

LOST DETECTIVES PODCAST
EPISODE 1

Recorded in St Andrews, 12/12/2019

with

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Funded by the University of St Andrews Knowledge Exchange & Impact Fund

Further information at: www.st-andrews.ac.uk/lostdetectives/

TRANSCRIPT

LOST DETECTIVES PODCAST:

EPISODE 1

CW: Hello and welcome to the first episode of a new podcast series entitled Lost Detectives with me, Claire Whitehead, Reader in Russian at the University of St Andrews, and -

CA: Carol Adlam. I'm a freelance writer and illustrator.

CW: So, this is a project aimed at bringing lost, forgotten or neglected works of, at the moment, 19th-century Russian crime fiction to greater public attention and readership through various acts of adaptation. It's kindly funded by the Knowledge Exchange and Impact fund at the University of St Andrews, and supported by the Centre for Russian, Soviet, Central and East European Studies (CRSCEES) and the School of Modern Languages at the University of St Andrews. We launched Lost Detectives in March 2019, having initially worked together on the cover image for my book devoted to late Imperial-era Russian crime fiction. That is a topic that I've been working on for about 15 years now as part of my academic research work, and what I've discovered over that time is that there's a huge number of crime stories written and published in Russia beginning in about the 1860s, and about which very little is known either in Russia or anywhere else.

So I've been reading and writing about authors such as Nikolai Sokolovskii, Petr Stepanov, Konstantin Popov, Nikolai Timofeev, Alexander Shkliarevskii and Alexandra Sokolova for many years in a purely academic context. That work led to the publication of my book The

Poetics of Early Russian Crime Fiction 1860 - 1917: Deciphering Stories of Detection, in 2018 by the publisher Legenda. It's a book I'm very proud of and which I think makes a significant contribution to scholarship, but it suffers from a significant flaw - even if that flaw is unavoidable - and that is that, with the exception of books written by Fedor Dostoevsky and Anton Chekhov, none of the works that I write about in that book have ever been translated into English, and most of them have never been reprinted in Russian since their original publication date.

So during a conversation that Carol I had about the cover image that she so brilliantly designed for the book we talked about what else we might do with my research and how we might make it accessible to a wider audience outside of Russia and particularly at the moment in the English-speaking world. Carol mentioned the work she'd already done on graphic novels and we began to explore the idea of adaptation in relation to the project that I'd conducted. So the very first stage of the project involves selecting one of the works that I'd written about in the book and thinking about adaptation, and so the first stage of the project involved a work by a writer called Semyon Panov and the work that we chose was called in Russian Tri suda, ili ubiistvo vo vremia bala and in English Three Courts, or Murder during the Ball. So maybe, Carol, you'd like to say a little something about work that I sent you and what we did with that?

CA: Yeah, of course. So I should say as well that I specialise in graphic novels and I've been working a lot on writing scripts for them as well, so when you sent me this project, this text, it was a really exciting opportunity for me to try and bring together two aspects of my working life, one of which was that I used to be a Russian lecturer - and so I can read Russian as well - and also my writing and illustration life too. So when you when you asked me to do your book cover I think you got a bit more than you bargained for -

CW: Absolutely-

CA: So this has grown and grown. So I took the text that Claire sent me - the Panov work, which is a very long - well I remember it as a long piece, and then I turned it into an English-language script adaptation. I went through it, I condensed an awful lot and then I did 10 pages

of artwork that we exhibited here in St Andrews, and I sent it to various publishers, and we have our fingers crossed to see what happens next, to see if anyone will bite on that. Ideally this will turn out to be a graphic novel of about 120 pages I think. And my name for it - I took it a step further away from the 'Three Courts' title because that didn't make a lot of sense to me from - I was thinking about an audience that wouldn't know what this was about - it's the name of the key character, in fact the two key characters, who are involved in this murder story.

CW: Perhaps we should say a little bit about what that novella is about so, without spoiling it for anyone who might eventually see the hopefully completed graphic novel, it's a story, it's a murder story, where a woman named Elena Ruslanova is being celebrated at her family mansion for her engagement ball. She's young, and at some point during that ball held in the mansion at which there are something like 227 guests present, she is discovered, dead, in her boudoir, with her throat slit. And, it's noted rather belatedly, with her diamond tiara stolen. And I think one of the reasons that Carol and I thought that might be quite a productive text to work on is that the text itself - the original Russian novel - pays quite a bit of attention to the layout of the family mansion and particularly where the body is discovered vis-à-vis where the guests are dancing, and the logistics of how a murder could possibly have been committed unseen in a room in the heart of a family mansion when apparently nobody saw or heard anything untoward.

CA: Yes, so it's a locked room mystery, and an impossible space, as I discovered when I tried to draw it or even to map it out. The first thing that the detective does when he arrives is he calls not for a doctor but for an architect - because the space is so complex. And in terms of different genres it's a mixture of Gothic space, and a more open space. We have long dark corridors full of portraits and candles, and then we have an open gallery space which is very important - it's where the murder and the witnessing of the murders takes place through a set of windows, interior and exterior. So for me as an artist it presented me with a number of problems and issues, the first of which was quite how to represent this complex space. So one of the things I tried to do was literally draw a map - an architect's plan - which the eagle-eyed observer would note doesn't work. And the second was how to show that huge number of people, these 227 guests who are present. And again the answer to that - and I only had 10

pages to work with - is to do with that economy of expression that illustration permits, so an image can say something in an incredibly condensed way that in fact with our author it might take 20 pages for him to get around to saying it -

CW: quite possibly -

CA: yeah, so there are lots of visual issues, and there are also fantastic things that I can work with including glass ceiling and lots of framing - literal frames - window frames and so on, as well as any number of extraordinary characters to depict.

CW: So if you want to find out more about that very first stage of the project then we'll give a link to our project website at the end of this episode and there are more details there about the various events we had about that and we will continue to update people about progress with publishers.

