D. G. Shatalov (Oxford, UK) Catriona Kelly, translator – an interview

Catriona Kelly is Professor of Russian at the University of Oxford. She was born and brought up in London, and studied Russian at Oxford and the University of Voronezh. After holding various research fellowships, she taught for three years at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, before taking up her present post in 1996. Her translations have appeared in journals in the UK and in two anthologies edited by Professor Kelly: *An anthology of Russian women's writing, 1777-1992* (Oxford, 1994) and *Utopias: Russian modernist texts 1905-1940* (London, 1999). She also translated *The Third Truth* by Leonid Borodin (London, 1989), *The humble cemetery* by Sergei Kaledin (London, 1990), poems by Olga Sedakova (in *The Silk of Time*, ed. Valentina Polukhina, Keele, 1994 and in *Poems and Elegies*, Lewisburg, 2003); by Elena Shvarts (in *Paradise*, ed. Michael Molnar, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 1993); by Olesia Nikolaeva, Olga Sedakova, and Bella Akhmadulina (in *Modern Poets in Translation* no. 20, 2002, ed. Valentina Polukhina and Daniel Weissbort); by Sasha Chorny, Sofiia Pregel, Anna Prismanova, Raisa Blok, prose by Vera Inber (in *An Anthology of Russian Jewish Literature*, ed. Maxim D. Shrayer, Armonk, NY, 2007); poems by Tatiana Voltskaia (in *Cicada*, ed. Emily Lygo, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 2006); by Mariia Stepanova and Maksim Amelin (in *The Ties of Blood: Russian Literature from the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Oliver Ready and Emily Lygo).

Dmitry Shatalov (Oxford, UK)

AN INTERVIEW WITH CATRIONA KELLY

Ключевые слова: *русский язык, перевод, русская литература, поэзия*

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Catriona Kelly is Professor of Russian at the University of Oxford. She was born and brought up in London, and studied Russian at Oxford and the University of Voronezh. After holding various research fellowships, she taught for three years at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, before taking up her present post in 1996. Her translations have appeared in journals in the UK and in two anthologies edited by Professor Kelly: AN ANTHOLOGY OF RUSSIAN WOMEN'S WRITING, 1777-1992 (Oxford, 1994) and UTOPIAS: RUSSIAN MODERNIST TEXTS 1905-1940 (London, 1999). She also translated THE THIRD TRUTH by Leonid Borodin (London, 1989), THE HUMBLE CEMETERY by Sergei Kaledin (London, 1990), poems by Olga Sedakova (in THE SILK OF TIME, ed. Valentina Polukhina, Keele, 1994, and in POEMS AND ELEGIES, Lewisburg, 2003); by Elena Shvarts (in PARADISE, ed. Michael Molnar, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 1993); by Olesia Nikolaeva, Olga Sedakova, and Bella Akhmadulina (in MODERN POETS IN TRANSLATION no. 20, 2002, eds. Valentina Polukhina and Daniel Weissbort); by Sasha Chorny, Sofiia Pregel, Anna Prismanova, Raisa Blok, prose by Vera Inber (in AN ANTHOLOGY OF RUSSIAN JEWISH LITERATURE, ed. Maxim D. Shrayer, Armonk, NY, 2007); poems by Tatiana Voltskaia (in CICADA, ed. Emily Lygo, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 2006); by Maria Stepanova and Maksim Amelin (in THE TIES OF BLOOD: RUSSIAN LITERATURE FROM THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, eds. Oliver Ready and Emily Lygo).

– It would be very interesting to know whether there was or is someone in your family connected with languages, or literature, or teaching, or something in that area.

– Professionally speaking, my parents were both musicians. My mother had studied in Paris. She was there for two years, coming back to Britain occasionally. And my father was the generation where you had to do army service. That was abolished in 1960, but he was born in 1929. He did it in the late forties, as far as I remember. He was posted

