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Around *Sonja*: On the First Russian Translation

VICTOR FET

The first Russian translation of *Wonderland* was published anonymously in 1879 as *Sonja v tsarstvie diva* (*Sonja in a Kingdom of Wonder*, hereinafter referred to as *Sonja*).¹ Deep Victorian mysteries surround it. Its translator remains unknown—but a hint from Lewis Carroll himself leads one to Russian aristocrats, patrons of the arts, and famous writers. Its readership is undocumented, but the faces of children who most likely first read this book are still well known in Russia today, having been painted by the most famous nineteenth-century Russian artists. Further, as one looks carefully at the text itself, one finds it remarkably interesting, even by today's standards.

As mentioned, Lewis Carroll was not acknowledged as the author of *Sonja*. The book reproduced only sixteen of Tenniel's illustrations and received very negative reviews. (The four known surviving reviews are reprinted in the Addendum.) The book apparently was so thoroughly forgotten that the next time it was mentioned in Russia was in the late 1960s. *Sonja* is considerably abridged and heavily "domesticated," that is, all English names and context markers were removed, and all characters were "Russified." This is discussed in the 2013 facsimile edition of *Sonja*, published simultaneously by the LCSNA as a limited-distribution hardback, and by Evertype (Éire) as a paperback.² It features commentaries by Fan Parker and Nina Demurova.^{3, 4} This pioneering practice of "domestication" was also used in later Russian translations—of which Nabokov's *Anya v Strane chudes* (*Anya in Wonderland*, 1923) is the best known.

There are only two known surviving copies of *Sonja*.⁵ One survived, unnoticed, in the Saltykov-Shchedrin Library in St. Petersburg, Russia. August A. Imholtz, Jr. managed to obtain its microfilm, and a scanned file is now available online. The second—the only known copy outside of Russia—surfaced in 1958 at Sotheby's. It went to the Alfred Berol Carroll collection, now at New York University's Fales Library. Its title page was reproduced in 1995 by Nina Demurova.⁶ (The Fales copy was the source for the 2013 reprinting.) NYU has a digitized version of it. There was also a third copy in the Russian State (formerly Lenin) Library in Moscow that was discarded or sto-

len in 1972, though a microfilm survives. *Sonja* has not been reprinted in Russia, but the text is now available online (in modern spelling).

At least four reviews of *Sonja* appeared in Russian periodicals between 1879 and 1882.^{7, 8}

These reviews are decidedly negative and even indignant. One of the reviewers, M. V. Sobolev, a children's literature expert of that time, opined that "the morality is overexaggerated, and . . . *Sonja*'s adventures are hardly interesting."⁹ None of the reviewers recognized that the book was a translation, nor did they identify it as Carroll's *Alice*! This demonstrates just how unfamiliar the Russians were with Carroll at that time.

In this article I use the spelling "Sonja" to be consistent with the 2013 reprinting, although a more common transliteration of *Соня* is *Sonya* or *Sonia*. This name, a diminutive of Sofia, also means "a sleepyhead" in Russian (from *son*, "a dream") and was clearly chosen to indicate Alice's dream (unlike Nabokov's *Anya*, which has no second meaning). "Sonja" also means "dormouse"; this noun in Russian has a feminine gender, and therefore the Dormouse is usually a female (but in *Sonja*, it was replaced by a male, *Mishen'ka-Surok*, "Mishenka the Marmot").

Warren Weaver, who studied Carroll's correspondence with his publisher, Macmillan, wrote in his book *Alice in Many Tongues* (p. 47): "On March 31, 1871, occurs a Dodgson letter of special interest: 'Unless it should happen that I have already given the order, will you please send a French and a German *Alice* to Miss Timiriasef—care of Rev. H. S. Thompson, English Church, St. Petersburg. She is the lady who, I believe, is going to translate *Alice* into Russian.'"¹⁰ Cohen and Gandolfo reprinted the same letter (p. 90) but with the spelling "Timiriaseff," and the sentence ending ". . . is going to translate *Alice* into Russian for me."¹¹ This letter by Carroll, in fact, is the earliest documented evidence that *Wonderland* was known to anyone in Russia. The very first mention in print I could find of *Alice* books (both *Wonderland* and *TTLG*) in Russia was in 1883, in a translation of an 1881 essay by British children's writer Anna Jane Buckland.¹²

Neither Rev. Thompson nor Miss Timiriasef were mentioned in Carroll's diaries or his *Russian Journal*,

the 1867 travelogue of his continental journey.¹³ Discussing the copy of *Sonja* sold at Sotheby's in 1958, Weaver made a connection with Miss Timiriasef: "Can it be that she is the translator of the 1879 edition?" The Russian scholar Dmitrii Urnov mused:

So who was [the translator]? Possibly, Olga Ivanovna Timiryazeva, a first cousin of the famous scientist K. A. Timiryazev. Her brother left memoirs where he tells about his family that was friendly with Pushkin, about him and his sister reading as children in major European languages including English, while their readings were selected by [the famous poet Vasily] Zhukovsky himself. Indeed, *Sonja v tsarstve diva* falls within the tradition of the Russian or translated literary fairy tale that was created for us by Pushkin and Zhukovsky.¹⁴

Urnov's suggestion, first made in 1975, became the source of further attribution, usually with a question mark. The suggestion, however, was based exclusively on Carroll's letter quoted by Weaver, which then became known in Russia. Demurova mentions that Weaver sent her a copy of his 1964 book after her translations of both *Alice* books were published (1967).¹⁵ No further inquiry, to my knowledge, has been made into the identity of the putative translator.

