

Personal details

Name: Richard Ernest Coombes

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Blue Sky: @richtranslator.bsky.social

Nationality: British; native language English

Translation language pairs: Russian to English; Ukrainian to English

Translation specialisations: Prose (novels, short stories, literary non-fiction)
Verse
Song Lyrics
Additional experience & qualifications: business, creative writing

Education: MA in Classics, Corpus Christi College Cambridge, 1976 to 1979 (Core elements: language, literature, history, translation)

Other qualifications: IoLET Level 7 Diploma in Translation

Publication Record

2019 – present

Published physical paper books, as contributor to collections (from Russian)

- ‘Retribution’, a novella by the Kazakh author Akim Tarazi (Cambridge University Press, 2019)
- Poetry in the bilingual World War II poetry collection ‘Frontovaya Lira’ (‘Poems from the Front’, 2021)
- Poetry of witness to, and protest against, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine: ‘Disbelief’ (Smokestack Books, 2023); ‘Dislocation’ (Three String Books, 2024)

Published physical, paper books: as sole translator (from Russian)

- Elena Dolgopyat's short story collection 'Someone Else's Life' ('Chuzhaya Zhizn'), published in May 2023 by Glagoslav Publications
- Alexei Ivanov's novel 'The Food Block', Glagoslav Publications, 2025 (entered by the publisher for the Oxford-Weidenfeld Translation Prize and the John Calder Translation Prize)

Work published in literary journals (paper and electronic), as sole translator

Short stories and poetry in the following magazines (from Russian)

- The Los Angeles Review (multiple publications, multiple authors)
- The Continental Literary Magazine
- BODY magazine
- Book of Matches
- Right Hand Pointing
- Steam Ticket
- The Temz Review
- InTranslation

Awaiting publication, as sole translator (from Russian)

- 'Liza's Waterfall' (Pavel Basinsky's documentary-thriller 'Posmotrite Na Menya'), to be published by Glagoslav Publications

Other work, completed and either not yet placed with a publisher, or published on informal (social media) platforms

From Ukrainian and Russian:

- Poetry by poets from Ukraine and other countries protesting Russia's war against Ukraine; this work undertaken as part of the Kopilka project (which produced 'Disbelief' and 'Dislocation')

From Ukrainian only, for pitches to publishers:

- Extracts from Liubko Deresh's novel «Погляд Медузи»
 - Extract from «Той Божевільний Рік» by Yevhenia Kononenko
- (both by arrangement with the publisher, Anetta Antonenko)
- Poems by Maryna Ponomarenko from her collection «Путівник по Урвищу й Околицях»
- (by arrangement with the publisher, Old Lion)

From Ukrainian only, other:

- More poetry by Maryna Ponomarenko
- Poetry by Andriy Kostinskyu
- Song lyrics by Scriabin, Shumei, Fiolet, The Hardkiss, Okean Elzy

Pre-translation career

International Tax Specialist, Andersen/Deloitte. My areas of expertise included:

- Transfer pricing technical and operational issues
- Risk assessment
- Strategy and management of HMRC audits
- Dispute resolution
- Interface between clients and HMRC
- Intellectual Property
- Design & delivery of training
- Public speaking

International Tax Specialist, HMRC. My core International Tax functions included:

Operational

- Strategic direction and technical support on business model optimisation, transfer pricing, and Permanent Establishment issues
- Developing transfer pricing approaches to intangibles planning arrangements
- Leading for HMRC in the conduct of litigation cases
- Acting as Competent Authority (an official authorised to deal on behalf of HMRC with counterparts in overseas tax authorities)

Training

- Devising & delivering national programmes of training in transfer pricing and business model optimisation for HMRC officers
- OECD secondments, delivering training programmes to tax officials from other countries in tax treaties and all aspects of international tax

Policy

- Advising Ministers on two Finance Acts

Other activities

- Teaching English to Ukrainians living in my area
- Leading online conversations and conversation clubs in English and Ukrainian with Ukrainians in the UK, Ukraine, and elsewhere