

## THE RETURN OF FALSE COGNATES

### And Other Fine Points of Russian>English Translation: Part I

Material from Steve Shabad's San Antonio ATA Presentation



Steve Shabad

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*Editors' note: Steve's presentation was so full of useful information that we have decided to simply reprint his handout here and in subsequent issues, so stay tuned. We are reprinting in the reverse order in which he presented the material at his talk. If you cannot wait to read the rest, go to: [http://atasld.org/sites/atasld.org/files/downloads/ATA54\\_SL3\\_Steve\\_Shabad.pdf](http://atasld.org/sites/atasld.org/files/downloads/ATA54_SL3_Steve_Shabad.pdf)*

### 1) The Story of o

Although the Russian preposition **o** has a neutral definition and normally means “on,” “about,” “regarding,” etc., when it follows certain action nouns, e.g. *решение, требование, вывод, довод*, it assumes an affirmative meaning in relation to the action noun that follows. Consider:

а) *Федеральный арбитражный суд Поволжского округа постановлением от 24 января 2011... подтвердил выводы нижестоящих судов о признании недействительными договоров купли-продажи...*

Rather than translate “выводы... о признании” as “the conclusions... on deeming invalid” (or “on invalidating”) the sentence should be rendered as follows:

*The Volga Circuit Federal Arbitrazh Court, in a judgment of January 24, 2011..., confirmed the conclusions of the lower courts deeming invalid (or invalidating) the purchase and sale agreements...*

б) *Вывод суда о незаключенности между сторонами договора купли-продажи сруба, судебная коллегия считает необоснованным и не соответствующим обстоятельствам дела.*

The above sentence must be reorganized in English as follows:

*The judicial board holds that the court's conclusion that a purchase and sale agreement for the log house was not entered into is unfounded and at variance with the facts of the case.*

с) Similarly, *требование об уплате налога* should be translated as *demand for payment of a tax.*

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d) *Довод о применении ст. 73 УК РФ необоснован* is NOT “the argument on the application of Art. 73 of the RF Criminal Code,” but, rather, *the argument that Art. 73 of the RF Criminal Code should be applied (or is applicable)*.

e) *Решение о продлении полномочий директора* is NOT “a decision on the renewal of the director’s powers” but rather *a decision to renew the director’s powers (or authority)*.

### 2) What’s the connection?

Consider the following phrases and sentences:

1) *Освобождение от наказания в связи с состоянием здоровья осуждённого*

2) *Страхование по безработице покрывает риск, возникающий в связи с потерей работы или невозможностью трудоустроиться.*

3) *Зачастую косвенные (социальные) эффекты данных программ, выраженные в росте успеваемости, улучшении физического состояния детей или улучшении питания трудно оценить.*

**В связи с этим** в данном разделе будут представлены основные расходы государства на поддержание программ социальной защиты и некоторые количественные показатели выгод от вложенных средств.

In all of these sentences, there is a clear cause-and-effect relationship between the clause before and the clause after **в связи с этим** (pun intended), the English should reflect that. So instead of “in connection with” or “in this connection,” **в связи с (этим)** is better rendered in Example 1 as “due to”; in Example 2 as “resulting from” (for the entire phrase *возникающий в связи с*); and in Example 3 as “Therefore.”

This is not to say that “in connection with” or “in this connection” never applies here. It does, when there is no clear causal relationship. But when there is one, “as a result of” is a much better option in English than “in connection with.”

### 3) Dealing with “отсутствие” and “наличие”

When these Russian nouns turn up, it is often (but certainly not always) better to reword the sentence in English to avoid the awkward use of “absence” or “presence” (or “existence” or “availability”). Consider:

a) *Коллегия судей ВАС РФ своим определением от 20 июня 2011... подтвердила отсутствие оснований для переоценки выводов судов, правильность применения ими ст. 168 и ст. 170 ГК РФ, и отказала в передаче дела в Президиум ВАС РФ.*

Instead of translating “подтвердила отсутствие оснований” as “confirmed the absence of grounds for...”, say: ...”*confirmed that there are no grounds for...*”

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b) Информация о **наличии** либо **отсутствии** письменного согласия выдвинутых в органы Общества и кандидатов на избрание в соответствующий орган Общества.

Similarly, this should be rendered as something like the following: “Information on whether the candidates for election to the relevant Company bodies have consented in writing.” (Note that “whether or not” in English is redundant; the word “whether” here already refers to the choice between one alternative and the lack of it.)

### 4) Getting rid of unnecessary words in English

a) Always be on the lookout for Russian words you can skip. The word *осуществление* is a prime example.

Depending on context, say, instead of translating *осуществление перевозки* as “carrying out a shipment,” just make it “shipment.” But be careful: if a word like *осуществление* is followed by several action nouns, e.g. *осуществление ремонта, проекта, плана и т.п.*, you may have to translate *осуществление* for an accurate translation.

b) Or when you see a reference to a *договор, заключенный между (двумя сторонами)*, see if you can just say “a contract between (two parties)” and omit “entered into” or “executed.”

c) A Russian word that is often used to describe a pattern, trend or process is *наблюдается*, as in the headline: *Дефицит школьной формы **наблюдается** в ряде магазинов Томска*. In most of these cases, depending on context, I like to translate this word simply as “There is” or “[the trend in question] is occurring (or taking place).”

### 5) Единоличный исполнительный орган

Anyone who has translated a company charter has probably encountered this troublesome term. The concept doesn’t really exist in U.S. business, so the options for translating it range from awkward to downright wrong. I suggest that the least unattractive choice, cumbersome as it is, is “**one-person executive body**.” (“Single-person executive body” is acceptable, but to my mind “single person” has a slightly different connotation.)

Before we review the other bad choices, let’s be clear about the meaning of the term. *Единоличный* denotes “single-person” and is meant to contrast with

*коллегиальный исполнительный орган*, or “collective executive body” – one with a number of members. In effect, the *единоличный исполнительный орган* is the chief executive officer.

1) So why not just make it “chief executive officer” or “CEO” in English? Because that term loses the information in the Russian that it is in contrast with a collective body.

2) “individual (or single) executive body” – this merely means it is one body. It does not indicate how many people are in it.

3) “sole executive body” – I have seen this term in a number of translations, and I don’t know why. In English it just means it is *the only* executive body, which is a mistranslation.

4) “single-member executive body” – this signifies a body with one member, which sounds nonsensical to my ear, and “one-person executive body” is at least more accurate.

### 6) Active/passive verbs

As we all know, one of the rules for good writing in English is to use active verbs as much as possible and try to avoid the passive voice. This rule applies to good translations as well, of course. But it is not an absolute truth. No such rule, as far as I know, exists in Russian, mainly because of its heavy use of reflexive verbs and different syntax. So the trick is to determine when you can convert a sentence to the active voice without sacrificing not just the meaning but the emphasis of the Russian. Here are a couple of examples from a company charter when it is best to leave the passive voice intact.

12.5 Президент (Генеральный директор) назначается Советом директоров Общества.

This sentence occurs in the section dealing with the president or general director of the company, so to translate it as “The Company Board of Directors shall appoint the President (General Director)” loses the emphasis. The point is not that this is one of a series of functions of the Board of Directors but that it is the Board of Directors that appoints the president or general director. The wording “The President (General Director) shall be appointed by the Company Board of Directors” is more effective in conveying that point.

Another example:

В остальных случаях решение об увеличении уставного капитала Общества путем выпуска дополнительных акций принимается Общим собранием акционеров.

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Using the active voice gives us:

*In all other cases, the General Shareholders Meeting adopts the decision to increase the Company's share capital by issuing additional shares.*

Again, the point is not that this is one of a series of decisions that the General Shareholders Meeting adopts, but rather, who makes the decision to increase share capital in all other cases? Hence it is better to turn the sentence around:

*In all other cases, the decision to increase the Company's share capital by issuing additional shares shall be adopted by the General Shareholders Meeting.*

### (to be continued)

Steve Shabad is a veteran Russian>English translator who originally learned Russian while attending a Soviet high school for four years during the time his father served as a *New York Times* correspondent in Moscow. He has translated thousands of articles and documents, as well as five books, spanning subjects from the law and business to Russian politics and history. For many years, he was an associate editor for *Newsweek* magazine and wrote a column on the Soviet/Russian press for the monthly *World Press Review*. He can be reached at [steve.shabad@verizon.net](mailto:steve.shabad@verizon.net)

## Attention SLD Translators and Interpreters!

### Opportunity to Network with Counterparts in Ukraine

We are pleased to announce that SLD has established a relationship with Ukrainian Translation Industry Conference (<http://2014.utic.eu/en>). They are inviting all interested SLD members to join their listserv.

This is a great opportunity, so if you are interested, please let SLD Administrator Lucy Gunderson ([russophile@earthlink.net](mailto:russophile@earthlink.net)) know and she will forward your details to them.

## Diary of an Administrator

*Lucy Gunderson, SLD Administrator*

It was wonderful to see so many SLD members in San Antonio. One of the most gratifying things for me about the conference is the chance it offers to take my virtual connections with my clients and colleagues off-line and solidify these relationships in the exhibit hall, over a meal, or even during an elevator ride. But we certainly felt the absence of those members who were not able to join us in Texas, and we do hope to see many of them in Chicago.



I am extremely grateful to all the members of our 2013 Leadership Council, who worked hard to make this conference a success. However, our division cannot be successful without member participation, so I'd also like to thank all the people who turned out for our annual meeting, despite the inconvenient time. Please see p. 9 for the meeting minutes.

For anyone who wasn't at the meeting, we now have a new Assistant Administrator—Fred Grasso. I'm excited to have the chance to work with Fred for the next two years and plan to make good use of his wide range of experience as an intelligence officer, lawyer, and translator. Our first major undertaking together was appointing a new Leadership Council, which I am pleased to introduce below:

- Nora Favorov – Nora will help us contact potential Greiss lecturers and then assist our candidate with the proposal submission process.
- Jen Guernsey – Jen will be working on outreach to SLD members working in languages other than Russian. She will also be serving as our newcomer coordinator for the Chicago conference.
- Ekaterina Howard – Ekaterina will be working to launch an SLD Twitter account.
- Todd Jackson – Todd will continue as our LinkedIn group manager, and he will also help organize our banquet in Chicago.
- Kate Jankowski – Kate will work on reaching out to the Polish community in Chicago, and she will also help Todd with the banquet planning.
- Alex Lane – Alex will be focusing on interpreter outreach.
- Sam Pinson – Sam will be serving as our blog editor.
- Christina Sever – Christina, one of the founding members of the SLD, will be working to set up an SLD archive that we can post on our site.
- Boris Silversteyn – Boris, who is secretary of ATA, will continue to provide us with valuable assistance as our direct link to the Board.
- Lydia Stone – Lydia is the editor of *SlavFile*.
- Eugenia Tumanova – Zhenya is our webmistress.

Fred and I will be working as conference coordinators. In this role, we hope to identify people who would be interested in presenting for the SLD track and assist them with the proposal and submission process.

The fact that we have a formal Leadership Council does not mean that we don't need input from other members. For example, we have one SLD member who was not able to serve on the Leadership Council due to time constraints, but who is going to contribute by helping to put a couple of proposals together. So, if anyone is interested in assisting any of our council members with their duties, please let me ([russophile@earthlink.net](mailto:russophile@earthlink.net)) and Fred ([frdgrasso@satx.rr.com](mailto:frdgrasso@satx.rr.com)) know, and we will put you in touch with the appropriate person.

One of our major goals this year is to get members working in languages other than Russian more involved in division activities. ATA was so pleased with the Russian webinar we held last spring that they have asked us for ideas for a webinar in another language. If anyone has any thoughts about topics or potential speakers, please let us know. We would also welcome blog contributions listing resources like dictionaries and websites for other Slavic languages or discussing the specific challenges involved in translating other Slavic languages. We really need some input in these areas so that our division can live up to its name.