The "Timiriasef" family name is well known in Russia due to the famous biologist Kliment Arkadyevich Timiryazev (1843–1920), a scion of the old aristocracy, who after 1917 supported the Bolshevik regime. Information about his cousin Olga Ivanovna Timiryazeva (1841–1897) is scarce. Her brother Fëdor (1832–1897) was a governor of Saratov in 1880–1881, and published a memoir to which Urnov refers.¹⁶ During her youth in Moscow, Olga belonged to the circle of the famous polymath Vladimir Odoevsky, who contributed much to the early Russian fantasy literature in the tradition of E. T. A. Hoffmann. In 1866, Olga Timiryazeva was appointed a lady-in-waiting (*freilina*) to the Empress Maria Alexandrovna (1824–1880), the consort of Alexander II, so from 1866 she lived in St. Petersburg, which matches Dodgson's letter of 1871. She was still listed as a *freilina* (i.e., she remained unmarried) at the coronation of Nicholas II in 1896.

So far I have found no evidence that Olga Timiryazeva ever published any literary work. However, I was able to locate another "Miss Timiriasef" who also lived at the same time in St. Petersburg, and developed into a well-known translator. She was Kliment's niece, Ekaterina Ivanovna Timiryazeva (1848–1921), better known under her married surname, Boratynskaya.¹⁷ In February 1871, she married Lev Andreevich Boratynsky (1849–1907), from 1890 the Vice Governor of Moscow, but their marriage did not last. In 1897–1898,

we see Ekaterina Ivanovna living in a rented apartment full of books, giving lessons to eight-year-old Boris Pasternak (1890–1960). The great Russian poet affectionately remembered her as his first teacher.¹⁸

Unlike Olga (who was her father's first cousin), Ekaterina Boratynskaya became an accomplished author and translator from English and French, including children's and art literature. Many of her translations were signed only by the initials "E.B." She left memoirs about the famous religious philosopher Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900);¹⁹ she was a friend of Lev (Leo) Tolstoy and contributed translations for his publishing house, Posrednik ("The Mediator") beginning in 1891. The chief editor of Posrednik remembered Ekaterina Boratynskaya as one of the most active contributors.²⁰ She translated and retold an incredibly diverse array of English, American, and French literature, including *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Longfellow's "Evangeline," stories of Ernest Thompson Seton, *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell, *The Lamplighter* by Maria S. Cummins, George Eliot's *Adam Bede* and *Silas Marner*, *Timothy's Quest* by Kate Douglas Wiggin, *Captain January* by Laura E. Richards, *Cosette* (a fragment from Hugo's *Les Misérables*), and ~~Charles Darwin's *The Voyage of the Beagle* (edited by her uncle Kliment)~~. On Tolstoy's suggestion, she translated Alice Bunker Stockham's *Creative Life: A Special Letter to Young Girls* (1893), an early text on women's health. It is quite possible that the Macmillan books in 1871 were requested for the young Ekaterina Timiryazeva rather than for Olga.

Note that Carroll asked specifically for French and German, but not English, texts of *Wonderland* (both the first translations, just published by Macmillan in 1869) to be sent to a "Miss Timiriasef." The request (which can be dated 1870) meant that she wanted to read *Alice* in more familiar languages; the educated Russians usually had good French and German, but English was much less common.

At the same time, it was spoken by the Timiryazev family branch in St. Petersburg, which had unusually close historical ties with England. Ekaterina's grandmother (and Kliment's mother) was Baroness Adelaida Klementyevna Timiryazeva (née de Bode), who considered herself an Englishwoman. Adelaida's grandmother, Mary Kinneresley of Staffordshire, married a French officer, Baron de Bode; they settled in Alsace but after the French Revolution fled to Russia. Ekaterina Boratynskaya wrote that she lived with Adelaida since the age of ten (i.e., from 1858), and that their home environment was rather Protestant than Russian Orthodox.²¹ It is likely that they had connections to the English expatriate community.

