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Introduction

by David Goldfrank

I have already presented Richard Stites's unusual and productive life, works, and impact in two introductions. For the late 2010 republication of his essays on culture, I reviewed his professional life and scholarship,[1] and for a three-part, former students' memorial festschrift to be issued over 2012-13, I sketched his career at Georgetown and his relationship with the individual contributors, all of whom I had all also taught and advised.[2] Still, it is worth repeating here that Richard rose out of childhood poverty, had passions all of his life for culture, both highbrow and popular, fell in love with Russia upon his first serious encounter, and was an irrepressible entertainer and comedian. But at the same time he was a singularly attentive listener, and wherever he taught, he was viewed as a master—at all college and university levels. Likewise, a creative, clever, sensitive and effective writer, he inspired, encouraged, and fortified professional colleagues at Georgetown and elsewhere to pursue their intellectual passions, to venture into new areas of research, and to exceed their own expectations for themselves. He was certainly more responsible than anyone else for my own success in developing a second, modern research field and for my feeling at liberty to employ biting or humorous chapter and section titles and turns of speech. Accordingly, the irreverent title of my contribution to the first festschrift in his honor served as my medievalist's tribute to him,[3] and he continues to be an inspiration when

I encourage and aid younger scholars to loosen up a bit and liberate themselves from any stodgy restraints on their creativity. He will, moreover, become more of an inspiration for all of us, when his posthumous study of the Decembrists in the light of the preceding Spanish, Neapolitan, and Greek revolutions, *The Four Horsemen: Riding to Liberty in Post-Napoleonic Europe*, appears in print.[4] Like his four published monographs mentioned in the Preface by co-editor Pavel Lyssakov, this one too will become a standard and a classic of a type with a special vision connecting to developments in Russia and Mediterranean Europe.[5]

The subjects of the contributions to this memorial project—itself the brainchild of Pavel Lyssakov and a product of the type of Russian-American cooperation, which Stites worked so hard to promote—range from the most sophisticated theoretical linguistics to the lowest life Soviet gulag criminal tattoos, and from a well respected Imperial Russian writer to contemporary Reality TV.

We commence, in rough chronological order, with an offering by the last student to start history PhD work under Richard's guidance, Anita Kondoyanidi. Her "Noblewomen, Courtesans, and Merchant Women: P.D. Boborykin's Literary Photographs" reflects the burning interest Richard evinced in his own PhD research and first monograph, as well as his love of reading. The quite individualist Boborykin (1836-1921), the early propagator of the term intelligentsia whose revealing interchange with Lev Tolstoy Kondoyanidi retells, stands as a *sui generis* precursor of Stites and his pioneering, sympathetic study of Russia's "woman question"—a phenomenon which so astounded our colleagues.[6]

Russia's vibrant provinces[7]and the international nature of culture[8] figured heavily in Richard's work, and our other pre-Revolutionary contribution, Boris Gasparov's "Евразийские корни фонологи-ческой теории: Бодуэн де Куртенэ в Казани" touches on both of these phenomena. More than that, Gasparov advances an original hypothesis, that the anti-Positivist, psychophonetic notions of Baudouin de Courtenay® had much in common with those of the conservative, Slavophile-influenced, Orthodoxy-promoting, but pro-native language educator of Russia's Turkic and Finno-Ugrian peoples, Nikolai Il'minskii, as well as that these views were influenced by the overall milieu of Kazan at the time both men resided

there. Stites, as we know, always encouraged such bold thinking and delighted in surprising conclusions.

"A vast activity deserving of special study" is how Richard Stites characterized sports in the USSR,[9] and so we welcome our first post-Revolution contribution, Bob Edelman's "Soviet Football, 1917-1941." Composed with the verve of a sportswriter, this essay places us squarely within the celebrated Dinamo-Spartak rivalry, as it developed, with all of the characteristics normally associated with professional sport. The author shows, moreover, how here, as elsewhere, such spectator sport made for "enclaves of autonomy" where "mass audiences" can evade "the goals of those who seek to control them."[10]

