

Title: The Munchausen Syndrome of a Titular Consular: Gogol's "Diary of a Madman" and Osipov's "Ne liubo ne slushai, a lgat' ne meshai".

Author: Yevgeny Slivkin, University of Oklahoma

In 1791 St. Petersburg printer I. K. Shor published N. P. Osipov's Russian translation of Burger's version of "Baron Munchhausen's Narrative of his Marvelous Travels and Campaigns in Russia" (1786). From the beginning of the nineteenth century Munchhausen's stories, published mostly under the title "Ne liubo ne slushai, a lgat' ne meshai", flowed into the burgeoning Russian book market. Researching these publications in the Russian State Library, I have discovered about twenty editions of "Ne liubo ne slushai" from 1797 to 1873. Surprisingly, the Munchausen discourse in Russian literature of the nineteenth century has never been explored by scholars. Iu. M. Lotman noticed the connection between Gogol's story "Diary of a Madman" (1834) and Russian popular prints with captions (lubok); A. Pletneva reveals the lubok tradition in Gogol's "Nos" and she writes that lubok texts with their detailed descriptions of monsters and dragons "recall the utterances of a madman." This paper demonstrates that the Russian versions of Munchhausen's stories with their surrealistic imagery and nonsensical statements recall a madman's delirium even more closely. Conducting a comparative reading of the notes of Gogol's madman and Osipov's translation of Munchhausen's stories, I suggest some strong intertextual connections. I also argue that Munchhausen's stories, which were widely read by both the lower classes and the nobility in Russia, occupied an intermediate position between the lubok and high literature and thus served as the perfect conduit for transporting fantastic folklore elements into literary texts. For a researcher of Russian literature of the nineteenth century it is especially important to be aware of this function of "Ne liubo ne slushai" in the case of Gogol, considering the writer's propensity for the extraordinary and his interest in folklore.

slivkin@ou.edu