This might explain why in his 1871 letter, Carroll asked Macmillan to send *Wonderland* to "Miss Timiriasef" c/o "Rev. H. S. Thompson, English Church,

St. Petersburg.”^{22, 23} We assume that the Timiryazevs learned about *Wonderland* from this clergyman, who therefore would have possessed an English copy. However, Rev. Thompson’s first initial should be A, not H. (Possibly an error on Carroll’s part based on the name of his old friend, Henry L. Thompson of Christ Church?) In 1864–1877, the Anglican chaplain in St. Petersburg was Arthur Steinkopff Thompson (1835–1919), who also served as a chaplain of the British embassy. While Thompson is not mentioned in Carroll’s diaries or his *Russian Journal*, the 1867 travelogue mentions his two colleagues, Rev. Robert George Penney (1838–1912) in Moscow, and Rev. John H. Herbert McSwiney (1827–1899), a chaplain of the British consulate in Cronstadt (the naval fortress off St. Petersburg). Both Penney and McSwiney hosted and guided Carroll and his traveling companion, Henry Liddon, during their tour; Rev. Penney visited Dodgson in Oxford in June 1886.²⁴ Arthur S. Thompson was a son of the famous Victorian physician Theophilus Thompson (1807–1860). After his return to England in 1877, Thompson was a vicar in several parishes, and an active member of the Anglo-Russian Literary Society. He was mentioned briefly in connection with Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, the Dean of Westminster,²⁵ as they both officiated in St. Petersburg on January 23, 1874 at the wedding of Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh (Queen Victoria’s second son) and the Grand Duchess Maria, the only daughter of Alexander II.

Interestingly, Rev. Thompson’s wife was Ellen Jameson (1843–1878), whose brother, Rev. Kingsbury Jameson, in 1881 married Grace MacDonald (1854–1884), daughter of Lewis Carroll’s most important mentor, George MacDonald (1824–1905). It was MacDonald who, with enthusiastic support of his children, convinced Carroll to submit *Wonderland* for publication.

Sonja was published in Moscow by Anatoly Mamontov (1839–1905).^{26, 27} He is much less well known than his brother, Sava Mamontov (1840–1918), who was called “Sava the Magnificent” and was the most famous Russian patron of the arts at the time. *The Bloomsbury Guide to Art* summarizes:

After making his fortune by building the first railway from Archangel to Murmansk, [Mamontov] bought the Abramtsevo estate near Moscow in 1870. In 1872 he invited the landscape painter Vasily Polenov and the sculptor [Mark] Antokolsky . . . to Abramtsevo as the basis of an artistic colony, and they were later joined by Repin and the brothers Viktor and Apollinarius Vasnetsov. The estate became a focus for the revival in traditional Russian arts and crafts. . . . The Abramtsevo artists also

contributed ornate set and costume designs to Mamontov’s amateur dramatics; and when he founded his own stage and theatre companies, these greatly influenced theatre design in Russia.²⁸

Much has been written about the Mamontov Artistic Circle.^{29, 30} Many other great names were associated with them, such as the painters Valentin Serov, Konstantin Korovin, and Mikhail Vrubel; the opera singer Feodor Chaliapin; and the stage director Konstantin Stanislavsky.

The family of *Sonja*’s publisher was also part of this greater Mamontov clan. Anatoly Ivanovich Mamontov opened his printing house in Moscow in 1863. In 1873, he added a book-and-toy store named *Detskoe vospitanie* (“Children’s Education”) where *Sonja* was sold. (We know this from one of the reviews that included bookstore advertisement information; see Addendum). The bookstore was owned by Anatoly’s wife, Maria Alexandrovna Mamontova (née Lyalina, 1847–1904). There, she later organized a toy shop to make dolls in folk dresses for the first time in Russia. Her niece Maria Morozova (1878–1958) remembered: “It was such a charming store, which had everything you could think about! M. A. herself was always there, and enthusiastically demonstrated all the toys invented by her. Both children and adults loved the wonderful small world she created—everything there was so pretty and entertaining; she had so much taste and fantasy.”³¹ The famous *matryoshka*, or nested doll, emerged from this store in 1898—a cultural fusion of Russian and Japanese woodcarving. Today, one remembers Maria Mamontova’s name mostly in connection with this doll, but she also published collections of children stories and games starting from 1870.^{32, 33} As early as 1872, she published a song collection with music arranged by no less than Tchaikovsky.³⁴ In 1881, she launched a children’s magazine, *Detskii otdykh* (“Children’s Pastime”).

Who were *Sonja*’s first young readers in Russia? So far I have not found the book mentioned in any diaries or memoirs; however, one can reasonably assume that Maria Mamontova’s children made good use of their mother’s bookstore! A shortlist of “the children who likely read *Sonja*” includes 15 names (nine girls and six boys): the six children of Anatoly and Maria and their nine first cousins (children of Anatoly’s brothers, Sava and Fëdor).

The faces of some of these children will be known to almost any educated Russian today: Over the years, the most famous Abramtsevo artists—Valentin Serov, Ilya Repin, Viktor Vasnetsov, and others—painted portraits of the Mamontovs, adults and children alike. Vera Savvichna Mamontova (b. 1875), the pub-

Fig. 1. Serov, *Girl with the Peaches*, 1887



Fig. 2. Repin, 1879



Fig. 3. Serov, *Portrait Milushi*, 1884



Fig. 4. Repin, 1882



Fig. 5. Vasnetsov, *Prince Ivan on the Grey Wolf*, 1889

lisher's niece, was portrayed as *Devochka s persikami* (*Girl with the Peaches*) by Serov (1887)—probably the best-known Russian girl's portrait (Fig. 1). Also shown here are images of Sofia Fedorovna Mamontova, another of the publisher's nieces, by Repin, 1879 (Fig. 2), and Lyudmila Anatolyevna Mamontova, the publisher's daughter, in a painting called *Milusha*; the first serious portrait done by the 19-year-old Serov, 1884 (Fig. 3). Lyudmila's sisters Tatyana (Fig. 4) and Natalya were the models for Vasnetsov's fairy-tale painting, *Ivan Tsarevich na Serom Volke* ("Prince Ivan on the Grey Wolf," 1889) (Fig. 5).