This would be a good time to remind everyone of our new relationship with UTIC. Our members have the option of joining UTIC's listserv by sending me their e-mail address and ATA membership number. This list is not very active at this point, but, we hope, will facilitate greater communication with our colleagues in Ukraine.

Our other goals for the year include updating our website with photos and archives, posting more frequently to our blog, finding a way to make Twitter work for us, and involving Chicago's Polish community in our 2014 conference.

Fred and I hope we can all work together this year to take the SLD to a new level of cooperation and information exchange. We're always anxious to hear your thoughts and ideas, so please don't hesitate to contact us if you have something on your mind.

That's all for now! Best wishes to everyone for a happy, healthy, and prosperous 2014.

## The Accidental Linguist: SLD's New Assistant Administrator Introduces Himself

*Fred Grasso*

Before elaborating on this article's title, allow me to introduce myself as the Assistant Administrator of the Slavic Languages Division. It is both an honor and a privilege to be selected to a leadership position of such an accomplished group. My goals as Assistant Administrator were outlined in my candidate statement for election, but there is also an unstated commitment to provide support and counsel to the Division Administrator. Coincidentally, January 2014 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my introduction to the Russian language and Russia's history, geography, culture and arts.



Fred as a young Air Force Officer

The title of this article alludes to the fact that my original career objectives, such as they were at that time, did not materialize as planned; becoming a linguist was never part of the equation. Being selected for language training after enlisting in the Air Force was not a career choice but the mandatory outcome of rigorous screening and testing. As for studying Russian specifically, that was the result of a random event that significantly altered the trajectory of my life and professional career.

My introduction to the Russian language was decidedly atypical. At the time, the Defense Language Institute (DLI) provided Slavic language training for enlisted military personnel under its East European Language Program at Syracuse University. While the curriculum for studying basic Russian was more or less standard, the class schedule was not. Because it was "intensive" Russian, the schedule consisted of 8-hour class days, 2-4 hours of study evenings and weekends, and a seemingly endless barrage of pop quizzes, tests, and oral and written exams.

The course lasted nine difficult but very rewarding months. Not surprisingly, the attrition rate was high. Some students lacked the self-discipline and/or academic skills to assimilate the material. Others simply could not cope with the enormous stress and were eliminated from the program. Most of us who were able to complete attributed our success to the caliber of the native Russian instructors who taught the course. Professional and capable, they were deeply invested in the success of their students, and genuinely concerned for their well-being. The instructors knew that failure for their military students meant an

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unfavorable performance report, transfer to an undesirable duty station and assignment to a tedious job.

The instructors were accomplished, highly educated, conversant in multiple languages, and also widely travelled, although not always by choice. Some had emigrated with their families during the turmoil of the Revolution and the ensuing Civil War. Others escaped during the carnage and chaos of the Great Patriotic War. In either case, their eventual arrival in the United States was neither direct nor easy. In short, they had incredible stories to tell, and we were eager to listen.

However, students were cautioned not to “fraternize” with the instructors because that might jeopardize a future high-level security clearance that authorized access to sensitive compartmented information (sometimes referred to as “above Top Secret”). We forged a bond nonetheless during sidebar discussions in class or unofficial gatherings for the Easter feast or the Christmas holidays. The instructors became mentors and counselors, and provided additional tutoring if needed. Their efforts over and above their assigned teaching responsibilities were instrumental in our overall success. I completed the intermediate and advanced Russian language courses at DLI in between military assignments as a linguist and intelligence analyst.

The fourth and final visit to Syracuse occurred at the 10-year mark in my military career. The purpose was to complete the requirements for an undergraduate degree in Russian. Graduation was followed by further training to earn a commission. Fortunately, despite the change in status from enlisted to officer, the intelligence assignments remained essentially the same for another 10 years.

After serving in military intelligence for nearly 20 years, I was fairly conversant in the language and worked with the language (mostly technical) on an almost daily basis. Not surprisingly, the Soviet Union and any and all of its citizens were strictly “off limits.” So long as I worked in the intelligence community, any contact would result in the suspension of access to classified material. Substantial contact would mean withdrawal of clearance entirely.

Those of us holding high-level security clearances were prohibited from traveling to the Soviet Union or Eastern Bloc countries except in a diplomatic capacity. Travel to these restricted areas became possible



Fred doing oil field work in Russia

only after the expiration of a certain number of years following military retirement. After retirement, travel was delayed still further by attending law school and subsequently practicing law with a domestic oil company headquartered in Houston. At that time major international oil companies were just beginning to make overtures to Soviet authorities regarding exploration and production of hydrocarbons in the Soviet Union.

My ultimate goal was to gain employment with one of the international oil majors, but that took some time.

My first trip to the Soviet Union, as a tourist, occurred in late 1990. By that time, however, the Berlin Wall had come down, the Warsaw Pact had collapsed, the Eastern Bloc had broken free, and only 14 months remained before the Soviet Union would cease to exist as a political entity. As it turned out, the date proposed in Andrey Amalrik’s controversial 1970 essay “Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?” wasn’t far off the mark.

At about the same time, during 1990-1991, two major oil deals, in Kazakhstan and in Azerbaijan, were making headlines. Both initiatives involved American oil companies; one of them hired me on. My second visit to the Russian Federation was in a professional capacity as company representative. The business trip – the first of many – came just six weeks following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This time, Moscow was just a layover. The final destination was a gritty west Siberian oil town located on the banks of the middle Ob River, 1300 miles east of Moscow. I was part of a team tasked to secure the development rights for a major oil field in the region.

The team consisted of legal and financial advisors as well as engineers and geologists. Of necessity the team also included a number of contract interpreter/translators who were absolutely essential to our task. As the only company team member with Russian language capabilities, I worked closely with the linguists, our specialists, and the Russian engineers to decipher and resolve translation issues. We analyzed and discussed oil-related technology and terms, the meaning and translation of company jargon, and the nuances of translating slang, colloquialisms and idioms. Over time, the contract linguists I worked with became invaluable mentors.

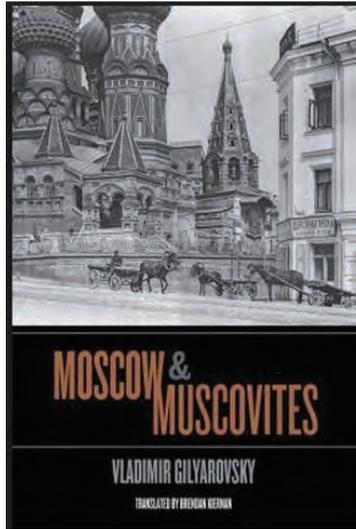
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# AN INTERVIEW WITH BRENDAN KIERNAN, TRANSLATOR OF GILYAROVSKY'S MOSCOW AND MUSCOVITES

At a time when many Russian classics of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century are being retranslated, some for up to the tenth time, the first English translation of a unique work, beloved and revered by many, *Moscow and Muscovites*, has been published by Russian Life Books <http://store.russianlife.com/moscow-and-muscovites/>. This work by journalist and social commentator Vladimir Gilyarovskiy is devoted to reminiscences of life in pre-revolutionary Moscow, with a particular focus on its underbelly. The text is full of slang and jargon and references to long obsolete aspects of Russian life. We cannot imagine a more challenging work to translate. Brendan Kiernan, translator and political analyst, accepted this challenge, which was supported by Moscow's Institute of Translation and Russian Life Books. SlavFile interviewed Brendan about this project.

**SF: Brendan, could you tell us why and how you conceived of this project and how it was brought to fruition? By the way, how long did it take you — from start of work to completion?**

This project is the professional high point of a 30-year relationship. Paul Richardson, the head of Russian Life Books and publisher of *Moscow and Muscovites*, and I have known each other professionally and personally since 1984. We entered the graduate program in political science at Indiana University at the same time, both interested in the Soviet Union. We've worked together on everything from writing first-year grad student papers, to researching Russian



verbal prefixes, to roofing a house, to translating Chekhov — and ultimately Gilyarovskiy. (I'll humbly admit that Paul is the better shingler.)

This project was always a collaboration. In mid-2012, I was looking for a substantial source text that would let me build on professional momentum I'd started to gather in 2010. After a 17-year break from academia and serious language study I had returned to translation with a number of small projects. I enjoy challenges, so I certainly was looking for something difficult. There are so many outstanding, untranslated Russian texts that I saw

the opportunity to facilitate a global English-language debut. When I asked Paul for a suggestion, he almost off-handedly, cleverly, suggested Gilyarovskiy. I soon found myself hooked, astonished that such a fascinating book remained unavailable in English. After a brief honeymoon, the size of the project really dawned on me. For a translator, taking on a challenging project like Gilya (our nickname for the book) is much less intimidating knowing that someone like Paul, and the resources of a company like RLB, are behind you. I'd also like to think that Paul, knowing my work, found it just a bit easier to relax as publisher.

Practically speaking, the project required approximately 20 months. I took the best part of the summer of 2012 to read the book and ponder how to attack the project. By mid-August, work was well and truly launched. I chipped away on a daily basis and by April 2013 a first draft was complete. From this point, and through the spring and summer of 2013, I re-worked

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During the next several years there were numerous such business trips throughout the former Soviet Union, culminating in a two-year posting in Moscow. Informal mentoring continued not only with linguists but also with the Moscow office staff, drivers, and Russian business counterparts. For me the business trips and Moscow posting represented the combination of an unofficial study abroad program with an on-the-job equivalent of a graduate study program in Russian.

As with most intellectual endeavors, a great deal of “sweat equity” is required in order to assimilate and master a second language. Some have the ability, tenacity, and self-discipline to do it on their own. Others require the knowledge, guidance, and patience of dedicated teachers in order to master the fundamentals. I fall squarely into the second category. In my case, although the academic foundation was solid, it required additional mentoring by experienced individuals to turn an accidental linguist into an accomplished linguist.

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the manuscript to apply in earlier chapters the knowledge and experience I had picked up later. I worked with native speakers on some of the trickier questions of interpretation and meaning. Collecting photographs, paintings, and maps did not start in earnest until the fall of 2013, although I had been keeping my eyes open throughout the project.

I should note (for readers like me) that I treated *Moscow and Muscovites* as almost a second job, certainly more than a hobby. I have two beautiful children and a full-time career in the telecom industry, so I was only able to eke out a few hours per day, at most, for the project. Consistency was important and I measured progress daily.

### **SF: Would you tell us about the special challenges translating Gilyarovsky?**

I wrote in the book's introduction that Gilyarovsky is a "spectacular verbal pastiche." Is that a special challenge? Certainly, most translators have multiple dictionaries, paper and digital, general and specialized, old and new, of two or often more languages open on their desktops all the time. Despite these powerful tools, and the incredible range of other sources at my fingertips, Gilyarovsky's vocabulary certainly did present quantitative difficulties (a huge amount of work finding the right sources and using them), but nothing qualitatively unique. For me, the truly special challenge was finding the energy and discipline—and tuning my ear—to listen to the rich emotional and social aspects of the text. These elements changed in tandem with Gilyarovsky's constantly shifting cast of characters and settings, never arriving, for more than a few pages, at a constant tone. When faced with an elliptical, colloquial text, embedded in an alien social and emotional context by a talented writer-actor, there was always the temptation to either run off to find another source, or a better source, or, move on, promising to do better in the indefinite "later." Of course, the "right" word is impossible to find, no matter the source, without the context broadly defined and consciously articulated. And the indefinite "later" — surprise! — is never any better. Eventually, and much too late in the process, I recognized that escaping to research put off the most important part of the work. That was the special challenge for me of Gilyarovsky's pastiche.

### **SF: Given the huge difficulties and complexities this work presented, how would you answer a reader who pointed out one or more inaccuracies in your translation?**

I can't speak for other translators, but I'd define my own professional *persona* as a volatile mix of artist and critic, pride and humility. Pride insofar as translation demands something akin to the powerful artistic force of a blacksmith, swinging a hammer over a white-hot forge, hour after hour, day after day, shaping ingots into *objets*. The focused and sweaty drive to transform ore to art suffers no fools. The smith's arms admit no weakness. At the same time, however, the critic in me believes, theoretically at least, that successful translation mutes the ego, maximizes the "other" in a Sisyphean effort to minimize the gulf between source and target. So, here's a simple response: it all depends on the approach. Provoke the proud artist, the smith, and you might get hammered. Engage the critic, and, at least in theory, we'll discuss your critique. And hopefully we'll both learn something.