"Sing a song, tell a joke, and smile," said Andrei Stites on the occasion of the Georgetown memorial service in April 2010, recalling his father's advice to all of us. Indeed, Richard was legendary for his repertoire of jokes, and he considered them important sociocultural artifacts.[11] Though he was partially, as well, a product of rigorous, old-fashioned Roman Catholic schooling, I do not know how he would have reacted to my present claim that punch lines are at heart maxims, and hence subject to Aristotle's treatment of such aphorisms as premises or conclusions to syllogisms, where the listener provides the missing elements.[12] But this is what we see in our fourth presentation, "The Image of Stalin in the Kremlin: One Life-Death Joke from the 1930s," where Boris Briker creates a wide-ranging and model fusion of logic and politically contextual literary criticism, as he methodically seeks true meaning. We shall stop here and allow the author himself to present the biting punch line to his essay.

Like many good writers, Richard Stites also crafted clever, satirical sketches and cartoons.[13] Hence it is fitting that our next contribution to this volume, Steve Norris's "Laughter's Weapon and Pandora's Box: Boris Efimov in the Khrushchev Era," analyzes the cartoons along with the life-odyssey and the reflections composed in the 1960s of one of Soviet Russia's greatest political cartoonists, and certainly the longest-lived (108 years!). Privileged to have met the still sharp Efimov when he was 106, Norris employs these reflections and his subject's use of the Pandora's box metaphor as a prisms for grasping an essential aspect of intellectual life during the Khrushchev era and the Thaw.

At a memorial at Washington, D.C.'s Martin's Tavern to celebrate a plaque there in Stites's honor several months after he died, the organizers passed out "You Dirty Rat" pins—a testimonial to his life-long passion for films, well reflected in his scholarship,[14] and his irrepressible and frequent imitations of Jimmy Cagny. Richard, in fact, was a pioneer in introducing Russian cinema to the history classroom,[15] and our film-specialist and novelist publisher, Anna Lawton, thus pays tribute to him in our sixth article, "Fiction in the Service of History: A Tale of How *Brief Encounters* Ended Up on the Shelf," on one of Kira Muratova's suppressed movies. In a *sui generis*, creative recalling of classical historiography's placing of appropriate words in the characters' mouths, Lawton consciously extends the unavoidable fictional aspect of narrative history to its logical extreme with her invented "Tale." Stites also introduced creative historical drama into our Russian history teaching,[16] and here Lawton has produced as a byproduct an excellent script for such a classroom play, as well as a plausible explanation of the workings of Soviet censorship in a specific case.

Many of us, in different ways, have written about Stites's impact. My introduction to *Passion and Perception* contains reflections of fourteen other scholars and a retired US Army officer, while the introduction and testimonials in *Beyond Revolutionary Dreams* will present thirty-three from active scholars and former students—only one appearing in both books.[17] Several obituaries have also appeared. But nothing else so far approaches our seventh essay, Sergei Zhuk's "Richard Stites, the Soviet West, Media, and Soviet Americanists," for the sweep of its analysis and conclusions, which boldly claim and substantiate for Richard a historic "role in changing intellectual landscape in both American and post-Soviet space." So this may turn out to be the singularly most important piece ever written about him.

Conspicuous commodity consumption was utterly alien to Richard's way of life, though he avidly collected books, and film videos, owned catchy posters and other cultural artifacts, and of course possessed such basic necessary items as a refrigerator. His prize personal item may have been his upright piano for his improvising show tunes and other songs. As for his car, he proved to be the ultimate economic urban rationalist, just as Soviet authorities

would have loved for their own populace. For once he moved to Washington in 1987, he switched to bumming rides or paying for taxis. Yet his famed Cagny and Brando imitations (besides "You dirty rat," "I could have been the champ") indicate that inwardly he thrived on at least the entertainment value of macho bravado, which expresses itself in motorcycles and hotrods, as well as competitive sports. And so our eighth contribution, Lewis Siegelbaum's "Cars and the Particularities of 'Personal Property' in the Brezhnev Era," which uses comparisons with refrigerators and pianos to identify the significance of the growth of automobile ownership in late Soviet society, intersects profoundly with Richard's sense that American and Soviet people shared far more values than not.

