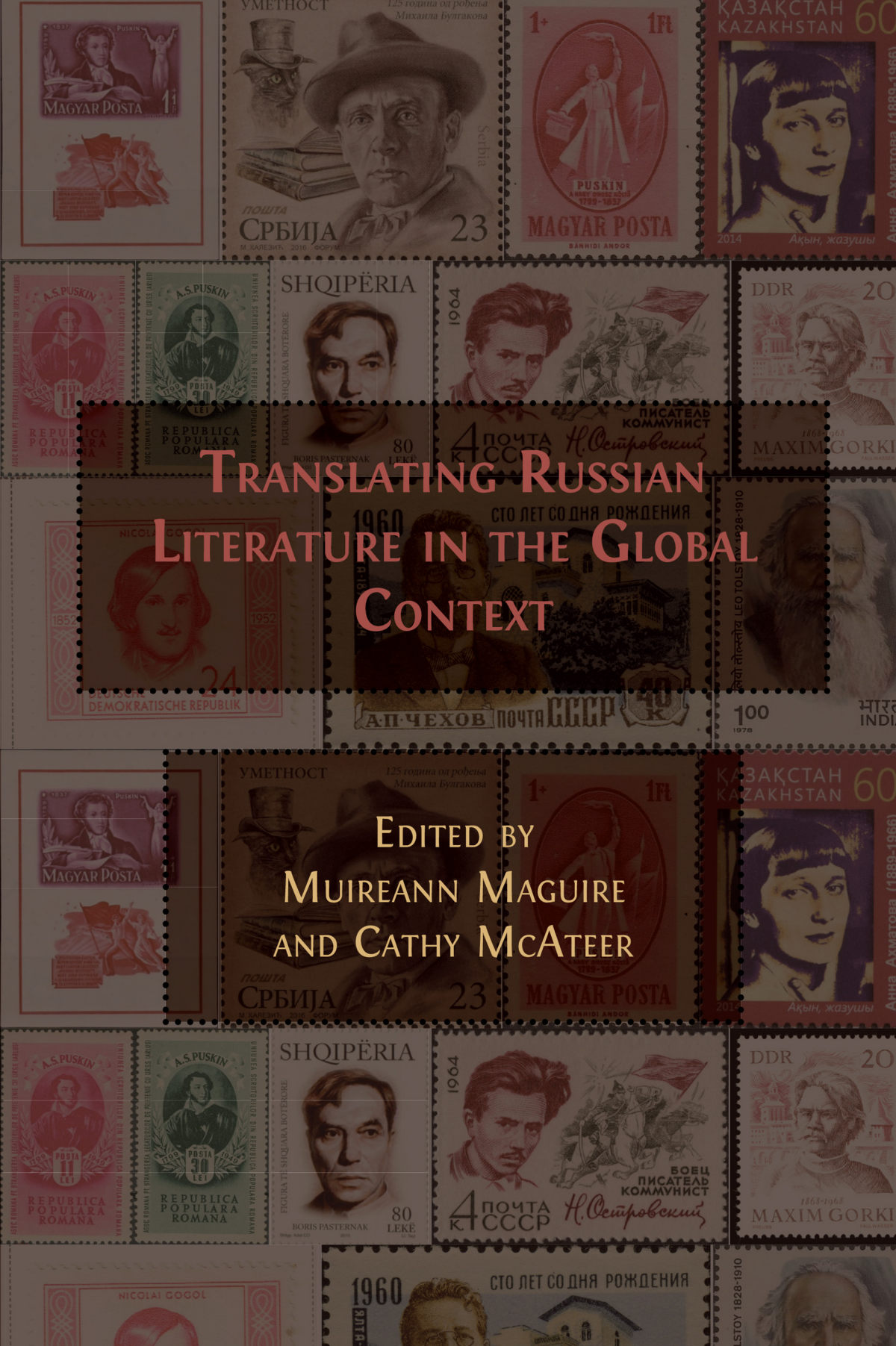

Translating Russian Literature in the Global Context

Edited by
Muireann Maguire
and Cathy McAteer

https://www.openbookpublishers.com

Muireann Maguire and Cathy McAteer (eds), *Translating Russian Literature in the Global Context*. *Cambridge*, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2024, https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0340

Digital material and resources associated with this volume are available at https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0340#resources

ISBN Paperback: 978–1-80064–983–5
ISBN Hardback: 978–1-80064–984–2
ISBN Digital (PDF): 978–1-80064–985–9
ISBN Digital ebook (EPUB): 978–1-80064–986–6
ISBN DIGITAL ebook (HTML): 978–1-80064–989–7
DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0340

Cover Design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme as part of the RUSTRANS academic project, 'The Dark Side of Translation: 20th and 21st Century Translation from Russian as a Political Phenomenon in the UK, Ireland, and the USA' (grant agreement no. 802437).

Finland

The Pendulum of Translating Russian Literature in Finland

Tomi Huttunen, Marja Jänis, and Pekka Pesonen

Introduction

The title of this article indicates how steeply the quantity of translations of Russian literature published in Finland has varied over time. Proximity to Russia has shaped Finnish history, including the arts, literature, and cultural activities; it is a factor that cannot be neglected in understanding Finland's past, present, and its future. The publication of translations of Russian literature has been most intensive when Finnish-Russian relationships are tranquil, and has declined markedly at times of conflict. Since the Russians are neighbours of the Finns, Russian literature has answered Finnish questions such as: what is Russia? What are the Russians like, and how can we understand Russian history? Few educated Finns have mastered the Russian language, so those individuals who did have played an important role as mediators and translators. This role has proven to be particularly crucial when Finnish-Russian relations have cooled or become hostile.

Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* (2004) deals with the inequalities of the international literary space, always dominated by literatures with a long history from widely known languages, and with the difficulties faced by literatures in a language with a very limited readership.[1] Finnish obviously belongs to the latter category, and thus literary translation has played a substantial role in the development of Finnish literature. Although Casanova discusses the role and work of translators, her scope is limited, and is primarily

1 Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. by M.B. Debevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

 https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0340.04

concerned with the translation of literary works from the cultural periphery into the languages of the centre.[2] This article considers translation in the opposite direction, that is, into peripheral languages.

