**CHUKOVSKY, Kornei Ivanovich** (ЧУКОВСКИЙ, КОРНЕЙ ИВАНОВИЧ) (1882-1969)

Born Nikolai Vasil’evich Korneichukov, a renowned writer, critic, and translator. Was born in St. Petersburg but moved to Odessa at the age of three. Established a reputation as a journalist, literary critic and translator before the Bolshevik Revolution, publishing essays in leading journals and founding his own satirical journal *Signal* (1905-06). Experienced periodic persecution by the government both before and after the Revolution. Extremely prolific with wide-ranging literary tastes, published several collections of critical essays on the leading writers of the SILVER AGE. Studied the work of Anton Chekhov and Nikolai Nekrasov throughout his life. Received the State Lenin Prize in 1962 for *The Mastery of Nekrasov* (*Masterstvo* Nekrasova) (1953). Served as London correspondent for the *Odessa Times* (1903-04) and later translated the works of Walt Whitman and Oscar Wilde, among many other English and American writers. Named head of the English section of World Literature Publishers in 1918, where he formulated general guidelines for literary translators, later published as *The Art of Translation* (*Iskusstvo perevoda*) (1936), and then as *A High Art* (*Vyssokoe Iskusstvo*) (1941). Became a popular writer of children’s literature, authoring a number of now-classic works. Also authored a book on children’s speech and on the Russian language. Was awarded an honorary degree by Oxford University in 1962.

**Timeline of Life and Works**

1882: born in St. Petersburg

1885: moves to Odessa

1898: expelled from school

1901: publishes first article in the *Odessa News* (*Odesskie Novosti*)

1903: marries Maria Borisovna Goldfeld in Odessa

1904: birth of son Nikolai

1905: arrives in Petersburg and begins publishing in the Petersburg press; visits the battleship Potemkin during the mutiny; begins editorship of the satirical journal *Signal;* arrest on the charge of offending the royal family; released on bail

1906: trial and closing of the journal *Signal*

1907: birth of daughter Lidiia

1908: publishes the collection of critical essays *From Chekhov to Our Days* (*Ot Chekhova do nashikh dnei*), as well as the monographs *Nat Pinkerton and Contemporary Literature* (Nat Pinkerton i sovremennaia literature) and *Leonid Andreyev, Big and Small* (*Leonid Andreev, Bol’shoi i malen’kii*)

1910: birth of son Boris

1911: publishes the collection Critical Stories, the brochure “To Mothers on Children’s Journals” (“Mater’iam o detskikh zhuranalakh”), and the book *On Leonid Andreev* (*O Leonide Andreeve*)

1912: begins editing for the journal *Niva,* publishes the *Collected Works of Oscar Wilde* (in Russian), and gives lectures on Wilde

1914: publishes the collection *Faces and Masks* (*Lista i maski*)*,* *A Book on Contemporary Writers* (Kniga o sovremennykh pisateliakh), the second edition of Critical Stories, and *Egofuturists and Cubofuturists: Models of Futuristic Works* (*Egofuturisty i kubofuturisty: Obraztsy futuristicheskikh proizvedenii*)

1915: publishes the book *The Silent Began to Speak: Tommy Atkins at War* (*Zagovorili molchavshie. Tommi Atkins na voine*)

1916: travels to England for the second time as part of a delegation of Russian journalists upon the invitation of the British government

1917: edits the journal *For Children* (*Dlia detei*) in which he publishes the children’s story “Crocodile” (“Krokodil”)

1918: commissioned by the Committee on the Publication of the Russian Classics; begins work at the World Literature publishing house

1919: delivers lecture “The Principles of Literary Translation” (“Prinstipy khudozhestvennogo perevoda”); opens the Studio for Literary Translation at the World Literature publishing house

1920: birth of his daughter Maria (Mura)

1922: publishes the books *Poet and Executioner (Nekrasov and Muravyev)* (*Poet i palach (Nekrasov i Murav’ev))*, *The Wife of the Poet* (*Zhena poeta*), *A Book about Alexander Blok* (*Kniga o Aleksandre Bloke*), *Nekrasov as Artist* (*Nekrasov kak zhudozhnik*), *Oscar Wilde* (*Oskar Uail’d*), and *The Futurists* (*Futuristy*)

1923: publishes the stories “Mododyr” and “Tarakanishche” (“The Monster Cockroach”)

1924: publishes the books *Alexander Blok as Man and Poet* (*Aleksandr Blok kak chelovek i poet*)*,* and *The Two Souls of Maxim Gorky* (*Dve dushi Maksima Gorkogo*)