"Prison is prison," Stites said to me one day in the 1980s, as we were reviewing the horrors of different types of confinement. Indeed, he had grounds to know a thing or two of such matters, since his own father lived on the edge of the law as a bookie, sometimes threatening to employ force to collect debts. Likewise, serving time was a normal occurrence for people from his youthful milieu. So being possessed of a sense of the codes of the underworld, as well as fascinated by images and their decoding, Richard would surely have welcomed our ninth essay by Helena Goscilo, "Texting the Body: Soviet Criminal Tattoos." She gifts us with sophisticated and well grounded elucidation of how this alternative society generated its own socially and culturally meaningful symbols, which now may be undergoing post-Soviet changes, parallel to the rest of the country.

"Why would anyone want to study that crap? That's gotta be real garbage!" This is how one no-nonsense American aficionada of NBC Nightly News, "Dancing with the Stars," and HGTV reacted upon learning of our final article by co-editor Pavel Lyssakov, "Reality-TV: Реальность *или* ТВ?" But another American not at all ignorant of the US television scene, also a graduate student in Russian history who had once studied with Stites, immediately grasped the utility for understanding economy, society, and popular culture of analyzing the stages of what we might term Russia's «так наз. Reality TV»—a twenty-first century adapted and domesticated import. Lyssakov, of course, sees through the false consciousness (to use a no longer fashionable term—and one which

Stites avoided in principle) generated by such нереальность, as do, we must suspect, most Russian viewers and their counterparts elsewhere, who turn to these shows chiefly for their entertainment and escape values.

So here we have a potpourri of Russia for you, Richard: a male feminist; Eurasianism and linguistics; Moscow soccer; an anti-Stalin joke; a legendary cartoonist; a banned film; your own impact; private cars; criminal tattoos; and Reality TV. As with the North African freedman and Roman comic playwright Terence almost 2300 years ago, "nothing human" was "alien to" you![18]

We conclude this memorial festschrift with "'I'm a Classic:' In Memory of Richard Stites," a slight revision of an eloquent obituary published in 2011 by his former student Anton Fedyashin.[19] He beautifully sums up the man, the teacher, and the scholar, to whose cherished memory all of the contributors happily dedicate their contributions to this volume.

Notes

1 *Passion and Perception*, pp, xii-xxxix: I will be happy to furnish electronic copies of these introductions to anyone who lacks access to them.

2 Sandra Pujals, ed., *Beyond Revolutionary Dreams: Essays in Memory of Richard Stites = Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 46, no. 3 (2012), 1-24. Thirteen of the fifteen contributors were among the sixteen Georgetown Ph.Ds, who wrote their dissertations under his mentorship.

3 "Burn, Baby, Burn: Popular Culture and Heresy in Late Medieval Russia," *Journal of Popular Culture,* 31.4 (Spring 1988): 17-32.

4 Oxford University Press will publish the finished manuscript, as edited by our Georgetown colleagues Catherine Evtuhov and John McNeill.

5 See below, Anton Fedyashin, "'I'm a Classic'," 254.

6 See Helena Goscilo's comment to this effect in my Introduction to *Passion and Perception*, xv-xvi: "I recall when I first encountered his superlative book on the women's movement, which impressed me not only by its excellence, but also by its meticulous scholarship and the sheer fact that a MAN had devoted so much intelligent attention to the topic."

7 For example, "The Creative Provinces in Nineteenth Century Russia," in Natalia Baschmakoff and Paul Fryer, eds., *Modernization in the*

Russian Provinces = Studia Slavica Finlandensia, XVII (March 2000), 306-23; rpt., *Passion and Perception*, 451-68; and a goody half of *Serfdom, Society, and the Arts in Imperial Russia* is devoted to the provinces.

8 Note here Natsascha Baschmakoff: "Editing and reading closely his articles, though, it amazed me how fluent he was IN DETAILS over the whole map of European and Russian culture – marrying events that happened at a same epoch far away from each others:" (personal email, summer 2010).

9 Lest this name confuse a reader, please note that due to an ancestor's immigration to Poland in the mid 18th century, Jan Niecisław Ignacy (aka Ivan Aleksandrovich) Baudouin de Courtenay was an Imperial Russian subject from the Kongresówka.