Finnish Language, Finnish Literature, and Translation in the Grand Duchy

For more than a century (1809–1917), Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire. Previously, it had been the Eastern province of Sweden; Swedish was the language of education, administration, and culture. As a Grand Duchy, during the nineteenth century, Finnish language and cultural identity were reinforced, partly due to the separation from Sweden and partly because Russia initiated a new distance from Swedish language and influence. Another significant factor was the popularity of European nationalist ideas among educated Finns.[3] The Finnish language advocates were called *Fennomans*; they were devoted to making Finnish language, spoken by the majority of the people, into a fully-fledged medium of administration, education, and culture. Ironically, most of the Fennomans spoke Swedish as their mother tongue.

Two Swedish-speaking Finns, Eric Gustaf Ehrström (1791–1835) and Carl Gustaf Ottelin (1792–1864), were Fennoman intellectuals who emphasised the importance of the Finnish language in Finland. They were the very first Finnish university students to receive a scholarship to study Russian in Moscow, which they did in 1812.[4] During their stay in Russia, which coincided with the dramatic historical events of Napoleon's invasion and the burning of Moscow, they studied and actively practiced Russian. They even made the first-ever translations of Nikolai Karamzin's poetry into Swedish without using any bridge language.[5]

2 Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, pp. 142–46.

3 Pascale Casanova mentions the 'Herder effect' in connection with nineteenth-century demands to create or revive a national language in many smaller European countries. She mentions Finnish as an example of a language that existed almost entirely in oral form. Her ideas about the role of writers and intellectuals in constructing a national identity in adherence to emergent national norms can be applied to Finland; see Casanova, pp. 28–29.

4 Kari Ketola, *Ryssän koulussa. Suomalaiset Venäjän stipendiaatit autonomian aikana 1812–1917* [*In the Russian School: Finnish Scholarship Students in Russia during the Autonomy 1812–1917*] (Helsinki: Finemor, 2007), pp. 23–25. The system of the Moscow scholarships had an enormous impact on Russian language studies in Finland during the nineteenth century.

5 See Nils-Åke Nilsson's introduction in *Från Karamzin till Trifonov. En bibliografi över rysk skönlitteratur i svensk översättning av Märta Bergstrand* [*From Karamzin to Trifonov: A Bibliography of Russian Literature in Swedish Translation by Märta Bergstrand*] (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1985), pp. 11–17. There were several Swedish translations of Karamzin prior to Ehrström's and Ottelin's, all effected via French or German versions.

Returning to Finland, they published the first grammar of Russian language in Swedish, and Ehrström also taught Russian at the Royal Academy of Turku (now the University of Helsinki). Among his students was the exceptionally talented young Elias Lönnrot (1802–84), who would later compile the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*. As a student of Ehrström's, Lönnrot translated one of Karamzin's poems into Swedish in 1824. Karamzin was thus well positioned to become the very first Russian writer translated into Finnish; one of his short stories, rendered by an unidentified translator, appeared in 1830.[6]

The conflict between proponents of Finnish and of Swedish as Finland's official language was heated, but the Fennomans slowly strengthened their position. Swedish became, and remains today, the second official language. The Finnish Literature Society was established in 1831 by a group of young scholars and writers, among them Elias Lönnrot and the Finnish-Swedish poet J.L. Runeberg (1804–77). Its bold programme aimed to promote Finnish literature by: (a) collecting existing Finnish-language literature, (b) collecting and publishing Finnish folklore, and (c) promoting the production of Finnish literature and of translations into Finnish (both fiction and non-fiction).[7] The society recommended that foreign literary works chosen for translation into Finnish should include both classics and contemporary literature.

Besides the Swedish-speaking Fennomans' initiatives, others sought to familiarise Finnish speakers with Russian literature through translation. Many translators of Russian literature came from families that had lived in St Petersburg after Finland became a Grand Duchy in 1809. Among the first literary intellectuals in Finnish St Petersburg was Thomas Friman (1821–86), who spent his life in the capital of the Russian Empire. Friman was a notable individual in the city's Finnish literary life, a teacher in the Finnish school and Theological Academy, and a newspaper editor. As early as the 1840s, he made several translations for Finnish newspapers, rendering texts by Iakov Grot, Nestor Kukol'nik, or Vladimir Odoevskii, for example. Grot, who was the first full Professor of Russian language and literature at the Imperial Alexander University (of Helsinki), became personally familiar with some leading Finnish writers (e.g. Runeberg and Lönnrot) and served as a key mediator between the literatures.

In St Petersburg, the descendants of Finnish artisans, servants, and traders also learned Russian while attending the city's Finnish school, and some became translators of Russian literature. One was Samuli Suomalainen (1850–1907), son

6 The short story 'Peasant Flor Silin' was published on 26 June 1830 in the newspaper *Turun Wiikko-Sanomat*.

7 Irma Sulkunen, 'Finnish Literary Society as a Promoter of Literary Translation in the 19th century' ['Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura ulkomaisen kirjallisuuden käännättäjänä 1800-luvulla'], in *Suomennoskirjallisuuden historia* [*History of Translation in Finland*], ed. by H.K. Riikonen and others, 2 vols (Helsinki: SKS, 2007), I (2007), pp. 127–29 (p. 127).

of a Finnish goldsmith, who studied under the above-mentioned Thomas Friman. Thanks to his background, Suomalainen was considered a suitable mediator for the "strange world" of Russian literature.[8] His first published translation from Russian to Finnish was Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter* (*Kapitanskaia dochka*, 1836; *Kapteenin tytär*, 1876). However, even earlier in 1876, the short story 'The Inn' ('Postoialyi dvor', 1852) by Ivan Turgenev had appeared as an independent volume. The following decade proved to be a golden age for literary translation into Finnish. Many works by Gogol, Turgenev, Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Ivan Goncharov were translated for the first time during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Suomalainen's translation of Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls* (*Mertvye dushi*, 1842) as *Kuolleet sielut* (1882) is a classic among Finnish translations of Russian literature; it has been republished several times, with the latest edition appearing in 2008.

