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A Russian in Germany and a German in Russia: Trauma and Memory in the Work of Svetlana Geier and Olga Berggolts

Svetlana Geier and Olga Berggolts were two writers whose traumatic experiences during the Great Purges and World War II became integral to their later works. During the war, Geier translated for the Nazis and eventually left for Germany. Berggolts was a Communist Party loyalist who survived torture and imprisonment during the purges, and then became the official voice of the Leningrad Blockade, returning to the party which had previously rejected her. Geier's life story was the subject of the German documentary *The Woman with Five Elephants (Die Frau mit den 5 Elefanten)* (2009). The five elephants refer to Geier's German translations of Fyodor Dostoevsky's major novels. Berggolts recorded her feelings and memories about the purges and the war in diaries, autobiographical poems, and her memoir *Dnevnye zvezdy (The Day Stars)*. My paper will examine their respective texts, whether on page, radio, or film, within the context of Soviet life writing, in particular women's life writing. The diversity of media they employed allows a deeper understanding of the importance of text, broadcast, and the projection of the female voice. The personal narratives of Geier and Berggolts demonstrate both the prescriptions and restrictions of Soviet life, reflecting on their lives as both obedient and doubting Soviet citizens. However, these two women were not typical Soviet citizens, making their texts different and, hence, interesting. Though I will address questions of self-reflection and gender, I will also discuss two aspects of these women's personal narratives that have not been widely studied in Russian literary scholarship - translation and broadcasting. The study of translation is becoming increasingly significant in literary studies. Like translation, broadcasting is a realm of cultural production not widely studied in literature, but is now playing a more important role. Examining the film and radio texts of Geier's, and Berggolts' lives, along with their written texts, is indispensable to any study of their works.