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Vorwort

The work of Russian women translators in the eighteenth century is important to Russian literary and social history for two reasons. Firstly, it represents a particular aspect of the cultural transfer which played a major role in social, intellectual, and literary life. Peter I's programme for modernising Russia by opening it to the West gave unprecedented importance to the dissemination of knowledge and ideas through the printing of books, the learning and use of foreign languages, and the translation of Western texts. Upper-class Russians became increasingly bilingual, and foreign texts became familiar in the original, in translation, and as the basis of Russian imitations. Translations familiarised Russians with the science, thought, arts, morals, and lifestyle of other parts of Europe, both past and present, compensating for the long period of cultural separation:

The discovery of French seventeenth-century literature (Boileau, Racine, Corneille, Moliere) coincided in time with active reading of Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. Puffendorf and Beccaria, Leibniz and Locke, Bacon and Saint-Martin, Shakespeare, Addison, Milton, Fenelon, Prevost, Cervantes, Le Sage, Ramsay and Tom Moore, Scarron and Marivaux were to be found everywhere, in Petersburg, Moscow, or the country study of the educated nobleman, on one and the same table.

Translations supplied the language with lexis in areas in which it was underdeveloped, such as science and technology, and enriched it with expressions modelled on foreign languages. At the time when modern Russian literature was in its infancy, the translation and imitation of Western writing were catalysts for its development, bringing productive genres such as the elegy, satire, and neo-classical tragedy, and models of refined style. Most of this was the work of male translators. But the first translation to be published by a Russian woman, Ekaterina Dashkova, appeared in print at the beginning of Catherine II's reign in 1763 and from then onwards upper-class women contributed to the translation project, and translated not only in 'women's' subject areas but also more widely.

Secondly, their translation work is a fact of literary history and of women's social history, and forms part of the larger picture of noblewomen's lives and cultural activities both in the cities and in the provinces, which has until recently largely been excluded from general histories of eighteenth-century Russia. This is the period when women first took part in public life, and one form of participation lay in artistic activities. The process began slowly and in the highest circles. Women initially became active in Russian social and cultural life at court. In the late seventeenth century the female relatives of Russian rulers who had hitherto led their lives at court but secluded from it,

began to emerge. In the early eighteenth century the spouses of courtiers were required by Peter I to comply with the new social norms he prescribed and to adopt Western behaviour and dress. Before long, nobles realised that knowledge of French or German could open the way to the higher ranks of the state service and to success in society, and they encouraged their wives and daughters to acquire Western social accomplishments such as dancing, singing, and refined conversation in foreign languages. Nevertheless, elite women's social roles continued to be subordinate ones, and they were not expected to be active in public pursuits.

After the throne and the court, the chief arenas for women's participation in public life in the eighteenth century were the stage and print. Large opportunities were offered by the spectacular growth of theatre and book and journal publishing over the century. In the reign of Catherine II a public sphere emerged in the literary world. Individuals defined themselves in their letters, and explored their inner lives in the literature they read and wrote, and a reading public emerged, sustained by a postal system, periodicals, literary circles, and theatres, as well as the expansion of independent presses. The development of a new European style of theatre in Russia was part of the post-Petrine modernising process; and the stage brought large numbers of women to public attention. Although upper-class women performed on stage in amateur theatre, most performers in public theatres were from the lower social classes. The preferred public forum for aristocrats and noblewomen was print. The first text published by a woman was probably an elegy, an original composition by Ekaterina Sumarokova which appeared in 1759, but over the next fifty years far more women published translations than original writing. Their work provides an insight into the way in which women began to combine traditional domestic roles as wives, mothers, and daughters with new public roles as published translators, which required participation in literary institutions. Investigation of their translations helps to illuminate the social context of literary history: how Russian women engaged with print culture, presented themselves to the public, and began the tradition of published women's writing. Because their work brought them into literary institutions for the first time, it allows us some insight into the workings of authority and patronage, and we can see how women adopted strategies of conforming to prevailing norms or subversion of them.