to Germany. And he also, as a music student, spent six weeks in Italy, in Siena, doing a music course during the summer. Of the two, my mother spoke French quite well. I mean, it got rusty as she got older, but she spoke and read French. Although she wasn't the world's greatest reader. She wasn't taught to read till she was seven. She didn't go to school till she was ten or eleven. It was a sort of old-fashioned, I mean, like members of Russian *дворянство*... It wasn't considered necessary to send her to a primary school. My parents were both interested in foreign languages – of course, musicians are used to singing in the original language. And they had quite a lot of friends who weren't British. It made a difference also being brought up in London. There weren't as many nationalities there as there are now, but there were still quite a lot. At our primary school, there were many people from non-British backgrounds. I realize now that quite a lot of my friends are sort of marginal in terms of the main culture. I have friends who are half-French. So that made a difference. And then my grandmother read German. And was very pro-German until the Second World War. We had books in foreign languages at home, we had foreign holidays from when I was about four – not regularly, but they started again when I was twelve. We went mainly to Austria at that stage, to the Tirol. To a lake called Achensee. So my German was actually quite a lot better than my Russian till I spent a year in Voronezh. I mean I had six months in Vienna when I was between school and university, partly on a language course. It wasn't that easy to make friends in Vienna, and I worked for a British family, but nonetheless I was in *лингвистическая среда*, so it made a difference. And of course, I went to the theatre a lot, we went to concerts, we saw a lot of architecture, so I saturated myself in the atmosphere. I've always thought that learning languages was important. At the same time, I think that learning and teaching languages is a kind of instrument of contact with the culture. I mean I'm not somebody who could get very excited about the study of grammar for its own sake.

– What translations did you like in your childhood?

– If you are a child, probably, any literature you read is going to sound part of your culture. *Для детского читателя нет ни эллина, ни иудея*, to use St Paul's expression. I read lots of writers in my childhood that I now know to have been foreigners. I just didn't know that

they were translations at the time, or didn't necessarily know. There were some children's stories by Meindert de Jong. One of them was called THE WHEEL ON THE SCHOOL. The wheel is there for a stork. The books had rather wonderful line drawings. On the front cover, there was a picture of a wheel with a stork on it. I found it extremely inviting, but the book was almost unreadable. So I've come to the conclusion that it wasn't probably a very good translation. I haven't checked these translations since. I think that going back to the books you loved as a child is sometimes an awful experience since you suddenly realize that the style is actually dreadful. You had this impression that it was a completely involving world and the style was totally dynamic, and to go back and discover that it was flat and clumsy is a personal tragedy. So I haven't checked. But some of the other things that I read, for instance, FINN FAMILY MOOMINTROLL – it did say that the author was Finnish. But Finnish meant much the same to me as Moomintroll; that was just another place, a fantasy land and another country; there was no difference between them.

– *Why did you decide to learn Russian?*

– When I was eight, my family didn't have television, so we spent a lot of time listening to the radio. And there was a twenty-week adaptation for radio of WAR AND PEACE. A very good dramatization, lots of sound effects, very good actor

(we couldn't pronounce the names), Nikolay, Andrey, etc. We were in love with Prince Andrey. I tried to read WAR AND PEACE at that stage. I don't think I read it from cover to cover at all, but anyway, there was a sense of relation with that. Then I got to secondary school, and it turned out that they taught Russian; and there was the daughter of some friends of my parents, who was learning it, and she was very enthusiastic. I told my class teacher that I'd like to learn Russian, and she said: 'Oh well, you have to realize that Mrs Knupffer is very strict, and she only likes very clever people.' So it then became a self-proving statement to be allowed to do it. It was the best advertisement for any kind of reasonably ambitious child in a competitive school. It was the best thing that could have been said. I then at the age of fourteen started learning it, so I had four years with a wonderful teacher, who came from the first wave of the Russian emigration. Her married name

was Knupffer, but her maiden name was Yakovleva. Her father was a general in the White Army. She had been educated in Serbia, where she had studied in *Институт для благородных девиц в изгнании*. So there were different ways in which I got interested in Russian. I became interested, first of all, in this very childish way; school teaching helped there. Then, of course, I spent a year in Voronezh, and there is no doubt that it was an enormous transformation. I mean, I knew very little about Soviet culture before I got there, apart from bad things, because of having had had an émigré teacher. She didn't refer to the Soviet Union as anything else but *большевики*. I remember she had this *анекдот* about the Soviet Union, about this person gone to Hell, and he'd been shown around, had a wonderful time. He had a lovely meal, saw these dancing girls, so he understood it was a wonderful place to live and signed up for Hell. And when he arrived, two devils grabbed him immediately and started roasting him in a frying pan. So he asked: 'What about these dancing girls?' And they said: '*Вы были в отделе пропаганды*.'[1]