But really what that project demonstrated so amply was the potential that we both felt was inherent in this collaboration between academic, primarily in my case really interested initially in the poetics of storytelling techniques, the sort of literary aesthetic preoccupation of these works that I think it's very important that the record of 19th-century Russian literary history is expanded to include these works - if you say to people that you're a 19th-century Russian expert they tend to think of Fyodor Dostoevsky, Alexander Pushkin – all of whom are of people that I've worked on and that I teach. But actually what the public in Russia in the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s and so on were reading just as much if not more than these great - now labelled great - works were actually some of this rather more sensational fiction, this popular fiction. And what it demonstrated through that first stage of the project was how fruitful and how productive and how mutually stimulating and rewarding a conversation between the two of us and working together bringing together the kind of textual, the visual -

CA: So I want to ask to you a question ... I came to you saying I'm going to push from the other direction, because you've been working on this for the last 15 years and it's your subject specialism as an academic, quite rightly you want to treat that seriously, but I'm coming at it as a writer and illustrator with a brief really to make it as accessible as possible to a wide

public – so, were the tensions in that for you? Did you think there were? Because I remember that there were things we had to work around and really sort of test and pull at – namely, the introduction of a sub-plot, because I felt that there were real issues with the original plot as it stood. So this is a recurring question really about how far you as academic collaborator are prepared to go effectively to see the work changed in this process, because I'm going to be coming at it saying, but I'm writing now, in the twenty-first century, we have different sensibilities, we have different ideas – so, what are we're going to do about that?

CW: I think it's probably going to be perennial issue for us, in the sense that to some extent my identity as an academic is very much as a nineteenth-century expert - that's primarily how I would market myself- and I think there is a tension for me in the sense of I do - I would like the audience as broadly conceived as possible to recognise that these are works that at their outset emanate from the late 19th century in Russia, because I think it's a blind spot for a lot of people that the existence of these great realist philosophical novels - albeit that that gives Russian literature a very good world reputation – it nevertheless overshadows a great deal of other production at that time and gives a rather skewed impression of what people were writing and what people were reading... That said, I think I recognise that one of the potentials of this project and this collaboration is that we have a contemporary situation in which crime fiction is very much in vogue in all of its various national traditions, in all of its various modes - that's short stories, novels, television adaptations, film adaptations, radio plays, podcasts - the list could go on - we are at a particular moment now, and there's a particular appetite, and I think I think we've said to each other before that the idea that you would have a mass UK TV audience watching a subtitled Scandinavian drama on primetime television even something like 15 years ago might well have been unthinkable. And so I do think there's an appetite there, and I think if there is a necessity or various obligations to or desires to make 19th-century Russian work more accessible, more palatable, in some cases more attractive to a contemporary non-Russian audience, then I think I have to be absolutely open to the sort of suggestions that you're putting towards me. I think one of the particular problems that we ran up against with Panov's Bobrov Affair/Three Courts is what is - from our temporal perspective – a rather problematic woman-on-woman crime. So Elena Ruslanova, as we learn, is actually murdered by her best friend - her female best friend - and what Panov seems to suggest in his original work is that that's for no other reason than female

jealousy over a man. And I think for us as two women in the 21st Century that's rather a cop-out.

So I think some of the discussions that we've had around those changes have been some of the most revelatory discussions I've had, because it's allowed me to see what adaptation can involve and what doesn't need to be in it and it shouldn't be usually a blind faithfulness, an unquestioning faithfulness to the original - if we think it's appropriate to manipulate the original without utterly distorting it, then then I think that's probably what we might well end up doing.

CA: That leads right into the question of what is adaptation and so on, but because it's a body of work we're working with, and not a single text, that actually allows us to really play, I hope, over the course of this project, where I'm going to be doing adaptations of three texts over the next period next year. That means I think there's real scope to play with different forms, and that's what we can talk about in a minute. I was consciously looking at this fashion for or a perennial attraction to Neo-Victorianism in our own culture as well and so it was ok to keep it in a vaguely nineteenth-century setting, although I decided quite early on - having gone and tried to research, you know, what did the wallpaper look like and so on - that this would just drive me round the bend. I can't do that. So I tried to come up with other ways of signalling in shorthand some sort of distance, temporal distance between our time and the time depicted, by making the party a fancy dress party that would reference old Russian folkloric visual symbols - masks and so on, headgear, and various other forms of fancy dress - so that particular one I decided to leave in a period but not be too concerned about actual accuracy. Because I think that's a real problem with adaptation, this issue of fidelity, it's a perennial - it comes up all the time, this idea of being faithful to a text and in a way it's an illusion. You want to reference it, I suppose, but you also have to bear in mind that your audience might have absolutely no real knowledge of or very little interest in the actual source material. So, what you need to present to them if you want it to work is something that was interesting enough for them to be interested in it as it stands, and maybe - maybe - out of that take something from that about another culture that they didn't know before. That's the ideal way, and that's what I'm trying to do ...

CW: Yes, even as we talk just now I think it's really interesting to think of the text, if you like, that I provide you with, although of course they're not my texts – they're just ones that I happen to have written about and researched, but all I'm I think all I'm really doing in that process is providing you with a source -

[20.44]

CA: That's right -

CW: and I think it's been really interesting in both the first stage of the project on the Panov novel, and the second stage, which we will come on to talk about in a minute, is the extent to which we are just selecting necessarily really quite a restricted number of source texts, because I think in my book I reference at least 40 different works - not by 40 different authors but 40 different works - that would be an immense project -

CA: yes, the rest of our lives -

CW: Yes, I doubt, I think we might exhaust our readership or spectatorship with ... But what was very interesting in for me with the Panov novel was the extent to which some of the discussions we could have about what would be an acceptable form of adaptation and what would be an acceptable kind of deviation from the original source text could be informed by my knowledge of other source texts, so that what you end up with is an adapted work that is, if you like, bigger than the sum of its parts. Because what we did with that one in particular was consider possible changes to the plot line and how acceptable would they be -

CA: in light of that larger body of material -

CW: exactly, as you said, and so some of the things you confronted me with as possible directions of travel that weren't mapped out by the original text - I think we had some quite fun conversations where you thought I'd be very shocked by some of your suggestions and in fact my response was well, no, that happens all the time in Russian translation of the late nineteenth century -

CA: [laughs] do you want to say what that was?

