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Editorial information

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 British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies

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President's Report

Brexit and beyond

This is my first post-Brexit editorial and I would be lying if I said 31 January was not a sad day for my family and I. While I did not lose as many rights and opportunities as my British colleagues and students at 11pm Greenwich time, the formal departure of the UK from the European Union comes with significant challenges to my family and the wider EU-citizen community in the country.

The BASEES membership includes a significant number of people from the 27 member states of the European Union who until now had the unrestricted right to live, study and work in the United Kingdom. Sadly these rights have been lost, and despite the government's repeated promises that nothing would change for EU citizens who made the UK their home, all find themselves in the position of having to apply for the right to remain.

Many EU citizens have already applied for 'settled status' under the government's settlement scheme. Ministers never tire of highlighting the very small number of rejections, but they wilfully ignore that over 40% of applicants only receive 'pre-settled status', meaning they have to re-apply to the scheme before their status expiry date five years later. Low-paid and precarious EU workers are disadvantaged in this process set up by the UK government. Academia does not usually come to mind when discussing such issues. Yet the HE sector is characterised by extensive casualisation, low pay, temporary contracts, and 1-2 year-long postdocs, with many academics (especially ECRs) inevitably facing periods of unemployment. The challenges involved in obtaining 'settled status' by proving five years continuous residence are thus very real: there is a risk some people will be caught up in a continuous pre-settled status loop.

I have not personally applied for settled status yet. On the one hand, my decision to delay it was a result of my hope that Brexit might never happen; on the other hand, there is the strange anxiety of what to do if the Home Office app says 'no -



only pre-settled status for you and your family'. Last week, I found myself picking up passport application forms from the local post office for my two sons, who were both born in the UK and have never lived anywhere else. However, because of their date of birth and the time my wife and I came to study and work in the UK, one has the right to a UK passport, while the other one, aged 11, will have to go through a hugely expensive naturalisation process. However easy the settlement scheme and however smart the Home Office app, the process will inevitably leave a large number of people without a British passport, including many children born and raised in the UK who will essentially become alien subjects. Clearly lessons from the Windrush scandal are not being learned.

Someone who has worked tirelessly to raise awareness of these problems and has given a voice to young non-UK EU citizens in the country is BASEES member Alexandra Bulat (UCL SSEES). Her PhD project explores how local contacts shaped attitudes towards EU migrants through a comparison of British, Romanian and Polish residents' views in two English local authorities in the context of Brexit. Herself affected by the upheaval of Brexit, Bulat has become a champion of her generation of EU migrants. She campaigns on EU citizens' rights with the 3million and more recently became a volunteer OISC Immigration Advisor for EU Settlement Scheme with the charity Settled. In this role, she is helping disadvantaged people from the EU migrant community to navigate the scheme and collate the documents to challenge the often incorrectly assigned 'pre-settled status'. I have been following Alexandra's admirable activism mainly through social media over the last few years and I very much look forward to finding out more about her scholarly work at the next BASEES >>

Book Review

Ruth Coates, *Deification in Russian Religious Thought: Between the Revolutions, 1905-1917*. Oxford University Press, 2019. 256 pages. ISBN: 9780198836230. £65.

This monograph considers the reception of the Eastern Christian (Orthodox) doctrine of deification by Russian religious thinkers during the immediate pre-revolutionary period. Ruth Coates defines deification (*obozhenie*) on the book's first page: it means to be saved, to be god-like, while still being human. The following chapter explaining deification in the Greek Patristic era is necessary to understanding the topic and Coates gives a clear exposition of the main themes relating to deification. There follows a chapter about deification in the long nineteenth century touching more broadly on Russian religious thought and literature in this period, which will be of interest to both scholars and students of Russian culture.