– *What was your first translation?*

– Apart from those that I did for pleasure, there were two stages. At one stage, of course, you translate things as part of the educational system. But we also had a kind of reading group. We had a translation workshop, which was part of the graduate seminar. The graduate seminar at that stage was run by graduates. Every so often, maybe once a term, we would have a sort of collective analysis and translation session of some particular poem or text. I remember we did Zabolotsky and Artem Vesely. It was that sort of, if you like, amateur, in the best sense, engagement with translation. And we criticized each other's work, which was very helpful. I'd certainly recommend that people do that. But I also had a commissioned translation. Most of the translations of prose that get published in Britain are commissioned. It's very rare that publishers would pick up something that somebody's just sent in. Anyway, Harry Willetts, who translated, for example, THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO when it first came out in English and knew an awful lot about how to translate, had liked my translation papers when I did my finals exams, so he recommended me to Harvill, who are known

1 'You were in the department of propaganda.'

for Russian translations. They had a manuscript lying around by a Russian émigré writer, who turned out to be extremely difficult and arrogant. He'd rung me a couple of times and told me I must come over to Paris and meet him. And I was very shy, 22 years old. The idea of going to Paris, not clear where I was going to stay, sitting with a Russian writer I've never met and talking about the manuscript was something that I found daunting. So I thought: 'Well, I'll do the translation first, produce this text, and then discuss it with him afterwards.' I realize now that it was a very bad mistake, psychologically. What I should have done is gone and met him at the earliest possible stage. I think, with any Russian writer, they would want that. So it's not that it was unreasonable on his part, it was just cultural miscommunication. I interpreted it as an unwarranted interference in my personal life. I did this translation. I must say that the book itself is pretty trashy. It has passages of what is known in English as purple prose. So it was a problem of taste and how to make this into anything that wouldn't sound totally awful in English. So as I translated, I edited because if you translated literally, you just could not say that in English – it would be so kitschy! This writer was absolutely furious. There were other things, apart from the editing. There was a scene at the market place, and I translated *товарка* as *the other old bag*. *Тётка* would be one way of translating *an old bag* into Russian. If you just translated *товарка* as *her mate*, it's not clear that that person is a woman; if you say *her friend*, that's not right because it's not colloquial enough. So I put *the other old bag*, and he said: 'При чём здесь сумка?!' That was the level of his English. Occasionally he was right because I translated *норвежки* as *Nordic skis*. And, of course, they were skates. But fine. I mean, any reasonable person might have said: 'Well, no, I had in mind skates.' It's not a bad mistake. The two things were in a sports kit; they were both in a *чулан*, they didn't have to do anything with the plot; it was just a detail. Fine. One needs to get these things right. I mean, these words were unlisted in the dictionaries, and there was no Internet, so the only way I could get it was to ask somebody. What I should have done is just formulated a long list of questions and asked him the things that I didn't know. Again, it was a mistake of tactics on my part. This person was so difficult to work with that the publishers cancelled the contract and told him to get lost. It was a very unpleasant experience and, fortunately, nothing like that has ever happened again.

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– Do you communicate with the authors that you translate?

– I certainly would do now. Of course, it depends whether you have direct access to the writer or not. Certainly, if there are things I am not sure about, I ask a native speaker, although one has to be careful about who the native speaker is. Say, with Mikhail Leonovich Gasparov, it was an ideal situation because he was an expert on translation. He knew Tsvetaeva extremely well; I was consulting him about Tsvetaeva. And then I consulted a friend not long ago – when I did some poems – because of the things, it struck me, that might have some ethnographical meaning I didn't know about. But I think it is better to consult actual writers, assuming that they are accessible, that they don't regard this as a sort of sign that indicates you are completely incompetent.

– You have translated many Russian poets. It is often said by native speakers of Russian that modern British poets and translators of poetry do not use rhyme. Is it true?

– Some of them do. Rhyme is much more widespread than it is thought. This is a free verse tradition; that's absolutely right. What you might call ordinary poets are very inclined to use free verse in the way that ordinary poets in Russia would naturally use rhyme. So there is a difference there. But my own feeling is that some of the Russian poetry I'm drawn towards is highly musical, and some of that's got to come out in the translation. I mean, even if it is a question simply of word order or cadency. Even if you can't reproduce the rhyme, you want to have something. It doesn't have to reproduce necessarily that rhythm, but it should be rhythmic, and it should have a repeated rhythm, I think.