A back-translation of *Sonja's Mad-Tea Party* fragment was published recently by Maria Isakova.³⁵ At the same time, the first detailed analysis was published (in Russian) of *Sonja's* text, focusing on its comparison with several later translations.³⁶ The discussion of *Sonja*, as noted by Demurova, centers on the domestication attempts and the text's visible heterogeneity.³⁷ The book is abridged, but in an inconsistent way, with much difficult wordplay skipped. The text is intentionally heavily "Russified" (which sometimes happened with foreign fairy-tale translations in Russia) to make the book more comprehensible to chil-

dren. However, a two-volume edition of the Brothers Grimm's *Folk-Tales* appeared in 1871 without any Russification; Andersen's and Hoffmann's tales have not been Russified. *Sonja's* Russification is antiquated: the translator used archaic language, imitating the typical cadence of Russian folk fairy tales (available then from the collection by Afanasyev, published in 1858–1860). Some of the expressions used in *Sonja* were already out of date in the 1870s.

^{Ushakova}
^{Nikolaev et al.} discuss in detail the translator's decision on rendering the name of the Mock Turtle, probably the hardest of the *Wonderland* characters to recast in a foreign language.³⁸ [See also Dmitry Yermolovich's discussion about translating "Mock Turtle" into Russian in "As You Translate, So Shall You Draw," p. 11 – Ed.] They note that a mock turtle soup was well-known in Russia at that time under its French name, *fausse tortue*; a reader (at least a middle-class one) would know that this dish was made from a calf's head. The French translators had no problem calling the character *Fausse Tortue*. Thus, based on Tenniel's illustrations, the *Sonja* translator rendered Mock Turtle simply as *Телячья головка* (*Teliachya golovka*, "a Calf-Head"). His (heavily abridged) final song says, "A wonderful calf-head soup!" This imagery was further developed into a nice pseudo-folkloric paragraph where the Calf-Head tells his sad story. Once upon a time, he was a real Calf (*telionok*) among other calves, then someone decided to turn them into turtles—but apparently the metamorphosis was not completed. Accompanying the story are clever phonetic puns in a true Carrollian fashion: for example, the Calf-Head explains that all this happened in a salt-water pool (*solënyi basseyn*) but they called this pool a sea (*more*) because the calves were *morili* (starved, tortured) there. A solution similar to "Calf-Head," but also based on Tenniel's illustrations, was independently used by Alexander Shcherbakov (1977), who called the Mock Turtle *Cherepakha-Teliachyi-Nozhki* ("a Calf-Foot Turtle"). For several new Evertype translations into rare languages, I advised rendering Mock Turtle descriptively as a "Calf-Headed Turtle" (e.g., *Muzoobaş Taşbaka* in the first Kyrgyz translation by Aida Egemberdieva, 2016), following the *Sonja* tradition and Tenniel's illustrations.

In addition to *Sonja's* text items discussed by ^{Ushakova}
^{Nikolaev et al.},³⁹ I would like to note a few other "markers." A very interesting decision by the *Sonja* translator is an added original Russian pun on the jurors. The translator cleverly noted that the word *присяжные* (*prisiazhnye*, "the jurors") invites a great, added phonetic pun (a Carrollian one-letter difference) with *пристяжные* (*pristiazhnye*, "side horses," that is, the two horses on the sides of the middle horse of a traditional Russian *troika*). *Sonja* confuses unfamiliar *prisiazhnye* with *pristiazhnye*, and then repeats the incorrect

word *s samodovol'stvie* ("with a feeling of self-importance") several times, thinking that few girls of her age would know the meaning of this word. The translator's clear irony is that a trial by jury was then a great novelty in Russia: It was introduced by Alexander II in 1864, just a few years before *Sonja* was published. It would survive for only a half-century: The expression [*gospoda*] *prisiazhnye* [*zasedateli*] ("gentlemen of the jury") was mocked as already outdated by a trickster hero, Ostap Bender (in Il'f & Petrov's *Twelve Chairs*, 1928), ten years after the Bolsheviks did away with the fair judiciary system. For decades, trial by jury was so alien to Soviet language that Boris Zakhoder, in his accomplished *Wonderland* retelling of 1971, independently tried the same pun in reverse; his clever Alice *knows* the old-fashioned term for the Jurors. Zakhoder tells his readers: "Do not confuse jurors (*prisiazhnye*) with side horses (*pristiazhnye*), and you will have as much reason to be proud of yourself as Alice. Even more: both are found these days much less often than a hundred years ago."⁴⁰ This Aesopian humor, unnoticed by censors, is very bitter: It was during that time (the 1970s) that Soviet judges handed down sentences to political dissidents.