The rest of the book is tightly focused on four authors: Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, Nikolai Berdiaev, Sergei Bulgakov and Pavel Florenskii. Within each chapter the number of texts referred to is quite small, which is helpful for a reader less familiar with the period or subject. The authors concerned came from very different backgrounds, having been influenced by (variously) their reading of the Church Fathers in the Philokalia, Western philosophy, the institutional church of their day (with which they all struggled at times), and concurrent literary movements such as Symbolism. As a result, all treated the subject of deification in very different ways. As such this book is a good mirror of Russian thought and literary culture of this period: it also touches on broader themes, including theories of creativity, theocracy and the Russian state, and the consequences of the clash between the Orthodox Church and the secular 'free-thinking' turn of writers at this time.

The book is very well written; the main themes are set out clearly and complex terms coherently explained. The structure is easy to follow, and any confusion on the reader's part will likely stem from the syncretic, eclectic tendencies of the Russian thinkers of this period rather than the author. If a fault can be found, more direct comparisons could have been made in the conclusion (which is rather short) to help bring together the authors and texts discussed. With this study, Coates has undoubtedly made a very important contribution to scholarship on Russian thought, and to our understanding of the interrelationship between Russian thought, literary culture and Orthodox theology in particular.

Elizabeth Harrison



John Moloney Photography: jgmoloney.com

>> conference. Alexandra will present a paper entitled "I'm still in the dark": young European migrants' perspectives on settling in the UK and their political engagement in the context of Brexit' on a panel on East European Migrants in the EU/UK.

The annual conference is approaching fast and we can finally announce a very exciting line-up of keynotes and events. The conference will be opened on Friday, 2 April, with a keynote lecture by Dr Paul Goode (University of Bath). On the same day, the BASEES Women's Forum is sponsoring the evening 'in conversation' keynote: former BASEES President Professor Judith Pallot will discuss 'Women's Activism before and after 1989/1991 in Eastern Central Europe and the FSU' with Russian poet and feminist Olga Lipovskaya and Professor Andrea Peto of the Central European University. Finally, on the main conference day, we are delighted to welcome filmmaker Marianna Yarovskaya, the director of the Oscar shortlisted documentary *Women of the Gulag*. A screening of the film, which tells the compelling and tragic stories of six women who survived the Gulag, will be followed by an audience with Marianna Yarovskaya. The conference will also provide opportunities to reflect critically on issues affecting ethnic and racial minorities in our community and our practice. One of the special events we have organised is a workshop on 'Race, Ethnicity, and Equality in Slavonic and East European Studies' led by Professor Sarah Badcock (University of Nottingham). This workshop will provide an informal space in which colleagues can discuss issues of race, ethnicity and equality in our community and share practical experiences of the drive to 'decolonise the curriculum'. What might it look like to decolonise our curricula and pedagogy in our discipline? What is already being done in classrooms and elsewhere across the university in this respect? It can often be difficult to get a sense of what is happening in other courses and across different departments, and this workshop is intended as an opportunity to make new connections, bounce around

ideas, and share practical tips, with a view to continuing these conversations in our organisation in the future.

It has become a regular feature of my editorial to mention the open letters or petitions I frequently write or share on behalf of BASEES. In the interval between the last newsletter and this one, I have unfortunately had to write several more. In January, I called on BASEES members to sign an open letter by Higher School of Economics students protesting against regressive and punitive changes to internal regulations. The new rules will prohibit students and staff from mentioning their institutional affiliation when discussing political issues or participating in activities deemed 'socially divisive', and will impose clear restrictions on the fundamental freedoms of expression, assembly, and association. I was delighted to see many BASEES members follow this call and we all must hope that the international outcry by the scholarly community will make the HSE leadership reconsider these proposed changes.

That our advocacy can work is highlighted by the concerted action we took together with sister organisations in Germany to protest against an ordinance by the Minister of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, Mikhail Kotiukov, that made regulations for collaborations between Russian and foreign academics significantly more stringent (as reported in the last newsletter). Yesterday, I received the good news that the new Russian Minister of Science and Higher Education, Valery Falkov, has scrapped the order of his predecessor to limit the contact of Russian scholars with foreigners. [See link for further information >>](#)

I would like to think that the action taken by BASEES and the German learned associations played a part in the process that led to a controversial order being rescinded.