– Do you think that if you preserve rhyme completely, the translation will sound strange in English?

– It can do. I remember Harry Willetts, who was a very experienced translator, saying that the worst translations he'd seen were ones trying to maintain the exact metre and rhyme. It's too big a freight. The other obvious point to make is that metres and rhyme schemes have a semantic freighting as well. The obvious one is the link of trochaic verse with the theme of travelling (Mikhail Leonovich Gasparov made this point). And there isn't a link of that trochaic metre with travel verse, as far as I know, in English.

– Why did you translate Urusova and Khodasevich in rhyme?

– I think, not just them. For instance, Kuzmin, Klyuev, and some other writers. It's a kind of nature of the text. I tend to work as much as possible with at least approximate rhyme. There are pros of prose translations. There is a very good, I think, prose translation by Ted Hughes of Pushkin's "ПРОРОК", which manages to get the sound world of the original right – there is a very gritty sound to it – and produces very impressive ways of realizing the metaphors. I suppose, my yardstick would be this: how much a poem appears to depend on rhyme and metre for its effect.

– There is a point of view that only poets can translate poets. Do you think it is true?

– It depends what you call a poet. I can't imagine somebody wanting to translate poetry if they didn't like poetry and didn't have any idea of how to do it. Certainly, in Britain there are far more poets than there are readers of poetry. Actually, it is quite important for translators to be readers of poetry also. It doesn't mean they have to be well up with every single contemporary poet, but they have to know enough about contemporary poetry in English to know what the possible ways of handling verse forms are, how line breaks are used... We had Ronald Hingley's funeral recently, and on the service sheet was a recent translation of Pasternak, which I thought was very fine. And as far as I know Ron wasn't a poet. I mean, I don't think he wrote poetry at any time of his life. So that would be a case of somebody who was a reader of poetry, very interested in poetry, loved poetry, but didn't necessarily write. So maybe it's about knowing about poetry. Probably, the same question is 'Do you have to be a native speaker in order to translate adequately?' You probably don't even have to be a native speaker of the language you are translating into. I know some good translations which were done by people who are not native speakers of English.

– Is it enough to be able to speak foreign languages in order to translate?

– No. For a start, you don't need to be able to speak foreign languages in order to be able to translate them. The obvious case point would be classical languages. The other consideration is that there are, of course, people who speak two languages extremely well and are absolutely hopeless translators.

– They can even be bilinguals.

– Yes. Actually, bilinguals are sometimes some of the worst translators. One of the problems with bilingual translators is that they almost never look anything up because they "know everything". And it's a disaster when they are relying on the knowledge of a rather contaminated heritage speaker, Russian, for example. *Бабушка*, particularly. (And *бабушка* is a nice cozy lady who has a degree in Pedagogical Sciences from a provincial University, and they are translating Tolstoy – it's just awful). It could be the other way round. It could happen that someone

ended up living in Russia, someone with a British mother. I mean, the answer there is that the best translators of modern languages can speak it when they do go there. And it's important. A Russian friend of mine, who speaks good English and has now lived for quite a long time in Britain, said he always used to find it comical when there were Russian translators who knew theoretically English very well, but they didn't know that Leicester Square was not pronounced [Ləsestə] Square. Also, unless you know all those realia, the landscape of the book you are translating, it's very difficult. I certainly have become much better at translating since I have been regularly visiting and have got some idea of all that.

– In the Soviet Union, some translators did not know the languages they translated from. They used cribs (подстрочники). Do you think that you might use a crib or you wouldn't ever do it?

– I think I wouldn't. The reason I like translation is because it is a challenge. Using somebody else's crib would be difficult. It even strikes me at some level as rather dishonest, almost... That's not quite true, because I've done prosaic translations for people. I did for the poet Sarah Maguire, I did for a whole group of translators for the Tsvetaeva jubilee in 1992. I didn't feel that my work was being poached or anything like that. I almost deliberately chose things that I didn't feel proprietary about myself. I wouldn't want to translate a poem by Tsvetaeva that I thought I could do a publishable, successful translation of myself. No, I wouldn't want to do that. I wouldn't want to try to render Japanese literature on the basis of a supposedly word for word translation because I know nothing about the linguistic universe of Japanese apart from the occasional stereotypical things that one hears second hand.

– Could you tell me about your studies in Voronezh?