But there's a practical matter here, too. Mistakes of any type, no matter how neatly framed, no matter the size or type, real or even imagined, are daftly, deeply, darkly depressing. Thoughts spiral: "What was I thinking?" At that point, I re-read Alexander Pope's *Essay on Criticism*. If even a giant like Pope had to struggle with perspective in this regard, at least I'm not alone.

Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see,  
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor ne'er shall be.  
In every work regard the writer's End,  
Since none can compass more than they intend;  
And if the means be just, the conduct true,  
Applause, in spite of trivial faults, is due.

### **SF: Is there any other point you would like to make for our readers?**

I attended an all-boys Catholic high school. Father DiBlasi, my Latin teacher, was rumored by students to have entered the priesthood after killing a man with his fists—in a boxing ring. (Almost) certainly apocryphal, the story did have a strong effect: everyone did their homework every night. No one wanted an invitation to the hallway to discuss "verb declensions." I sometimes wonder if Gus DiBlasi, a truly gentle man who probably enjoyed more than anything else his fishing trips to a nearby reservoir, didn't start the rumor himself. I mention all this only as a long-winded introduction to a simple truth: what we do as translators is often hard, daily, demanding work, like writing. My point: translate. Every day. And don't get called into the hall.

Brendan Kiernan, was a Russian major at Williams College and studied at Indiana University's Russian and East European Institute before earning a Ph.D. in political science. He may be reached at [bkiernanphd@gmail.com](mailto:bkiernanphd@gmail.com).

# Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the American Translators Association's Slavic Language Division

Friday, November 8, 2013

Marriott Rivercenter, San Antonio, TX

Lucy Gunderson, Administrator  
John Riedl, Assistant Administrator  
Minutes taken by Nora Favorov

SLD Administrator Lucy Gunderson called the meeting to order. After approval of the agenda and the minutes of the 2012 meeting, Lucy thanked John for all his work over the past two years and announced the gift of an Amazon gift card in gratitude, in lieu of the traditional flowers. Lucy named and thanked the members of the leadership council: Nora Favorov, Fred Grasso, Jen Guernsey, Todd Jackson, Katarzyna Jankowski, Irina Jesionowski, Janja Pavetić-Dickey, Elana Pick, Sam Pinson, Boris Silversteyn, Lydia Stone, and Eugenia Tumanova. She asked for volunteers for the LC for 2014. Each member has a particular area of responsibility, such as banquet organization, representation of Slavic languages other than Russian, recruiting speakers for the 2014 conference, social media coordinator, editor of the website blog, etc. In particular, SLD is developing a relationship with UTIC, the Ukrainian T/I organization, and seeks a Ukrainian<>English translator to serve on the council as a liaison between the two organizations.

In planning for the 2014 conference, one issue is whom to invite for the Greiss lecture, the SLD's distinguished speaker series. Lucy mentioned that we do have a speaker in mind but sought input from the membership on possible invitees. Emma Garkavi suggested Anne Fisher. Maksym Kozub brought up a suggestion that Tom Fennell made last year: William Butler. Another suggestion was Pominov of Multitran.

Among SLD accomplishments in 2013 was the division's first webinar, which was given by Michele Berdy and was a huge success. All involved, including ATA HQ, were extremely pleased with attendance, the webinar itself, and the follow-up by Michele Berdy, who published in the *SlavFile* the answers to some questions she did not have time to answer during the webinar. ATA is encouraging the division to organize another webinar soon. Lucy suggested trying to find a speaker of a Slavic language other than Russian for the next one.

Lucy asked if there was any additional business to be discussed, and Maksym Kozub asked whether practical steps were being taken to increase membership among young translators and interpreters working in Slavic languages other than Russian, such as

Ukrainian. Nora Favorov encouraged him and other Ukrainian translators and interpreters to reach out to their younger colleagues. Lucy stated that Boris had identified members working in Slavic languages other than Russian with the goal of outreach. Tom Fennell suggested reaching out to young translators through ProZ. John Riedl commented that the key is energy. The members themselves have to follow through on ideas for expanding membership. Larry Bogoslaw proposed organizing panel presentations at conferences on topics of relevance to all Slavic<>English translators, such as the issue of definite/indefinite articles or CAT tools. Maksym asked whether ATA collected statistics about the languages in which conference attendees are working; Lucy responded that she would inquire. David Stephenson made the point that Chicago, the site of the 2014 conference, is a city with a large Slavic population, and thus represents an opportunity to attract people working in a number of languages into the division.

Lydia Stone reported on the *SlavFile*. In 2013 the *SlavFile* published four issues totaling over 100 pages and including 48 different articles or editions of columns. In the past year *SlavFile* had only four articles devoted to languages other than Russian, although many of the other articles were of potential interest to all members. There is an ongoing effort to source more articles on Slavic languages other than Russian. Perhaps the new informal arrangement with the UTIC may help. The *SlavFile* has a new regular contributor, Kenny Cargill, who will be writing about technology and translation, but others are also encouraged to submit tech-related articles.

Lucy thanked the nominating committee for selecting the candidates for administrator and assistant administrator for the 2013-2014 term. She herself has agreed to serve another term as administrator; however, John Riedl stepped down as assistant administrator. Fred Grasso was nominated to replace him and accepted. Fred and Lucy were elected by acclamation.

Lucy mentioned the great improvements to the website, thanks to LC member and SLD webmistress Eugenia Tumanova.

Newcomers to the ATA conference were asked to introduce themselves, after which the meeting was concluded.

## USE YOUR TIME WISELY AS AN ATA CONFERENCE NEWCOMER

Adam Fuss

*Use your time wisely.* It sounds like simple enough advice. I remember hearing the same thing from a number of older friends and family members before setting off for college years ago. *Those four years will go by faster than any other time in your life. Make the most of them.*

Although I have gone on to bigger and better things since my college days, I've discovered that the wisdom of that advice holds true for all sorts of endeavors. Yet, as with many other things in life, this wisdom is often clear only with 20/20 hindsight. So it was with my first time at the ATA Annual Conference this past November in San Antonio.

I have been translating professionally for nearly nine years, but 2013 was really my first year as a full-time freelance translator. After an extremely busy spring and summer, September and October brought on a long dry spell, so I made a very late decision to attend the ATA's 2013 conference in hopes of attracting new clients and generating new business. Due to a previous scheduling conflict, I also went to sit for the ATA certification exam (more on that later).

Despite my initial lofty goals of growing my client list and bringing in more work, once I began flipping through the conference program the morning after my arrival, I realized how much I had to get done. *So many interesting sessions! So many networking opportunities! The certification exam! And the work I had stupidly brought along with me! And San Antonio to explore! Needless to say, I panicked. Three days is not enough!!!*



After regaining my composure, I forced myself to adopt an endurance mindset. A month earlier I had completed my first-ever century bike ride, and for much of the year I had subjected myself to a grueling regimen of CrossFit training. If I could handle those physical rigors, I thought, I could surely handle a three-day conference with a packed schedule.

I did handle it, but not without a certain measure of regret once everything was said and done. What follows is an overview of how I spent my time and some thoughts on what I felt worked and didn't work.

### Thursday

I arrived late Wednesday night, deciding to forego the costs of an extra hotel night and the pre-conference seminars that were not included in the general registration fee. Given my busy schedule earlier in the week and my limited funds, I felt this was the right decision, although future attendees may very well benefit from traveling a day early. If nothing else, it is a great opportunity to do extra sightseeing.

After the opening session on Thursday morning, I attended an orientation session for conference newcomers held by Corrine McKay and Jill Sommer. In the afternoon, I attended several sessions devoted to legal translation, and in the evening I popped in for the Speed Networking event before dashing off several blocks away for the Slavic Languages Division banquet.

*What worked:* All of the conference sessions I attended were excellent. As a follower of Corinne McKay's excellent blog for several years, I was glad to finally meet her in person. Since legal translation is one of my areas of specialization, the afternoon sessions were well worth my time. Speed networking allowed me to meet some great people I would likely have never met otherwise. Finally, both the dinner and conversation with fellow Russian translators at Ácenar, a contemporary Mexican restaurant on San Antonio's famed River Walk, were excellent.

*What didn't work:* Nothing! Despite my panicked start, Thursday was a huge success!

### Friday

Friday was devoted to a mix of sessions for independent contractors and my language pair (Russian > English). In the evening, I also attended the



SlavFile Editor Lydia Stone recruits contribution from conference newcomer Adam Fuss as newcomer coordinator Sam Pinson looks on.

CONFERENCE NEWCOMER

Slavic Languages Division meeting and the Resume Exchange.

*What worked:* As with the previous day, I found the sessions to be very informative, although given that there were so many taking place on Friday that interested me, in retrospect I wish that I had left a few earlier to pop in on others. (N.B. Conference attendees frequently do this and so long as one does so quietly, it's not considered rude.)

*What didn't work:* The Resume Exchange. Even though it was only an hour long, this was without a doubt the biggest disappointment of my entire time in San Antonio. Before entering the room—a crowded, windowless, stuffy hotel banquet room—attendees were given badges that indicated whether they were “looking to work” or “looking to hire.” It goes without saying that the former outnumbered the latter by a ratio of at least 10:1. This was exhausting, and despite the number of resumes and business cards I gave out, the event most certainly did not generate any new business for me. If ATA includes the Resume Exchange in future conferences, at least in its current format, my advice would be to skip it and do something more productive – like exercise, sleep, or otherwise relax.

**Saturday**

Saturday morning was devoted to the ATA certification exam. My actual intention had been to take this exam earlier in the fall, but due to a variety of both personal and ATA-related scheduling issues, the conference turned out to be the best time for me to take it.

In the afternoon, I attended several sessions dealing with literary translation, security clearances, and arbitration.

*What worked:* Again, the sessions were fantastic. At the end of the conference, I felt that I had earned a solid “A” for choosing great sessions to attend, not to mention for cramming as many as possible into three short days.

*What didn't work:* The exam. Don't take it during the conference. Really, don't do it! Even if you are smart and don't stay out the night before (i.e., miss an important chance to socialize with your fellow translators), you'll still be exhausted and distracted from everything else taking place at the conference. You will also miss some potentially very interesting sessions during the exam. Find another time to take it during the year; there are dozens of opportunities to do so.

**The final verdict**

Needless to say, I came home on Sunday morning worn out—far more so than after riding 100+ miles on my bike in late September. Not only was I physically tired, but I was also spent mentally, especially since I couldn't shake a nagging tendency to analyze what I just had gone through, wondering if I had missed some important business opportunity during those hectic three days. *Will this ever pay off?* This question bugged me repeatedly for several days.

Yet, as the days and weeks passed, and as I reflected more on my experience, I realized that formal networking and pitching aren't what the ATA conference is all about. As in other industries, so much business in translation comes from word of mouth rather than filling out application forms, sending resumes, and distributing business cards. In the month following the conference, I have had the pleasure of both giving and receiving referrals that have resulted in real revenue. The business generated by these referrals—made possible entirely by socializing with other translators—has far exceeded the business generated by applying directly to the translation agencies whose booths I visited in the Exhibit Hall.

While my marathon approach ultimately paid off, a far saner way would have been to go with the mindset that the ATA conference is a place to meet people and learn something new. Nothing more, nothing less. Things that can be done elsewhere and at other times—pitching for work and taking the certification exam—only serve as distractions. I look forward to a calmer but ultimately more productive conference this fall in Chicago!