CW: Yes, so what we did with the Panov novel was, because we were both rather dissatisfied with the rather simplistic explanation of why one woman would have murdered another woman, what you ingeniously came up with was the suggestion that there might be another motive for the murder that involved a plot line of incest between the murderess, as a witness of possibly incestuous affair with between the victim, and a man who actually in the original novel is variously labelled as either the victim's brother or her father -

CA: No, the murderer's father/brother -

CW: Yes, and so what we came up with up was this idea that actually introducing an incestuous plot line as a motive into this particular adaptation - although it's not there in the original, it is there in other texts of this time -

CA: yes, because you said to me that there's a special word for this –

CW: yes, there's a particular word. I always enjoy teaching this course to my undergraduate class and one of their favourite bits of vocabulary that they are attain during this course is the word *snokharchestvo*, which is the term used to designate illegal incest sex between a father-in-law and his daughter-in-law - which was apparently common enough to late imperial Russia to deserve its own term, whereas I think in English I'm not aware of that existing as a term, but perhaps that's my ignorance. So these have been really productive discussions –

CA: Can I just say that that also arose out of the text itself, because of that confusion - the text had this word brother and it had the word father for the same character at different points, and that gave me – I mean for whatever reason, we talked about why that might be the case whether it had been serialised, whether there had been gaps in production that meant the author had actually forgotten who this relatively minor character - but it gave me impetus really, and gave me free rein to think, oh, well, actually I'm not bound by this text, because it's unstable, it's not fixed, and that's the beauty of doing something that isn't canonical - it's not Dostoevsky, people don't know it and, I'm also not making claims for this to be an

authentic or entirely faithful version – these are not translations. It's something else again. I think about this with regard to the second text that I'm working on now that it's really opened up to me possibilities in form and in setting that that are endless - I could set one in space, who knows?

CW: future projects - So we should say that the first stage of the project is still ongoing, in that Carol sent her 10 pages of proof-of-concept artwork for the proposed graphic novel to publishers, and we're waiting -

CA: and script as well -

CW: yes, and we're awaiting the outcome of that, but we really felt I think that we'd started to work on something that we were both really excited about, that we were both very motivated by, and that we both finding very inspiring in lots of different ways. And so what we've done is apply successfully for further funding from University of St Andrews Knowledge Exchange and Impact Fund to take this into the Lost Detectives Stage 2, and what we are proposing is, as you might have worked out, a podcast series of which this is the first episode, but also funding for Carol to adapt three further works of nineteenth-century Russian crime fiction.

We are currently working on the first of those, and so the second work that we're working on this project is by an author Nikolai Timofeev who I referenced a little bit earlier. And what's interesting I think about Timofeev is that we don't really know very much about him actually, precisely because he's not a canonical writer, so people haven't gone back and excavated his past in the way that they have with certain other writers of that period. But what we do know is that he worked as a judicial investigator, a criminal investigator in the mid-19th century, before going on to become a well-known barrister when that position was introduced after the legal reforms of 1864. And he drew on that professional experience to write quite a long list of works in the 1870s, beginning in the 1870s through the 1880s, that had a good readership, and he was really very popular at the time.

What I sent to Carol as a source text was a collection written by Timofeev that goes under the volume title, collection cycle of *Zapiski sledovatel'ia* which means *Notes of an Investigator*, published in 1872 in St Petersburg. And that volume, that collection includes seven stories, all of which are told by an unnamed narrator-detective, so the narrator is the detective - and I think one of the most interesting things that we had right from the outset is what we each think of the genre of these works –

[29.11]

CA: Yes, and it's so interesting hearing you say that it's narrated by an unnamed narrator-detective, because I read it and I didn't know anything about Timofeev – you'd told me a little bit but I knew very little about him so it was my first encounter with him - so I took it at face value. This narrator says, these are my case file notes, I was a young man, I was posted to this part of the Western provinces of Russia, an area that was contested at the time with Congress Poland and the Austrian empire, and I went there as a young man, I was 22, and I make no great claims to be a writer, I'm not a writer, I'm a judicial investigator - and as I read these stories, which are – well, a couple of them are extremely disturbing and they go into forensic detail about crime and bodies and various aspects of the whole process. And it was that level of authenticating detail that led me again – though just maybe I walked right into the bear trap there, naively – but I just thought, these are case notes, and this is effectively true crime. And I still tend that way. So when I then said this to you, you came back to me and said that you've written a piece about this as well, but that, effectively, he's using literary devices and he's writing in the knowledge of this wider genre of notes, *zapiski*, that was common at the time, and that these have a sort of literary status - although I would say also the sketches have a kind of anthropological or ethnographic status – that was also a very common genre. I think it was a borderline, overlapping genre ...

[31.50]

CW: I think it is really interesting because as I say the original title in Russian uses this term 'zapiski' which literally translated would be 'notes'. But actually one of the things that I've written about in the book is how almost all-encompassing that term can be or, certainly the

way it gets translated. So it gets translated into English depending on the work: it could mean diary, it could mean notes, it could mean autobiography.

And so what I argue I think - and I think it is so interesting that we read the same thing - in a sense it served my purposes to read it as literature if you like - because I was writing a book about crime fiction. And certainly, for instance, if you take something like Gogol's *Diary of a Madman* which is much more canonical, that is *Zapiski sumashchedshego*, so it uses exactly the same term for a work which is unambiguously fictional. So I think what's really interesting both in terms of our conversations and our kind of wranglings I suppose about this, but also particularly for the question of adaptation and of reception, is precisely the generic ambiguity inherent in that term that I think actually I would probably still argue that Timofeev knowingly exploits, the ambiguity of that term to kind of straddle a kind of - is it fact, is it derived from his lived experience, or is it partially fictionalized, is it entirely fictionalized - what is it? Because certainly other of his other of his writings, published writings, I would say some of those much more unambiguously fall on the side of memoir, and some of it falls unambiguously on the side of literary fiction. And this one, interestingly his first one, I think there are - I guess, you know, we can still have an arm wrestle about it! But I think what's fascinating, and what I would want to ask you about is what that generic - whether we call it hybridity, instability, ambiguity - what that potentially does for the adaptation process and decisions that you might make?

CA: I think it's to do with the content. So fundamentally I read this as pulp fiction.

Particularly when I when I found out that this had been a bestseller of the year and I think it was Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* that was published in the same year. So, you know, it outstripped what we now consider to be the big pieces. So I read and read these stories and this one - maybe I'll just summarize - there's this one called 'Murder and Suicide', which is about a young woman who is arrested for attempting, for having attempted to kill herself, and the investigator then uncovers a series of crimes that have been committed against her, and these crimes that have led her to this point of desperation. And we should say that, by the way, suicide at this point was illegal, because it was a crime against God - is that right?