– Yes...

– What year was it?

– We arrived in September 1980 and left at the beginning of July 1981. And I had a break: I went back home for 3 weeks in February. I'd

had enough of winter by that stage, and I was beginning to get a little bit claustrophobic. I think a lot of my students go to the Russian provinces and have an absolutely wonderful time, very often a much better time than people who go to Moscow or St Petersburg. Quite a lot has changed. What's changed is that people in the provinces are traditionally hospitable in the way that Petersburgers and Moscovites no longer have time to be. They are under too much pressure. The pressure they are under is, as much as anything else, just the sheer size of the place and the length of time it takes to travel around, especially if you've got several jobs because it takes so much of the day – 3-4 hours a day just getting from place to place. *Им не до того, чтобы пригласить кого-то к себе домой*.

– *Was it your first visit to Russia?*

– No, I went to Leningrad in 1979 on a course. In Voronezh, it was easier to meet people than in Leningrad with no contacts. The first time I ever went to Russia I had no contacts and didn't meet anybody. The second time I had lots of contacts because British friends who'd been in Voronezh gave me addresses and telephone numbers, and I rang people up, and then I also had contacts in Moscow and Leningrad. So I just rang up and introduced myself, and at that stage, particularly in Moscow and Leningrad, the people who were prepared to have contact with foreigners at all, who weren't scared to do it, were extremely welcoming, and you would immediately be invited round, and would be *свой человек*. What to say about Voronezh? One of the things that were striking was how little interest people had in anywhere that wasn't Voronezh at that stage. I know that it's not true of your generation; there were people of whom it wasn't true then. But if you imagine being in a closed town, and a closed town to which the only foreigners who come are students. That's one of the things. And also not being able to travel yourself. I've heard this said by many people since, not from Voronezh, but other people, sort of saying: 'Well, I didn't think there was any point in learning English and German because we were never going to use those. Now here I am in Germany, and I can't say a word.'

– *Was that course in Voronezh arranged by your University?*

– No, by the British Council. All exchanges at that period were higher level. They started sending students, I think, in the early 1960s, and it was all negotiated agreements. They took normally 15 students a year. And often the entire 15 went to Voronezh. My year, I think, 4 people went to Moscow, and the rest of us went to Voronezh.

– What did you study in Voronezh apart from the Russian language?

– Literature. Well, you had a *научная тема*, which was self-nominated.

– What did you choose as your topic?

– I chose to do Soviet literature. What I chose to do was Pasternak, Tsvetaeva, and Mandelshtam.

I have to say that the main help in Voronezh was linguistic. We had very good language teaching. It was regimented, but the commitment of the teachers was really amazing. What they told us about grammar was in many cases very useful. Certainly, the discrimination between finer shades of meaning in the perfective and imperfective – I wouldn't have known anything about that if we hadn't had that discussion there.

– At Oxford, you teach translation, among other things. What is the most important thing that you tell your students about translation?

– Well, I told them a number of things. There are quite basic things such as 'Make dead sure you understand the grammar.' And one obvious thing to tell the students whose native language is English is 'Never start translating a sentence until you've understood what the word order in English would be.' In other words, 'Don't ever start translating a sentence assuming that the first noun you see in the sentence in Russian is the subject because it probably isn't.' So there are elementary grammar things like that. And 'Remember that you are translating out of a language that is differently ordered.' Then 'Be sure that you have an accurate understanding of it even if you decide to depart from it. Don't start to improvise too quickly.' What else? 'Be prepared to depart from the text. Try translating back into Russian and seeing what you come up with. If you can adequately translate into

Russian the English expression which you've used, then you probably shouldn't be using that English translation because there is a variation there, and in the original language it is there for a reason.'

– Do you think that classical authors should be retranslated? Obviously, Russians read Dostoevsky without any adaptations. Is there any point in the retranslation of classical literature?

