Maxim Gorky and H. G. Wells. Budberg, who faced accusations of spying (accusations which Alexander firmly refutes in the memoir), worked as a translator and historical advisor for films and theatre,⁹² a role Alexander took on too.

Miller was presumably drawn to Alexander because of her fascinating, complex background, detailed in her memoir *An Estonian Childhood*. In this book she acknowledges her “confused identity”: “although I technically became an Estonian citizen, I have always felt myself to be more Russian than anything else.”⁹³ Though raised on her family estate in Estonia, Alexander recalled “one feature of our household was that it was more Russian than Baltic in character,” focusing particularly on culture, the arts, languages, and literature that she felt defined a Russian aristocratic household more than an Estonian one.⁹⁴ Like Fen, Alexander had a privileged upbringing and moved to London as a young woman. But, unlike Fen, she expressed a muted support for Bolshevik Russia, believing that Russian communism could fight back against the much more dangerous forces of fascism, forces that were receiving support from her former friends in Estonia. Visiting Moscow in 1935 she admits she was “eager to believe that here in the USSR a world of equal opportunity based on trust in the unlimited powers of man was being built.”⁹⁵ As with so many liberal-minded young Britons, she was later shocked by the revelations about the Stalinist purges.

Despite this leftist sympathy, Alexander, like Fen, represented an earlier Russia, the one of which Chekhov wrote. Indeed, her memoir markedly resembles Fen’s biographical writings at times in its descriptions of idyllic, privileged, decidedly rural Russian aristocratic life—even though much of what she remembers (unlike Fen who left for London nearly twenty years earlier) was tempered with privation and suffering: “Every season had its memorable moments. In autumn new smells reached you, the smells of hay and mushrooms. . . . Pushing back the branches, we wound our way through the trees, chatting and calling to one another or singing ‘round’ songs.”⁹⁶ This could almost be taken from Madame Ranyevskaia’s reminiscences in *The Cherry Orchard*. I am sure Alexander would have concurred when Fen wrote, “I am Russian; my childhood was spent among people rather like some of those that Chehov [*sic*] described.”⁹⁷ Alexander and Fen both speak for a Russian aristocratic experience Miller sought in his productions. Other producers, such as Ken Loach and Charles Sturridge, also employed Alexander as they sought to evoke this pre-Revolutionary version of Russia. The presence of both these Russian women and their embodied, historicized approach to Chekhov’s works haunt Miller’s plays with, to borrow Patrice Pavis’s useful term, “an authenticity effect,” that is, a comprehensible illusion of authenticity produced by a series of readable onstage and offstage signs.⁹⁸ This conclusion is not without its problems, of course: it could be read as two token women fulfilling rather shadowy functions behind more celebrated theatrical

men. My aim here is to counteract this dismissive conclusion, to reject consigning Alexander and Fen to supporting roles and instead to resurrect them as significant contributors to a history of “British Chekhov.”

Miller challenged conventional British ways of producing Chekhov’s work; he dismissively referred to the “Keats Grove genteel, well-mannered school of acting that flourished in the late 1930s and post-Second-World-War period,” an approach that led audiences to imagine the “melancholy, pausing version as the only permissible one.”⁹⁹ In contrast, Miller wanted to achieve a deft balance of humor and realism, a balance he felt better represented the original Russian feel. So, Miller focused on emotion in general in the play (not only humor) to counteract the rather listless presentation of Chekhov’s characters so often found on the British stage. Penelope Wilton, who played Masha in *The Seagull*, for instance, was encouraged to play a far more “angry character, furious with what has happened to her life.”¹⁰⁰ But, alongside this, Miller aimed for a more realistic rendering of Chekhov’s words:

I found it essential to be more slipshod, and allow more hesitation and pauses of the kind you find in any ordinary conversation. It is also useful to allow for things that Chekhov has not written, by this I mean interruptions, reduplication and overlap with people starting to talk when the previous speaker has not finished and then having to apologize.¹⁰¹