Matthias Neumann

ECR Spotlight

The *Newsletter* speaks to Natalia V. Parker, a PhD student working on Russian linguistics and language acquisition at the University of Leeds.



How did you end up doing a PhD?

It's a long story. I did not set out with the idea of doing a PhD. I was living in Somerset and teaching Russian to adults, enjoying helping them discover my mother tongue and looking for ways of making it easier for them to understand how Russian works. Over the years, this search grew into my own independent research which resulted in a new approach to teaching Russian, while my numerous handouts developed into a proper set of teaching materials. I decided to see whether I could make this methodology work for other learners of Russian by testing it within some kind of research project.

The difficulty was that language teaching methodologies for Russian is an extremely under-researched topic in the UK. The Russianists I approached were mainly interested in Russian literature, history, politics, music, rather than language teaching methodologies, and language teaching methodologists were not Russianists: it took me over a year to find an academic who was interested in what I was doing. Originally, I was not even in Russian Studies – I started in Applied Linguistics in the School of English at Sheffield, and am extremely grateful to my supervisors there for seeing the potential of my project. The other difficulty was that, having a teenage daughter and no full time employment, I was not able to fund my project in any shape or form. Nearly a hundred emails, letters and applications later, I received an MA bursary from the British Philological Society, which enabled me to run the first part of my research, teaching Russian pronunciation to complete beginners. The experiment delivered great results and I was asked to develop my methodology further through

a PhD. I am now in my second year of PhD at Leeds with two fantastic supervisors and full funding.

What are the highlights of your career to date?

In addition to my successful MA (I now have an article, based on those findings, under review in SEEJ), receiving a PhD offer in Russian Studies felt like an achievement. Securing Arts and Humanities Research Council funding (through White Rose College of Arts and Humanities) was unbelievable. Every time I present at a conference, I am overwhelmed by the interest that my papers evoke. Although being the only UK presenter at AATSEEL (American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages) in the US was a bit scary, the response was fantastic. The biggest highlight is probably Routledge accepting my publishing proposal for a beginners' textbook, *Russian in Plain English*, which is due to come out in May. The book is really why I started all this, though my research now has gone further. I also feel very fortunate to have met a few people on the way whose support and encouragement has helped make these highlights possible.

Tell us about your current research.

In my PhD, I look at how Russian's complex inflection system is acquired by native English speakers, and how to make language instruction more processable for learners. My study synthesises language pedagogy, Second Language Acquisition and Psycholinguistics, language processing in particular. At the moment, I am preparing for my testing in the next couple

of months and getting excited about what I will find.

What are the challenges facing PhD students at the moment?

For me the biggest challenges happened before I started my PhD. Now, I would say the challenge is distributing my 24 hours between everything I want to do. I constantly find myself juggling writing my PhD (as well as my articles), presenting papers, organising knowledge exchange, proofreading my book, running the BASEES Languages and Linguistics stream, as well as spending time with my daughter and getting some sleep.

What are your thoughts on the future of the field?

As we all know, the situation with foreign languages in the UK does not seem to be improving. Considering my experience looking for a supervisor, I believe that research in language pedagogy needs to be promoted among Russianists in order for language learning to grow and develop in this country. Furthermore, my Knowledge Exchange Project has convinced me that there is a huge gap between existing research and language teaching practitioners. Researchers and teachers need to talk to each other to help our learners benefit from research findings. I am conducting a Grammar Teaching Workshop (Session 5.1) and two small tasters (morning coffee breaks) at the BASEES conference in April and hope to see many of those of you who do not research teaching methodologies but do teach Russian, so that together we can work out better ways of teaching Russian to English speaking learners in the UK.