CW: That's as I understand it. Yes. That you didn't have the right, only God had the right to decide whether you lived or died. And so even the death penalty when it was handed down was couched in terms of a decision enforced by, permitted by the church. And so, yes, she is arrested for having tried to hang herself.

CA: Yes. She then tells him about her childhood and that she is the daughter of a very well-known local landowner, a very wealthy man and who at the time of telling is dead. But she was abused by him. So there's a story of sexual abuse from a very early age - sexual and physical and psychological abuse, by both him and her mother. There's a suggestion that she herself is also a victim of fundamentally a predatory network of men -

CW: that go on to include that initially she is the victim of her own father and then at a point at which he seems to lose interest - the father seems to lose interest in her - the abuse continues at the hands of her unknown half-brother who returns to the estate. And so what you have is a story that is primarily constituted of her accounts of this abuse, supplemented by the investigator's own searches and some witness testimony that corroborates this account of appalling, long term, almost unremitting abuse that's led to the birth and very premature death of the first child which has been fathered by her own father. And then the birth of three subsequent children who are from her half-brother. And those children play - the eldest child actually plays quite a key role in revealing or inadvertently revealing the motive behind Mariana's attempted suicide -

CA: which is - a spoiler - but which is that she has killed the half-brother after repeated rapes, and she was told by him that they would marry. And the other very important factor in this, is that this takes place before the Emancipation of the Serfs and her position in the household is not as - well it varies - but she is actually a serf: she has no property, she has no power at all. So this is about systematic powerlessness, and particularly it's gendered - of course, it's about women's powerlessness as well. And so when she realizes that the half-brother won't in fact marry her because he goes off with somebody else, she realizes that she has left herself in a terrible position with these three children and no means of support. And I believe there's a final rape scene as well. And then she murders him, and then her son - the eldest son - keeps

asking where is my father, who is my father, where is my father - and this is why she is then driven to attempt to kill herself.

So it's utterly dreadful. I can't put it in any other way. It's the grimmest, grimmest tale I've read for a long time. It makes Crime and Punishment look like a happy picnic in the park.

And that is a real, real problem for me, and this is why I go back to the question of genre and true crime, because, as I read it and I thought if you saw this now on the shelves of the true crime section in Waterstones or somewhere that's where that's where, I think, ok, that's where it would fit. But it seems entirely inappropriate for me to try to replicate that in any fashion. And again I don't want to do a straightforward translation. And I feel that there are two things that authenticating concern me here, and one is to do with its status as documentary evidence, because I decided that underlying this there is a real case. There was a real case. So there's that question.

And then there's the question of tone and how do you - how do I, as somebody working in adaptation - how do I address the gravity of the situation in genre terms. And I've actually come up with two possible solutions, that we've got a couple of extracts to listen to.

Just to go back to the question of its status as an authentic text. I asked myself, what is it today, what do we believe in, this world of contested facts? You know, we're bombarded with these ideas of fakeness and so forth. And I thought, well, there still are - I mean, this is under question now - but we tend still to listen to the radio, some of us, and we watch the news, some of us, as well... So there are effectively ready-made forms I could use to try to present this as a set of cases that are unfolding in real time. So my first solution, the first thing I've tried, is a version of BBC Radio Four's flagship news program the Today Programme. So I have come up with the Today programme - Today in 1864. And just a point - I've set it in 1864 and not in 1872 when it was actually published, because the events happened around 1864.

And the other reason I've chosen to do this is because I can get an awful lot of information into that format. I can really pack in historical information in, I hope, a fairly light way. So at

the very beginning of this recording, which I've conceived as an audio play, a radio drama maybe with four voices. It starts with an announcer reading the shipping forecast for Russia, for Russia in 1864 - so perhaps we could listen to that now.

EXTRACT ONE: TODAY IN 1864

ANNOUNCER: First, the Shipping Forecast. The general synopsis at 05.00 hours. Sea of Azov: Wind south-westerly, backing north-westerly 5 to 7; drift ice, occasional pack ice; fog, hail for a time; visibility: poor. Barents Sea: wind south-westerly 9-11; rafted ice; poor. Pechora Sea, wind south-westerly 5-7, backing easterly; floating ice; sea har; poor. Kara Sea: wind easterly, 3-4; hummocked ice; fog; poor; Laptev Sea: wind easterly 8- 10; old sea ice; severe; very poor; East Siberian Sea: wind south-easterly, 2-3; ice fields, semi-permanent; Chuckhi Sea: wind easterly; fast ice; extreme fog; very poor; Bering Straits, easterly; grease ice and pancake ice; variable; Sea of Okhotsk: easterly 4-5; slush; ice floes in parts; visibility: moderate; Sea of Japan, south- easterly; rain then fair; Caspian Sea; southerly 2-3; good; Lake Baikal, ice; fog; occasional storms; tornado; Black Sea: northerly, smooth; fair; very good.

And now, tweet of the day.

A CROAKING SOUND.

And that was the Siberian grouse, the only bird that is endemic to our Great Empire of all the Russias.

THE PIPS SOUND.

GEMFRISKY: (CLEARS THROAT).
Good morning, it's 6 AM on Monday 21 November 1864, and you're listening to the Today Programme with Ivan Gemfrisky and Marfa Karnovna. Today we're bringing you a special guest edition of our

programme from a secret location in one of the Western provinces, not far from the territory formerly known as Congress Poland and assimilated just three months ago. Our guest editor is Mr Nikolai Timofeev, one of the so-called Judicial Investigators – our new heroes of the Empire who are keeping crime off our streets and criminals behind bars – and, if I may say so, an incredibly youthful hero at that – how old are you, Mr Timofeev?

TIMOFEEV: My age has no bearing on how I execute my duties as
an investigator

GEMFRISKY: We'll return to our 22-year old investigator – just
fancy
that! – in a moment. But first, the headlines.