Thirdly, we can identify a contribution by women to the spread of enlightenment in Russia. The rapid development of Russian intellectual and literary culture in the second half of the eighteenth century was the work of a relatively small number of people. While the nobility as a whole and a few non-nobles gradually accustomed themselves to reading, the production of original literary material was largely confined to the members of restricted and close-knit circles, usually in the two capitals, who shared their knowledge of and interest in new European trends and supported each other's work. The role of women in intellectual life and in the production of literary texts was necessarily limited. In 1772 when N. I. Novikov published his survey of Russian literature, he could find only 317 writers in all Russia's past and present, and of these only nine were women. The most prominent, Empress Catherine II and Ekaterina Dashkova, President of the Academy of Sciences and Director of the Russian Academy, were familiar with classic Enlightenment texts and personally acquainted with great minds of the day, but most Russians, particularly women, encountered these ideas, if they encountered them at all, at second or third hand, and came to them long after they had become assimilated into Russian intellectual life. But between such extraordinary women as Catherine and Dashkova on the one hand and, on the other, the average noblewoman of the period there were women who participated in the culture of the printed word, were in touch with propagators of Enlightenment values, and made a contribution to the dissemination of these values in the form of translations.

Eighteenth-century Russian women translators have not yet been studied as a group, and while there has been a little research on eighteenth-century women's writing, there is as yet no detailed

discussion of the contribution made by translators. Until recently they have received rather little attention even as individuals. In their own day observations about their work were few and fragmentary. In his survey Novikov commented on the work of three women translators: Anna Vel'iasheva-Volyntsova, Mar'ia Khrapovitskaia (later Mar'ia Sushkova), and Mar'ia Zubova. Editors of journals which printed translations by women sometimes appended footnotes to their work, drawing attention to the sex of the translator as a novelty. Although book reviews were not common in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a few translations by women were discussed in the press. By 1826 S. V. Russov was able to list thirty-four women who had translated into Russian, with reasonably accurate if incomplete references to their published work. Some translators were included in M. N. Makarov's series of articles 'Materialy dlia istorii russkikh zhenshchin-avtorov' ('Material for a History of Russian Women Writers', 1830), in which, he assembled the information about the pioneers of women's writing which he and the readers of his *Damskii zhurnal* {Ladies' Journal} could provide. But, like most writing by Russian women at this period, except that of women such as Catherine II who were also known for other reasons, publications by women translators were soon forgotten.

The first to return to their work was D. L. Mordovtsev, whose study of the eighteenth-century predecessors of the nineteenth-century emancipated woman included two short chapters: 'The Literary Daughters of Lomonosov and Sumarokov' on Anna Vel'iasheva-Volyntsova, Zubova, Sushkova, and Elizaveta Kheraskova, and 'The First Russian Women Translators' on Ekaterina Menshikova, Mar'ia Orlova, Varvara Vasil'evna Golitsyna and Anna and Ekaterina Volkonskaia. A ground-breaking contribution was N. N. Golitsyn's listing of translations in his bibliography of women's writing published in 1889. Even though the list is incomplete and suffers from understandable inaccuracies - it does not identify source texts and does not always distinguish translations from original writing - it provided data which show that there were substantial numbers of translations by women in the eighteenth century and that they far exceeded women's original compositions.

Apart from scattered references, little more was written about eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century women translators until recent times. Modern research on the literary activity of Russian women has concentrated on original writing to the virtual exclusion of translation, and on the last two centuries rather than on the eighteenth. The rather brief list of work on eighteenth-century translators includes short accounts of a few of the translators with some information on family background, biography, publications, sources, and the reception of the translations. A major contribution has been the reprinting of some translations by women in recent anthologies of eighteenth-century women's writing. Two histories of literary translation have appeared recently. Maurice Friedberg's *Literary Translation in Russia: a Cultural History* (1997) deals with 'the ideological dimension' but does not take a gendered approach; the history by R. Iu. Danilevskii, N. D. Kochetkova, M. Iu. Koreneva, Iu. D. Levin, S. I. Nikolaev, V. D. Rak, and P. R. Zaborov, which, as the frequency of its appearances in my footnotes indicates, is the indispensable guide to translation at this period, is aware of the work of some women translators, though it does not view them as a separate group.