In memory of Polly Corrigan



BASEES was deeply saddened to learn of the recent death of Polly Corrigan. Polly was a PhD candidate at KCL's Department of War Studies and a member of the King's Intelligence & Security Group (KISG) who specialised in the origins of Stalin's Great Terror in the 1930s. We reprint the following tribute by Polly's mother Jane: "Polly was born in London, the elder of two children, and grew up around Camden Town, attending Haverstock school. Her father, Michael Corrigan, and I both worked as journalists. In 1992, Polly spent a year teaching English in nascent capitalist Moscow, nurturing a lifelong fascination with the outgoing Soviet system. At Liverpool University (1993-96) she collected a 2:1 degree in history and an entourage of admirers who joined her ever-growing group of friends. These included a fellow student, Rhys Morgan (now director of education at the Royal Academy of Engineering), whom Polly married in 2005. She became an intern at the Guardian in 1996 and a writer with the dotcom company Wide Learning in 1998. In 2003 she joined Telegraph Online, becoming its first features editor, and early on inadvertently posting an entire Jeffrey Archer novel before publication, an error that earned only the briefest of reprimands. She stayed in the job for six years, but then her life changed direction with the birth of her children, Martha (in 2006) and Rosie (in 2009). In 2009, she gave up full-time work to devote herself to their care. Three years ago, she embarked on a doctoral thesis at KCL department of war studies. The subject, the systems behind the Great Terror in the USSR in the 1930s, gave her a leading role within an international group of academics reconsidering how a regime promising utopian-style freedom instead delivered terror and tyranny. The day before her death, she told Twitter how much she had "really enjoyed" writing her first journal article ['Political Police Archives in Ukraine and Georgia: A Research Note', *Europe-Asia Studies* 72.1 (2020), pp. 117-131], describing her visits to Kyiv and Georgia to access recently released Soviet archives from the 1930s that informed her thesis. Even at this late stage, she believed it would be the first of many such papers. Polly was opinionated, uncompromising and funny. She combined care, generosity and compassion with intelligence and a capacity for deep, enduring and affirming friendships both within and outside her family.

As well as her husband and children, she is survived by me, and her brother, James." A chapter by Polly, 'Walking the Razor's Edge: Censorship and Literature in the 1920s', also appears in Lara Douds, James Harris & Peter Whitewood (eds), *The Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution: Illiberal Liberation, 1917-41* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

Tribute to Dr Arfon Rees, 1949-2019



BASEES would like to pay tribute to Dr Arfon Rees, who died on Wednesday 27 November 2019. Family, friends and colleagues gathered for his funeral on 17 December. Arfon received his PhD from the Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Birmingham, in 1982. After lecturing at the University of Keele, Arfon moved to the staff at CREES in 1986. From 2000-2009, he was Professor at the European University Institute in Florence. After returning to the University of Birmingham, he moved to the Department of History, where he taught until his retirement in 2018. Arfon was the author or editor of eighteen books and contributed to many other publications. Much of his work in Soviet history focused on the politics and institutions of Stalinism and Soviet industrialization and will be familiar to BASEES members as well as scholars around the world. In recent years Arfon also published on Welsh cultural history and comparative mythology. Arfon will be remembered as a meticulous scholar who contributed a great deal to the broad area of Soviet Studies. He was a supportive and intellectually generous colleague and a kind-hearted friend. **Melanie Ilic (University of Gloucestershire)**

Book donations in Slavonic and East European studies: some guidelines for donors

Offers of donations of printed materials are carefully considered in line with the acceptance policy of each individual library. Most libraries purchase their books from specific vendors as the only way to reliably match supply to demand. In addition, modern collection development strategy focuses on the acquisition and promotion of high quality electronic resources to support teaching and research, which requires a managed decommitment from some print materials. Six major libraries already receive all material published in the UK through legal deposit: The British Library, National Library of Scotland, Bodleian Library, Cambridge University Library, Trinity College Dublin, National Library of Wales. It is normal practice to ask a donor to

provide a detailed list of the books being offered before any decision could be made. Each item should have a title, author or editor, publication place and date, and ISBN/ISSN (if available) as a minimum.