1925: publishes “Barmalei”

1926: publishes “Telephone” (“Telefon”), “Fedor’s Sorrow” (“Fedorino gore”), and the collection *Nekrasov. Articles and Material* (*Nekrasov. Stat’i i materialy*); arrest of his daughter Lidiia who is exiled to Saratov

1927: Lidiya returns from exile; all his children’s works are detained by the censor

1928: Lenin’s wife, Nataliya Krupskaya, publishes the letter “On ‘Crocodile’ by K. Chukovsky” (“O ‘Krokodile’ K. Chukovskogo”) in *Pravda;* Maxim Gorky publishes a letter in defense of Chukovsky; publishes the book Little Children (Malen’kie deti), later renamed *From Two to Five* (*Ot dvukh do piati*)

1929: publishes a letter renouncing his children’s stories and promising to create the collection “Happy Kolkhozland” (“Veselaia kolkhoziia”)

1930: publishes *Stories about Nekrasov* (*Rasskazy o Nekrasove*)

1931: death of his daughter Mura

1934: makes two presentations at the First Congress of Soviet Writers; publishes *People and Books of the Sixties* (*Liudi i knigi shestdesiatykh*)

1937: arrest of Lidiya Chukovsky’s second husband, the physicist M. P. Bronshtein

1940: publishes a collection of recollections Repin. Gorky. Mayakovsky. Bryusov

1941: publishes the book *High Art* (*Vysokoe iskusstvo*; second edition of *The Art of Translation* (*Iskusstvo perevoda*)); is evacuated to Tashkent

1942: publishes the children’s story “We Shall Defeat Barmalei!” (“Odoleem Barmaleia!)

1943: article by P. Iudin in Pravda launches campaign against “We Shall Defeat Barmalei!”

1949: publishes the brochure “Pushkin and Nekrasov” (“Pushkin i Nekrasov)

1952: publishes the brochure “Gogol and Nekrasov” (“Gogol’ i Nekrasov”)

1953: publishes the book *The Craftsmanship of Nekrasov* (*Masterstvo Nekrasova*)

1954: nomination of *The Craftsmanship of Nekrasov* for the Stalin Prize; presentation at the Second Congress of Soviet Writers

1957: awarded the Order of Lenin

1962: publishes the book *Alive as Life* (*Zhivoi kak zhizn’*); receives the Lenin Prize for *The Craftsmanship of Nekrasov;* is awarded an honorary doctorate by Oxford University; publishes the collection of recollections *Contemporaries* (*Sovremenniki*)

1963: meets Alexander Solzhenitsyn

1964: speaks out in defense of the poet Joseph Brodsky after his arrest on the charge of social parasitism

1965: publishes the first two volumes of his collected works

1966: publishes the next two volumes of his collected works

1967: publishes the fifth volume of his collected works

1968: publishes the sixth volume of his collected works

1969: dies in Moscow

[](http://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&docid=vMhC4Zfr5XeNtM&tbnid=imfylQQKUa4sVM:&ved=0CAUQjRw&url=http://www.librarything.com/author/chukovskykornei&ei=m3s1U_yFOJHEsAT8xYGgCQ&bvm=bv.63808443,d.b2I&psig=AFQjCNGibunC1InZ2XU9-9uQU3at-VuHfQ&ust=1396100325632068)

Chukovsky, Kornei Ivanovich (ЧУКОВСКИЙ, КОРНЕЙ ИВАНОВИЧ) (1882-1969)

Born Nikolai Vasil’evich Korneichukov, Chukovsky was renowned as a writer, critic, and translator in a career that stretched across the greater part of Russia’s turbulent twentieth century. The illegitimate child of Emmanuil Levenson and Ekaterina Korneichukova, a maid in the Levenson home, he was born in St. Petersburg but moved to Odessa in at the age of three. He was expelled from gymnasium for his “lowly origins,” forcing him to complete his high school and university degrees by correspondence. He established his reputation as a journalist, literary critic and translator before the Bolshevik Revolution, publishing essays in the Russian Symbolist journal *Vesy* and founding his own satirical journal *Signal* (1905-06). A chronicler of the SILVER AGE, he published several collections of critical essays, including *From Chekhov to Our Days* (*Ot Chekhova do nashikh* dnei) (1908); *Critical Stories* (*Kriticheskie* razkazzy) (1911); and *Faces and Masks* (*Liki i maski*) (1914)—and was a close friend to the leading poets and writers of the time. Extremely prolific, in 1922 alone he published two books about Nekrasov, two about Alexander Blok, one about Oscar Wilde, and one about the Futurists.