We can detect some Afanasyev fairy tale imagery in *Sonja* in a complex parody context. One of these clever, bizarre elements is the text that replaces "Father William." The Worm (i.e., the Caterpillar) orders *Sonja* to recite "*Blizko goroda Slavianska*." This text is an aria from an extremely popular Russian opera, *Askol'dova mogila* ("The Askold's Tomb") by Verstovsky (1835, libretto by Zagoskin), a song that had become very popular by 1879. Stylized as a medieval folk song, it tells about an evil nobleman who keeps a maiden in a deep cellar: "*iznyvala v zloy nevole / krasna devitsa dusha*" ("a good soul, a fair maiden suffered in the evil prison"). A very close phonetic parody delivered by *Sonja* is "*iznyvala v zlom rassole / belorybitsa dusha*" ("a good soul, a white fish, suffered in the spicy marinade"). This *belorybitsa* (a large variety of salmon) swam in from Russian legends and fairy tales.

In the scary fairy tale "Alënushka and her Brother Ivanushka," an enchanted girl wails to her brother from the bottom of the sea: "*liuta zmeia serdtse vysosala, belorybitsa ochi vyela*" ("the evil snake sucked out my heart, the white fish ate out my eyes"). Note a complete syllabic equivalence of *krasna devitsa* ~ *belorybitsa*, even with a matching color scheme *krasna* ~ *belo* ("red ['fair'] <girl>~white"). Such a freewheeling, multilayered parody would be expected from much later, twentieth-century nonsense writers such as Korney Chukovsky or even Daniil Kharms. It reminds one of *kapustniki* ("cabbage parties"), traditional gatherings of students or intellectuals, full of amateur songs, skits, spoofs, and parodies. One recalls Savva Mamontov's amateur theatricals that started exactly

at this time (Christmas, 1878), and over a few years grew into an amazing Mamontov Private Opera.⁴¹ The pseudo-medieval *Askold's Tomb* was by the 1870s an old-fashioned, good target to parody. Other poetry in *Sonja* includes parodies of children reading from Zhukovsky (*Svetlana*, 1813), Pushkin (*The Gypsies*, 1824), and Mikhail Lermontov (*The Cossack Lullaby*, 1840), and a quote from Krylov (*The Quartet*, 1811). Some of these classical pieces would be independently utilized by later Russian translators.

The Duchess, who is not a playing-card character in *Wonderland*, becomes one in *Sonja*: Пиковая княгиня (*Pikovaia kniaginia*, "Princess of Spades"). The suit choice is a clever reference to Pushkin's novellette, *Pikovaia dama* (*The Queen of Spades*, 1834; Tchaikovsky's famous opera, based on this story, appeared later in 1890). Pushkin's old lady, in fact, was a Countess (*grafinia*), not a Princess (*kniaginia*). The suit assignment brings the Duchess into the deck, closer to her antagonist, the Queen of Hearts; the European Duchess (*Gertsoginia*, a title not found in Russia) is replaced by a Russian Princess, *Kniaginia*. One of *Sonja*'s reviewers addressed the character as a *Queen of Spades*.

Russian translations always have a problem rendering the Queen of Hearts. The Russian deck has no Queens (*koroleva*); instead, it has Dames (*dama*), not an explicit royal rank. Usually, one disregards the correct playing-card terminology and uses a *Koroleva*. However, *Sonja*'s translator found a clever way out. The Queen is addressed as a *Краля* (*Kralia*), an old-fashioned term for a playing-card Queen with the same grammatical root as *koroleva*; see, for example, Gogol's *Igroki* ("The Gamblers," 1842). The word *kralia* still exists as an ironic slang word for a pretty woman, "a beauty."

A very interesting domesticated parody in *Sonja* is the Mouse's "dry lecture." Demurova commented on the French Mouse arriving in Moscow with Napoleon.⁴² It gives the Mouse's perspective of the French invasion of Russia in 1812. The mouse is not really clear about who won the war, the Russians or the French. One has a feeling that, in 1879, this childish rendering slyly parodies not just a generic history book, but also the greatest Russian historical novel, read by nearly everyone at the time: *War and Peace* by Lev Tolstoy (publ. 1868–1869). Another possible literary reference is a strange added word *Гнеденька* (*Gneden'kaia*, "A Little Bay," from *gnedoy*, "bay" [horse]). This is a horse's name, with which Ilyushka (the Hatter) addresses *Sonja*, who indignantly replies: "There are no such names!" The name is followed by *vam ne meshalo by postrich' grivuku* ("you should cut your little mane" for "your hair wants cutting"), referring to *Sonja*'s hair as an equine mane (Russ. *griva*, also used for long human hair). Both *gneden'kaia*

and *grivka* are rather endearing words. The word *gneden'kaia* is found in one of Tolstoy's early stories, *Metel'* ("A Snowstorm," 1856), which would have been a commonly-read book in the 1870s. This could be also a hint about the added phonetic pun on the Jurors (see above) since in Tolstoy's story the little bay is a *pristiazhnaia*, a side horse in a *troika*. Moreover, the same story has a central character called Ignashka, which is close to Ilyushka. A careful analysis of *Sonja* might possibly reveal more interesting parallels; the text clearly was geared toward a middle-class child who would easily recognize the literary sources of the parodies. The book's high price (see reviews in the Addendum) confirms that it was not intended for lower-class children.