Translations of Gogol's works by Samuli Suomalainen were read aloud in a literary salon (named the Elisabet Circle, after its central figure) in the town of Kuopio in Eastern Finland. The history of this salon makes for an interesting case study in the popularity of Russian literature in Finland. It was led by Elisabet Järnefelt (1839–1929), daughter of the celebrated sculptor Peter Clodt von Jürgensberg, who retired to his Finnish estate after enjoying a distinguished career in St Petersburg. Elisabet married Alexander Järnefelt, a Finnish army officer educated in Russia, later a high administrative officer in the Grand Duchy and a provincial governor.[9] In her salon, she inspired contemporary young Finnish writers to discover and admire Russian literature, particularly Tolstoy, by reading aloud existing translations; she even shared works not yet available in Finnish by translating them aloud on the spot. Elisabet Järnefelt greatly admired Russian Realism; she introduced her young followers, among them the novelist, playwright, and early supporter of women's rights Minna Canth, to Vissarion Belinskii's concept of types as the basis of Realist literature. Elisabet Järnefelt's literary salon, however, rejected the emergent school of Modernism.

Finland established a network of public libraries in the 1880s; translations of Russian literature amounted to 13% of all acquisitions of foreign literature.[10] Dostoevsky's *The House of the Dead* (*Zapiski iz mertvogo doma*, 1862), Gogol's *Dead Souls*, and Turgenev's *A Nest of the Gentry* (*Dvorianskoe gnezdo*, 1859) and *First*

8 This is a quotation from an article in *Aamulehti* on 21 December 1886. Cited by Outi Paloposki and Sari Kivistö, 'Samuli Suomalainen', *Suomennoskirjallisuuden historia*, I, pp. 207–11 (p. 208).

9 The children of Alexander and Elisabet Järnefelt also became prominent figures in the history of Finnish culture: Armas Järnefelt was a composer, Eero Järnefelt a painter, and Arvid Järnefelt a writer, the most prominent follower of Lev Tolstoy's ideas in Finland. Their daughter Aino married the composer Jean Sibelius.

10 In the 1860s, Finnish state authorities recommended that municipal and rural schools open libraries, not only for use by pupils. This was the origin of Finland's public library system; by the 1880s, libraries were subsidised by municipalities and the state.

Love (*Pervaia iubov'*, 1861), with two collections of short stories by Lev Tolstoy, were among these acquisitions.[11] *Arvosteleva kirjaluettelo* (*The Critical Catalogue of Books*),[12] the main source for determining Finnish libraries' acquisition policy, distinguished between works appropriate for less educated readers using rural libraries, and those that required "a more sophisticated readership". Recommendations for acquiring translations of Russian literature followed these guidelines. For instance, Lev Tolstoy's *Childhood, Boyhood and Youth* trilogy (*Detstvo, otrochestvo, iunost'*, 1852–56) and *War and Peace* (*Voina i mir*, 1869; translated as *Sota ja rauha* by Iivari Wallenius in 1905) were recommended "primarily for public libraries of more developed regions".[13]

'Icy Times' and 'Oppression'

While Finnish was now firmly established as Finland's principal language, the attempt to make Russian an official national language had failed. Finland had become a well-organised society with thousands of schools where the language of the empire was not taught.[14] Political turmoil in Europe and unrest in Russia's peripheral regions hardened Russian attitudes towards Finland's autonomy within the Empire. In 1899, Nikolai Bobrikov, the newly appointed Finnish Governor-General, declared in his February Manifesto that imperial state legislation should be enacted in Finland. Finnish people saw this decision as an end to their autonomy. It was followed by a language manifesto in 1900: Russian should become the official language of administration. The February Manifesto led to widespread demonstrations in Finland, although Tsar Nikolai II forbade protests. The period from 1899 to 1905 is known as 'Icy Times' ('*routa-aika*') and even the 'Oppression' ('*sortokausi*') in Finnish historiography.[15] The newly 'icy' attitude to Russia, including its literature and language, now made compulsory in secondary schools, affected translation policy. However, the works of Russian writers considered anti-tsarist, such as Lev Tolstoy and Maksim Gorky, were

11 Eija Eskola collected data of acquisitions of translated literature in six municipal libraries in 1880–1890. Eija Eskola, *Rukousnauha ja muita romaaneja. Suomennetun kaunokirjallisuuden valinta yleisissä kirjastoissa 1880–1939* [*The Rosary and Other Novels: Selection of Literature, Translated into Finnish, for Public Libraries in 1880–1939*] (Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, 1991), p. 12.

12 *The Critical Catalogue* was established in 1902 to assist in acquiring books for public libraries. The critical comments were given in short articles, written by librarians, teachers, literary critics, and others. The catalogue had no board of editors or editor-in-chief, only a secretary responsible for its compilation. It served librarians, especially those not professionally trained, and was not well known among literary circles or readers.

13 Eskola, *Rukousnauha*, p. 44.

14 David Kirby, *A Concise History of Finland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 123.

15 Kirby, *Concise History*, p. 130.

translated and published widely. Tolstoy's didactic and social writings were translated into Finnish earlier than his great novels, and he had devoted followers in Finland—the most active of them was Arvid Järnefelt, the son of Alexander and Elisabet Järnefelt. Gorky supported the Finnish people's fight against tsarist oppression and received a triumphant welcome when he visited Finland to see the performance of his play *The Lower Depths* (*Na dne*, 1902; translated as *Pohjalla* by Iisakki Lattu) at the Finnish National Theatre in Helsinki in 1903.

