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0521621798 - English Literature and the Russian Aesthetic Renaissance

Rachel Polonsky

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The turn of the nineteenth century, a time of exceptional creativity in Russia, was also a time of great receptivity to foreign cultural influences. Among the most important of these were English poetry and aesthetic thought, which gave new impetus to the Russian imagination. This is the first study of the Russian reception of English literature from Romanticism to Aestheticism, focusing particularly on the reception by Russian poets of Shelley, Ruskin, Pater, Frazer and Wilde. Framing this account is a pioneering exploration of the intellectual background to these influences in comparative scholarship, illuminating a common interest in myth, folklore, anthropology and the origins of language. This book also discusses the relationship between Russian conceptions of national identity, literary influence, and the origins of comparative literary history.

Rachel Polonsky is a research and teaching fellow at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. She has written and broadcast on both English and Russian literature, and her translations of contemporary Russian literature have been published in *Granta*, *Soviet Literature* and *Glas: New Russian Writing*.

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For J. M. F. and M. C. F.

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In poetry the national boundary is destroyed and the elements of one language call to those of another through the voices of space and time, for all languages are bound in a fraternal union which is strengthened in the freedom and domesticity of each . . . and they greet each other as members of a single family.

Osip Mandelstam, 'Remarks on Chénier'

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Notes on the text

For ease of reading I have translated into English the titles of Russian works in the body of the text. In the first instance the original Russian title is given in brackets. I have used the British Standard conventions for the transliteration of Russian words, omitting diacritics. In proper names, *y* is used for final *ий* and *ый*, and soft signs have been omitted. Exceptions have been made in cases where an accepted English spelling exists ('Roerich', rather than 'Rerikh', and 'Soloviev' for Solov'ev', for example).

All Russian dates before 1 February 1918 are given according to the Old Style (Julian) calendar.