Fen’s translations (in readable, approachable English as they are) provided the perfect raw material for Miller’s productions. Counteracting the British penchant for pauses, untrammelled melancholy, and actorly affectation, Miller’s productions were decidedly quicker; for example, he cut the running time of *Three Sisters* by twenty minutes.¹⁰² It was this aspect of the production that struck *The Listener*’s reviewer John Elsom most acutely: “*the love of economy and precision, of the quick detail instead of the slow portrait*. His actors are good enough to make the various points directly, efficiently and with throwaway rapidity.”¹⁰³ The designs for his Chekhov stages (by Patrick Robertson with costumes by Rosemary Vercoe) seemed considerably simpler too; Allen describes them as “austere.” Miller’s reasoning clearly places human experience above mimetic realism: “What is important in Chekhov is the encounter between characters and the web of relationships that develops. To make it easier to concentrate on that, I opted for a simple setting.”¹⁰⁴ Such choices led to criticism with the reviewer from *The Spectator*, after witnessing the Cambridge Theatre version of *Three Sisters*, bemoaning the “naked, unconcealed spotlights hanging from the fly . . . monstrosity of all monstrosities: no curtain and an apron stage!”¹⁰⁵ This simplicity returns to a, perhaps, more authentic imagining of Chekhov’s first intentions for his plays. Chekhov’s concerns about Stanislavsky’s naturalistic, “slice-of-life” rendering of his plays is comprehensively documented. Miller’s version returned to a sense of simple, relationship-focused symbolism that Chekhov first had in mind.

Many of the reviews, whether they liked the versions or not, situated them firmly in the history of British Chekhov; it is “hard to imagine anything more different from the tradition handed down via Stanislavski and Komisarjevsky,” said

Hilary Spurling of *The Observer*.¹⁰⁶ Fen's clear translations lent themselves to the sort of productions Miller imagined. Back in 1951, when her translations were first published, *British Book News* confirmed they were "accurate, easily spoken, and make no false step, yet the rhythm of the speech belongs to the present age rather than to the close of the last century."¹⁰⁷ This combination of contemporary rhythm and historical accuracy seemed equally to define Miller's performative renderings of Fen's translations.

Chekhov retains a place in the "present age" too; as I write this, current companies and practitioners remain committed to approaching Chekhov in more innovative ways. RashDash's new 2018 version of *Three Sisters* has the tagline "Chekhov. Dead, white man. A classic play," bringing a decidedly feminist meta-theatrical approach,¹⁰⁸ and Michael Boyd's 2018 version of *The Cherry Orchard* presents a challenging reading of slavery.¹⁰⁹ Chekhov even has a physician's garden named after him at the Hampton Court Flower Show.¹¹⁰ In the twenty-first century, Chekhov, in all his fluidity, remains an inspiration to British makers and creatives.

CONCLUSION: LINGERING OPTIMISM

In 2007 Miller returned to Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* in a new translation by Pam Gems (originally based, interestingly, on a literal translation by Tania Alexander), at the Crucible in Sheffield. Favorably reviewing the production Benedict Nightingale said, "from a lovingly observed collection of molehills he builds a mountain you might, not too fancifully, call *fin-de-siècle* Russia."¹¹¹ Four decades earlier in her description of Chekhov's works, Fen described the playwright as "the most human of men, and one of the most objective and compassionate. He understood and shared the human predicament, the perpetual chasm that keeps opening between aspiration and achievement [*sic*]."¹¹² For Fen, the act of translating Chekhov was deeply emotional, a searching after a lost Russia. Miller too approached Chekhov's plays with a similar sense of benevolence and geographical specificity. In essence these three theatrical figures—the playwright, the translator, and the director—dealt with the characters and scenarios in a similar, empathetic manner. The program notes for Miller's 1976 *Three Sisters* at the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, citing Olga's recognition that "our sufferings may mean happiness for the people who come after us," suggest that "if the artist's process of selection can give meaning to experience, then the frustrations and disappointments of the sisters' lives may not be an expression of the hopelessness and unqualified misery of life, as it is sometimes taken to be."¹¹³ In the end the key connective characteristics shared by Chekhov's plays, Fen's translations, and Miller's productions appears to be compassion and a sense of lingering optimism. Such optimism can be uncovered only through an experiential, performance-based reading of the plays and by a transnational tracing of intersections among playwright, translator, and director that actively cut through the barriers of period, geography, and language. By uncovering the intentions, decisions, and influences of the translator, Fen's versions of Chekhov's plays become more dynamic, multifaceted works, important contributors to the history of "British Chekhov."

ENDNOTES

1. “Chekhov the Man” (talk, n.d.), in Elisaveta Fen papers, Leeds Russian Archive (LRA), Brotherton Library, Parkinson Building, University of Leeds, UK, MS 1394 [hereinafter EFP], 208–9, at 209, 1. (All citations of “Chekhov the Man” are from 209.) Details of the EFP’s contents are online at https://explore.library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/20003/fen_elisaveta_jackson_lydia_ne_zhiburtovich; regarding the LRA, at <https://library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections/collection/728>; both accessed 26 April 2019.