ANNOUNCER: Our Great Tsar-Liberator Alexander II continues to implement his reform programme at all levels of our nation and society. Last night, at exactly one minute to midnight, the Tsar signed the Court Statutes decree, which institutes the most sweeping changes in our judicial system, rivalled only by the Emancipation of the Serfs bill of three years ago in its scale and consequence. Trials will henceforth be conducted with juries of twelve men, and a Supreme Court will now sit in the event of any attempt on the life of the Tsar, his family, or his senior officials. This decree will, in the words of the Tsar-Liberator himself, equip Russia with a legal system that is swift, just, and merciful.

Seditious elements continue to be monitored by the Tsar's security service, the Third Section.

In foreign news, Abraham Lincoln has been re-elected President of the United States. The Civil War continues.

On the European Continent, war between Denmark and the Kingdom of Prussia and the Austrian Empire has concluded with all parties signing a

Treaty in Vienna. Denmark has ceded the Duchies of Schleswig, Holstein, and Saxe-Lauenburg.

Weather: the outlook for today is more snow.

Racing tips: The Happy Nihilist, Not as Superfluous as I Look, and Mme Frou Frou in the 4.20 Troika Championship at the Moscow Hippodrome.

GEMFRISKY: We go now to Mr Timofeev, who will today be commenting live as we bring you details of an unfolding and particularly shocking case of both murder and suicide in the region. As we wait for the results of the trial Mr Timofeev will also be giving us some summary accounts of noteworthy cases he has so far encountered, ranging from organised criminal gangs, to a terrible attack of superstition, and finally, the tragic case of a prostitute found murdered -

TIMOFEEV: a woman – she was a woman above all – before fate dealt her a hand that so compelled her –

GEMFRISKY: Yes, yes, we'll come to that. But first, Mr Timofeev, I suppose the job of a judicial investigator is to make a prosecution –

TIMOFEEV: No.

GEMFRISKY: No?

TIMOFEEV: It is unworthy of the conscientious investigator simply to gather the facts for a prosecution and to consider one's part in the process thus concluded.

GEMFRISKY: So what do you see as your main task as judicial investigator?

TIMOFEEV: To face the naked truth, however unpleasant. To understand what led the criminal to act so –

GEMFRISKY: But surely criminals are born bad. It's just a fact of

life. Like bribes.

TIMOFEEV: On the contrary, no one is born a criminal. Life itself forms criminals. Poverty, destitution, sin, the passions, depravity in life – these are the foundations of and overwhelming reasons for all the crimes that are committed on this earth –

GEMFRISKY: Anyway, I understand you're in the radio troika
with
my colleague Marfa Karnova – Marfa? Are you there?

KARNOVA: Yes, Ivan, I'm here. I'm here at the Marianna Bodresova trial, which has gripped the region ever since the 27-year old was arrested three weeks ago for attempting to kill herself in the upstairs attic of the tiny hut she shares with her three illegitimate children. Mr Timofeev, how did this case first come to your attention?

TIMOFEEV: Marianna Bodresova was brought to me by a local police officer –

KARNOVA: And she was arrested – why?

TIMOFEEV: An attempt upon one's body is an offence against the Almighty God. In truth, I may have felt the police were over-zealous the application of the law – but my job is to establish why she acted in this way. But this I cannot do until she speaks.

KARNOVA: And your first impressions of the young woman?

TIMOFEEV: She has an evenness of feature that belies the poverty of her circumstance –

KARNOVA: She's considered quite a beauty in these parts – does that explain your interest?

TIMOFEEV: No, no, I –

KARNOVA: I'll interrupt you here to say that I have just heard

that Bodresova has in fact started to speak, after her children were returned to her this morning. In a moving and shocking account she has spoken of her childhood and the systemic physical and psychological abuse she suffered at the hands of her father, Nikolai Grondzevsky, the well-known owner of the large local estate at Gostits, and her mother, a young Frenchwoman whose cruelty to her own daughter became so infamous in the region that parents would use her name to terrify their small children and get them to behave themselves ... I'm going now to an interview with a ... a bear? – no, a bear trainer – whose testimony has caused an uproar in the court this morning – hello? Mr –?

CA: So now that we've listened to that you can see that it's meant to be a light-hearted thing, but it also sets the tone - it tells us where it where it is. If you want to know about Russian seas - I tried to find out about all of them and go round in order

CW: As you would -

[43.40]

as I would! I found out about pancake ice and grease ice and so on, so there's all of that, and then I've also in the initial - as you also heard when Ivan Gemfrisky who is of course meant to be John Humphrys - slightly out of date now but never mind - when he opens and he tells us that we're bringing you a special guest edition of our program from a secret location in one of the western provinces, not far from the territory formerly known as Congress Poland and assimilated just three months ago. Our guest editor is Mr. Nikolai Timofeev, and so on.

So it tells you there have been these reforms and as we are in the reform period ourselves I thought that might be quite an interesting thing to do, to try and tell people quickly, economically, what's going on. And so there's another section where I also have a bit of news about the court statutes decree, something that came in, and that was one of the most

sweeping changes in the judicial system apart from the actual Emancipation Bill. So it really changed things and as you said earlier on it created a new form of barrister.

And I've put in some other information as well about what was going on elsewhere in the world in foreign news. Abraham Lincoln has been re-elected president of the United States. The civil war continues and so on.

So I'm just, I'm trying to use the form to do the thing we're talking about of telling people a little bit about something they may not know.

CW: Yeah, yeah. And I think what was fascinating for me as somebody who - you know we have these conversations about what direction the adaptation might go in, and what form it might take - and what's fascinating to me about that, the decision that you've made to potentially do this as a radio play modelled on the Today programme, is on the one hand, yeah, absolutely, the question of tone. I think as you were talking just earlier I was thinking I would absolutely agree, the tale "Murder and Suicide" is an absolutely unremittingly awful kind of series of incidents.