During the 1910s, the view of Russia as an oppressor continued to weaken interest in Russian literature. Among the few exceptions were Eino Kalima (1906–72), a former student of Konstantin Stanislavskii at the Moscow Arts Theatre, who later ran the Finnish National Theatre. Kalima is known for his translations of Tolstoy and Chekhov (and for his productions of the latter's plays). He stated bitterly in his memoirs that there was hardly any other civilised European country, where "splendid Russian literature" was as ignored and under-valued as in Finland.[16] His first Finnish translation of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1878), published in 1910–11, was met with contempt by V.A. Koskenniemi (1885–1962), an influential poet and cultural figure, who wrote: "Tolstoy's characters lack the higher intellectual life. [...] They do not possess the balance between activity and passivity, reason and heart, which is significant to Western cultural ideals".[17]

In the 1910s, no novels or plays by Russian authors were listed as favourites by readers using public libraries.[18] Yet it was only a few hours by train from St Petersburg to the Karelian isthmus and Eastern Finland. Many holiday resorts and summerhouses (*dachas*) were visited by Russian writers and artists in the early 1900s. Kornei Chukovskii's dacha 'Chukokkala' in Terijoki was a gathering place for artistic and literary circles from St Petersburg in 1912–17.[19] However, Finnish writers were apparently not invited to these gatherings, although some young enthusiastic Swedish-speaking Finnish writers did obtain and share information about Russian Modernism.[20]

16 Eino Kalima, *Sattumaa ja johdatusta* [*Accidents and Guidance*] (Helsinki: WSOY, 1962), pp. 270–71.

17 V.A. Koskenniemi, '*Anna Karenina*. Oriens an Occidens', in *Aika* [*Time*], 12 (1912), pp. 15–25.

18 Eskola, *Rukousnauha*, p. 78.

19 Lidiia Chukovskaia lists, among the visitors to Kornei Chukovskii's dacha, the prominent writers and poets Maksim Gorky, Vladimir Maiakovskii, Viktor Shklovskii, Leonid Andreev, Anna Akhmatova and Nikolai Gumilev. See Merja Suomi, *Metamorphoses of a Text within Stalinist Context*: *Kornei Chukovskii's 'A High Art' in the 1930s* (Tampere: Juvenes, 2016), p. 9. See also Natalia Baschmakoff, 'Avant-Garde Encounters on Karelian Bedrock (1890s-1930s)', in *A Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in the Nordic Countries* (*1900–1925*), ed. by Hubert van den Berg, Irmeli Hautamäki, and others (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2012), pp. 351–70.

20 See Ben Hellman, Tomi Huttunen, Tintti Klapuri and Lauri Piispa, 'Finlandssvenskarna som förmedlare av rysk kultur på 1920- och 30-talen'

Independent Finland

After heated debates about how and whether Finland should remain part of Russia, now ravaged by strikes and revolutions, the Finnish Head of State, Pehr Evind Svinhufvud, travelled to Petrograd in December 1917 to negotiate and confirm Finland's sovereign independence from the Council of People's Commissars. But there was no agreement between opposing political parties in Finland, and thus a Finnish civil war broke out in January 1918. The Reds (Socialists) were defeated, and the Whites, supported by German troops, celebrated their victory in early May.[21] The existing negative attitude towards Russia, including Russian culture and literature, primarily provoked by the tsarist regime's oppressive politics towards Finland at the beginning of the century, was aggravated by the new situation. Soviet Russia represented the ideology that had triggered the Civil War in Finland and revolutions elsewhere in Europe. Russian culture was rejected in the newly independent Finland. The closed border made it impossible to follow developments on the Soviet side. This negative attitude towards Russian literature was reflected in the acquisition records of public libraries. In the 1910s, translations of Russian literature comprised 11% of all acquisitions, but in the 1920s their share fell to 2%. In the 1930s no translations of Russian literature were listed among readers' favourites.[22]

Russian Modernism

In Finland, not much was known about the avant-garde forms of literature, arts, theatre and cinema in Soviet Russia after the revolution and the early 1920s, even though Russian printing presses had been sending legal-deposit

['Finnish Swedes as Mediators of Russian Culture in the 1920s and 30s'], *Finsk Tidskrift*, 3–4 (2017), 75–78, http://www.finsktidskrift.fi/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ft_3417_paino.pdf.

21 The leaders of the defeated Reds fled across the Eastern border to Soviet Russia, accompanied by many ordinary workers who found it difficult to re-establish themselves in Finland after participating in the Civil War. The Finnish language played a significant role in the linguistic situation of Soviet Karelia, necessitating the translation of both personal documents and fiction from Russian into Finnish. This continued in the 1920s and early 1930s, but when Stalinist repression intensified in the mid-1930s, it lost its position. Translation into Finnish was resumed in the 1960s, and translations of Russian literature were again distributed and read in Finland also. See Marja Jänis and Tamara Starshova, 'Cultural and Political Contexts of Translating into Finnish in Soviet/Russian Karelia', in *Domestication and Foreignization in Translation Studies*, ed. by Hannu Kemppanen and others (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2012), pp. 189–207.

22 Eskola, *Rukousnauha*, p. 55, p. 61.

copies—among them many Futurist rarities—to the Helsinki University Library.[23] Regarding Russian literature, the Finnish press published mainly 'bad' or sad news from Bolshevik Russia, such as information about the tragic deaths of the poets Aleksandr Blok and Velimir Khlebnikov. Word about new and interesting literary developments came via various routes, often dependent on certain active individuals, very often with a transnational identity. The journalist Rafael Lindqvist (1867–1952) was a Swedish-speaking Finn who translated major works by Tolstoy, Gorky, and many Russian and Soviet poets, also Modernists. His translations, although into Swedish, were published in Finland. His ideological views were Suecophile, i.e., he was a member of the pro-Swedish movement in Finland. He also became known as an anti-Semite (he translated the Protocols of the Elders of Zion into Swedish). As we know today, Modernism in Swedish literature was initiated not in Sweden, but among Finland's Swedish-speaking minority.[24] Thus it is not surprising that Russian Modernism was mediated into Swedish not only by Lindqvist, but also by a Swedish-speaking Finnish poet, Edith Södergran (1892–1923). A notable translator of Igor Severianin's poetry, she was born and educated in St Petersburg.[25] Another transnational mediator, Antti Tiittanen (1890–1927), an Ingrian Finnish refugee,[26] was an exceptionally active journalist and writer who published articles about Russian literature and theatre. He also translated poems and short stories. His main influences were Aleksandr Blok and Nikolai Evreinov. Tiittanen's fate remains unknown; he disappeared during his daily walk in Helsinki in January 1927. The Finnish newspapers suspected that right-wing political activists kidnapped him. Another highly active mediator was Henry Parland (1908–30), who also died young, aged just twenty-two. From a multi-lingual family in Vyborg and educated partly in St Petersburg, Parland succeeded in introducing contemporary Russian Modernism to Finland, especially within Finno-Swedish cultural circles. While living in Kaunas, the interim capital of Lithuania, he acquainted himself with local poets and with Russian avant-garde authors, like Iurii Olesha and Anatolii Mariengof. Their writing influenced his own unfinished experimental novel project titled *Sönder* (*To Pieces*), published posthumously in 1932.