2. Susan Stanford Friedman, “Cultural Parataxis and Transnational Landscapes of Reading: Toward a Locational Modernist Studies,” *Modernism*, 2 vols., ed. Ástráður Eysteinnsson and Vivian Liska (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007), 1: 35–52, at 36.

3. Fen’s background remains a little shadowy, even in her many autobiographical works. Byelorussia is mentioned frequently (e.g., Elizaveta Fen, *Remember Russia* [London: Hamish Hamilton, 1973], 16, 207), but she never makes her place of birth entirely clear. Ekaterina Neugodova, in her unpublished master’s dissertation, does an admirable job of piecing together the evidence, although Fen’s exact birthplace remains veiled; “Remembering Russia in Life and Work of Elisaveta Fen: A Biography” (M.Phil. diss., University of Vienna, 2012), EFP, 12048, 7. Perhaps this was due to fears about repercussions for her family who remained in the Soviet Union.

4. Fen, *Remember Russia*, 4.

5. Elisaveta Fen, *A Russian’s England: Reminiscences of Years 1926–1940* (Warwick: Paul Gordon, 1976), 467.

6. As Mary Luckhurst, for example, rightly suggests, “Too many retrospectives of twentieth-century British and Irish drama have paid shockingly tokenistic attention to plays by female authors”; Mary Luckhurst, “Introduction,” in *A Companion to Modern British and Irish Drama: 1880–2005*, ed. Luckhurst (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 1–3, at 2.

7. André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London: Routledge, 1992), 1.

8. Patrice Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, trans. Loren Kruger (London: Routledge, 1992), 156.

9. As Neugodova asks, “Can one talk about Fen as a Russian émigré? She sometimes calls herself that, but there is little evidence she took any part in the Russian colony’s life in England” (4).

10. This scholarship includes *Russia in Britain, 1880–1940: From Melodrama to Modernism*, ed. Rebecca Beasley and Philip Ross Bullock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); *A People Passing Rude: British Responses to Russian Culture*, ed. Anthony Cross (Cambridge: OpenBook, 2012); and Caroline Maclean, *The Vogue for Russia: Modernism and the Unseen in Britain, 1900–1930* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015). Theatre as well as theatrical interpretation and translation are part of these narratives, but the connection has been clarified further by *Russians in Britain: British Theatre and the Russian Tradition of Actor Training*, ed. Jonathan Pitches (London: Routledge, 2012) and my own book, *Claire Warden, Migrating Modernist Performance: British Theatrical Travels through Russia* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

11. Pitches, “Conclusion: A Common Theatre History? The Russian Tradition in Britain Today: Katie Mitchell, Declan Donnellan and Michael Boyd,” in *Russians in Britain, 192–210*, at 195.

12. Jessica Berman, *Modernist Commitments: Ethics, Politics, and Transnational Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 10. To describe Fen as a “modernist” may appear problematic, given her lack of real aesthetic experimentalism and the fact that her translations did not appear until the 1950s. In using this broader version of “modernist” I am following the lead of New Modernist Studies scholars who have sought an expansion of the term to create new interweaving networks of creative making. In this sense Fen could be described in transnational modernist terms if, like Andrzej Gąsiorek, we conclude “modernism’s boundaries are permeable and . . . it is not the job of the critic to police them”; Andrzej Gąsiorek, *A History of Modernist Literature* (Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 3.