But I mean it's also the fact that another of the stories in the collection - "A Crime of Superstition" - is equally horrific for different reasons. Timofeev there really holds this unwavering gaze on disinterred bodies from a cemetery and their various states of decomposition and one of them is dismembered, and, you know, it's certainly - as a non-native speaker of Russian, there's a good deal of vocabulary that you have to go off and research because it's not stuff, it's not vocabulary that you would be reading -

CA: Yeah, it's very specialized -

CW: Yes, for a particular purpose. The other thing, though, I was thinking is that, so although this is really unremittingly awful, I think that there has to be an acknowledgment that this isn't and wasn't unique to Russia in the 1860s. And so what the process of adaptation and the way that you've presented it, what that achieves I think is building a bridge across to contemporary British society, in terms of the mode of adaptation that you've chosen, but also

that the sorts of information and details of the cases that you include in this absolutely could be elements of a factual radio program today, in a sense. I mean, not obviously in as gruesome detail as to a few of the present set, but we were just talking earlier about the Rochdale child sex exploitation and grooming cases, and the way in which there has been an adaptation of that case - the BBC 3 series Girls, which gives the victims a voice but is still to some extent a straight dramatic adaptation. You also told me about the film adaptation London Road, which is done as a musical, and we could come back and talk about that a little bit.

But for me certainly as an academic what this, what your decision to do with the radio program is, is so interesting in bringing different voices into play, and having this as a sort of multi-vocal, multi-perspectival, multi-stranded account which absolutely captures one of the essences of crime fiction, which is one of the things I'm most interested in in the book that I've written and the other work that I've done - which is the extent to which a reader is asked to build up a composite picture of a crime and also the investigation by listening to a whole series of different, sometimes complementary, sometimes conflicting, sometimes very antagonistic voices, and that impulse that one has - as a sort of consumer of whether it's crime fiction or true crime - of trying to sift between voices, sift between versions, and actually build together a sort of a full picture - because, ultimately, I think most of us still expect to get to some form of resolution, some form of unravelling of the criminal mystery, and that again by choosing the format of a news program, albeit fictionalized, also plays with the genre's preoccupations with issues of truth, authenticity, knowledge, the fact that we still think that the world ought to be knowable, and that crimes ought to be solvable, and that victims ought to be punishable.

And so I think it's really interesting that actually without particularly explicitly talking about it what you've ended up producing is something that I think absolutely reflects some of the preoccupations of crime fiction -

CA: well, that's also why I decided on a news program, the live news broadcast. It allows me to set it as a live, unfolding event. And I think that was part of what was so troubling about the original story was that in effect it's sort of static and it's closed and at the end there's a

terrible denouement - you know, she dies. She kills herself actually. I wanted instead to inhabit that world as it unfolds and to have it fragmented, as you say. So you have these contesting narratives and you have interruptions and you have - the radio format also allows me to do things like play with the idea that they're in a radio troika, the radio car, and the microphone is a bit dodgy, and the voice breaks up and you can have witness accounts that you don't get in the original story as well. So, it was a way for me to try and mitigate the horror - because as soon as you go into live, as you can give the illusion of something unfolding in real time, it also gives you hope. There's a bit of hope in there, and a bit of light, rather than just the kind of unremitting darkness of a tale already told and finished and concluded, which is what the case file is.

But to go back to the London Road work and what you just mentioned - I came up with another version. Instead of thinking about this idea of authenticity, I wanted instead to pay tribute, to find a form that could hold the enormous, emotional impact of this story, that would be capacious enough, and grand enough - because this is prosaic, this is everyday people just talking about stuff as it goes on - and the only form that I can really think of that does that is actually opera, and we laughed about this but - [laughter] Actually I think it is. Of course opera has its problems with dead women - basically plots involve a lot of women dying and so, too, does this, yet again.

[53.07]

CW: But you know, I think, and not just Timofeev, you would have to say that Russian crime fiction of the nineteenth century just as probably British crime fiction of the twentieth century – well, the body count is far more heavily weighted with women than with men.

CA: I'm fairly willing to put money on that being the case, it being a distinguishing feature of literature generally possibly anyway, of cultural production anyway.

So I first of all looked at what what's called verse drama, which if you know T.S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral is an example of sort of incantation, incantatory drama, where people stand and chant - almost going back to Greek tragedy, to the theatre where you have

to write things very large. You know, people would wear masks and so on to convey these grand passions that don't exist or exist in different form in real life, and that we can't find ways to acknowledge or express usually, or only in extreme circumstances. And I think there's something cathartic about seeing drama like that, and I think there's something very moving about it and it can be very beautiful. And I just feel, because I had decided in my mind that actually there was, there might well have been a woman who experienced this, or, more generically, that that there were cases, there are terrible crimes like this - that this subject matter requires some sort of treatment that is hyper-stylized in some way.

And so I looked at verse drama, and then I looked at something as well called verbatim theatre, which the creator of *London Road* created - and I'd forgotten her name now but never mind. So the creator of *London Road* interviewed people who lived on the street where the serial killer was operating, and she recorded there just what they said, including all of their ums and ahs and don't knows, and all that, everything - the way that people actually normally talk. And then the actors listened to this in the rehearsal, they wore headphones and then they repeated the words, and they repeated them, and repeated them, until they became - they internalized all of the pauses and hesitations, and so that's what was meant by verbatim theatre.

Now we don't have access to the original material, what the words were of these cases, if they actually existed. We only have a narrated or possibly fictionalized account.

CW: Yeah.

CA: And that is fine. But then I think verse and musical theatre can still do something with that that you can't do in prose as much. And that's why one of the things I've done is I've started to write a piece called *Spade and Sand* - and it's a verse drama written in blank verse or iambic pentameter as close as I can get. And it is set in Stoke-on-Trent in a fish and chip shop in -

CW: In post-Brexit -

CA: Yes sorry. Three years from today, in 2021, in what I imagine might be a post-Brexit landscape.

CW: And here's an extract we recorded earlier of the opening of Spade and Sand:

EXTRACT 2: SPADE & SAND

SCENE 1

CURTAIN IS DOWN. AT FRONT OF STAGE DCI TIM NICHOLS SITS AT HIS DESK, SURROUNDED BY STACKS OF PAPERS. HE WRITES AND WRITES. IT'S NIGHT, AND HE LOOKS EXHAUSTED. HE'S LIT BY JUST ONE LIGHT. HE LOOKS UP.

NICHOLS: Eight years of chasing crime.
Back then, I was alert, and quick, and keen.
I thought I knew it all. I got a job,
temping for the law. All day, all night,
I filed forms. A basement, full of crimes,
transcripts, statements, eye-witness reports,
of murder, arson, pimping, car-theft, fraud -
I soaked them up, I couldn't get enough.
The boss – an old man then, of forty-eight –
he laughed at me. It's not a library, lad,
he said. But me, I craved insight, the edge,
to stand at the abyss, alive with fear,
and tame it with my mind. I begged him.
let me see, myself, first-hand.