While his literary tastes were wide-ranging, he studied the work of two Russian authors—the writer and playwright Anton Chekhov and the poet Nikolai Nekrasov—throughout his life. Chukovsky focused on the aesthetic qualities of Nekrasov’s poetry, which had previously been overshadowed by discussion of the poet’s social engagement and, as editor of the author’s complete collected works, helped to establish definitive versions of his poems. He received the State Lenin Prize in 1962 for *The Mastery of Nekrasov* (*Masterstvo* Nekrasova) (1953). He served as London correspondent for the *Odessa Times* (1903-04) and later translated the works of Walt Whitman and Oscar Wilde, among many other English and American writers. His translations of these authors greatly contributed to their popularity in Russia. He was named by Maxim Gorky to head the English section of World Literature Publishers in 1918, during which time he composed general guidelines for literary translators, later published as *The Art of Translation* (*Iskusstvo perevoda*) (1936), and then as *A High Art* (*Vyssokoe Iskusstvo*) (1941).

He became a popular writer of children’s literature, authoring now-classic works such as “Crocodile”(“Krokodil”) (1916); “Tarakanishche” (“The Monster Cockroach”) (1923), and “Aibolit” (“Ouch-it-hurts”) (1929). He also authored a book on children’s speech, *From Two to Five* (*Ot dvukh do piati*) (1933), republished several times throughout his life, as well as *Alive as Life* (Zhivoi kak zhizn’) (1962), about the Russian language. In 1962 he was awarded an honorary degree at Oxford. Both before and after the Revolution, Chukovsky experienced periodic attacks by the government for his writings. Nevertheless, Chukovsky defended the writers Mikhail ZOSHCHENKO, Anna AKHMATOVOA, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn when they were being attacked by the regime. Toward the end of his life, he publicly defended the poet Joseph Brodsky. His daughter, Lydia Chukovsky, also a writer, was a close friend of Akhmatova. His oldest son, Nikolai, was a translator.

**References and Further Reading:**

**Biography**

Luk’ianova, Irina. 2007. *Kornei Chukovskii.* Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia.

This is an extremely thorough and fair biographical account of Chukovsky’s life, which inscribes his life and work within the shifting political and cultural climate of his time.

**Selection of Critical Works**

Karlova, T. K. 1988. *Zhurnalist i literaturnyi kritik* (*Journalist and Literary Critic*)*.* Kazan: Kazan UP.

This is a good account of Chukovsky’s early career as a journalist.

Petrovskii, M. S. 1966. *Kniga o Kornee Chukovskom* (*A Book about Kornei Chukovsky*).Moscow: Sovetskii Pisatel’.

This is a somewhat hagiographic Soviet account of the author and his work, which appeared toward the end of his life.

Sivokon’, S. 1983. *Chukovskii i deti* (*Chukovsky and Children*). Moscow: Znanie.

This is a very enjoyable treatment of Chukovskii’s fascination with children.

**Major Editions and Diaries**

Chukovskii, Kornei. 1994, 1997. *Dnevnik. V 2 t.* (*Diary. In 2 Vol.*). Ed. E. Ts. Chukovskaia. Moscow: Sovremennyi Pisatel’.

The diary offers a unique and unflinching view into the workings of Soviet cultural politics.

Chukovskii, Kornei. 2009. *Dni moei zhizni* (*Days of My Life*)*.* Moscow: Boslen.

This is a one-volume edition of Chukovskii’s diaries.

Chukovskii, Kornei. 1965-69. *Sobranie sochinenii. V 6 t.* (*Collected Works. In 6 Vol.*). Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia Literatura.

Chukovskii, Kornei. 1990. *Sochineniia. V 2 t.* (*Works. In 2 Vol.*). Ed. E. Ts. Chukovskaia. Moscow: Pravda.

Chukovsky, Kornei. 2005. *Diary, 1901-1969.* Ed. Victor Erlich. Trans. Michael Henry Heim. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Chukovsky, Kornei. 1984. *A High Art.* Trans. and ed. Lauren G. Leighton. Knoxville: University of Texas Press.

This provides an excellent view of Chukovsky’s nuanced and sophisticated views on translation, honed over a career as one of Russia’s leading translators of English and American fiction.

**Brian James Baer, Kent State University**

URL for photo: <http://www.librarything.com/author/chukovskykornei>

URL for book cover: <http://librarything-svetlana.blogspot.com/2010/07/i-have-been-asked-to-display-some-more.html>