In general, we are unlikely to accept:

- Duplicates
- Print editions of items we hold electronically
- Back runs of journals and random issues of periodicals
- Items which are not in good condition
- Archives in inaccessible formats

If you would like to offer your books to a specific library, please consult their website or contact them for full information on their current donation policy. As an alternative, you may approach charities and social enterprises looking for books for redistribution or recycling.

There are other ways to support libraries. Most institutions would welcome financial (tax-deductible) donations, which can be ear-marked for specific purposes or collections. [See link for more information >>](#) **Angelina Gibson, on behalf of the Council for Slavonic & East European Library & Information Services (COSEELIS)**

UTREES launches links to full thesis texts

UTREES, the bibliographical database for university theses in Russian and East European studies, is now providing links to the full text of many of the theses listed. Under an agreement with the British Library, UTREES users can access entries on the BL's massive ETHOS database, which aims to record UK doctoral theses in all subjects. Many ETHOS entries include an abstract of the thesis and the means to access its full text.

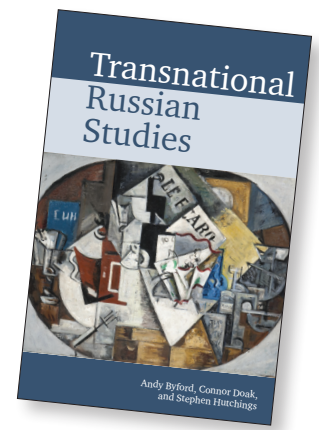
A high proportion of the UK doctoral theses listed on UTREES have ETHOS records, and all such entries since the 2008 update (nearly 2,300) now carry a link to ETHOS. Links for earlier theses will be added during 2020. [For more details, see the 'Access to Theses' section on the UTREES website >>](#)

The 2019 update of UTREES, just completed, has added a further 199 entries, from 63 institutions in the UK and the Irish Republic, and the database now holds particulars of 5,837 theses. The variety of topics treated remains as wide as ever: they include the Czech puppeteer Jan Švankmajer; cybercrime in Azerbaijan; the perpetrators of the Ukrainian famine; and the VKhUTEMAS art and technical school in 1920s Moscow.

UTREES is supported by the Modern Humanities Research Association (MHRA) and is free to use at the website shown above. Additions and corrections are welcome, and should be sent to the Editor at gpmwalker@btinternet.com. **Gregory Walker (editor, UTREES)**

Transnationalizing Russian Studies: A New Intervention

Many might regret that the transnational wave which swept the humanities at the beginning of the 21st century subsided long before Russian Studies opted to ride it. Yet recent events, including those mired in the residues of the Soviet Union, a failed transnational project par excellence, indicate that such regret may be premature.



An abiding problem faced by 'transnationalists' was the need to navigate between the tacit essentialism of methodological nationalism and the elusive abstractions of 'global flows'. This tension is echoed in the ambiguity of the prefix 'trans-' which designates movement both across and beyond nations. The fact that such tension was not resolved by globalization's exponential pace (to which the apparently anachronistic nation remains resistant) means that efforts to refresh transnational approaches to disciplines traditionally grounded in the nation state are timely; think only of the paradox that populism's recent, alarming rise relies both on global communication networks facilitated by digital technologies which know no national boundaries, and on the resonance of various retrograde nationalisms.

Such is the context for *Transnational Russian Studies*, a new volume featuring contributions from 20 leading scholars who represent a significant cross-section of our discipline. It arose at the intersection of two major AHRC initiatives in Modern Languages, the 'Translating Cultures' (TC) and 'Open World' (OWRI) schemes, demonstrating Russian Studies' presence at the heart of new thinking in Modern Languages. The book includes a co-authored introduction, available via [Open Access](#) and offering an extended reflection on the implications of our discipline's encounter with transnationalism. What that encounter does not prescribe, the co-editors insist, is the application of a general transnational theory to all things 'Russian'. Rather, they seek to stimulate an interrogation of how the distinctive history of nation-making, empire-building, and diasporization that has moulded our field's object of study also shapes how Russian Studies is 'done'. The key consequence is that Russian Studies must forge its own responses to such questions, using its unique resources to describe what 'the transnational' might look like from a 'Russian' vantage point and recognizing that the 'object' we engage with is also a subject.

