cognac, now he is "stupefied" (77). Though his heart is beating, he feels as if he were standing outside himself, and his body is detached from his "I." Chandler captures all the vividness of Grossman's near-death experience, as Grossman gradually re-integrates his consciousness and body, and "[a] skull covered by cold clammy skin had once again become my warm dry forehead" (80).

A final point. All of Grossman's oeuvre is heavily autobiographical. Relatives and friends struggle over his legacy. At an academic symposium at St. Peter's College, Oxford University, to accompany the September 2011 BBC 4 radio dramatization of *Life and Fate*, Robert Chandler alluded to the conflicting narratives given by Grossman's best friend, Semyon Lipkin; the love of his life, Madame Ekaterina Zabolotskaya; his stepson, Fyodor Guber; and his daughter, Ekaterina Vasilievna Korotkova. As Chandler succinctly puts it, "Lipkin and Zabolotskaya tell one story. Fyodor and Ekaterina Vasilievna tell another." We, too, met this conflict in our research. Whereas both Lipkin and Madame Zabolotskaya shared everything with us, Guber refused us access to any of Grossman's letters or notes without our agreement that we would submit for his prior approval any portion of our manuscript which used materials he had given us. We were thus unable to see any of Grossman's letters to his wife (or any other items we discussed with him). Whatever arrangement Chandler reached with Guber—who is thanked in the acknowledgements—he has been able to use Grossman's letters to his wife in the introduction and the notes. These invaluable citations allow us to see yet another dimension to this complex man.

John Garrard, University of Arizona

Note: John Garrard donated all his archival materials on Grossman to The Harvard University's Houghton Rare Book and Manuscript Library, where they are accessible as the "John and Carol Garrard Collection," housed within the Andrei Sakharov Archive.

Vyacheslav Pyetsukh. *The New Moscow Philosophy*. Trans. Krystyna Anna Steiger. Prague: Twisted Spoon Press, 2011. 186 pp. $16.00 (paper).

Vyacheslav Pyetsukh's *New Moscow Philosophy*, originally published in *Novyi Mir* No. 1 in 1989 as *Novaia Moskovskaia filosofiia*, is set up like a murder mystery that slowly emerges as a parody of a murder mystery. Unlike its primary inspiration, Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, this novel may or may not involve an actual murder—we don't find out until the end of part III. Nor do we find anything like the setting of that earlier work, as all the action takes place in a communal apartment in which all of the book's idiosyncratic characters are residents. The thirteen are listed in the manner of a cast on the novel's first page, giving the book the feel of a dramatic production, a performance in which the narrator takes part, commenting, contextualizing, and playing himself. The action takes place over three days, Friday to Sunday, and Monday serves as an epilogue. The book is tightly organized, careful, allusive in all sorts of ways that literary types will appreciate, and hilarious.

There may or may not have been a ghost in the apartment just before the murder, who may or may not have been Sergei Vladimirovich Pumpiansky, original owner of the apartment and father of the potentially murdered tenant, Alexandra Sergeyevna (also known as "the old lady"). The tenants engage in extensive discussions about the possible crime, its possible origins, the nature of crime in general, as well as life, death, and, of course, literature and its relation to life, especially Russian literature and Russian life. The narrator starts things off in this vein, making a strong, if perhaps ironic, case for the reality of famous Russian characters of classic works as he sets the scene for the novel's primary action:

> What's important is [...] that in all probability literature is the root of life, so to speak, if not life itself, only slightly displaced along the x-axis, and consequently it should come as no surprise that in Russia where life goes literature follows, that Russians not only write what they live but in part live what they write, that literature has such spiritual authority here, in certain romantic instances it may occur to a completely reasonable person that Alyosha Karamazov wouldn't behave in such a way. And there's positively nothing to be ashamed of when in certain romantic instances we nod and glance back at those figures we hold sacred in the works of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, or Chekhov, for they are not figments of the imagination, but the true saints of Russian life, having existed in actual fact as exemplars, worthy of imitation in how they suffered and reasoned, for the whole point is that all of it happened. (13–14)

And so, he continues, a certain misguided youth smashes in the head of an old pawnbroker woman with an axe:

> This scene has not only occurred in all of the stated details in real life many times over, it's even occurred yet again just recently. True, the circumstances weren't particularly bloody: the sacrificial old lady in a dark piebald coat of an old-fashioned fabric and cut, wearing a funny little fur hat with an ear-band and a pair of felt-and-rubber boots commonly referred to as "farewell youth," was just sitting on a bench at the very top of Pokrovsky Boulevard, having closed her eyes and folded her hands on her stomach—the ways of the last quarter of the twentieth century have succeeded in tempering the classical scene. (14)

Krystyna Anna Steiger has done an excellent job of recreating the feeling of Bulgakovesque prose in the details of dress, and indeed, in true Soviet fashion, the central question on discovery of the body becomes not "Was she murdered, and if so, by whom?" but "Who will get her apartment?"