23 Tomi Huttunen and Tapio Pitkäranta, 'The Futurism Collection at the National Library of Finland in Helsinki', in *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies*, ed. by Günther Berghaus and others (Berlin: de Gruyter), 9 (2019), 297–308.

24 Lars Kleberg, 'The Advantage of the Margin', in *Swedish–Polish Modernism: Literature—Language—Culture*, ed. by Małgorzata Anna Packalén and Sven Gustavsson (Stockholm: KVHAA / Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2003), pp. 56–89.

25 Hellman and others, 'Finnish Swedes as Mediators of Russian Culture in the 1920s and 30s', pp. 76–78.

26 Ingrian Finns are descendants of the seventeenth-century Finnish-speaking, predominantly Lutheran settlers on the South-Eastern shore of the Gulf of Finland; after 1918 until 1922, a considerable number of so-called 'tribe refugees' (Ingrians and East Karelian people) fled Soviet Russia for Finland.

Contemporary Russian poetry was described in Finnish in an article by the young literary critic Olavi Paavolainen (1903–64) in his 1929 volume of essays *In Search of Modern Times* (*Nykyaikaa etsimässä*). According to Paavolainen, Aleksandr Blok, Vladimir Maiakovskii, and Sergei Esenin represented the trinity of 'Faith, Hope and Love' amid the tragedy of the revolution. Paavolainen describes Blok's 1918 poems 'The Scythians' ('Skify') and 'The Twelve' ('Dvenadtsat') as examples of irresistible poetic power, breaking the political wall which rose around Russia after the revolution.[27] Maiakovskii introduced Futurism in good time: nowhere else than in revolutionary Russia has Futurism been more intensely developed. For Esenin, Paavolainen argued, the revolution was a tragedy, since it denied Russia's essential status as a peasant country. *In Search of Modern Times* was widely disseminated and influential.[28]

Translations of the Classics

While a negative attitude towards contemporary Russian literature tended to prevail, the prominent Finnish publishing house Werner Söderström (founded in 1878) nonetheless launched a project to translate Russian classics. Since the first translations of Russian literature had appeared, mainly during the 1880s, their importance had changed; and so had the Finnish literary language. When these translations were first published, they represented contemporary foreign writing; but by the 1920s, they were classics of world literature. All Dostoevsky's major works were now translated into Finnish. Some translators, like V.K. Trast (1878–1953) and Ida Pekari (1894–1986), were descendants of Finns who had lived in St Petersburg. Tolstoy's radical thoughts on equality made some readers suspicious that his work might have partly incited the Russian Revolution. Arvid Järnefelt, son of Elisabet Järnefelt and a prominent follower of Tolstoy's ideas in Finland, questioned these thoughts in his article 'Should Tolstoy be Considered the Father of the Russian Revolution?'.[29] The quantity of both published literatures originally written in Finnish and of translations into Finnish declined in the 1930s. From 1900 to 1929, these were at parity, but the proportion of translations fell in the 1930s, remaining at a lower level

27 Olavi Paavolainen, *Nykyaikaa etsimässä* [*In Search of Modern Times*] (Helsinki: Otava, 1929, reprinted 1990), pp. 196–225 (p. 196).

28 For a survey of Russo-Finnish literary interactions in the early twentieth century, see also E.G. Soini's *Vzaimoproniknovenie russkoy i finskoy literatury v pervoj polovine XX veka* [*The Permeation of Russian and Finnish Literature in the First Half of the 20th Century*] (Moscow: IaSK, 2017), 2nd edn, esp. Chapter One, 'Vospriiatie russkoi literatury v sisteme kontaktnykh sviazei' (pp. 46–90), which has a subsection on Rafael Lindqvist.

29 Arvid Järnefelt, 'Onko Tolstoi pidettävä Venäjän vallankumouksen isänä?' ['Should Tolstoy Be Considered Father of the Russian Revolution?', published in the literary periodical *Sininen kirja* [*Blue Book*], 8 (1928), 7–17.

until the 1950s.[30] Many factors have been cited to explain this, such as Finland's signature of the Berne Convention in 1928, forcing publishers to pay royalties for acquiring translation rights; nationalistic tendencies and isolationism, also noted in many other newly independent states in Central and Eastern Europe; and the Finnish government's promotion of patriotism, the agrarian lifestyle and the Lutheran church as the essential values of Finnish life.[31] New radical currents in contemporary European literature as well as interesting tendencies from Soviet literature, however, were discussed in several liberal and left-wing cultural publications in both Finnish and Swedish.