Biographical information about most translators remains sparse, if not non-existent. The status of translators is traditionally low, and they attract much less attention than their texts; this applies particularly to Russian eighteenth-century women translators. Because most were neither well-known nor from illustrious families they were not documented in their lifetimes, nor have their personal papers survived. Even such simple facts as dates of birth, marriage, and death, or maiden and married names are often unknown.

Gender and translation has become an area for research only relatively recently. An important contribution is Sherry Simon's monograph in which she sets out a number of questions about the interplay of gender and translation. What are the processes through which translation maintains and activates gender constructs, how have the sites of translation theory been implicitly gendered, and how can this theory be transformed? How have gender roles been played out in the practices of translation, the social and historical roles through which women have understood and enacted their writing activities? In what ways have women interpreted their role as translators? In respect of the question concerning gender roles, which is the one I propose to pursue, Simon advances two models of translation by women in the early phases of women's activity in this field. On the one hand it can be 'a weak and degraded form of authorship', in which 'women have been confined to a subordinate writing role' and 'were "only" translators when they might have been enjoying the privileges of full authorship, "bearers of the word" rather than creators'. On the other it can be 'a strong form of expression for women - allowing them to enter the world of letters, to promote political causes and to engage in stimulating writing relationships'. She contrasts women who 'understood that the transmission of significant literary texts was an essential, not an accessory, cultural task', with those for whom translation remained 'a totally marginal form of activity, "adding" nothing to the intellectual circles into which it was introduced'. She notes:

... translation was the means through which women, beginning in the European Middle Ages, particularly, were able to gain access to the world of letters. Long excluded from the privileges of authorship, women turned to translation as a permissible form of public expression. Translation continued to serve as a kind of writer's apprenticeship for women into the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (George Eliot was first known as the "translatress of Strauss", before she was known as a novelist.) In addition, translation was an important part of the social movements in which women participated, such as the fight against slavery.

This assertion is based on research on the work of early English translators which has attracted more attention than the work of their Russian counterparts. This research deals with a period in which English women's writing and social status was not dissimilar from that of eighteenth-century Russian women, and shows that some Englishwomen made their way into the world of letters as translators, and that it was religion which allowed them to do so.

Louise Schleiner argues that Englishwomen's first forms of writing were paratexts such as prefaces, dedicatory poems, patronage epistles, and translations. Margaret Hannay's collection of essays has shown that in sixteenth-century England women were expected to be silent in public, but a few exceptionally well-educated women were able to break this convention on the grounds of demonstrating their religious devotion. They were thus able to begin translating, selecting appropriate religious works, and on occasion they inserted statements of their own into the translations. More rarely, women began writing, again devotional texts. Some also began acting as patrons, encouraging religious education and publications. Translation of religious texts was therefore one of the earliest and most important ways for Tudor Englishwomen to begin participating in public life.

However, Tina Krontiris' work suggests that in sixteenth-century England religion was not the sole factor enabling women to begin writing. At the court of Elizabeth I the role of lady-in-waiting required participation in polite conversation and the ability to participate in public display, both of which were preparation for writing. Domestic service in educated families could also provide instruction in languages and access to the capital for young provincial women. Translation was popular amongst those women who had the required skills because it was perceived as more passive

and less masculine than original composition. It also constituted a way for women wanting to undertake literary work to protect themselves against accusations of inappropriate content. Venturing into publication could be justified by dedicating a work to a man or a respectable woman. Only a small number of women claimed their right to enter the literary field without such manoeuvres.