13. Rebecca Beasley, "Modernism's Translations," in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, ed. Mark Wollaeger with Matt Eatough (Oxford University Press, 2012), 551–70, at 558–9.
14. Fen, *Russian's England*, 24. Frances Fineman (Gunther)'s archive is housed at Harvard University; <https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/repositories/8/resources/7193> accessed 23 May 2019.
15. See A. P. Chekhov, *Eight Plays* (1976), *Plays* (1959–1980) [*The Seagull and Other Plays* (1954)], [*Short Stories* (1974)], [*Three Plays* (1951)], EFP, 328–96. This is the most comprehensive collection of Fen's translations.
16. *Western Evening Herald*, 1 October 1951, EFP, 347.
17. Warden, 110–12.
18. David Magarshack, *The Real Chekhov: An Introduction to Chekhov's Last Plays* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1972), 13.
19. Beasley, 560.
20. *Chekhov on the British Stage*, ed. Patrick Miles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 2.
21. *Ibid.*, 1.
22. George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 29.
23. Dan Rebellato, "Chekhov's Genius Will Always Allude Us," *The Guardian*, 3 November 2010; www.theguardian.com/culture/theatreblog/2010/nov/03/theatre-anton-chekhov-modern accessed 27 April 2019.
24. Stuart Young, "Making the 'Unstageable' Stageable: English Rewritings of Chekhov," *Modern Drama* 52.3 (2009), 325–50, at 327.
25. Andras Nagy, "A Samovar Is a Samovar Is a Samovar: Hopes and Failures of the Author as the Object and Subject of Translation," in *Moving Target: Theatre Translation and Cultural Relocation*, ed. Carole-Anne Upton (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2000), 151–8, at 156.
26. Steiner, 28.
27. Elizaveta Fen, "A Glimpse of 'Another Russia'" (n.d.), EFP, 299–300, 1. All quotations from 299. This document, though undated, gives the sense that Fen has experienced these places recently. She traveled back to Russia in 1929 and 1932, so perhaps it was written after these trips. Neugodova suggests that she wrote articles for *The Lady* magazine (62), so this may well be one of these.
28. Fen, "Glimpse," 299, 3.
29. Fen, *Remember Russia*, 3.
30. She ironically refers to the Bolshevik regime this way in *Russian's England*, 9.
31. Elizaveta Fen, "Russia—My Country" (1939?), EFP, 253–5, 9. There are three versions in the LRA. I cite from the version numbered 253, as it seems the most complete.
32. Elisaveta Fen, "Translator's Introductory Essay," in Anton Chekhov, *Plays*, trans. Fen (Ware: Wordsworth, 2007) [hereafter Fen, *Plays*/Wordsworth], xvii–xlii, at xli.
33. Letter from Fen to Dr. Ware, 21 January 1960, "Chekhov the Physician" (1960), EFP, 216. The article was indeed published as "Chehov the Physician," *British Medical Journal* 1.5167 (1960): 192–3; www.bmj.com/content/1/5167/192, accessed 27 April 2019.
34. Program from *Three Sisters*, The Old Vic, Sunday, 19 May 1963; Patrick Miles Chekhov Collection, 1880–1998, CHEK/TP/1/6/13, Manuscripts and Special Collections, University of Nottingham, Kings Meadow Campus, Lenton Lane, Nottingham, UK.
35. Cornelia Möser, "Gender Travelling across France, Germany and the US: The Feminist Gender Debates as Cultural Translations," in *Feminist Translation Studies: Local and Transnational Perspectives*, ed. Olga Castro and Emek Ergun (London: Routledge, 2017), 80–92, at 80.
36. Fen, "Chekhov in His Plays" (talk, 1959/60), EFP, 207, 1.
37. Fen, "Chekhov the Physician" (1960), EFP, 210, 2. Undoubtedly, this is true. Think of Dorn in *The Seagull*, Chebutykin in *Three Sisters*, and Astrov in *Uncle Vanya*. For more information

about his short stories in this regard, see Jack Coulehan, *Chekhov's Doctors: A Collection of Chekhov's Medical Tales* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2003).