When publishers were accused of neglecting to publish translations, they resorted to commissioning anthologies. 'Golden Books' from several literatures—anthologising the Scandinavian, German, English, French, Italian, and Spanish and Portuguese classics—were issued in the 1930s.[32] Russian literature comprised one third of *The Golden Book of Slavic Literatures* (1936). In his Editor's Introduction, V.K. Trast called Ivan Turgenev the foremost master of style, and Tolstoy the greatest thinker. He claimed that in Russian literature, ideologies and social questions are more important than artistic aspirations and aesthetic perfection; Trast credited Vissarion Belinskii with this hierarchy.[33] In 1943, the librarian Helle Kannila, who was primarily responsible for developing the Finnish public library system, published an overview of translations of literature in the first half of the twentieth century. Kannila concluded her article by observing that Russian literature was well represented in translation before World War I, but that Soviet Russian literature understandably failed to resonate with Finnish readers.[34]

New Kinds of Contact, New Kinds of Translation

After the short 'Winter War' (1939–40) between Finland and the Soviet Union, and following Finland's involvement in World War II as an ally of Germany

30 Erkki Sevänen, ['Ikkunat auki, ikkunat kiinni! Suomennoskirjallisuuden asema ja luonne 1920—ja 1930—luvuilla' ['Open the Windows, Close the Windows! The Position and Character of Translated Literature in 1920s and 1930s'], in *Suomennoskirjallisuuden historia*, I, pp. 382–93 (p. 384).

31 Ibid., p. 382.

32 The series editors were prominent literary critics Rafael Koskimies and Martti Haavio; each anthology had its own dedicated editor.

33 V.K. Trast, 'Venäjän kirjallisuus' ['Russian Literature'], in *Slaavilaisten kirjallisuuksien kultainen kirja* [*The Golden Book of Slavic Literatures*], ed. by V.K. Trast (Helsinki: WSOY, 1936), pp. 2–30 (p. 30).

34 Helle Kannila, 'Tällä vuosisadalla ilmestyneen kaunokirjallisuuden suomennoksista' ['Translations of Literature during this Century'], in *Kirjallisuudentutkijain seuran vuosikirja VII* [*Yearbook of the Society of Scholars of Literature VII*], ed. by Rafael Koskimies and others (Helsinki: SKS, 1943), pp. 79–110 (p. 106).

from 1941 to 1944, the country managed to withdraw from conflict in September 1944. What followed can be described as the "problematic early years of a new relationship with the Soviet Union".[35] As a condition for ending hostilities, Finland had to allow the presence of a Control Commission formed by the Allies, but led by Soviet politicians. This regulated internal politics. Political parties with far-left ideologies, including the Communist Party (prohibited since the Civil War ended in 1918), were allowed to function openly. In March 1945, a coalition of far-left parties managed to attract nearly a quarter of the votes in the parliamentary election. Attitudes towards Russian culture and literature changed in many ways. Anti-Soviet literature could no longer be published. Conversely, publications of both Soviet classics and new Soviet literature were encouraged. What followed was a short but astonishing efflorescence of translations from Russian in 1945 and 1946, when about 20% of all new literary translations were from that language. A new, openly far-left, publishing house called Kansankulttuuri (People's Culture), commissioned most of these translations. Maksim Gorky's *Mother* (*Mat'*, 1906) was published for the first time in book form in Finnish in 1944 and received substantial attention. Among the authors to be translated in the 1940s were Mikhail Sholokhov, Vasilii Grossman, Nikolai Ostrovskii, Leonid Leonov, Aleksei Tolstoy, Konstantin Simonov, Il'ia Ehrenburg, and Konstantin Paustovskii. Ehrenburg and Paustovskii became very popular among Finnish readers when their respective memoirs came out in the 1960s.

The first anthology of Russian poetry in Finnish, *The Russian Muse* (*Venäjän runotar*), appeared in 1946. Its editors described the history of Russian poetry and poetic language from Pushkin to the Soviet poets in their foreword.[36] This anthology was not fully comprehensive, since it neglected Russian Modernism, but it did include a wide variety of Russian poetry and poets. The editors claimed that Russian poetic metre had returned to traditional forms, as if Modernist experimentation had ended.[37] Some contemporary poets to feature were Aleksandr Tvardovskii and Evgenii Dolmatovskii, whose poems were linked to the 'Winter War'. The editors wrote: "We can say that Tvardovskii, and especially Dolmatovskii, who participated in the Taipale River battles, write poems with a truly human message, where along with the heroism of Soviet soldiers, the tough resistance of Finnish soldiers and the majestic austerity of the war is described".[38]

The radical turn towards interest in Soviet culture and literature was short-lived, and it did not affect literary institutions like publishing houses, the press, or cultural foundations. Interest in classic Russian literature persisted among

35 Kirby, *A Concise History of Finland*, p. 206.

36 Lauri Viljanen and Valentin Kiparsky, 'Johdanto' ['Preface'] in *Venäjän runotar* [*The Russian Muse*], ed. by L. Viljanen and V. Kiparsky (Helsinki: WSOY, 1946), pp. 5–19.

37 Ibid., p. 15.

38 Ibid., p. 16.

Finnish readers, however, and during the 1950s new editions of translations of Russian classics were regularly issued.[39] In 1947, the Soviet Union and Finland signed a treaty of friendship, co-operation, and mutual assistance, which differed from Eastern European mutual assistance treaty models and thus assured relative freedom to Finland, for instance via entry into the Nordic Council and the United Nations. However, the Soviet Union maintained firm control over Finland, occasionally affecting the latter's cultural life as well.

The Thaw and Afterwards

Interest in Soviet literature was enhanced by irregular dramatic changes. 'The Thaw'—the time after Stalin's death, named after Ehrenburg's novel (*Ottepel'*, 1954; published in Finnish as *Suojasää* in 1963 in Ulla-Liisa Heino's translation)—led to looser control over cultural politics and the emergence of new styles in Soviet literature. Vladimir Dudintsev's novel *Not by Bread Alone* (*Ne khlebom edinym*, 1956; *Ei ainoastaan leivästä*, 1957) was a sensation in Finland as well as in other countries but is now almost forgotten. It was translated by Juhani Konkka (1904–70), who also translated Gogol, Dostoevsky, and Pasternak (among others) into Finnish. Another sensation—both in Finland and elsewhere—was the Nobel Prize given to Boris Pasternak, author of *Doctor Zhivago* (*Doktor Zhivago*, 1957), in 1958. In the same year, Juhani Konnka's translation of the novel (*Tohtori Živago*) appeared and became a bestseller. Later, Pasternak's poetry was also translated and published, both in anthologies and as a separate collection. Gorky's selected writings were published in Finnish in four volumes in the 1950s, an honour given to few world writers. Translations of Mikhail Sholokhov's *Quiet Flows the Don* (*Tikhii Don*, 1926–40) and *Virgin Soil Upturned* (*Podniataia tselina*, 1932) were also popular among Finnish readers.