Adam Fuss has worked as a professional Russian to English translator for over nine years. Originally from Omaha, Nebraska, he graduated from Boston College in History. In 2001, he traveled to Smolensk, Russia on a Fulbright Award from the U.S. Department of State, after which he obtained a Master's degree in Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. He currently lives in Naperville, Illinois and can be reached by email at [adam@abftranslations.com](mailto:adam@abftranslations.com).



A lively discussion follows every SLD session.



## HANDLE WITH CARE

### A translator's take on EPO-offered MT of Chinese patents

Presented by Irina Knizhnik

Reviewed by Natalie Shahova

In Russia we have a popular joke: “What’s an American university?” “It’s a place where Russian physicists lecture to Chinese students.”

Perhaps this introduction provides a good segue into my review of Irina Knizhnik’s presentation, “Handle with Care: Practical Considerations for Using the New Machine Translations of Chinese Patents,” delivered at the ATA Annual Conference in San Antonio: as the presentation was listed under Chinese, I believe Irina and I were the only members of the Slavic Languages Division in the audience, which included mostly – surprise, surprise! – Chinese translators. So here I am telling you about the event.

A translator at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) with over 30 years of experience doing technical and patent translations from Chinese, Japanese, and Russian, Irina Knizhnik was certainly the right person to present the topic.

The presentation started with some useful (especially for me!) background. Irina stated that during the last three decades the number of patents granted to Chinese inventors, in China and worldwide, has been growing exponentially, and in 2012, China’s State Intellectual Property Office (SIPO) granted more patents than any other patent office in the world, including the USPTO.

The growing volume of Chinese patents, with no concomitant increase in either the number of Chinese-into-English translators or in the funding allocated for patent translation, naturally led to a surge of interest in machine translation. This, in turn, led to an agreement between the European Patent Office (EPO) and Google, under which the EPO was given use of Google’s machine translation technology to translate patents into different languages, and in exchange Google was given access to human translations the EPO has accumulated over the years, which allowed the company to optimize its machine translation technology. The result of this agreement was the development of the EPO’s free automatic translation service, Patent Translate. Its Chinese-English component was launched in December 2012.

Now, the collections of patents written in the two most common source languages have been united as full-text documents on the Espacenet website (<http://worldwide.espacenet.com>) and can be searched using

a single tool, Patent Translate. Under the new arrangement with SIPO, Espacenet has grown by 4 million Chinese language documents, adding to the 75 million documents already available. This huge database allows Patent Translate to provide free machine translation between English and Chinese.

Human translators can derive multiple benefits from a free downloadable machine translation: it can serve as a useful terminology search tool, as a way to avoid omissions or inaccuracies when translating long lists (such as lists of chemicals, plants, components, chromatography or NMR results, etc.), and as an invaluable source of clues and ideas for English and Latin equivalents of traditional Chinese *materia medica*.

The Chinese into English patent translations provided by the Patent Translate service are often rather good and require only minor post-editing. However, sometimes these translations include mistakes that one wouldn’t expect from a machine translation (Irina mentioned a machine patent translation where numbers did not match the Chinese original and another one where the original Chinese had ten Claims but the translation only had nine).

Irina provided several examples that included the inconsistent translation of terms, loss of key words, disregard for grammar causing misinterpretation and so on.

To me, the situation with the Patent Translate service is reminiscent of the Mechanical Turk or Automaton Chess Player, constructed by Wolfgang von Kempelen (1734–1804): what seems to be machine performance could be in reality based on a hidden human performance (isn’t there a small human translator actually providing translations?). Just kidding.



**HANDLE WITH CARE**

The presenter noted that, unfortunately, only limited options for reporting mistakes and inquiring about problems were offered by the EPO but noted that the system was gradually improving and even revisiting the same patent on the EPO site later, one could find that some of the previously existing problems had been fixed.

Irina warned translators to be careful in using the Patent Translate service, although she also felt that this could be a very helpful tool for those who stay alert.



R>E translator, Liv Bliss, takes a stand in front of San Antonio's famous Alamo.

Natalie Shahova received her PhD in Math from the School of Mechanics and Mathematics of Moscow State University, later worked for 12 years as an assistant professor of computer science in another Moscow University (MIREA) and is currently the head of the EnRus translation agency, an ATA member, specializing in topics related to computers. Natalie herself is a member of the Union of Translators of Russia and has translated a dozen books, including *Grand Pursuit* by Sylvia Nasar and *Business @ The Speed of Thought* by Bill Gates.

Natalie may be reached at [translation@enrus.ru](mailto:translation@enrus.ru).

**VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT TO TRANSLATE RUSSIAN MEDICAL DOCUMENTS**

Volontery Perevodov (Волонтеры Переводов) is a global social services project launched in 2012. Volunteers worldwide translate documents from/into Russian without charge for sick children requiring medical treatment outside of Russia. Since 2012, we have completed ~800 projects.

Requests are submitted by children's families or charities via a centralized website, where all the documents are kept. Volunteer managers oversee all of the projects and ensure the quality of the translations. The managers publish requests via our Facebook group, where translators can view the announcements and volunteer to translate a particular document.

We are always looking for new volunteers! If you are interested, simply join our group on Facebook to view our announcements.

Link to our Facebook group [www.facebook.com/groups/perevodov.volunteers/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/perevodov.volunteers/)

Link to our website <http://volontery.perevodov.info/home>

I am one of the managers and can answer any questions. Thank you!

Julia Blain ([juliablain13@gmail.com](mailto:juliablain13@gmail.com))

## TRANSLATING ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS BETWEEN ENGLISH AND POLISH

*Presented by Magdalena Perdek*

*Reviewed by Iza Kryjom*

Magdalena Perdek, who has made it a tradition to come to ATA conferences from Poland every year, did not disappoint us this time. In San Antonio, Perdek, Assistant Professor in the Adam Mickiewicz University Faculty of English, gave a presentation entitled “Translating Administrative Documents between English and Polish.” The lecture was very interesting, engaging the audience in a lively discussion throughout its length. Perdek walked us through the history of Polish administrative language from the Middle Ages to contemporary times, making us laugh at memories from our youth (or for some of us adulthood) during the Communist era of such administrative linguistic oddities as addressing people as *obywatel*, *obywatelka* (citizen).

In the medieval period, Polish administrative language was influenced by Latin and German, with legal instruments such as royal decrees being written in the former. During the Partitions (*zaborcy*, 1795-1918), as Poland formally ceased to exist and was divided among its neighbors, the Polish language was not used for official documents and was replaced by the languages of the occupying powers—German and Russian. The Polish in official documents only started to be standardized after 1918. Syntactic calques from Russian and German can be found in such expressions of Polish administrative language as *w powołaniu się na pismo* (invoking the letter) or *w posiadaniu pisma* (in the possession of the letter).

Perdek divided the types of administrative language into legal (*prawny*) and that pertaining to documentation, and registry (*kancelaryjny*) and further separated administrative communications into two categories. Examples of non-individualized (non-personal) communication would be statements, announcements, or documents addressed to anybody (or a large class of people). For example, an office might address certain categories of citizens using such terms as *płatnik podatku* (tax payer), *ubezpieczony* (the insured person), or *świadek* (witness). In an individualized (personal) communication, statements, announcements, or documents are addressed to a particular person using terms such as *Pan*, *Pani* (Mr., Mrs./Ms.). These terms came back into use in 1989 replacing the above mentioned “citizen.”

Administrative language was described as directive, impersonal, precise, standardized, and prolix (wordy,

redundant, repetitious). Directive language is characterized by such nouns as *obowiązek* (duty), *nakaz* (order), *zakaz* (prohibition), *pozwolenie* (permission) or expressions such as *jest nakazane* (it is ordered), *jest zalecone* (it is recommended), *jest dozwolone* (it is permitted), *należy* (which in some cases could be translated as “shall” or “should” but varies in meaning depending on the context), *powinno się* (it ought to), *nie wolno* (it is not allowed, it is forbidden).

Examples of impersonal administrative language are such reflexive verbs as *zarządza się* (it is ordained), *informuje się* (it is informed) or verbs in past tense ending in *-no*, *-to*, as in *przyjęto* (it has been accepted, it has been approved), *rozpatrzone* (it has been considered, it has been reviewed), and sometimes the passive voice: *świadek został powiadomiony* (the witness has been notified).

Examples of precise language include formulaic means of identifying a particular type of document: *Uchwała... Rady Ministrów z dnia...* (Resolution... of the Council of Ministers of [date]...), references to other documents or points: *zgodnie z* (in accordance with), *w oparciu o* (based on), *stosownie do* (according to), *opłata, o której mowa...* (the fee referred to...), or indication of the exact time when a document becomes binding: *zarządzenie wchodzi w życie z dniem ogłoszenia* (the order enters into force on the day of its publication).

In the case of standardized language, document templates are developed and used repeatedly in certain common administrative situations. Examples of prolix administrative language are numerous and deeply rooted in Polish culture: *fakt przyjazdu* (the fact of arrival), *proces niszczenia* (the process of destruction), *w miesiącu grudniu* (in the month of December), *w dniu dzisiejszym* (today, literally “on today’s day”), *dnia 3 maja* (on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of May), *do miasta Krakowa* (to the city of Cracow) to name just a few. Other redundant expressions are: *dokonać otwarcia* (to perform the opening), *nabyć drogą kupna* (to acquire by purchase), *otwory okienne* (window openings) or *przeprowadzić analizę* (to conduct an analysis).

In general, administrative language is formal (colloquialisms are avoided), uses archaic forms and borrowings, avoids the use of emotive terms or expressions, and uses legal terms. Verbal nouns ending in

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–anie, –enie, –cie or adjective-derived nouns ending with –ość are often used. Sentences tend to be long.

Magdalena Perdek distributed two documents: one American – a Social Security Card Application Form, and the other Polish – *Orzeczenie o stopniu niepełnosprawności* (disability degree certificate). Audience members joined forces to help translate such terms and expressions as: to process an application (*rozpatrzyć wniosek* or *podanie*), without an expiration date (*wydany na czas nieokreślony / wydany bezterminowo*), U.S. military identity card (*legitymacja wojskowa* or *książeczka wojskowa*, the Polish equivalent). Discussion arose about such terms as “Social Security Card” (translators disagreed about whether *karta ubezpieczenia społecznego* or *karta Social Security* should be used) and “legal name,” which makes sense in America where people, many of them immigrants, often go by a different, simplified name than the one used in their birth certificate, but does not appear in Poland where the term “legal” is not used in relation to a person’s name and simply *imię i nazwisko* (first name and last name) is listed in official documents. Explaining the term “final adoption decree” (*ostateczna decyzja o przysposobieniu*), the speaker pointed out that the term *przysposobienie*, not *adopcja* is a legal term in Polish, which reminded me of my third year in law school when my classmates failed the exams in civil law for using *adopcja* instead of *przysposobienie*.

It was interesting to learn that *orzeczenie o stopniu niepełnosprawności* (disability degree certificate) refers only to persons older than 16. For persons aged

16 and younger, *orzeczenie o niepełnosprawności* (without mention of the “degree” of disability) is used. *Stopień niepełnosprawności* (degree of disability) can be *znaczny* (considerable, substantial), *umiarkowany* (moderate) or *lekki* (mild). Assessments of disability are made by *Powiatowy Zespół do Spraw Orzekania o Niepełnosprawności* (Provincial/District/Powiat Disability Evaluation Board), and the audience agreed that *powiat*, the term some translators use for *powiat*, a small administrative unit of Poland, would most likely not be understood by an American audience not familiar with Polish administration and culture. Other expressions that translators encounter when working on Polish disability documents are: PESEL = *Powszechny Elektroniczny System Ewidencji Ludności* (Personal Identification Number for all Polish citizens), *zakład aktywności zawodowej* (vocational development center/vocational rehabilitation facility), *przedmioty ortopedyczne* (orthopedic aids), *środki pomocnicze* (assistive devices), *praca zarobkowa* (gainful employment) and ZUS = *Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych* (the Polish Social Insurance Institution, the translation used on the ZUS website).

The presentation was very informative. We are looking forward to another presentation by Magdalena Perdek next year in Chicago.