38. Fen, “Chekhov in His Plays,” 21.
39. Fen, “Chekhov the Man,” 1.
40. Elisaveta Fen, “Introduction,” in Anton Chekhov, *Plays*, trans. Fen (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, UK: Penguin, 1959) [hereafter Fen, *Plays/Penguin*], 7–34, at 17. By way of example, see Gleb Struve’s comprehensive critique of Soviet versions of Chekhov’s plays and letters, which identifies particular censoring by Soviet authorities in order to infuse them with a greater sense of Soviet ideology. Notably, Struve says, British biographers David Magarshack and Ronald Hingley both welcomed the new Soviet imprints and neglected to note the inconsistencies or inaccuracies. This provides some context for Fen’s intention to counter such publications. Gleb Struve, “Chekhov in Communist Censorship,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 33.81 (1955): 327–41.
41. Fen, “Chekhov the Man,” 1.
42. Fen, *Russian's England*, 125.
43. Fen, *Plays/Penguin*, 11.
44. Elizaveta Fen, *A Tourist in Russia* (1932?), EFP, 311, 5.
45. Fen, *Plays/Penguin*, 398.
46. George Calderon, *Two Plays by Tchekof*, 2d ed. (London: Grant Richards, 1912) [hereafter Calderon], 158.
47. Anton Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard*, trans. Michael Frayn (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978) [hereafter Frayn, *TCO*], 67.
48. Anton Tchekov, *The Cherry Orchard and Other Plays*, trans. Constance Garnett ([1923]; London: Chatto & Windus, 1965) [hereafter Garnett], 78.
49. Anton Tchekhov, *Plays and Stories*, trans S. S. Kotliansky ([1937]; London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1950) [hereafter Kotliansky], 52.
50. *Ibid.*, 9.
51. Fen, *Plays/Penguin*, 341.
52. Frayn, *TCO*, 9; Kotliansky, 9.
53. Fen, *Plays/Penguin*, 350.
54. Garnett, 25; Calderon, 107; Anton Chekhov, *Plays by Chekhov, Second Series*, trans. Julius West (1916); <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/7986/7986.txt>, accessed 27 April 2019 (n.p.) [hereafter West]; Kotliansky, 17.
55. Fen, *Plays/Penguin*, 350.
56. *Ibid.*, 375.
57. Kotliansky, 35; Calderon, 131; Garnett, 52; West (n.p.); Frayn, *TCO*, 43.
58. Fen, *Plays/Penguin*, 375.
59. *Ibid.*, 334.
60. Magarshack, 16.
61. See Fen, *Plays/Penguin*, 316, 330.
62. West (n.p.). The only other place I can find a similar rendering of the song is in Noel Coward’s *Bitter Sweet* (1929), where he includes the line, “Tarara boom-de-ay / It’s mental washing day”; Noel Coward, *The Lyrics of Noel Coward* ([1965]; London: Bloomsbury Methuen, 2002), 81. West’s translation was written some thirteen years previously, so this must have been a regular music-hall version before Coward incorporated it into *Bitter Sweet*.
63. Anton Chekhov, *Three Sisters*, trans. Michael Frayn (London: Methuen, 1983), 89, 90, xix.
64. Donald Rayfield, “Chekhov’s Stories and the Plays,” *The Cambridge Companion to Chekhov*, ed. Vera Gottlieb and Paul Allain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 203–15, at 210.
65. A. D. P. Briggs, “Introduction,” in Fen, *Plays/Wordsworth*, vii–xvi, at xi.
66. *The Weekly Telegraph* (no city given), (n.d.) September 1951, EFP, 342.
67. John Gielgud, “Introduction,” Anton Chekhov, *Two Plays of Anton Chekhov: The Cherry Orchard, Three Sisters*, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Limited Editions Club, 1966), x–xv, at

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xiii. Under the directorship of Theodore Komisarjevsky, Gielgud performed as Baron Tuzenbach in *Three Sisters* (1926) and as Boris Trigorin in *The Seagull* (1936).

68. *Manchester Guardian*, 30 October 1951, EFP, 346–7.

69. Neugodova, 83.

70. *Three Sisters*, BBC Home Service Basic, 24 May 1965; <http://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/8648d0fc28eb4cbb88b01d1a04368567>, accessed 28 April 2019.

71. BBC Play of the Month: *Three Sisters*, dir. Cedric Messina, 18 January 1970; online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGPTcIOSqO4, accessed 28 April 2019.

72. BBC Play of the Month: *Uncle Vanya*, dir. Christopher Morahan, 8 November 1970 <http://bufvc.ac.uk/screenplays/index.php/prog/1808>, accessed 28 April 2019.

73. BBC Play of the Month: *The Cherry Orchard*, dir. Cedric Messina, 19 December 1971 <http://bufvc.ac.uk/screenplays/index.php/prog/1085>, accessed 28 April 2019.

74. *The Seagull*, Galleon Theatre at the Greenwich Playhouse (August 2005) www.galleontheatre.co.uk/theseagull.htm, accessed 28 April 2019.

75. *The Cherry Orchard*, Galleon Theatre at the Greenwich Playhouse (March–April 2010) www.galleontheatre.co.uk/the_cherry_orchard.shtml, accessed 28 April 2019. Landlords closed the Greenwich in 2012 to convert it to accommodations for the London Olympics; www.galleontheatre.co.uk/greenwich_playhouse.shtml, accessed 28 April 2019.

76. *Cherry Orchard*, Galleon Theatre.