Only a few collections of Russian poetry were published in Finnish between the 1950s and 1970s. An exception was Vladimir Maiakovskii's poetry, translated by the Finnish poet Arvo Turtiainen (1904–80), and now considered a classic example of poetry translation into Finnish. In the 1960s and 1970s, Evgenii Evtushenko's poetry was widely translated and enjoyed by Finnish readers. His fame at that time was almost phenomenal, surpassing most other poets in Finnish translation. Paradoxically, during the late Soviet period, Evtushenko

39 Jarl Hellemann, the head of the publishing house Tammi, writes about the strong traditions of Russian literature in Finland: when Finnish readers are asked about their favourite writers, they mention Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekhov and Gogol, whereas Scandinavian writers have lost the position they acquired at the turn of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth. Jarl Helleman, 'Käännöskirjallisuuden vuosisata' ['Century of Translated Literature'] in *Kirjan rantaviiva* [*The Beachline of Literature*], ed. by Jussi Nuorteva (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 1988), pp. 84–95 (p. 92.)

was a famous and sensational poet because he discussed problematic topics, but his fame dwindled when those topics ceased to be relevant.

Interest in Russian Modernist prose and, later, also in Modernist poetry started in the 1960s. Some works by Andrei Belyi, Isaak Babel, Boris Pil'niak, Iurii Olesha, and Evgenii Zamiatin were translated. Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* (*Master i Margarita*, 1940) was translated as *The Devil Comes to Moscow* (*Saatana saapuu Moskovaan*, 1969). The Finnish title was initially credited to the translator, Ulla-Liisa Heino (1934–2023), but in fact—as she has shown—it was the publisher's idea. Bulgakov's novel has since been reprinted several times and remains the most popular twentieth-century Russian novel in Finland. It has also been staged in numerous Finnish theatres. Not even Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's works have achieved success on the scale of Bulgakov's novel.

Solzhenitsyn began to be translated in the 1960s, a significant process for Finnish translation and publishing policy. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (*Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha*, 1962; *Ivan Denisovitšin päivä*, 1963) was swiftly translated into Finnish by Markku Lahtela (1936–80), immediately after the original text appeared in the Soviet Union. Solzhenitsyn's next works were published outside the Soviet Union. Finnish translations of *Cancer Ward* (*Rakovyi korpus*, 1968; *Syöpäosasto*, 1968) and *The First Circle* (*V kruge pervom*, 1968; *Ensimmäinen piiri*, 1970) were issued in large print runs. Both were translated by Esa Adrian (1939–2007), who specialised in translating Russian Modernism and dissident literature for Finnish readers. They became popular bestsellers, selling tens of thousands of copies. The Soviet Embassy in Finland tried to prohibit the translation and publication of Solzhenitsyn's works but succeeded only in persuading Finnish authorities at the last minute to stop the release of *The Gulag Archipelago* (*Arkhipelag Gulag*, 1973–78; *Vankileirien saaristo*, translated by Esa Adrian) by the Tammi publishing house. Tammi had published all previous Finnish translations of Solzhenitsyn's works. The first volume of *Archipelago* was then published by a small publishing house in Sweden instead (Wahlström & Widstrand in Stockholm), but it could still be bought and read freely in Finland.[40] Solzhenitsyn's works were very popular in the 1960s and 1970s in Finland (and internationally), but interest in them has since faded. However, new editions of his major works have been republished in Finland, most recently *The Gulag Archipelago* in 2012.[41]

Very few works by Russian emigrant and dissident writers were published in Finland in the 1960s and 1970s, and far fewer than in other Western countries, where interest in contemporary Russian literature was largely supported by

40 The fact that although *The Gulag Archipelago* was not published by a Finnish publishing house, the Finnish translation of the book published in Sweden could be freely distributed, read and discussed, demonstrates the Finns' relative freedom and self-determination from Soviet authorities.

41 Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago* [*GULAG: Vankileirien saaristo*], trans. by Esa Adrian (Helsinki: Silberfeldt, 2012).

the writings of dissident and emigrant authors. 'Finlandisation'[42] affected the translation policy of Soviet literature, particularly in the 1970s, when translations of contemporary Soviet literature were published more than ever before. Several Finnish publishing houses joined forces to launch a new publishing project, 'Soviet Literature'; books published in this series had a standardised cover design and logo. Eventually, eighty-four titles were issued over ten years. Four volumes of poetry called *Soviet Lyrics* (*Neuvostolyriikkaa*) were published in this series between 1975 and 1986; they introduced classics of Russian poetry from the beginning of the twentieth century, starting with Symbolists and ending with contemporary poets, most of them appearing for the first time in Finnish. Later the poetry of these authors—Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandel'shtam, Boris Pasternak, and Iosif Brodskii—was published separately, translated by Finnish poets. Dissident or unofficial Russian literature has not been widely published in Finland. Vasilii Grossman's *Life and Fate* (*Zhizn' i sudba*, 1960; translated by the prolific Esa Adrian as *Elämä ja kohtalo* in 1984), depicting the 1930s and the wartime Soviet Union, was much discussed, as was Vladimir Voinovich's *The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin* (*Zhizn' i neobychainye prikliucheniia soldata Ivana Chonkina*, 1969; *Sotamies Ivan Tsonkinin seikkailut*, 1979, translated by Riitta Pyykkö (b. 1953)) and its sequels. Fiction by Nikolai Gogol, Fedor Dostoevsky, Lev Tolstoy, and Anton Chekhov has been published in new translations in recent decades—and this is a continuing trend. Chekhov's correspondence, published in three volumes with detailed commentaries, has attracted much attention from Finnish readers.

