

thoughts in a manner better suited to a broader audience of Tolstoyans (and non-Tolstoyans)' is belied by passages of daunting opacity and verbosity, of which this is only one example:

To assert skepticism dogmatically is an elementary inconcinnity that explodes the whole edifice of Tolstoy's novel if the force of his descriptions is to embody a skepticism arising from the notion that experience either cannot be reduced to rational knowledge or cannot be known at all but only invented, thus collapsing the traditional notions of truth and falsity of a narrative as well. (p. 43)

The specialist reader, Tolstoyan, non-Tolstoyan, philosopher or historian, will recognise in *The Overcoming of History in 'War and Peace'* an original and suggestive contribution to Tolstoy scholarship; regrettably, the broader audience to whom it is addressed, and the undergraduates who might benefit most from its insights are all too likely to feel themselves overcome.

John McNair

The University of Queensland

Jack Franke, *The Big Silver Book of Russian Verbs*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 2005, iv + 667 pp.

The publication of yet another guide to the forms of the Russian verb in the guise of *The Big Silver Book of Russian Verbs* attests to the durability of demand for grammatical aids in this area. Those who have studied (or taught) Russian in the past two decades will doubtless be familiar with the standard text by L. Pirogova, *Conjugation of Russian Verbs: Reference Book for Foreigners*, first published in the 1960s and regularly reissued in subsequent decades, and possibly with more advanced guides, such as I.K. Sazonova's *Russkii glagol i ego prichastnye formy* (1989). In recent years Issa Zauber's *750 Russian verbs and their uses* (1997) has served as a supplement to such aids by providing a listing of verbs in sentences illustrating their most common usage. The book under review seeks to cover both these discrete goals in one volume. First and foremost it consists of an alphabetic listing of verbal pairs with a comprehensive description of each partner: conjugated forms, past and compound future (where appropriate), imperative and participial and verbal adverbial forms. An 'innovation' is the inclusion of an entry under the heading

of the subjunctive listing the verb in the four past tense forms followed by the subjunctive particle.

The introductory chapter, entitled 'Russian tense profiles', acquaints the reader with the approach to systematization used in the book. Understandably the compiler has striven for simplicity and has developed a version of Roman Jakobson's one-stem system of Russian verbal conjugation, reducing the original eleven stems to six and classifying the remaining five as irregular. Two sets of formulae are provided for extrapolating the conjugated forms from the stems. Each of the six types is then illustrated by basic variants of the type which, given that the Russian verb system is a difficult and complex one, do not always accord with the basic rules of formation. For instance the stems of Type 4 verbs (ending in -ovat' and -evat') are *trebova-* and *voeva-* however this stem is not applicable for the present tense and so a note is required when covering this conjugation. The rest of the chapter provides brief notes on the method of formation of participles, verbal adverbs and the subjunctive as well as covering the particularities of reflexive verbs and verbs of motion.

Below the morphological forms, the bottom third of each page is given over to sentences illustrating the main contexts in which the verb is used. As a general rule this section is useful in that it illustrates the various forms (present, past, future tenses, imperfective and perfective aspect) with occasional additional rubrics such as idioms, proverbs, sayings. All sentences are accompanied by an English translation. In my view this section could benefit from a comprehensive revision. That this volume is directed at the American college student is evidenced by the vocabulary which reveals mainly non-Russian realia as source, for instance, a reference to *politsiia* rather than *militsiia*, *politseiskie* rather than *militsionery* in the section for the verb *arestovat'* 'to arrest' (p.2). The translations are framed in American English (eg p. 145 'Yeah, he is plenty obnoxious') and allusions to American life (Monterey, California, FBI) are as common as ones to Russia or the former Soviet Union (Shevchenko, Kiev, Pushkin, Azov Sea).

There are a number of inconsistencies in the approach to translation which could be misleading for the beginner. The entry for the verb *meshat'* only lists the meaning 'to hinder' but then provides illustrations of the meaning 'to mix'. Some of the translations could have done with the editorial hand of a native speaker and sentences such as 'Newlyweds (no article) put the rings on each other's finger' and 'The teacher is concertedly teaching English to the

kids' could have been rendered more elegantly and in the latter case more cogently. The reflexive version of a verb is regularly listed in the same entry as the non-reflexive form, which in numerous instances leads to confusion in the attribution of meaning. This is sometimes avoided by omitting any uses of the reflexive form, as in *brat'sia* (p. 12) but in the case of *dogovarivat'* (p. 92) there is no illustration of the non-reflexive form. A more rigorous approach is required here.

So, in summary, on the positive side we have a useful handbook of 550 Russian verbs in all their forms, but, on the negative side, a simplified system of stem allocation which is less transparent than the compiler would lead us to believe and is effectively undermined by the complexities of even commonly occurring verbs. The sentences illustrating usage seem to be haphazard in selection and need to be differentiated according to meaning. Reflexive verbs should be illustrated separately from the non-reflexive forms where there is a semantic difference. All in all, this is an aid which promises more than it delivers.

Lyndall Morgan
The University of Queensland

Peter A. Chew, *A Computational Phonology of Russian*, Dissertation.com, Parkland FL, 2003, 426 pp, US \$29.95, ISBN: 1-58112-178-4.

A Computational Phonology of Russian, Peter Chew's D. Phil. dissertation from the University of Oxford, is an attempt to synthesise three areas of Russian phonology which have been for the most part treated separately, namely syllable structure, morphology and stress assignment. While morphology and stress have to some extent been treated together in morphemic theories of Russian stress such as those of Garde and Zaliznjak, syllable structure has for the most part been sidelined both in general (generative) and Russian linguistics. Chew's goals for this book are bold: '[I]t will cover a number of phonological phenomena (stress assignment, syllabification, vowel-zero alternations, word-final devoicing, voicing assimilation, vowel reduction and consonant-vowel interdependencies) within a single constrained grammar.' The approach is Chomskyan, based on phrase structure rules, with a context-free framework (rather than context-sensitive) deemed adequate for the task in