A puzzling feature of *Sonja* is its complete anonymity; the book bears no indication of the author, the translator, or the illustrator. According to the censorship laws of the 1870s, a book manuscript could be presented to a censor without revealing the author's or translator's name. These would be requested only if a censor were suspicious of the content.⁴³ Only sixteen of Tenniel's illustrations were reproduced in *Sonja*. All of Tenniel's monograms and the Dalziels' signatures were carefully removed. Demurova says, incorrectly (p. xiii), that Tenniel's initials "were there at the bottom of every picture,"⁴⁴ but the copies in the Fales and St. Petersburg libraries both show the initials removed. Until now it has not been noticed that *Sonja* has *signature marks*—typographic features that identify leaves to ensure correct binding. They are located at the bottom-left side of nine pages (pp. 1, 17, 33, 49, 63, 81, 97, 129, and 161) and read *Пруключ. Сони* (*Prikluch. Soni*), an abbreviation of *Пруключения Сони* (*Priklucheniia Soni*, *Sonja's Adventures*). These signature marks preserved the important word "Adventures," which was not part of *Sonja*'s final title. This means that the Moscow publisher or the printer was aware of the original English title.

When *Sonja* was recast into a Russified text, it was carefully purged of all English markers, down to replacing the price of the Hatter's hat with "50 kopecks." A similar replacement was done in the first Italian edition of 1872. This Russian price appears to be the cleverly calculated price of a *toy* hat, while Tenniel's iconic "10/6" in 1865 would be a *real* hat price, with a buying power of about US \$60 today. The *Sonja* book itself was expensive, possibly due to the cost of illustrations: at 75 kopecks (0.75 ruble); it was correctly called "greatly overpriced" by one of the irate reviewers. At this time, an average worker's monthly salary was 20 to 30 rubles; a pound of meat was 20 kopecks.

The main remaining question is: Who was the translator? I'm reluctant to agree with the suggestions mentioned earlier that it was Olga Timiryazeva. I have found no evidence so far that she ever published any

literary text or a translation. I would rather think that the Macmillan books were requested for the 23-year-old Ekaterina Timiryazeva (later Boratynskaya) who resided in St. Petersburg until February 1871. Twenty years later, she had developed into a fine, professional translator of English and American children's literature. It is possible that, by sending her the *Alice* translations, Lewis Carroll directly contributed to her early professional development and through that, indirectly, influenced generations of Russian children—including Boris Pasternak.

Sonja was published in Moscow eight years after Carroll's 1871 letter. Ekaterina Boratynskaya was then married and living in Moscow, which further strengthens her candidacy over Olga's. According to Ekaterina's memoirs, she suffered nervous illnesses after her marriage and deaths in her family.⁴⁵ She says that she fully recovered only by 1878—which would explain the seven-year gap between 1871 and 1878. *Sonja* could have been her first attempt in translation, experimenting with a hybrid folk style.

Still, was Ekaterina Boratynskaya the translator of *Sonja*? Her later translations and abridged retellings were never Russified as *Sonja* was. All of her translations published in the 1890s would bear the author's name; at the same time, *Sonja*'s English identity was consciously and skillfully concealed. Moreover, it would have been prudent for the translator to inform the author (or Macmillan, who sent her the *Alice* books, as we assume they did) that the translation had been published. However, it appears that no one ever told Carroll about the only Russian translation of *Alice* published in his lifetime.

At the same time, Maria Mamontova in Moscow was trying her hand at diverse educational and literary activities. Her productivity and networking were outstanding for a Russian woman of the 1870s. Maybe the Mamontovs commissioned *Sonja* independently. Anatoly Mamontov himself translated from German: He published a Russian translation of Goethe's *Faust* in 1897. Clearly, *Sonja* fits well among the early creative projects of the Mamontov circle.

I must note one more fascinating and possibly relevant connection. For thirty years after 1879, there would be no other Russian translation of *Wonderland*, and then, within a short period of 1908 to 1913, four different translations appeared (by Matilda Granstrem, ^{Alexandra} ~~Anastasia~~ Rozhdestvenskaya, Allegro, and Mikhail Chekhov). Allegro (the 1909 translation) is the pen name of the poet Poliksena Solovyova (1867–1924), the youngest sister of the philosopher Vladimir Solovyov. Ekaterina Boratynskaya had been one of his close friends in the early 1870s. Is it a mere coincidence that 30 years later Poliksena Solovyova produced her own *Wonderland*? Vladimir Solovyov himself was a fine poet with a streak of parody and ab-

surdism; in 1880, he translated "The Golden Pot" (*Der goldne Topf*) by E. T. A. Hoffmann, and in 1875 he traveled to London and met William Ralston Shedden-Ralston, the famous translator of Russian literature and fairy tales (including Afanasyev).

