

subscribe to the concept of a multipolar world in which Russia can be expected to play a substantial part – rather than a world in thrall to the one remaining superpower, the ‘ravenous wolf’ of his recent address. Regional hegemony has been and in all likelihood will continue to be a major goal as well. Though something of a commonplace (and, one suspects, a convenient stylistic device for reviewers desperate to find a proper closing statement), in this case it holds true: *Russia as a Great Power* is indispensable reading for anyone wishing to understand Russia’s role as a great global power player. Time spent reading the fourteen essays that constitute the core of this book will indeed be time well spent.

Susanne Hillman
University of San Diego California

Pamela Davidson, *Vyacheslav Ivanov and C.M. Bowra: A Correspondence from Two Corners on Humanism*, Birmingham: Centre for Russian and East European Studies, 2006 (Birmingham Slavonic Monographs 36). 132 pp. ISBN 07044-2570X. £15.00

The starting point for this intriguing volume is the correspondence between the Russian symbolist poet and classical scholar Viacheslav Ivanov and the Oxford classicist, literary critic and Professor of Poetry Maurice Bowra that took place in the years 1946 to 1948. The association between the two men began in 1941, when Bowra discovered some volumes of Ivanov’s early poetry in the London Library; he later included his own translations of three poems in the anthology *A Book of Russian Verse*, which he published in 1943. Direct personal contact was initiated in 1946, when Ivanov, encouraged by the Oxford Professor of Russian, Sergei Konovalov, contacted Bowra with the aim of enlisting his support for the publication of a new volume of Ivanov’s verse. In this first approach, Ivanov sent Bowra a selection of offprints of some of his recent articles published in German in areas calculated to appeal to Bowra’s own interests – on humanism and religion, Gogol and Aristophanes, and *The Lay of Igor’s Campaign* – together with his German translations of poems by Baratynskii and Tiutchev on the death of Goethe. He accompanied these offprints with an inscription in Latin distichs, again designed both to flatter Bowra and to link the two writers in a shared tradition of humanistic

scholarship. Bowra responded in Latin prose, promising to pursue the publication of Ivanov's poems, and the two men continued to exchange compliments, books, translations and original poems in Greek until not long before Ivanov's death in 1949. Bowra visited Ivanov in Rome accompanied by Isaiah Berlin in September 1947 and again in August 1948. Ivanov's final volume of poetry, *Svet vechernii (Evening Light)*, finally appeared in Oxford, with Bowra's introduction, in 1962.

Davidson's commentary on the Ivanov-Bowra correspondence, which she has carefully reconstructed from Bowra's papers held at Wadham College, Oxford, and from Ivanov's archive in Rome, includes eighty pages of introductory material in which she meticulously examines all aspects of the broad context in which it was produced. She thus provides a useful summary of Ivanov's absorption in the humanist tradition from his early classical studies in Berlin under Otto Hirschfeld and Theodor Mommsen, and traces the development in his criticism, translation and original writing from a focus on 'pagan humanism' to a more mystical vision of the classical heritage fully integrated with his conception of the Russian national ideal. She provides a parallel account of Bowra's intellectual career, noting his early exposure to Russian culture during a visit to St Petersburg in 1916, and his energetic pursuit of interests not only in classical studies, but in the field of European literature more broadly. Close attention is given to Bowra's early translations from Ivanov, which are seen as a successful manifestation of his theory of verse translation, based on faithful reproduction of the meaning and metre of the original, notwithstanding some apparent deficiencies in his understanding of the Russian texts. Full accounts are provided of the two meetings in Rome and Bowra's subsequent promotion of Ivanov's work. Davidson emphasises, however, that Bowra did not share Ivanov's fundamentally religious view of culture, and sees their correspondence as an instructive dialogue, similar in some ways to the exchange of letters on the cultural tradition which Ivanov and his friend Mikhail Gershenzon had published in 1921 as *Perepiska iz dvukh uglov (A Correspondence from Two Corners)*.

The encounter between Bowra and Ivanov is perhaps a fairly minor episode in the history of European letters, but it has a high symbolic value in that it represents the regeneration of the humanistic tradition in the aftermath of war: the persistence both of a broad, shared European culture after decades of totalitarianism, and the survival of Russian poetry and particularly the

traditions of mystical symbolism in spite of attempts by the Soviet authorities to suppress it. Davidson's elegant book brings this inspiring moment in intellectual history vividly to life.

David N. Wells
Curtin University of Technology

Stephen Lovell and Birgit Menzel, (eds), *Reading for Entertainment in Contemporary Russia: Post-Soviet Popular Literature in Historical Perspective*, Munchen, Verlag Otto Sagner, 2005, 202 pp.

The redoubtable Stephen Lovell has done it again. Following the publication of the critically acclaimed monographs *The Russian Reading Revolution: Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras* (2000) and *Summerfolk: A History of the Dacha, 1710-2000* (2003), as well as two coedited collections of articles, he has returned to the material which he covered in Chapter 6 (Reading in Post-Soviet Russia) of the first title. The book under review fleshes out the general premises of that survey in the form of introductory theoretical overviews by the two editors followed by five genre-specific articles, four by leading Russian scholars, the fifth by the German academic, Birgit Menzel. The editors have viewed this collaboration as an opportunity 'to put before an Anglophone audience some of the most interesting recent Russian scholarship on popular fiction, its publishers and its audiences' (p. 8). And they are to be congratulated on having selected contributors who have been able to explore the theoretical gap between western and Russian traditions and provide well-argued and comprehensive coverage of the main aspects of Russian popular literary culture. Although each contributor has followed his or her own approach (for Boris Dubin, this is predominantly sociological, while Mariia Koreneva takes a more narrowly literary view) each article roughly adheres to a tripartite division: historical antecedents, current situation, and points of contact and divergence with the Western counterpart. This collection constitutes a timely contribution to a research area, which, as the editors note, 'has not made too many inroads into Russian studies' (p. 7).

Stephen Lovell sets the scene with an introductory note and two chapters: the first on the evolution of popular genres in Russia over the past two centuries and the second on how Russian literary formulas can be classified