And so, I got my badge. Tim Nichols, 22,
in CID! Just fancy that! I went
where I was sent -

to Stoke on Trent.

SCENE 2

STOKE-ON-TRENT. THE YEAR IS 2024. WE'RE IN A CHIPPIE, WITH MOULDED PLASTIC CHAIRS STUCK TO THE FLOORS. THROUGH THE CHIP-SHOP WINDOW AT THE BACK, WE SEE DERELICT SHOPS. IT'S RAINING. THERE'S A SMALL QUEUE OF PEOPLE, THE CHORUS. THIRD IN LINE IS TIM NICHOLS, IN PLAIN CLOTHES, WITH A UNIFORMED PC NEXT TO HIM.

CHORUS : (SHUFFLING FORWARD)
Sovereign now we stand! Not serf, nor slave,
these past three years since Boris,
Tsar, the Liberator-King, struck off
our chains!

MAN: Two chips, two Iron Bru to go.

WOMAN: (SERVING BEHIND COUNTER)
That's fifteen pounds.

CHORUS All's changed. The People's will –
the constitution, parliament, the courts!
A revolution in them all.

WOMAN ONE
IN QUEUE: Time was
I called this home. I used to love it here.
But now – I feel like everything collapsed –

WOMAN TWO
IN QUEUE: The mood is very tense. The Polish shop
was set on fire last night. The flames –

CHORUS: Light up, a beacon for the world,
renewed.

WOMAN ONE: One cod, one mushy peas, no salt.

WOMAN TWO: The Jewish quarter's been attacked, again.
You'd think the cops would sort it out by now.

NICHOLS: The cops? That's me and him they mean.
A PC and a DCI on break –
Large chips with curry sauce, a saveloy,
and wait, I'll have some gherkins too –

WOMAN: We're out.
Sayeed!!

SAYEED: You wha'?

WOMAN: The gherkins – go upstairs
and check -

SAYEED: Ok, ok.

(THE SOUND OF HIS FOOTSTEPS. A PAUSE, AND
THEN, A SCREAM).

NICHOLS: (TO PC)
Don't wait, just go!

(PC RUNS OFFSTAGE, RETURNS, WITH A SHAKEN-LOOKING
SAYEED, AND A WOMAN, MARY BLYTHE).

PC: I've arrested her -

SAYEED: The gherkins – they were drying –

NICHOLS: Arrested? For what crime?

PC: A crime against
the body of us all. Attempted suicide.

CA: And with that I'm trying to reference that reform period of the 1860s when things were really transformed. I mean, history seems generally to agree that this was of course a good thing - the Emancipation of the Serfs and so on, but there were obvious problems with that as well.

CW: Yeah.

CA: And so depending on your political point of view, this might be good or bad. But anyway, I've set it in this period of a major reform in Britain or possibly what is, what will be England, and in a place where - one of the important things about the original text is that there are a lot of Polish people, it's a Polish area, the border zone between Poland and Russia. which was then taken over by the Russian Empire. The landowners of the area fell under suspicion, the Russian forces thought that they were supporting Polish rebels, and indeed some of them were. So in Stoke-on-Trent the kind of tension between a Polish community and other local community groups will be what I'm going to be playing with.

CW: And I think the issues around the choice of historical setting, geographical setting, the extent to which you can draw some broad parallels between these periods and I think for me as well that's supplemented by this really interesting relationship between crime fiction and theatre, where proposing a sort of a potential adaptation as verse drama that would be performed or has the potential to be performed -

CA: Or sung -

CW: Or sung - absolutely chimes with the genre not just in Russia in the 19th century but in virtually every national tradition of that period. And subsequently in that that there is something - and I don't mean this flippantly in any way - but there is something inherently theatrical in not only a criminal investigation but particularly court proceedings.

So for instance if you go back to the Panov novella that we were talking about earlier its title is Three Courts. And the second half of that novella actually involves the trial of the wrong culprit as it turns out, or the culprit who assisted in the theft of the tiara but has nothing to do with the murder of Elena Ruslanova. When he's on trial and the judicial investigator attends court, and eventually the perpetrator also attends court, and it's the court proceedings and the pronouncement of the verdict of guilty on her collaborator - but not really her co-conspirator - that forces a confession from her. There's a great deal of play there on the courtroom as theatre. There's a great deal of academic work done on that. All of the people in the town mob the courtroom, try to get tickets, they're actually sold tickets, they're all armed with their opera glasses so they can see well and - you see this in works by Dostoevsky but also other writers, that lawyers - whether positively or negatively - are depicted as actors who are performing, and it's very much about the outcome of the trial because of the introduction of jury trials, about how your audience, as constituted by the jury, receives your theatrical performance and that may well have a great bearing on whether someone is pronounced innocent or guilty. So again, as we've found I think in both of these processes of adaptation of the text that I've suggested to you, what we find is that to some extent intuitively we're each interrogating some of the same issues and arriving at the same issues, but without necessarily having the same approach really, and so what I think that demonstrates to me is just how fruitful and rich crime fiction, whatever language it's written in, whatever date it comes from, however it was received at the time and however well it's known now offers huge potential both for artistic practice but also for reception and further communication to an audience - I don't expect anyone in twenty-first-century Britain to know about these writers - but they have something that remains universal.