There are several possible directions for further inquiry. The Russian archives might yield more information on Boratynskaya, the Timiryazevs, and the Mamontovs. *Sonja* might have been mentioned in the letters or diaries of the Mamontov or Solovyov children, or their friends and teachers. Finally, the text itself might contain more pointers, not dismissible as mere coincidences. Take, for example, the three "treacle well" girls whose names in *Sonja* are Dasha, Pasha, and Sasha. The names are quite common—but two of them are the same as the names of two of the Mamontov girls: Praskovya Anatolyevna ("Parasha" or "Pasha") is the daughter of *Sonja*'s publisher, and "Sasha" is Alexandra Savvichna, the youngest Mamontov baby, born in 1878. And, yes, "Sonja" was a common name at the time, as well—but it is also the name of Sofia Fëdorovna Mamontova, aged 13, painted by Repin in Abramtsevo, in a beautiful Russian dress, in the same year 1879 (Fig 2). It would be quite remarkable if *this* Sonja had *not* read *Sonja*!

I am grateful to many who answered my queries, including Alina Bodrova, Mark Burstein, Mike S. Clark, Michael Everson, August A. Imholtz, Jr., Clare Imholtz, Jon Lindseth, Olga Luchkina, Eleonora Paston, Natalia Patrushcheva, Abram Reitblat, Mark Richards, Colin Salter, Byron W. Sewell, Elena Terkel, Tatyana Ushakova, and Edward Wakeling.

ADDENDUM: FOUR REVIEWS OF THE FIRST RUSSIAN TRANSLATION OF *Wonderland*, 1879

Reviews 1 and 2 were found and reprinted by A. M. Ruzhaylo;⁴⁶ reviews 3 and 4 were found and reprinted by V. V. Lobanov,⁴⁷ translated from Russian by Victor Fet.

- 1) Anon., *Narodnaia i detskaia biblioteka (Popular and Children's Library)*, Moscow, 1879, No. 3, pp. 93–94, *Sonja v tsarstvie diva*, † Moscow, 1879, 166 pp., price 75 kopecks, with illustrations. Publisher's warehouse at the "Children's Education" store, Moscow, *Leontyevsky pereulok*, Mamontov House.

Is this book also published by the Mamontov's "Children's Education" store? This little book, full of spelling errors and greatly overpriced, contains a kind of tiresome, extremely boring, confused, and morbid delirium of an ill-fated girl named Sonja; the description of this delirium lacks any shade of artistry; one finds no trace of wit or joy. Here are, for you the read-

ers, some of Sonja's sickly brain attacks: here, a rabbit runs . . . the rabbit takes a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket, looks at it and then hurries on; Sonja now is up on her feet . . . Sonja falls into a deep well . . . there are cupboards and bookshelves on the sides of the well; here and there, maps and pictures hang upon nails . . . Sonja drinks from a bottle and shrinks . . . Sonja cries, her tears become a puddle, the puddle takes half of the room . . . Sonja slips—and falls up to her chin into saltwater (Made of her tears! How elegant!). There is a mouse in the end of the pool . . . Its face (the mouse has a face!) is pale as death . . . Now a duck and a crane fall into the same pool . . . A parrot, an eagle . . . The mouse tells about the French coming to Moscow and fighting at Borodino . . . An old magpie with a shawl rattles: "I must be getting home . . . it is getting dark, my throat can get sore . . ." Sonja comes into a tidy little room with a small table, on the table there are several pairs of new gloves and several fans . . . Sonja drinks from a bottle, she grows and grows, her head hits the ceiling . . . it is getting too tight . . . what to do? the last resort was to put one arm out of the window, and one foot up the chimney (??) . . . Sonja eats a cake and shrinks again . . . Sonja walks in a wood . . . a puppy drags a stick . . . Sonja runs away, afraid that the puppy will eat her up—she is so small! . . . A fat blue worm sits on the top of a mushroom with folded hands and quietly smokes a very long pipe . . . Sonja bites off a piece of the mushroom, her neck stretches higher than trees . . . her neck bends and folds like a snake's . . . A fish footman gives a letter to a frog footman . . . A baby who is not a baby but a pig . . . Siberian cats are "grinning" . . . A Princess tends a baby: she sings a verse (of a lullaby) and shakes the baby "so hard it is scary to look" . . . The Princess tosses the baby right at Sonja; the cook throws a frying pan at her . . . At a table, Ilyushka and a Hare are drinking tea . . . The cards (Five, Seven, etc.) play croquet on a meadow . . . A calf's head sticks out of a turtle's shell . . . A deck of card flies at Sonja.

Reader, enough! Sonja woke up. If one fills the gaps between the above-listed fragments from this book with all the omitted book's content, there still will be not much more sense than in those fragments. Even if the tale of Sonja were retold from any original source—from Hoffmann, from Edgar Poe, or any other elaborate fantasy of a poet—we still would consider this retelling to be unskilled, sick, and wild ravings. It is possible and useful sometimes to lead children, following Schiller, to *das schön Wunderland*¹⁸—but such a realm of wonder, a realm of magic, would be based on a certain measure of *artistic balance*. . . . One can *poetically* reproduce human dreams—but such a memorial of pathological content of a delirium-stricken brain as this strange book about Sonja, though possibly useful for medical ob-

servations and studies, is in no way an entertaining and educational fictional reading for children.