77. David Allen, *Performing Chekhov* (London: Routledge, 2000), 187.

78. Kate Bassett, *In Two Minds: A Biography of Jonathan Miller* (London: Oberon, 2012), 209.

79. Michael Romain, *A Profile of Jonathan Miller* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 128.

80. Janet Watt, “Diagnosing the Doctor,” *The Guardian*, 9 July 1976, 8.

81. Fen, “Chekhov the Physician,” 2.

82. Romain, 160.

83. Irving Wardle, “The Uniqueness of Chekhov,” *The Times* (London), 30 November 1968, 21.

84. Michael Billington, “Doctor’s Dilemma,” *The Guardian*, 17 April 1974, 12.

85. Fen, “Glimpse,” 299, 1.

86. Fen, *Plays*/Penguin, 249.

87. Bassett, 183.

88. Jonathan Miller, *Subsequent Performances* (London: Faber & Faber, 1986), 167.

89. Bassett, 183.

90. “Tania Alexander,” obituary, *The Guardian*, 14 December 2004; www.theguardian.com/news/2004/dec/14/guardianobituaries.artsobituaries, accessed 28 April 2019.

91. Program from *Three Sisters*, Cambridge Theatre, London, 23 June 1976; Patrick Miles Chekhov Collection, CHEK/TP/1/6/24, University of Nottingham.

92. Tania Alexander, *An Estonian Childhood: A Memoir* ([1987]; London: Faber Finds, 2010),

143. The book was also published in 1987 under the title *A Little of All These*.

93. *Ibid.*, xv.

94. *Ibid.*, 86.

95. *Ibid.*, 135.

96. *Ibid.*, 90. All of this, of course, leads us to wondering whether Fen and Alexander ever met.

There are multiple moments when the biographies of these two Russian émigrés might have collided. However, the only circumstantial evidence comes in the form of a highly speculative connection through the editor of the *British Medical Journal*, Hugh Clegg. He was married to Alexander’s cousin Kira, to whom she was very close (*ibid.*, 135). Clegg was editor in 1960 when Fen’s article was published. There is no concrete evidence here, but perhaps Clegg’s own Russian connections do provide a reason why the *BMJ* was interested in Fen’s Chekhov article in the first place.

97. Fen, “Chekhov the Man,” 1.

98. Patrice Pavis, *The Routledge Dictionary of Performance and Contemporary Theatre* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 19.

99. Miller, 164.
100. Romain, 167.
101. Miller, 167–8.
102. Allen, *Performing Chekhov*, 174.
103. Quoted in David Allen, “Jonathan Miller Directs Chekhov,” *New Theatre Quarterly* 5.17 (1989): 52–66, at 58 (emphasis in original).
104. *Ibid.*
105. Rodney Ackland, “From Komisarjevsky to Jonathan Miller,” *The Spectator*, 18 September 1976, 34.
106. Quoted in Allen, “Jonathan Miller Directs Chekhov,” 52.
107. *British Book News*, December 1951, EFP, 346.
108. *Three Sisters by RashDash, after Chekhov*, coproduced with Royal Exchange at The Yard Theatre, London, 22 May–9 June 2018, www.rashdash.co.uk/three-sisters/, accessed 28 April 2019. Lyn Gardner, “*Three Sisters* Review—RashDash’s Gloriously Playful Take on Chekhov,” *The Guardian*, 11 May 2018, www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/may/11/three-sisters-review-rashdash-royal-exchange-manchester, accessed 23 May 2019. The production also had a US run in February 2019 (closed 2 March) at Curio Theatre Company in Philadelphia.
109. Charlotte Higgins, “*The Cherry Orchard* Review—Michael Boyd’s Exquisite Chekhov Debut,” *The Guardian*, 12 March 2018, www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/mar/12/the-cherry-orchard-review-michael-boyd-bristol-old-vic, accessed 28 April 2019.
110. Anton Chekhov Foundation, “Anton Chekhov’s Garden,” <http://antonchekhovfoundation.org/garden.html>, accessed 28 April 2019.
111. Benedict Nightingale, “Theatre: *The Cherry Orchard*,” *The Times*, 21 March 2007, 17.
112. Fen, “Chekhov the Man,” 3.
113. Program from *Three Sisters*, Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford, Surrey, 20 April–8 May 1976; Patrick Miles Chekhov Collection, CHEK/TP/1/6/23, University of Nottingham.