Douglas Robinson argues further that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries English women translators justified their participation in public life through translation by imitating the rhetorics of patronage, courtly love, and morality used by men to express submission to social superiors or the will of God:

... these women's rhetorical strategies operated on and with precisely the various rhetorics of submission that had hitherto confined them to the domestic sphere, traditionally the only realm in which a woman's voice should be used and could be heard; ... these women came to voice by working subversively within established rhetorics of submission, working to transform those rhetorics into surreptitiously empowering channels of expression that nevertheless continued to reassure the conservative male guardians of the public sphere with stylised gestures of obeisance.

The translator Margaret Tyler, for example, argued that if women could read the texts dedicated to them as patrons, they could also translate them, or write equivalent texts of their own. Women began to argue that they could legitimately speak in public, because they spoke with the voice of virtue. Their claim to authoritative speech was based on their submission to divine ordinance, and to the social code which defined them as the moral educators of the family.

The conclusion to be drawn from this research is that translation was a form of writing accessible to sixteenth-century Englishwomen because it accorded with their traditional roles, being subordinate, instrumental, and humble. It was a form of participation in the public sphere, and was tolerated by the male establishment because the women translators were almost as silent and invisible as those who did not participate. Even so, it afforded limited opportunity for the translator to subvert conventions, make herself a little more visible, and to introduce some self-expression into her work.

The fruitfulness and potential of the work of researchers such as Margaret Hannay and Tina Krontiris has been emphasised by Luise von Flotow, who suggests the following further lines of enquiry:

How has gender affected the work of translators in the past? Have they resisted or undermined the dominant norms and orthodoxies of the societies they lived in, and if so, how did they do this? Does their work provide any non-canonical views of the cultural 'truths' and assumptions propagated by dominant cultural systems? How and why has their work survived over time, and what has been its influence?

My first aim here is to continue the task of recovering forgotten Russian women writers with an updated list of translations, literary and practical, published by Russian women between 1763 and 1825. My list owes a large debt to the enormous scholarship and painstaking bibliographical research of Iu. D. Levin and particularly V. D. Rak on the sources and intermediary texts of translations into Russian. Even so, the list is necessarily incomplete. In the eighteenth century translations and original writing were not systematically differentiated: V. K. Tred'iakovskii, poet, translator, and the first theoretician of translation in Russia, declared in 1730 that 'the translator differs from the creative writer only in name'.¹⁸ It was common for translations to be published

without indication of the source text. The source language was quite often specified - the text was described as 'from the French', for example - but even this was not invariably done, so that translations were often confused with original compositions. Translations were also frequently made not from the original text but from an intermediary which the translator had to hand, or found more tractable; particularly if the source text was in one of the less-known languages, translation was via French. All this means that it is not always possible to establish which texts were translated, or what their sources were.

In spite of the fact that nearly all are rarities, I have been able to see most of the translations. I have paid particular attention to the gender-specifics of genre and subject matter and looked at paratextual detail such as signatures, dedications, and prefaces, which provide evidence of the presence women constructed for themselves in the translated text. Here the voices of the translators themselves are to be heard, sometimes in chorus with their advisors, and there is sometimes evidence about the translator in the form of statements about what she wanted to do or be seen to do, and about her readers. Where logistically possible, I have also compared translated texts with source texts, to examine translation strategies.

In my commentary on the catalogue I seek to address von Flotow's questions and to provide for the early stages of published translations by Russian women an equivalent of the picture provided by Krontiris and others for English writing. I begin by describing the environment in which eighteenth-century women translators worked. I provide profiles of the translation activities of three of the most remarkable translators, and I address some fundamental questions relating to the translators as a group. Who were the women who translated in the eighteenth century? What can we establish about their education, social status, age, their patrons and collaborators, and the places in which they worked? What can be discovered about women translators' reasons for choosing their source texts, the languages from which they worked, the subject matter they tackled, and their favoured genres and authors? What readerships did they address? Which were their preferred translation strategies? How did they get their work into print? And how was their work received? Having addressed these factual questions I then aim to draw some conclusions about what functions women's translations performed and the significance of their work.