- 2) **Anon., *Vospitanie i obuchenie* (Upbringing and Education), St. Petersburg, 1879, No. 10, pp. 474–475. *Sonja v tsarstvie diva*. Price 75 kopecks. Moscow, 1879.**

This edition is accurate, with many illustrations that do not look ugly. It has no typing errors and is printed on good paper. We fully admit all this, since the masses buy children books exclusively based on those features; one must note that the masses do not care much for typing errors and ugly pictures; for them, however, illustrations of this book would lack a very important feature: a bright and gaudy coloring. Now, the public who look for content in children books won't find it in *Sonja in a Kingdom of Wonder*. The Realm of Wonder is a scattered dream of a girl who is transported into a world of mice, cats, squirrels and insects. Possibly a buyer, leafing through this book, would hope to find in it some kind of imitation of Georges Sand's *Grandmother's Tales* and, certainly, not expecting to discover any great talent or poetry, would still try to find some thoughtfulness—and would be wrong. The author has no idea that his story could be a rich source from which children would absorb nature's poetry and learn to understand its influence on man, as in Georges Sand's tales; he just spins fantasy after fantasy, which make no sense, except a grammatical one, and presents this for consumption during a child's free time. Sonja drinks magic potions, eats magic cakes and mushrooms, grows and shrinks to the size of a mouse's world, finds herself in a fantastic world of playing-cards—and there is no end to this nonsense. Yes, it is true that dreams rarely make any sense—but dreams that are funny because of their nonsense are told and laughed at within a circle of friends, rather than being printed on 166 pages in 1/16 format, illustrated, and presented to the public.

- 3) **Anon., *Zhenskoe obrazovanie* (Women's Education), 1879, No 6-7, p. 469. *Sonja v tsarstvie diva*. Moscow, 1879, small format, price 75 kopecks.**

There are some books that are not worth a dozen words, so "beneath any critique" are they. The book that lies in front of us belongs exactly to such a class. It is hard to imagine anything that would make less sense than this fairy tale (or rather just a nonsensical story—since the creation of a fairy tale would at least require some fantasy). All mothers are advised to walk past this absolutely useless nonsense without stopping for a moment. — *Ye. S.*

- 4) Sobolev, M.V. *Obzor detskikh knig za 1879 g.* ("A review of children's books for 1879") in: *Pedagogicheskii sbornik (Pedagogical Collection)*, St. Petersburg, 1882, No. 2, pp. 287-337. *Sonja v tsarstvie diva*. Moscow, 166 pp., small format, price 75 kopecks.

There are publications in foreign literature where the characters and their relationships are depicted as caricatures, exaggerated to an ultimate degree; those stories are designed to show vice in a disgusting way, and to impress children by showing how revolting it is. It is hardly doubtful that the aim could be achieved: Ridiculing and shaming can only affect those children who have a developed self-consciousness, while others would note only the comical side; children laugh at deficiencies or, rather, at the exaggeration of them, without a good understanding of abnormalities.

In children's education, it is important to develop the positive sides of a character, which would give a person a foundation for struggling against the abnormalities.

This book, *Sonja in a Kingdom of Wonder*, belongs to such kinds of publications, although it is less interesting and talented than the foreign ones. The Russian example is rather boring because, on one hand, the morality is overexaggerated, and on the other, Sonja's adventures are hardly interesting. The author objects to unnecessary curiosity, passions and wishes, empty talk, etc. Sonja falls asleep in a garden, and travels in the underground world, where she meets and talks with various animals that personify certain deficiencies.

Most of Sonja's transformations are pointless, and the scenes are wild: For example, Sonja drinks a liquid that makes all her limbs grow so large that one foot gets up the chimney, and an arm goes out the window—all this only in order to hit a rabbit and push out a cockroach. One of the wildest scenes takes place in the Queen of Spades' kitchen, where a cook throws all possible objects at the Queen and almost kills her baby.

It seems, upon reading this book, that the author was somewhat familiar with the subject: the transformations that Sonja experienced in her dream correspond to the changes in a body's position when asleep, and to general influences upon a sleeping person. If the author possessed a more organized and advanced imagination, this theme could produce a nice fairy tale; but nothing came out of this try.

¹ *Соня въ царствѣ дива (Sonja v tsarstvie diva)* (Sonja in a Kingdom of Wonder). Moscow: Tipografiia A. I. Mamontova, 1879, 166 pp. (in Russian).

² *Соня въ царствѣ дива (Sonja v tsarstvie diva)* (Sonja in a Kingdom of Wonder). A facsimile of the first Russian

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She was home-schooled and lived with her grandmother in St. Petersburg until age 23, when she married L.A. Boratynsky (then a graduate student in Moscow University) on 30 January 1871 (Old Style=11 February 1871, New Style).

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- ⁴⁸ "Nur ein Wunder kann dich tragen / In das schöne Wunderland" ("Only wonder can bear thee / To the beautiful Wonderland") are the last lines in the 1801 poem "Sehnsucht" (Longing) by Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805). It has been set to music many times, most notably by Schubert. - Ed.

Mother Goose and Grimm by Mike Peters, October 11, 2016