Iza Kryjom is an ATA-certified English to Polish translator, who also works from Portuguese and Spanish into Polish. She has a Master’s degree in law from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. She completed post-graduate studies at the Latin American Studies Center and Developing Countries Center, both at the University of Warsaw. Contact: [iza@polishtranslatorusa.com](mailto:iza@polishtranslatorusa.com).



At the SLD Banquet (clockwise from left): Yulia Tsaplina, Lynn Visson, Nora Favorov, Natalia Strelkova, Irina Jesionowski, Lucie Butcher, and Angelina Galanska-Pickle



SlavFile Editor, Galina Raff, always finds something of interest in the technology displays.

# WHEN TO BE “POLITE” (OR NOT) IN USER INTERFACE LOCALIZATION

Presented by Larisa Zlatić

Reviewed by Marijana Tropin



The only South Slavic session held during the 54<sup>th</sup> annual ATA Conference was an extremely interesting and useful one, Larisa Zlatić’s presentation entitled “When to Be “Polite” (or Not) in User Interface Localization.”

As a translator into Serbian and Croatian who has long experience with localization projects, Ms. Zlatić offered a number of suggestions to help translators working into Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian choose between “Vi” (the formal or polite “you”) and “ti” (the informal “you”) in website and user interface localization. The importance of the right choice between these two forms goes beyond consistency in terminology and style, as the informal “you” may offend the end-user while the formal “you” may alienate him/her.

Ms. Zlatić’s presentation focused on well-known web applications, such as Facebook, and well-known email applications and apps for mobile devices. This type of localization involves numerous commands and prompts or descriptor sentences that prompt the user to take or not take a certain action.

The examples of pragmatic contexts where it is preferable to use the informal “you” (“ti”) include **commands** and **prompts** (e.g., *Login/Prijavi se; Logout/Odjavi se; Verify your account/Verificiraj svoj račun; Save (Delete) file/Sačuvaj (Izbriši) datoteku; Search mail/Pretraži poštu; Go to URL/Idi na veb sajt, ...*) and **requests/instructions** (*Change your profile picture in a second/Promijeni sliku na*

*svojem profilu u sekundi; Customize your profile and settings for better view/Prilagodi svoj profil i postavke za bolji prikaz*). In such cases the danger of the informal usage offending the user is mitigated by the impression that the command comes from the device, rather than a human being or organization.

The contexts where the formal “you” is preferred (“Vi”) include **polite requests/instructions** (*Please try again later/Pokušajte ponovo kasnije; Please confirm your email address/Potvrdite (svoju) adresu elektroničke pošte; Leave feedback/Pošaljite povratne informacije; Subscribe now/Pretplatite se sada*) and **demands for payment** (*Enter credit card # on next page/Unesite br. platne kartice na sledećoj stranici*). Ms. Zlatić noted that requests, if translated informally, could lead the reader to think that they are mandatory, causing the user to immediately opt out of a transaction rather than comply. A good example would be: *Submit/Make payment (Izvršite uplatu/plaćanje; NOT: Plati/Uplati)*. Other examples of contexts for using the formal “you” include **advice** (*If you don’t want to receive emails from X, unsubscribe here/Ako više ne želite primiti elektroničku poštu od X, otkazite pretplatu ovdje*), **explanations** (*Sorry, you already have an email account/Žao nam je, ali već imate nalog e-pošte*), **informative statements** (*We’ll keep your mobile number secure.../Čuvaćemo vaš broj mobilnog na sigurnom mestu...*), **questions** (*How would you like to receive alerts?/Kako biste želeli da primite obaveštenja?*), including **fragmented questions** (*Forgot your password?/Zaboravili ste lozinku?*) and statements pertaining to **system status** (*Your account is now verified/Vaš račun je sada verificiran*).

The presentation also addressed contexts where either formal or informal forms would be appropriate: certain instructions/commands (*Try again later/Pokušaj(Pokušajte) ponovo kasnije; Check email/Proveri [Proverite] e-poštu*), certain requests (*Update now/Ažuriraj [Ažurirajte] sada*), indirect commands (*Simply enter your mobile number/Jednostavno unesi [unesite] svoj broj telefona*), notifications (*You have a new message from.../Imaš [imate] novu poruku od...*) and persuasion (*Stay connected!/Ostani povezan/a! or Ostanite povezani!*). These

## Strategies for using ‘vi’ or ‘ti’ in localization

(1) Consistency in style (formal vs. informal)

Depends on:

- i. Audience (who the end-users are)
- ii. Pragmatic types of utterances: commands, prompts, requests, demands, descriptions, explanations, notifications, tips...

(2) Consistency in terminology

(3) Cultural appropriateness and transparency

INTERFACE LOCALIZATION

particular contexts allow for both forms because they will not put the end-user at a distance if the formal form is used, nor will they seem offensive if the informal form is used.

When discussing past tense statements, Ms. Zlatić pointed out that in such statements the translator should **avoid** using the informal “you” because we run into the masculine/feminine inclusion issue and there may not be enough space for including both the masculine and the feminine forms. This is especially true when translating user interface for mobile devices, an area of localization where brevity is often required. Her recommendation for dealing with this issue is to use the formal form of “you.” Examples include: *Forgot your password?/Zaboravili ste lozinku?* (but not: *Zaboravio/la si lozinku?*) and: *You have successfully sent a message/Uspješno ste poslali poruku* (but not: *Uspješno si poslao/la poruku*), etc.

Another topic the speaker discussed was the rules for choosing between “ti” and “Vi” in website localization. She suggested categorizing the statements and distinguishing commands or prompts from other discourse types such as instructions, tips, notifications, status messages, advertisements, etc., in order to insure consistency in the use of pronouns/verb forms. Ms. Zlatić mentioned that imperative “content” verbs (*print, edit, verify, download, submit, delete, open, close*) suggest prompts/commands for which the informal form is preferred. However, some imperative prompts can go either way (*try, see, check out, look*). The formal form is to be preferred in translations of sentences containing the English “please”: *Please try logging in later/Pokušajte se prijaviti kasnije* (but not: *Pokušaj se prijaviti kasnije*); *Please confirm your email address/Potvrdite svoju adresu elektroničke pošte* (but not: *Potvrdi tvoju adresu elektroničke pošte*). “Vi” is generally used in descriptive statements or notifications (*You are receiving this message because...; You have a new email/comment/follower*), as well as in statements offering advice/tips.

In conclusion, Ms. Zlatić pointed out that in user interface applications we want to build closeness and establish a friendship rather than alienating the client from the end-user. However, it is not a good strategy to translate/localize the entire site/page using the informal form. While pointing out that it is preferable to use the informal “you” and the corresponding informal verb forms or pronouns for commands and prompts that instruct the user what action to

Generalizations

1. Languages that distinguish between formal and informal pronouns or verb forms cannot simply localize the entire site/page using the informal language forms.
2. There are more contexts that require polite or formal verb forms or pronouns, than those that require informal forms.
3. It is preferable to use informal 'ti' and the corresponding informal verb forms for commands/prompts, instructing the user what action to undertake.
4. For all other contexts, the polite forms are preferable.

undertake, Ms. Zlatić argued that there are more contexts that require the polite or formal verb form than those that require informal forms. On the other hand, she noted that as much as we do not want to put the end-user at a distance by using the formal form, we cannot translate everything using the informal form as this may offend the end-user. This would be especially true in certain contexts where informality is not culturally and pragmatically acceptable. Finally, she strongly advised against mixing the formal and informal forms on a single page, screenshot, or application and urged consistency wherever possible. However, consistency, Zlatić emphasized, is not required between clearly different pragmatic contexts.

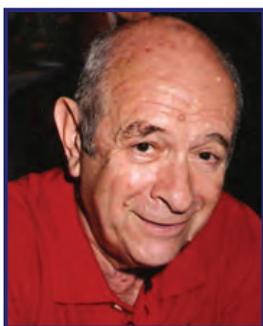
Marijana Tropin is a native speaker of Serbian and Croatian with a degree in Psychology. She specializes in marketing, technical and medical translations. She is a member of ATA's Medical Division and Science & Technology Division. Marijana is the owner and founder of *Ask A Translator*, a translation and localization services company based in Houston, TX, and can be reached at: [info@AskATranslator.net](mailto:info@AskATranslator.net)



Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian translator, Paula Gordon, and Polish translator and interpreter Kate Jankowski

## THE SLD SAN ANTONIO BANQUET

Boris Silversteyn



When Galina Raff told me on Wednesday, November 6, 2013 that the SLD banquet the next day was on me, I didn't bat an eye – I knew she was only asking for a *SlavFile* write-up, not for me to foot the bill. So I grudgingly agreed.

For me, the SLD banquet is always a highlight of the ATA Conference, and I have never missed one (when I attended the Conference, that is). It gives me a chance to spend time with colleagues – both old and new friends – in a relaxed and joyous atmosphere.

Attending the banquet is easy – just write a check, mail it to the organizer, and then show up. Organizing it is a different story.

First, it is necessary to find a local person who will do the leg work – screening restaurants to find several that meet the above criteria. Most of the time this is not a problem – there are SLD members in every major U.S. metropolitan area. In San Antonio, we were fortunate – our own Fred Grasso lives there. Rumor has it that Fred had to endure wining and dining at prospective candidate places, but he performed valiantly. Having honorably survived the restaurant marathon, Fred offered the banquet organizers a few choices together with his assessment and recommendations.

Second, it is necessary to find suitable choices. The suitability criteria are many and often contradictory: the restaurant needs to be close-by, preferably within walking distance from the conference hotel; it should have a private banquet room; the menu should offer something for everybody (at least three selections for each course); the food quality should be above average; and the price should be right (hopefully, under \$50, drinks not included).

Third, the organizers need to pick the banquet restaurant. After a lively online discussion among members of the SLD Leadership Council (now you know who to blame for everything☺), we had the winner – Ácenar, located 0.7 miles from the Marriott Rivercenter Hotel. (Note: This is approximately the length of Kreshchatik – the main street of Kiev, my hometown. So for my wife and me, 0.7 miles was walking distance.)

The restaurant offers modern Tex-Mex cuisine, and its website quotes Zagat: “Laid back atmosphere, killer food.” It also advertises “private dining,” but this is not 100% accurate – more on that later.

In addition to dinner and drinks, an SLD banquet usually includes a special treat that I do not think any other ATA gathering offers: bouts-rimés composed and presented by Vadim Khazin. For his bout-rimés (rhymed line endings) Vadim uses pairs of rhymed words proposed by each banquet participant. The words can be in English, or any of the Slavic languages spoken by the poet: Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, and this time somebody (I know who it was but won't tell) even threw in a few Spanish pairs. No problem: for those of you who didn't know, in his youth Vadim used to translate fiction from Spanish. While we continue eating, drinking and talking, Vadim steps aside and combines all these contributions into a smooth poem with a common theme and a healthy dose of humor. The evening ends with Vadim reading the poem, interrupted by the audience's roars of laughter.

This time was slightly different. The thing is, the so-called private areas in the restaurant are separated by curtains rather than walls, and one can hear noise from other areas of the establishment. So at first Vadim opposed the idea of keeping up the bouts-rimés tradition. However, after some arm twisting he changed his mind close to the evening's end. The only problem was that there was no time for the finished product to be created and read before the banquet's conclusion. But there is a silver lining to this cloud: those who had not attended the banquet but were at the subsequent SLD meeting were able to hear the bouts-rimés from the author's mouth. And those of you who did not attend the conference can read and enjoy this year's bout-rimés right here, in the Lite column on page 20.

Boris Silversteyn ([bsilversteyn@comcast.net](mailto:bsilversteyn@comcast.net)) is a Russian and Ukrainian translator and interpreter, ATA-certified in English-Russian and Russian-English translation. He is currently the Secretary of ATA's Board of Directors, having previously served on the Board as a Director. He is the Language Chair for English-Russian translator certification, and a grader for English-Ukrainian translator certification. Boris is a member of the SLD Leadership Council.