– Well, the argument which is often made is that people are very fortunate to read Shakespeare in translation since they have a translation of Shakespeare into a much easier to understand language. In other words, there are many people who could do with a translation of Shakespeare into English. It's literally been suggested that he should be adapted for British schools, which, I think, would be catastrophic: people would never see the original. It's much better to have commentaries. It's definitely the case that as fashions in style change, so do expectations of translations. I think it's positive to have more, no problem. I got a bit irritated with the Pevear and Volokhonsky translation of ANNA KARENINA because it is not as accurate as they claimed it to be. There is this immense thing about how they've done things in ways that people have never done before. So they have this pioneering status. I think this led to this inflated reputation. Fine, they've done a new translation; it's good to have a new translation, but it's not one that renders redundant any previous translations and any interpretations that might be in the future. That has been argued primarily by native speakers of Russian, who feel that because there was this upfront participation. All earlier translations that were any good, I mean, Aylmer Maude's, for example, and Constance Garnett's, used native speaker informants. It's just that they were not credited on the front page. So the process of the Pevear and Volokhonsky translation, as far as I understand, was rather similar. I don't think Pevear knows Russian.

– Is the life of a translation shorter than the life of the original?

– Probably, unless it's done by some important writer of the same period, or even of a later period, but particularly the same. Urquhart's translations of Rabelais are an example of something which is now of an extraordinary historical interest because he is so close to the au-

thor, and it is written in the English of that period. One of the things that annoy me about people translating Russian writers is that, I think, translators should specialize in one particular writer. I mean, they are different. You can't imagine somebody who would do Dickens and Jane Austen into Russian. Or if they did, you would think: 'What the hell is this?' But, at the same time, people are doing Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and all the same person. It's just crazy. Constance Garnett is pretty good for Turgenev. She is OK for some of Tolstoy, particularly, FAMILY HAPPINESS. I would now feel anxious about her translations of Dostoevsky because those flatten down too much.

– Do you believe that some literary works are untranslatable?

– Certainly, there are works which are untranslatable by me. Either because I wouldn't want to or because I wouldn't be the right person to do them. In a sense, I almost always start off translating a poem by thinking I'll never do this. It's difficult for me to remember cases where I have abandoned things, but I think there have been. Certainly, with Tsevetaeva's lyric poetry, it's very difficult to do. I did a rhymed translation of Tsvetaeva's poem *Orfei* twenty years ago, and I was quite pleased with myself that I managed to capture the sound world. I found it a few days ago, picked up this translation, and thought: 'What is this?' And then I remembered it was by me. It was a very strange sensation. It read as if it had been written in the early twentieth century. That's the problem, in a sense, of translating some poems. OK, it's a translation; anybody can understand what it meant; it exists as a poem, but it is not good. Is it untranslatable or is that translatable? Maybe in 200 years time some people will think that translation is good, and they will think that this is a wonderful early twentieth century English.

– Which of your translations do you like most? Are you ever satisfied with your translations?

– I'm not inclined to be satisfied... I think that my translation of Mayakovsky's СЕРГЕЮ ЕСЕНИНУ worked well.

– Are there any differences, in your opinion, between Russian and British approaches to translation?

– It's quite difficult to comment because one of the things that's clearly happened in the years since the collapse of Soviet power is what you might call a dehegemonization of translation. Translation is no longer half as prestigious as it used to be. There's a lot of *подёнщина*. It's done by people who really don't know the language properly they are translating out of, doing it far too quickly. The translation of one of my academic texts was absolutely terrible because the Russian of it was dreadful. There were things like '*святилище советского святого*' and '*такой тип типа…*' Obviously, I've read translations by major poets, such as Annensky, Bryusov, Balmont, Pasternak. I've also read some of the secondary literature on translation by Mikhail Leonovich Gasparov, by Efim Etkind – the "МАСТЕРА ПОЭТИЧЕСКОГО ПЕРЕВОДА" series. And what's clear is that there was a stage of what you might call classical Soviet translation, when translation was prestigious, when it had a very strong sense of mission. It was very different from what it was down here because it was centrally organized, because people were lifetime translators and did only that, and because they had surpassing confidence in their own authority as translators. There were equivalents of people like Rita Rait, because there was Barbara Bray who translated Samuel Beckett. But that was unusual: she was living in Paris, and she was a 'friend' of Samuel Beckett. In other words, that's an exceptional situation. There are some prominent British translators also, but you couldn't say that they are part of a school in the sense that they train other younger translators or people are imitating what they do, that it creates a homogeneous approach to translation.

– Are you thinking about translating something in the future?

– I would like to translate "МОСКВА – ПЕТУШКИ" because I think that the actual translations are awful. But I've come to the conclusion that, if not untranslatable, it's very difficult. That's actually an example of something I've started translating, and I thought: 'I'll never do this.' Maybe I've just got to spend more time on it…

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