After the Soviet Union

During perestroika, many translations of Russian books popular in the Soviet Union appeared, but they attracted few readers in Finland and were quickly forgotten. This cannot be said of translations of prose by the Absurdist writer Daniil Kharms whose stories were first issued in Finnish in 1988 in a collection of short stories entitled *Hazards* (*Sluchai*). This collection has been republished many times, included on school curricula, and staged in many theatres. In the 2000s, more collections of Kharms's work were translated.

Included among authors whose works have been translated into Finnish in recent decades are later avant-garde, dissident, and postmodernist Russian

42 This term was first applied by commentators and politicians outside Finland to warn about certain measures of Soviet control. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance was buried, it has been adopted in Finnish discussions of recent history to assess the extent to which Finns conceive themselves as having practised self-control in their relationship towards Russian interference in Finnish political and cultural life. See Kirby, *A Concise History of Finland*, p. 245, p. 272.

writers such as Evgenii Popov, Vladimir Sorokin, and Viktor Erofeev. Andrei Bitov's *Pushkin House* (*Pushkinskii dom*, 1987; *Puškinin talo*, 1983) and Venedikt Erofeev's *Moscow-Petushki* (*Moskva-Petushki*, 1973; *Moskova-Petuški: runoelma*, 1990)[43] have been treated as classics of contemporary Russian literature; both were translated into Finnish by Esa Adrian. The author (and former head of Finnish PEN) Jukka Mallinen (b. 1950), who participated actively in the cultural and literary exchange between post-Soviet Russia and Finland, made many of the translations of 1990s prose and poetry. However, apart from publications in periodicals, the 1990s witnessed very few translations of Russian literature until the appearance of such best-selling writers as Viktor Pelevin. The translation of his novels into Finnish was obviously motivated by his prior success across Europe. This shows that the market economy has become influential in Russian-Finnish literary relations, which were traditionally governed by bilateral developments.

Two Russian prose writers have proved exceptionally popular among readers in the 2000s. Aleksandra Marinina's detective novels have become extraordinary best-sellers, while Boris Akunin's historical detective fiction has also dominated sales. Both are constant record breakers in the Russian literary market. Meanwhile, it has become obvious that more popular and internationally successful Russian contemporary fiction is now being translated into Finnish. Thus, Russian literature is no longer seen by Finns as consisting solely of psychological realism, or of religiously, philosophically, or intertextually challenging texts. This is reflected in the recognition of the fantasy novel series by Sergei Luk'ianenko and Dmitrii Glukhovskii, for example. Meanwhile, prose by women writers has gradually gained visibility in contemporary Russian fiction. Following the success of Tat'iana Tolstaia's and Liudmila Petrushevskaia's short stories, it is obvious that Liudmila Ulitskaia, Dina Rubina, and Elena Chizhova have acquired many devoted readers in today's Finland. Sergei Dovlatov, whose prose had already become immensely popular in Russia during the 1990s, enjoyed a more recent spike in readers. Two books translated by the poet and scholar Pauli Tapio (b. 1986) in 2012—*The Suitcase* (*Chemodan*, 1986; *Matkalaukku*) and *Ours* (*Nashi*, 1983; *Meikäläiset*)—initiated a series of exceptionally best-selling translations which at the time of writing comprises five titles. The current trend for autofiction, along with the high quality of these translations, may have encouraged this phenomenon.

Conclusion

The recent history of Finnish translations of Russian literature vividly demonstrates that, during the 1990s, the few works translated were most often

43 Also translated into English with the title *Moscow to the End of the Line* by H. William Tjalsma (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994).

chosen according to and as a result of their success in the European book market. This also remained the case in the early 2000s, when the number of translations remained rather small. However, the situation changed rapidly in the 2010s, when translation activity suddenly became much more intense than in the previous decades. This may reflect the fact that Russia and its turbulent political situation were constantly present in newsfeeds, as during the so-called 'winter of demonstrations' of 2012–13 and, even more so, after the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the war in Ukraine in 2014. On the other hand, this was perhaps merely a reflection of a new generation of translators making their debuts in the publishing arena.

For 2015, the Helsinki Book Fair had chosen Russia as its theme country. While this decision was not accepted unanimously in Finnish society, more than thirty contemporary Russophone writers still came to advertise their oeuvres at the Book Fair—legitimately representing the diversity of Russian-language literature both ideologically and aesthetically. This achievement naturally encouraged Finnish publishing companies to have new Russian authors' works translated and thus further boosted translation activity. New names were identified during Book Fair discussions, and Finland soon began to increasingly publish—along with other Nordic countries—new Russian literature. Consequently, Finnish translations of Guzel Iakhina's *Zuleikha* (*Zuleikha otkryvaet glaza*, 2015; *Suleika avaa silmänsä*, 2016, translated by Kirsti Era), Mariia Stepanova's *In Memory of Memory* (*Pamiati pamiati*, 2017; *Muistin Muistolle: Romanssi*, 2020, translated by Mika Pylsy) and Oksana Vasiakina's *The Wound* (*Rana*, 2021; *Haava*, 2023, translated by Riku Toivola) constituted the very first translations of these novels outside Russia. Typically for the cultural periphery, these examples show that individual translators' cultural sensors are still evidently the most important factor influencing the translation of Russian literature in Finland, as was the case at the very beginning of Russian-Finnish translation history in the early nineteenth century, or in the 1920s, for example. At the same time, Russia's escalation of military aggression in Ukraine has initiated many discussions of ethics within Finnish publishing companies, which will most probably lead to a decrease in translation activity in the future.

To return to Casanova's idea of the world republic of letters, we emphasise the importance of examining events on the periphery of any literary space. Translating literature from many different major languages into less widely spoken languages has played a remarkable role in making the periphery aware of the developments in the international literary space. In small literary and linguistic spaces like Finland, translators are not just a minority of benevolent polyglots. They are a choir of masters of many languages and cultures, including their own. In Finland, translations have played a crucial role in the development of Finnish literature. This article has examined just one aspect of literary translation in Finland: that of works from Russia, the country's largest neighbour.