### SLD NOW ON TWITTER

The Slavic Languages Division has launched a Twitter account (@ATA\_SLD).  
Go to [https://twitter.com/ATA\\_SLD](https://twitter.com/ATA_SLD) to view the feed and join the conversation.”

# SLAVFILE LITE: NOT BY WORD COUNT ALONE

Lydia Razran Stone

Just as I was despairing that I had nothing with which to start this column, I actually came into possession of a small anecdote that actually is both “lite” and Slavic to write about. My friend called to tell me about her trip to Russia – the first since she emigrated with her family in the early 1990s. Her 25 year-old daughter, who shared the trip, was 4 years old when she left and had spent the remainder of her life in New York City. My friend reported that the young woman’s first uncensored response when she looked around her at the streets of Moscow was: “Это прямо Брайтон Бич!” (It’s just like Brighton Beach!) Perspective, as they say, is everything.

Actually, I have one more Slavic-related thing to tell you about. This item goes under the heading of the degradations imposed by American commercialism on whatever it gets its hands on. The beautiful Slavic name Svetlana has been adopted by an American company for its line of exercise clothes and uses the spelling “Sweatlana.” On behalf of my countrymen I apologize to all the Sveta’s of my acquaintance. (I wonder whether the people who came up with this are aware that *lana* is Spanish for *wool*?)

Slightly under 17 years ago, in my column in the Fall 1997 issue of *SlavFile* I wrote about a relatively recent experience of having confused the Russian word for protein белок (genitive белка) with that for squirrel белка (genitive plural белок), and told some people I was talking with in Moscow that Americans ate too many squirrels. I thought I was the only one who had appeared foolish because of that linguistic confusion, but today SLD member Irina Knizhnik sent members of the Yahoo Russian Translators Group a link to a website [www.adme.ru/itogigoda/35-fatalnyh-oshibok-perevoda-601855/](http://www.adme.ru/itogigoda/35-fatalnyh-oshibok-perevoda-601855/) (highly recommended, by the way) of mistranslations that shows that confusion twice: once protein for squirrel and once vice versa. Nice to know after all those years that I am not the only one prone to that particular error.

I confess to an addiction that has not yet been targeted by a 12-step program. I cannot resist reading any list on a Yahoo or other web news site. You know the kind of thing I mean: “*The 10 U.S. Cities with the Most Dentists*,” or “*37 Adorable Child Stars Who Grew up Ugly*.” (This last one is real and I actually read it to the end, even though I recognized almost none of the names or pictured faces, most of which I found neither adorable nor ugly.) I certainly would not leave a list of the *Richest Heads of State* unread.

I was not surprised at all to find that number one on the list that attracted my attention was Vladimir Putin, with independent estimates of his net worth putting it at \$40 billion. Other lists do not include him as his self-declared worth is only \$150,000 (annual income reported last year was \$187,000). Whatever the true situation, and I myself tend to doubt the 150K figure, I fear based on my own personal observations that appearing on the top of even a few lists puts Vladimir Vladimirovich in a very dangerous position. The last time I considered reporting in this column that a Slavic head of state had made first place on a list, Yuliya Tymoshenko, rated as the “hottest head of state” in late 2009, I tactfully refrained from doing so because criminal charges had been brought against her leading eventually to her imprisonment. (Does hotness envy know no bounds?) At any rate, VV, forewarned is forearmed.



On a much more positive Slavic list note, and regarding a much more serious list, are the current results from PISA, Programme for International Student Assessment (5,000 15-year olds from 65 countries tested in math, science and reading skills), sponsored by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development. What was emphasized in the papers was the generally average performance of the U.S., largely considered deplorable by journalists. But what stood out for me was the remarkable performance of Polish young people. Their scores earned them a place in the top 10 in science and reading and 14<sup>th</sup> in math. (If you wish to compare, the United States ranked 28<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> and the Russian Federation 37<sup>th</sup>, 41<sup>st</sup>, and 34<sup>th</sup> in these respective areas.) Poland’s scores since 2003 have been phenomenal, rising 28 points (out of what seems to be a kind of college board scale of 600 points) in science, 37 in reading, and 27 in math. This is a greater increase than any other nation. I would very much like to know what is happening in Poland to create this kind of success. Can anyone steer me to an article, or better yet write one for *SlavFile*, that discusses this? For those of you who are still with me, other Slavic or ex-Soviet nations whose adolescents performed better than those of the U.S. are: in all three areas – Estonia, which ranks even higher than Poland in math and science; in math and science

– Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Latvia; and in math – Russia and Slovakia.

At the annual Literary Division After Hours Café we were treated to a translation-related multilingual skit by three young translators who had written and rehearsed it on the day of the event. The skit contained a song, the verse of which was translated into four other languages – Russian, German, Spanish and French. I am providing the English and Russian here. If you want to see the others write to me and I will send them. The three performers/skit writers/translators are: Vladimir Reznikov, Julia Grawemeyer, and Jose Salguero. I do not know if they knew each other before but they certainly developed a successful collaboration style fast. Here are the words:

Refrain:

*We're translators, interpreter and writers – smiths of words,  
We're artists and creators, of Universes, worlds.  
We're faithful, but creative, and diligent galore...  
We're guardians and messengers of science, art and lore...*

English verse:

*Words: the power of life and of death...  
So noble your letter and sound...  
Cultures wilt, the hurricanes pass,  
But our sorrows and joys are around...*

Russian verse:

*Слова меняют судьбы, влюбляют и разят,  
Слова дороже золота, прозрачнее алмаза,  
Прекрасны и губительны, и сказочно-изящны,  
Не брось на ветер слова, не предавай ни разу...*

Speaking of poetry, I hereby offer you Vadim Khazin's Burime. For those of you who do not know, Vadim has not only entertained and astonished those who attend the SLD banquets year after year, but has added a new word to our vocabulary—буриме or burime (aka bouts rimés), a kind of a party game cum poetry genre, in which someone or a group assigns a number of rhyming words to the poet who then, while the party is going on, works them into a whole poem with an amusing coherent theme or narrative thread. Difficult enough to do unilingually, but Vadim does it in 4 languages and no one even assigned him a Ukrainian word to incorporate.

## БУРИМЕ

*на банкете Славянской Дивизии АТА  
(San Antonio, TX, November 2013)*

Здесь собралась хорошая компашка:  
Каждый мужик надел красивую рубашку,  
Каждая дама привела в порядок волосы  
И куда надо нанесла цветные полосы.  
Приехали мы в солнечный Техас,  
Где расцветает всё, даже матрас,  
Where love keeps winning over hate,  
At least for those who have a mate.  
And if this mate by chance is horny:  
Праздник в мечтах у вас нерукотворный,  
И, наполняя свой бокал иль рюмку,  
Лелеете в душе своей задумку:  
To have a mansion with two-car garage,  
Or just to live in safety from barrage  
To drink smooth wine, perhaps a Margarita,  
And eat some steak, жаркое иль fajita,  
Y si no quieres después estar solita,  
Quizás preferirás un vaso de mojito.  
Захочешь стать ты худощавой, словно муха;  
Враги себе пусть набивают брюхо,  
Niech swoją chca napelnić jadłami wątrobę,  
Mówiąc do siebie „Tak mi się podoba”.  
Но наша страсть и участь — перевод,  
И на другое нам не нужен переход;  
And where our task is “Die or do it,”  
And never, ever say “Just screw it!”  
Вы потеряете тогда не только деньги,  
Но также шанс танцевать весело merengue;  
You'll suffer from an everlasting pain  
And zero profit, revenue or gain.  
You even might be forced to go to court,  
I tylko we śnie znów zobaczysz tort.  
Не сможешь долго ты качать свои права  
И будешь помнить: позади Москва!  
But please recall you have a faithful friend  
On whom in times of need you may depend.  
И твой характер сразу станет твёрд как сталь,  
И с этих пор себя не будет жаль,  
И не сойдёшь от горя ты с ума,  
С проблемами ты справишься сама,  
И снится тебе будут канарейки,  
Которым вставили для звука батарейки,  
И ни один тебе не будет страшен бич,  
And you will never call your life a bitch,  
You'll have no ugly, deadly thought,  
И снится будет в сапогах радушный кот,  
Or maybe it will be an English cat  
A Puss in Boots, and maybe also hat,  
But never of a crocodile or snake,  
And life will seem to you a piece of cake.  
Обхватишь крепче ты любимую подушку,  
А на закуску съешь ещё и грушку.

P.S. I (Lydia) had assigned Vadim what I thought was the bilingual pair дует – screw it, but, evidently because of my less-than-perfect Russian pronunciation, he interpreted дует as do it. If there is anyone who can come up with a pair of lines in the spirit of the above burime to fit my original pair, I would love to see it.

## **Dictionary of Omissions for Russian Translators With Examples from Scientific Texts**

by Isidore Geld, 1993, Slavica Publishers, 157 pp.

(Available from Amazon.com and from Slavica)

Elliott B. Urdang

I feel very lucky to have this occasion to review Isidore Geld's wondrous *Dictionary of Omissions for Russian Translators*, because it has given me an opportunity to revisit it after many years (inspired by Jennifer Guernsey's idea of collecting examples from her medical translation work "in which there are words that not only can be omitted, but should be omitted from the translation"). I first encountered it as a novice translator fresh (and wet behind the ears) from my MA in Russian at Boston College 25 years ago. When first faced with a scientific text that I had to translate for pay, I stood like the proverbial баран перед новыми воротами [a ram standing in confusion in front of a new gate]. It was not the science *per se*, but the sentence; I knew from English that sentences had in principle a beginning, and middle, and an end, enclosed between a capital letter and a period. But many Russian sentences did not present themselves that way, and despite four years of a wonderful MA program, many were a thicket through which a path had to be hacked. In addition to which, they seemed peppered with phrasings, complex coordinating and subordinating connectors, and general verbosity which could not simply be ignored. *In my experience, omission is not an option that seems readily available to the less experienced or even more advanced translator.* It takes a fair amount of daring to leave things out. As you will see, Geld gives qualified permission to leave stuff out, and sometimes more than you might imagine.

One essential machete that helped me along the way when faced with this dilemma was Zimmerman and Vedeneva's *Russian-English Translator's Dictionary*. It was easy to use and very comprehensive. Then I came across Isidore Geld's dictionary, which is based on a different premise—that if one learns to recognize what is brush and undergrowth in the Russian sentence, it is easier to clear all that away and reveal a clear path to the idea (as it might be expressed in English). Unfortunately for me, I encountered this work too early in my career to make good use of it. I am glad to return to it now.

Geld states his premise in his Introduction: "Russian technical and scientific texts are replete with unneeded words and phrases that may be omitted

in English translations to render them easier to read, tighter, and more understandable." His approach is as follows: "Words and entire phrases to be omitted, with pertinent meanings, are listed alphabetically in bold type along with their Russian contexts and desired translations."

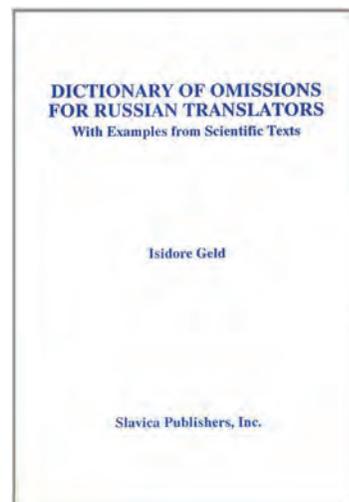
As this is not a cookbook, discretion is advised: "The terms *should be omitted, not always, but only in the types of contexts shown or, of course, in other contexts where the translator thinks it would be appropriate*" (italics added).

There are three levels on which this dictionary is useful and intriguing: 1) the practical, for the needs of the Russian-to-English translator; 2) the educational, as it demonstrates a method of improving translations to the translator-learner at different levels of experience; and 3) the linguistic/philological, as it focuses the reader on a comparison of the different ways English and Russian get from point A to point Z (or even just to point B).