The approach taken in *Transnational Russian Studies* is that of an epistemic project – an interrogation of the framing or boundary-work involved in constructions of 'Russia' and 'Russian culture' which are seen as domains of

knowledge production. For this reason, the book eschews narrow definitions of the Russian nation, since 'nation' is itself an epistemic frame, directing the study of Russia down particular lines. This applies, too, to concepts such as 'empire', a competing epistemic frame with its own way of governing how Russia should be studied and known. Such frames carry the imaginaries that position Russian culture in a particular geo-historical time-space, an embodied network of subcommunities, a society marked by assumed patterns of self-reproduction; a specific set of symbolic codes (especially language); and an evolving canon of cultural artefacts and producers. As knowledge-producing professionals, Russian Studies scholars must construct Russia and Russian culture as frames both for their own professional community and for those outside it. They are simultaneously confronted with the continual construction of these frames by intellectuals and specialists from other disciplines, and by lay individuals, including those who might claim Russian culture as 'theirs' and those who might be particularly keen to Other it (positively or negatively).

Translated into practical terms, we are bound, therefore, to adopt multiple methodological variants on the transnational paradigm. Thus, some contributors work comparatively, juxtaposing the Russian with the non-Russian. Others operate cross-culturally, tracing movement across Russian and non-Russian space-time configurations, both within and beyond a broadly defined post/imperial space. Others still apply what might be termed a transcultural approach, testing universal theories out on Russian cases.

The book comprises four parts. The first examines how the multi-ethnic space once claimed by the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union can be explored as a geocultural frame within which a variety of national, imperial, and postcolonial entanglements are enacted as part of the region's ongoing cultural politics. The second part foregrounds language's crucial role in circumscribing culture, and especially literature, in national terms, while simultaneously serving as both the means of and the obstacle to transnational, interlingual, and crosscultural communication. Part Three focuses on the life and cultural

transpositions of things 'Russian' in the global arena. The final section discusses Russia's positioning in the contemporary globalized world, exploring how this world has transformed Russia and how it is transformed in turn. Russia is understood throughout as a multinational society that perpetually redefines Russianness in reaction to the wider world.

Individual chapters are authored by specialists in history, literature and cinema (imperial, Soviet and post-Soviet), translation, opera, theatre, the digital world into which the new, post-Soviet Russia was born and socio-linguistics as applied to the language and identity practices of diaspora Russians. Several chapters demonstrate how the Russian language can work through and beyond its associations with nation and empire in order to detach itself from them and reassert a post-imperial unifying function. There are, thus, lessons here for the way languages are taught, suggesting first that the separation of language acquisition and skills from the study of literary, cultural, and historical 'content' is suspect and false, and secondly that the teaching of modern languages, sociolinguistics, ethnolinguistics, and critical discourse analysis should go hand in hand. This points towards new interdisciplinary allegiances, and towards the renewal of the traditional alliance between Modern Languages and Area Studies.

Although grounded, by epistemological design, in empirically concrete, historically and linguistically shaped socio-cultural and symbolic worlds associated with the epistemic frame of 'Russia', the volume, by 'transnationalizing' the latter, prompts a more general reflection on how meaning is forged between intersubjectively connected communities, across time-space, and in and through 'language' in the broadest of senses. Thus, while aimed primarily at students and researchers in Russian Studies, this volume will be highly relevant to all Modern Linguists, and to anyone else who employs transnational paradigms within the broader humanities.

Stephen Hutchings (University of Manchester); Connor Doak (University of Bristol); Andy Byford (University of Durham).