In the course of one discussion, Valenchik (aspiring writer) suggests they proceed to a secret vote among the apartment's inhabitants to determine who will inherit the augmented living space:

> "Here's a matchbox with exactly seven matches in it, corresponding to the number of eligible voters: whoever casts votes in favor of the nominated candidates returns the match to the box in its original state; whoever votes against Nikita breaks off the head of the match; whoever votes against Vaska puts half a match back into the box; whoever votes against Vera leaves behind a tiny stub."
>
> "What an incomprehensible electoral system," said Anna Olegovna, looking around dully at the gathering. "And supposing I want to cast a vote against Vera but for Nikita?"
>
> "Then you leave the head on the match and gnaw off a tiny stub from the opposite end."
>
> "And for Vera but against Vasily?"
>
> "Then just break the match into two pieces of equal length." (129)

I will not quote from the extensive and equally entertaining philosophical discussions between Belotsvetov (pharmacologist) and Chinarikov (caretaker and resident philosopher). Suffice it to say that they range from imagining a variety of scenarios for the murder to the nature of good and evil, replete with appropriate references.

Pyetsukh is at constant play with the basic question of literary ordering and the literary construction of reality, especially conventional plot, always a clever move when the genre—whether murder mystery or parody of the same—depends on embedding details in a manner that might make them seem incongruous, if not inconsequential. Steiger's translation, as indicated above, is careful and effective, and the book flies by. Her translator's note provides some insight

into the difficulty of re-creating tone—I would have liked to learn more about this. The notes to the text, from page 181 to 186, are not indicated in the text itself, so one might not know they are there until turning the last page. This is a good way to include notes when the work reads as quickly as this one, with a little treasure at the end to extend and deepen the reading experience.

Russell Scott Valentino, Indiana University, Bloomington

Valentina Brougher, Frank Miller, and Mark Lipovetsky, ed. and trans. *50 Writers: An Anthology of 20th Century Russian Short Stories*. Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2011. 788 pp. Cloth.

Valentina Brougher, Mark Lipovetsky, and Frank Miller have rendered an important service to the profession by compiling a rich, judiciously selected, and carefully translated anthology of twentieth-century Russian short stories.

50 Writers is in equal measure an encyclopedia of modern Russian history and literary aesthetics. As Lipovetsky and Brougher point out in their illuminating introduction to the anthology, "The relative brevity of the [short story] genre makes it possible to include in one volume a wide spectrum of artistic approaches to depicting reality that Russian writers of the twentieth century favored and, in some cases, introduced to the world" (22). At the same time, "The short story was the ideal genre for a quick, sometimes even lightning-fast, reaction to the shocking events that punctuated the twentieth century" (22). Offering a wealth of cultural and historical material, this book may serve as an introduction to twentieth-century Russian culture. Alternatively—and to my mind more fruitfully—this compilation will cater to those students and general readers who already possess knowledge of this realm and seek to enrich it further, often in unexpected and exciting ways.

Of existing English-language anthologies of modern Russian short stories, *50 Writers* is by far the most expansive—spanning over eight hundred pages and covering an array of themes and styles, from pre-revolutionary modernist gems by Alexander Kuprin, Fyodor Sologub, and Alexei Remizov, all the way to post-Soviet phantasmagoria of Victor Pelevin, Vladimir Sorokin, and Yuri Mamleev. The anthology nicely complements earlier collections (such as Clarence Brown's *The Portable Twentieth-Century Russian Reader* (1985) and Robert Chandler's more recent *Russian Short Stories from Pushkin to Buida* (2005)) by including mostly newly translated, non-traditional, yet representative and compelling selections by classic twentieth-century writers. For instance, Ivan Bunin's "Tanya" is featured where one might well expect the more familiar "The Gentleman from San Francisco" or "Light Breathing." Kuprin's "Gambrinus" is included instead of the more obvious "The Garnet Bracelet" or "Staff Captain Rybnikov," and Mikhail Zoshchenko's "Black Magic" and "The Female Fish" appear in place of, say, "The Bathhouse." Alexander Solzhenitsyn's "The Young" offers an engaging alternative to the well-publicized "Matryona's Home," etc. Simultaneously, *50 Writers* updates the anthologies that precede it by featuring a number of stories written in the last decade of the previous century by Pelevin, Lyudmila Ulitskaya, Iury Buida, Lyudmila Petrushevskaya, Mamleev, and other prominent post-Soviet writers.

Even an eight-hundred-page volume, of course, is bound to display some omissions. Tales in the grotesque vein seem to appear somewhat more often than works composed in the more traditional realist style, just as oppositional authors of various kinds make a more frequent appearance than do official Soviet writers. Or else, when someone like Mikhail Sholokhov enters the picture, he shows himself in a more ambivalent light—perhaps for the better. One may, depending on personal preferences, wish that a late Leo Tolstoy or Anton Chekhov piece were included in the beginning, maybe a Bely story in the early twentieth-century section or a Rubina story in