The question of why one language takes one route to the expression of an idea and another a different one is raised directly by this dictionary. It is particularly interesting since the examples given are from scientific texts with relatively rigorous requirements for precision, and little leeway for poetic license. The fact that these are from scientific texts provides another advantage not as available in more literary prose—that the essential terms (verbs, nouns, modifiers) are fairly fixed in both languages, so that it becomes a bit easier to spot the connective tissue, and at the same time to grasp the role that it plays in syntax.

*The practical level:* What is one to do with the following:

1) *можно было бы себе представить* (p. 60)? One could say "one might imagine." Geld simplifies to: "*conceivably*" (I think he views *можно* in general as an unnecessary equivocation).



2) If you have *Кинетическое уравнение можно выразить следующим образом* (p. 60), you could say “The kinetic equation can be expressed in the following manner.” Geld simplifies to: “*The kinetic equation is...*”

3) *Позволять* is a perpetual pain in the neck; when combined with other nuisances (e.g., *проводить*), it's even more confounding. What does one do with this: *Предлагаемая методика позволяет проводить определение нитрита натрия* (p. 87)? Geld simplifies to: “*The proposed method determines sodium nitrite.*”

4) The expression *по отношению* makes explicit an idea that could just as well be left implicit in English, when appropriate. The following: *исследовал поведение этих молекул по отношению к энзимам* (p. 85), Geld simplifies to: “*studied the behavior of these molecules with enzymes.*”

*The educative implications of this dictionary* reside in the challenge to the translator-learner to understand why a straight-line rendering improves on a roundabout rendering, and by example, how straight-line rendering can be thought about and accomplished in a wide variety of instances.

For instance, under the entry for *по размеру*, Geld has the sentence: *Таким образом, мы сумели изучить многие типы клеток, которые слишком малы по размеру, чтобы можно было использовать внутренние электроды* (p. 85). His rendering: *We were thus able to study many cell types too small for internal electrodes.* It is easy to see how much wording that would be unnecessary and even digressive in English can be dropped. It's not that this rendering is THE answer, but that the practice of identifying appropriate omission(s) can inculcate the habit of seeking a more economical and clearer English rendering.

Another example: *по сравнению*. For *Предполагаемый метод определения железа по сравнению с методами, описанными в работах [1-9], обладает большей чувствительностью и более высокой селективностью особенно по отношению к Ni и Co* (p. 85), Geld offers the sentence: *The proposed iron determination is more sensitive and selective, especially for Ni and Co than those reported in [1-9].* The reader finding this adequate learns that we don't need “method(s) of”, which the Russian seems to insist on; we don't need “in studies,” which the Russian seems to insist on; we don't need “by comparison with,” because the notion of comparison is implicit in “more than”; and we don't need the elaborate phrase “in relation to,” as “for” serves succinctly with the same meaning, at least in this context.

This thinking fundamentally relates also to the *linguistic/philological implications* of the contrast between Russian and English styles, structures, and habits of thought, in general and especially in scientific writing. As mentioned above, in his introduction Geld states: “*Russian technical and scientific texts are replete with unneeded words and phrases that may be omitted in English translations.*”

Since he does not elaborate on this, one might be left with the erroneous impression that the *words and phrases* are actually *unneeded in the Russian*. But these phrases are clearly part of Russian style and this gives rise to the question: What is it about the Russian in any given instance that calls for these ostensibly *unneeded words and phrases that are often superfluous in English*? It's not likely that this is just a Russian predilection for wordiness. Beyond inferring that, for a variety of reasons in given constructions, the Russian feels that something is missing without those “*unneeded*” words and phrases, we are left to ask ourselves what might be the underlying reason those “extra” words are felt to be necessary. For example, to ask ourselves what would be “wrong” with *предполагаемое определение железа*? We might speculate that the verbal noun *определение* (something akin to “determining”) calls in Russian for “anchoring” by a nonverbal noun such as *метод* when it is modified by a verbal (participial) adjective. Or maybe this has nothing to do with it.

Geld does elaborate a bit in a page and half (pp. 156-157), offering a few “general omission rules” (examples are given). These are: 1) When a term (or phrase) has been cited in the same sentence or paragraph, it may be replaced by a function word such as “that,” “those,” or “the” in the translation; 2) When an adjective-modified word is preceded by the same term in the same sentence, the word can be retained and the adjective(s) omitted in the translation; 3) When two synonymous or similar words or phrases are in the same sentence, either may be deleted in the translation [Example (p. 157): Основным вопросом, на котором я бы хотел заострить внимание, является вопрос... The main point I should like to draw attention to is...]; and 4) When two synonyms of Russian and non-Russian origin are adjacent or close to one another, either can be omitted in the translation [Example (p. 157): степень извлечения при однократной экстракции... degree of single-pass extraction].

However, while useful, these do not throw light on the linguistic issues, except insofar as in these instances, the Russian appears to prefer redundancy

*Continued on page 23*

## THE HOLOCAUST WITHOUT JEWS

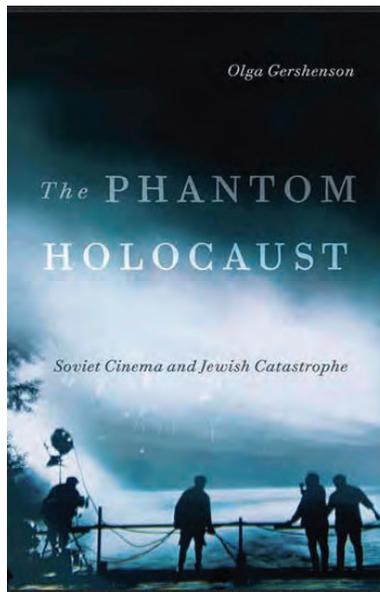
by Susan Welsh



Book by Olga Gershenson, *The Phantom Holocaust: Soviet Cinema and Jewish Catastrophe* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Press, 2013)

This fascinating book, which opens up a hitherto largely unexplored area of scholarship, investigates the history of Soviet “phantom” films on the Holocaust (those for which the screenplay was suppressed before a film was produced, or for which the film was mutilated by the censors or banned after production), as well as the few films on this subject that actually saw the light of day. Gershenson’s research sent her to the archives in several former Soviet cities, as well as on an international quest to interview the relevant filmmakers.

Her thesis is that, except for a few early films (before the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939), the Soviet line on Nazi persecution of the Jews was characterized by 1) *Externalization*: If Nazi persecution of Jews is to be shown at all, it must not be shown as occurring within the territory of the Soviet Union. Short clips from concentration camps in the West, in which Jews were identifiable by the Stars of David on their clothing, were sometimes tolerated; but Jewish victims of Nazi atrocities in the USSR had to be described generically, as “peace-loving Soviet citizens.” This is related to 2) *Universalization*: the idea that, since all Soviet citizens suffered horribly from the war, Jews should not



be placed in a special category. These two requirements paralleled rising Soviet state-condoned anti-Semitism during and after the war, to the point that it became increasingly difficult or impossible for films to say anything at all about Jews, to feature a Jewish character, or to have a Jewish director or Jewish actors.

This analysis was confirmed by several ATA Slavic Languages Division members and other Russian and/or Jewish and/or Ukrainian émigrés with whom I spoke and who were kind enough to share their knowledge and experience, for which I thank them.

Gershenson presents abundant documentation through the films she discusses. I also watched a 1947 documentary that she only mentions in passing, *Суд Народов* (*Court of the Peoples*), on the Nuremberg Tribunals, which at one point shows a heap of corpses, while the narrator says: “They killed Russians and Poles, Norwegians and French, old and young, men and women.” But Jews? Not mentioned.

The intertwined requirements of *externalization* and *universalization* are also evident in the most horrifying film I have ever seen on the events of the war in Europe and the Soviet Union, one that Gershenson does not mention: the documentary presented by the

*Continued on page 24*

## DICTIONARY OF OMISSIONS

to achieve additional clarity. Or to remove possible ambiguity?

Perhaps redundancy for additional clarity is a key issue in general. Under the rubric *Их*, Geld gives the example: *Определение железа в цветных металлах и их сплавах...* and renders this as: *The determination of iron in nonferrous metals and alloys...* (p. 48). He is satisfied that his English rendering is unambiguous, as the fact that the “alloys” referred to are of “nonferrous metals,” not alloys in general or alloys of something else (reading his rendering, however, I find myself wondering if that actually is crystal clear), and so is willing to omit the “their.” The Russian is not.

In summary, using or dipping into this little gem of a dictionary can stimulate interesting reflections about the *linguistic/philological implications* of the contrast between Russian and English styles.

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## SLAVFILMS

Soviet prosecutors at Nuremberg (which is an extra on the DVD “Nuremberg: Nazis Facing Their Crimes,” dir. Christian Delage, 2006). The hour-long Soviet film, titled “Atrocities Committed by the German Fascists in the USSR,” consists of footage taken by Soviet cameramen “embedded” with the Red Army as it liberated one Soviet town after another from the Nazis, from as early as 1941. The only narration is the laconic—chilling—reporting by the cameramen (as eyewitnesses, legally sworn as such for the purposes of the Court), describing what they saw, giving the names of the deceased and their living relatives, who hurled themselves on the bodies of their loved ones, weeping, once the Nazis had left (often just a short time before the Red Army arrived). All of the deceased are described simply as “Soviet citizens.” There is no soundtrack, no sound at all except the intermittent voice of the narrator, and between narrations, as the camera sweeps across yet another horrific scene: the silence of death. This film, of course, was not shown in theaters, only at the Tribunal.

The thing I find paradoxical is how sharply the “Holocaust without Jews” contrasts with events before the war. Anti-Semitism in Russia dates back to tsarist times, of course; but in the first two decades of the Soviet Union it was officially condemned, even suppressed. In fact, the Soviet government during the 1920s and early 1930s did more than any other government in history to promote the Yiddish language and Jewish culture. I was amazed to learn that Stalin (!) announced a massive public campaign against anti-Semitism at the 15th Communist Party Congress in December 1927, saying, “This evil has to be combated with utmost ruthlessness, comrades.” As late as 1935, people were being sent to labor camps and even shot for anti-Semitic statements or actions (Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* [Princeton University Press, 2004]). And in the spring of 1939, state support was given to the posthumous celebration of the 80th birthday of Sholem Aleichem, with gala readings and performances in Kiev and Moscow (Bernard Wasserstein, *On the Eve: The Jews of Europe Before the Second World War* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012]). This was happening shortly before Maxim Litvinov, the Soviet (Jewish) Commissar of Foreign Affairs, was replaced by Vyacheslav Molotov, with the instruction from Stalin to “purge the ministry of Jews.” Historians agree that this purge was in preparation for the “non-aggression” pact with Germany in August.

Films play a part in the paradox too, as we learn from Gershenson. The first film anywhere in the world about the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany was

the 1934 Soviet *Карьера Рудди* (*Ruddy's Career*). This was while Hollywood wouldn't touch the issue with a 10-foot pole. Then there was the 1938 Soviet film *Профессор Мамлок* (*Professor Mamlock*), the first film in the world “to tackle the issue head on,” Gershenson writes. It takes place in Germany, showing the Nazis' rise to power, their battles with the Communists, and their persecution of Jews. The first time the word “Jew” was used in an American film about the Nazis was two years later, in 1940, in Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*—a film that the Hollywood studios tried to block, but whose production was quietly encouraged by President Franklin Roosevelt (see the American DVD “Imaginary Witness: Hollywood and the Holocaust,” dir. Daniel Anker, 2004).

Why the change in Soviet policy? Gershenson, unfortunately, does not address the shift. Having asked all my SLD interlocutors and others about it, and received diverse answers and many suggestions for further research, I set it aside for now, as “too big a question” for this review. The issue of resurgent Russian anti-Semitism during and especially after the war cannot be explained exclusively by Stalin's dictatorial power, anti-Semite though he was. It is a deeper cultural and historical question, as suggested in the remark by physicist Igor Tamm, reported by Andrei Sakharov in his *Memoirs*, that there was “only one foolproof way of telling if someone belongs to the Russian intelligentsia. A true Russian *intelligent* is never an anti-Semite. If he's infected with that virus, then he's something else, something terrible and dangerous.” What is that “something else”? How did anti-Semitism come to dominate a land whose leaders and core ideology had repudiated it? A land in which many Jews of those years recalled the war as a “red line” with regard to their personal experience of anti-Semitism, particularly state-sponsored anti-Semitism? That is the key question that the book prompts the reader to ask but does not attempt to answer.