10 "Soviet Popular Culture in the Gorbachev Era," in *Harriman Institute Forum* 2, no. 3 (1989); rpt. *Passion and Perception*, 239.

11 Anna Lawton, "A Meaningful Montage," in *Passion and Perception*, 532. For a representative selection, see *Passion and Perception*, 34, 174, 214, 218, 230, 287, 335, 343, 393, 399 (n24), 413, 483; the originals are: "On the Border with the Soviet Avant-garde," *Soviet Observer* (Harvard University, Sept. 1988); "Soviet Popular Culture in the Gorbachev Era," *Harriman Institute Forum*, March 1989; "Bolshevik Ritual Building in the 1920s; "Cultural History and Russian Studies," in Daniel Orlovsky, ed. *Beyond Soviet Studies* (Washington DC/Baltimore: Wilson Center Press/Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); "Frontline Entertainment" in Richard Stites, ed., *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1995); "Days and Nights in Wartime Russia," in Aviel Roshwald and Richard Stites, ed., *European Culture in the Great War: The Arts, Entertainment, and Propaganda, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999); "Soviet Russian Wartime Culture: Freedom and Control, Spontaneity and Consciousness," in Robert Thurston, ed. *A People's War: Popular Responses to World War II in the Soviet Union*. Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000); "The Misanthrope, the Orphan, and the Magpie: Imported Melodrama in the Twilight of Serfdom," in Louise McReynolds and Joan Neuberger, eds. *Imitations of Life: 200 Years of Russia Melodrama* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

12 "Maxims are the premises or conclusions of enthymemes without the syllogism:" Aristotle, *Technes Rhetorikes*, II.xxi.2 (1394a), in John Henry Freese, ed. with trans., *Aristotle: The "Art" of Rheotoric*, Loeb Classical Library (New York: Putnam, 1926), 278-79; see on these, David Goldfrank, "Adversus Haereticos Novgorodensos: Iosif Volotskii's Rhetorical Syllogisms," to be published by Slavica in a forthcoming festschrift to Donald Ostrowski. Indeed, if you have even been dissatisfied with the logic of a joke and then recast the lead up to the punch line, you have affirmed my approach here.

13 See Goldfrank, "Introduction," in *Beyond Revolutionary Dreams*, 3.

14 For a survey of Stites's writings on cinema, see Goldfrank, "Introduction," in *Passion and Perception*, xxviii-xxix; these are: "Soviet Movies for the Masses and for Historians," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television*, 9, no. 2 (June 1991): 185-94, rpt. *Passion and Perception* , 273-87; "Doing Film History in the Soviet Union: a Research Note," *Russian Review*, 50, no. 4 (Oct. 1991): 481-83; "Dusky Images of Imperial Russia: Prerevolutionary Cinema," *Russian* Review, 53, no. 2 (Apr. 1994): 285-95, rpt. *Passion and Perception*, 289-305; "To the Virgin Lands. The Epic and the Idyll in the Cinematic Representation of Khrushchev's Great Adventure," ed., David Goldfrank, in *Passion and Perception*, 307-18; "*The Pawnbroker*: Holocaust, Memory, and Film," in American Historical Society, *Perspectives on History*, 46, no. 1 (Jan. 2008): 30-31.

15 See Goldfrank, "Introduction," in *Beyond Revolutionary Dreams*, 5, 6, 19, 22.

16 We actually did this together, but he was the initiator and the "maestro:" see Goldfrank, "Introduction," in *Beyond Revolutionary Dreams*, 5.

17 *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* plans to issue the three-part *Beyond Revolutionary Dreams,* which was completed by late 2011, over the period 2012-13, with the last volume containing the testimonials gathered by Paul du Quenoy and also the short speech that Tom Barrett delivered at our Georgetown University memorial service in April 2010. (Both Paul and Tom did their PhD's under Richard and are contributors to that memorial project).

18 Cf. the original in the first person present: "Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto."

19 *Russian Review*, 70, no. 1(Jan. 2011): 175-78. Fedyashin was one of a large number of our graduate students who wrote their dissertations under another mentor, but profited immensely from Richard's teaching, critical reading, and overall guidance.