CA: I think so, and you see a society in a period of great change and all of these different crimes, however they're – obviously there are some that are particular, for instance the Crime of Superstition story that you referenced has specific roots in Russian beliefs of that period – nevertheless these are all transferable. And the more that I work on the adaptations the more I see points of connection that I think are really interesting and that can be brought to a modern audience, because we're fundamentally talking about people here, and that's the bottom line...but I think you're right about performance. It feels to me as though the practice of the law as Timofeev describes it is about a process of spectacle, and if I do go down the other route of doing verse drama or something more theatrical, that really helps me, this idea of the spectacle and the visibility that justice has to be seen to be done - its process is not a private thing, its process is one of people looking at each other. In fact, in one of the stories about arsonists Timofeev brings the accuser and accused together and says this is part of my process, it's called a face-to-face confrontation, and – there's a specific term in Russian for that -

CW: And it's a part, it was a part of the Russian legal process, the original called *ochnaya stavka* is precisely bringing people almost eye to eye, is what it almost literally means – and what's then so fascinating is that his role as a detective mutates into what he explicitly acknowledges as being one of a psychologist -

CA: That's right-

CW: where what he's reading are not physical, evidential clues of fingerprints or footprints or wound marks, but he's reading facial expressions as evidence of psychological or emotional trauma or potential involvement, and again what's fascinating about that is that he's there asking the accused and usually the accuser to perform in front of him. And so then you have this wonderful mutation of his role where he is frequently the performer, but in those instances he's playing the role of the performer or stage manager, where he's watching two people on a stage and using that as evidence. And that's a recurrent feature of the genre as well, that as a Western reader in terms of legal process seems really dodgy, potentially, in terms of legal process – but -

CA: Well, I was just thinking actually, that this is the figure that we're now used to in modern crime drama, television drama with the modern criminal psychologist, and if you think of something like Line of Duty where the set-piece is quite stylized -

CW: Absolutely, confrontational -

CA: -it's the confrontational, across the desk, it's the interview that has the amazing twists in it and it's close-ups on facial reactions, on twitches of eyebrow and so on, so it's that facial reading that we're actually really used to doing it in the age of cinema and the screen and visuals - we've become, moving away from the theatre where you're obviously at a distance and that's the problem with theatre - if it is a problem - it's a specific of theatre that you can't see facial expression to the degree that you can when you put somebody on a huge screen - then you can see everything. So I think that's really interesting for me as someone working in adaptation, that that's a feature of that nineteenth-century genre that we can now bring into and relate to the stuff that we watch today on telly, fundamentally.

CW: And I think that's what's important for me always remember that this is something I work on as a researcher but it's also something I teach, and I want my undergraduates to read this - and to that extent I think the way in which you can actually get undergraduates to engage - or anybody really - but obviously in the specific context of the university classroom to get undergraduates to engage with this is to specifically ask them what does this look like to you? You know, what does it remind you of? And particularly here at St Andrews where we have such an international student body that their experiences are really very, very different, you'll have people who are fans of true crime, who've never read a detective story in their life, who come from an entirely different background - but actually what you do in the first class is say, ok, so what is your experience? what are you able to relate this to? So actually by the end of a 12-week module what they're actually able to do is gain an appreciation of these works in and of themselves, as literary works or as quasi-historical documents, but also build their comparative bridges across to trends nowadays, the sort of storytelling techniques, the sort of staging techniques that are actually common across all of these different types of production - whenever they originated, whatever audience they've been targeted at, there just are I think a number of foundational devices and techniques that

people know work, and they knew it back in antiquity and they knew it in nineteenth-century Russia and they know it now, and it doesn't matter whether you're working with audio or text or film, so that's what's so fascinating about it.

CA: OK, so to go right back to that very first adaptation, I can show confrontation in the visuals form, in illustrated form, in the audio it's not so present in that way, but confrontation is there in the live recording, and in this last one I think it's through a hyper-stylised, slightly more distanced form of confrontation but it's there nevertheless. So I'm hoping to bring those strands together, and across the whole project, to test each of these in different forms. So, that's my plan.

CW: So we very much hope that you've enjoyed the first episode of the Lost Detectives podcast series. We'll be coming back with another episode and more chat about detective fiction, processes of adaptation, and the decisions that Carol and I have to arrive at, in the very near future. We're going to conclude this first episode with another brief extract from Carol's adaptation of the Today programme in 1864, which we hope you'll all enjoy. The following scene shows the home affairs correspondent, Dominik Kashiansky, questioning a young woman who has accused her mistress of harbouring arsonists in the region.

EXTRACT 3: TODAY IN 1864

GEMFRISKY: Thank you, Marfa. It's now 10 past 6 and we're going now to a special report on the latest in a case of arson investigated by our Judicial Investigator earlier in the year. Our home affairs correspondent from the region reports.

KASHIANSKY: I'm reporting from the village of Leki, approximately 40 versts from Krakow, where the Venskys, a prominent landowning family, has been accused of harbouring a gang of arsonists. It's been eighteen months now since the suppression of the 1863 January Uprising of Polish nationalists against the Russian Empire, and fires set by insurrectionist rebels continue to rage, causing widespread damage to the lands and property. Landowners have come under particular suspicion for

organising attacks and for harbouring those who wish the Empire ill. I'm joined now by their accuser, Miss Agata Kroleva, who worked as a domestic servant to Mrs Venskaya. Miss Kroleva, can you tell us what you saw?

KROLEVA: It was the middle of the night, and I saw the mistress let in three Polish men, dressed all in black, like thieves, or arsonists - one was very tall - and she gave them food, and vodka -

KASHIANSKY: The coachman, the guard, the butcher, and the nanny all deny your claims -

KROLEVA: I know what I saw.

KASHIANSKY: Is it true that you yourself were the subject of a complaint to the police by the Venskys not three weeks ago?

KROLEVA: What, me? No, that's not true -

KASHIANSKY: The allegation against you was that you stole 10 roubles, a scarf -

KROLEVA: The mistress kissed the tall man! She called him Yan, and she kissed him!

KASHIANSKY: - some silver, and two pairs of stockings -

KROLEVA: the master made the complaint because I wouldn't sleep with him! It's all true, I swear!

KASHIANSKY: Meanwhile Mr and Mrs Vensky suffer so under the weight of your vile accusations that Mrs Vensky now lies in a coma, and is near death's door. We're joined now by some local villagers - I'll just take a quick straw poll from them - Ladies and Gentlemen, if you could just do a quick show of hands on whether Miss Kroleva is telling the truth -

MAN ONE: Lock her up!

WOMAN ONE: Put her in solitary!

MAN TWO: Cut out her tongue!

WOMAN TWO: String her up!

KASHIANSKY: Well, that seems to be definitive. An overwhelming majority think that Miss Kroleva is lying. And now, back to the studio.

CW: So we hope that our conversation and these extracts have whetted your appetite for more, and have demonstrated the potential inherent not only in the original nineteenth-century stories written by Timofeev, but also in Carol's brilliant and imaginative adaptations. Thank you very much indeed for listening: we'll see you next time.