### Where To Find the Films

Gershenson rightly complains that most of the films she describes are not available on DVD and are unknown in the West. She puts a few short clips on her [website](#). Those that I determined to be available on DVD or that have been legally uploaded by Mosfilm to its own YouTube site are the following (I did not search for every film in the book):

**1938:** *Болотные солдаты* (*Peat Bog Soldiers*), dir. Alexander Macheret; Mosfilm

## SLAVFILMS

**1938:** *Семья Отпенгейм (The Oppenheim Family)*, dir. Grigorii Roshal, Mosfilm

**1943:** *Два бойца (Two Fighters)*, Leonid Lukov; Tashkent Film Studio (on DVD in Russia, but not readily available in USA. I found it on eBay).

**1964:** *До свидания мальчики! (Goodbye, Boys!)*, dir. Mikhail Kalik; Mosfilm (Mosfilm does not have this on its YouTube site, but it can be streamed, for a fee, at [www.memocast.com/media.aspx?id=865385](http://www.memocast.com/media.aspx?id=865385)).

**1965:** *Обыкновенный фашизм (Ordinary Fascism; also in English as Triumph over Fascism; Echo of the Jackboot)*, dir. Mikhail Romm; Mosfilm (available in DVD, with English subtitles). Quite a remarkable “film-contemplation,” as Romm called it, including material from Goebbels’ personal video archive, Hitler’s personal photo archive, Nazi propaganda films and newsreels, and children’s drawings from Theresienstadt.

**1967:** *Хроника пикирующего бомбардировщика (Chronicle of a Dive Bomber)*, dir. Naum Birman; Lenfilm (available in DVD)

**1967**, but not released until **1988:** *Комиссар (Commissar)*, dir. Aleksandr Askoldov; Gorky Film Studio (available in DVD with English subtitles and interviews with the director and some of the actors). A particularly excellent film, as several SLD members noted. Gershenson’s analysis is sometimes a bit strange (such as that the deceased father of Commissar Vavilova’s child was Jewish, which accounted for her having taken the newborn baby to a destroyed synagogue as well as a church).

**1972:** *А зори здесь тихие (At Dawn It’s Quiet Here)*, dir. Stanislav Rostotskii; Gorky Film Studio (widely viewed at the time and nominated by the USSR for an Oscar. There is a DVD, with English subtitles, but it is not widely available in the USA. I found it on eBay).

**2000:** *Дети из бездны (Children of the Abyss)*, dir. Pavel Chukrai; Steven Spielberg and Survivors of the Shoah History Foundation (available on the DVD “Broken Silence,” a five-part TV mini-series of which *Children of the Abyss* is one part).

**2004:** *Папа (Papa)*, dir. Vladimir Mashkov; TransMashHolding and OAO Rossiiskiye kommunalnye sistemy (on the theme of the play *Матросская тишина [Sailors’ Rest]* by Aleksandr Galich, which had been banned in 1958; available in DVD, with English subtitles).

**2012:** *Жизнь и Судьба (Life and Fate)*, dir. Sergei Usulyak; Kinokompaniya Moskino, Telekanal Rossiya (based on Vasily Grossman’s novel of the same title; available in DVD. Gershenson reports that the film almost entirely omits the events of the Holocaust).

The following films can be found on the Internet but not otherwise, to my knowledge. I do not know whether they were legally uploaded or not, so I do not provide links:

**1938:** *Профессор Мамлок (Professor Mamlock)*, dir. Herbert Rappaport and Adolf Minkin; Lenfilm

**1945:** *Непокорённые (The Unvanquished)*, dir. Marc Donskoi; Kiev Film Studio of Artistic Films

**1956:** *Солдаты (Soldiers)*, dir. Alexander Ivanov, Lenfilm (based on the book *В окопах Сталинграда [In the Trenches of Stalingrad]*, by Viktor Nekrasov)

**1966:** *Восточный коридор (Eastern Corridor)*, dir. Valentin Vinogradov; Belarusfilm

**1990:** *Дамский портной (Ladies’ Tailor)*, dir. Leonid Gorovets; Fora-Film

The author welcomes discussion of these issues and the films mentioned here, and can be reached at [welsh\\_business@verizon.net](mailto:welsh_business@verizon.net).

### From an article entitled Sochi makeover carries unmistakable stamp of oligarch chic

by Katy Lally, *Washington Post*  
February 5, 2014

Much of Gornaya Karusel’s style suggests power rather than comfort. The Gorki 960 spa, with its broad, shallow Classical porch and four columns, has a cold Soviet House of Culture look to it. Skiers coming off the slopes won’t find softly glowing cafes where they can sip on mulled wine. It’s elegant hotel lobbies or nothing.

Still, there are glorious mountains and chance encounters with the real Russia. One evening this week, a traveler lining up for the cable-car trip back down to the valley found the cars dark and unmoving.

“They cut off the electricity,” a guard said. “It could be off for five minutes.”

The would-be passenger regarded the line of decidedly cold people. “How long has it been five minutes?” she asked.

“Oh,” he replied, “about 15 minutes.”



## TWO POEMS BY MARIA PETROVYKH

Translations and Commentary by Laurence Bogoslaw

*Author's Note:* These poems were submitted for the 2013 Compass Poetry Award contest, an international competition for the translation of Russian poetry into English that is held under the auspices of the journal *Cardinal Points*.

*депево» (A distant tree), published in Yerevan in 1968. However, her mastery of poetic form, precision of diction, sensitivity to sound patterning, and ability to communicate a broad range of feeling—from subtle irony to passionate love to sincere spirituality—are undeniable.*

### ABOUT THE POET

Born in 1908, Maria Petrovykh grew up and completed her basic education in Yaroslavl. In 1925, she moved to Moscow, where she pursued State Higher Literary Courses with other accomplished poets, including Arseny Tarkovsky. She became a friend of Silver Age poets Anna Akhmatova and Osip Mandelstam. In 1936, she married Vitaly Golovachev, and in 1937 their daughter Arina was born. A few months later, Golovachev was arrested and sentenced to five years in the Gulag, where he died in 1942. Meanwhile, Petrovykh worked as an editor and translator for Moscow publishing houses; in the summer of 1941, she and her daughter were evacuated to Chistopol in Tatarstan, where they spent World War II. From 1959 to 1964, she conducted a seminar for young translators along with fellow writer David Samoilov. Throughout her life she served as a mentor to younger poets and translators. Petrovykh died in 1979 in Moscow.

As a poet, she was much appreciated by a small circle but little known to the wider public; the only book of poems she published during her lifetime was *«Дальнее*

### COMMENTARY ON THE TRANSLATIONS

#### ЗВЕЗДА (STAR)

This is one of Petrovykh's earliest known works (1927). As might be expected from a poet of nineteen, it has its artistic pretensions, echoes of an earlier

#### ЗВЕЗДА

Когда настанет мой черед,  
И кровь зеленая замрет,  
И затуманятся лучи -  
Я прочеркну себя в ночи.

Спугнув молчанье сонных стран,  
Я кану в жадный океан.  
Он брызнет в небо и опять  
Сомкнется, новой жертвы ждать.

О звездах память коротка:  
Лишь чья-то крестится рука,  
Да в небе след крутой дуги,  
Да на воде дрожат круги.

А я, крутясь, прильну ко дну,  
Соленой смерти отхлебну.

Но есть исход еще другой:  
Не хватит сил лететь дугой,  
Сорвусь и - оземь. В пышный снег.  
И там раздавит человек.

Он не услышит тонкий стон,  
Как песнь мою не слышал он.  
Я кровь последнюю плесну  
И, почерневшая, усну.

И не услышу ни толчков,  
Ни человеческих страшных слов.  
(А утром скажут про меня:  
- Откуда эта головня?)

Но может быть еще одно  
(О, если б это суждено):  
Дрожать, сиять и петь всегда  
Тебя, тебя, моя звезда!

(1927)

#### STAR

When heaven deems my time is due  
And my green blood won't flow anew  
And all my rays are dimmed of light,  
I'll etch myself into the night.

Startling lands from silent sleep,  
I'll sink into the ocean deep.  
One spray into the sky, and then  
The waters' vault will close again.

The trace of stars is quickly lost:  
A hand devoutly signs a cross,  
Against the sky a lofty arc,  
And water's ripples fade to dark.

I'll spiral downward, lost to view;  
One briny gasp, and my life's through.

A different end could be in store:  
If I don't have the strength to soar,  
I'll plummet to the snowy ground,  
Where someone's foot will stamp me down.

My faint groan will not reach his ear,  
Just like my song he did not hear.  
One final spurt of blood will do  
To turn me black, and my world too.

And I will nevermore be stirred  
By shoves or frightful human words.  
(When morning comes, they'll say: "How queer!  
How did these charred remains get here?")

But there's still one more end for me  
(If only it were meant to be):  
To twinkle, singing near and far  
For you, for you, my shining star!

(1927)

## SLAVIC POETRY

generation, self-indulgent melodrama, and moments of downright weirdness (a star with green blood?). However, it also has polished diction, technical precision, confident thematic progression, and a distinctive voice.

As a translator, I tried to do the young Petrovykh justice, especially in striving to convey that voice. I resisted temptations to amend the weirdness (the star's blood stays green!), temper the melodrama (the rather jarring раздавит and толчки are rendered more or less literally as “stamp [me] down” and “shoves”), or modernize the style (hence my installation of fixtures like “anew” and “nevermore,” and my use of “queer” in its former sense of “strange”).

One element that presented a unique difficulty—impossible to ignore once I noticed it—was Petrovykh's adroit use of a particular Russian verb type (infinitive ending in -нуть), which conveys a one-time action, often sudden or violent. Examples from the poem include (with various inflected endings): прочеркну, спугнув, кану, брызнет, сомкнется, прильну, отхлебну, плесну, усну. English has no such verb class—much less one with rhymable inflections—so I resorted to two different devices. The first is nominalization: in order to convey a one-time event, I put a name to it. For example, the verb phrase брызнет в небо becomes: “One spray into the sky.” Similarly, I rendered the line Я кровь последнюю плесну as “One final spurt of blood will do.” The latter example also shows the second substitution device: rhyme duplication. At three key points in the poem, I use a rhyme with long “u”: the opening couplet, the stand-alone couplet (lines 13-14), and the closing of the star's second “death” (lines 21-22). I chose this rhyme to echo the inflected first-person ending “-ну” in those unusual verbs.

A good deal easier to reproduce than the above verbs were Petrovykh's rhyme and meter: iambic tetrameter with all masculine endings. The only place I used a near-rhyme was in lines 23-24 (stirred/words). Petrovykh's breathtaking assonances and alliterations (such as соленой смерти, or тонкий стон) proved more elusive. One success in this area that made me proud was the line Спугнув молчанье сонных стран: I retained all three “s” sounds with “Startling lands from silent sleep.”

## НАЗНАЧЬ МНЕ СВИДАНИЕ НА ЭТОМ СВЕТЕ (LET ME SEE YOU AGAIN IN THE WORLD I LIVE IN)

For a translator, this choice was natural: it is, after all, one of Petrovykh's best-known poems, highly praised by Anna Akhmatova. Given the precise construction of the work, the stakes were high in finding the right equivalent for the opening half-line “Назначь мне свиданье.” Had the source text dated from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it might have been stylistically appropriate to say: “Set a rendezvous with me.” A contemporary equivalent is: “Make a date with me.” However, neither of these was what the poem required; the right phrase must have Petrovykh's clear ternary rhythm, and—more important—the raw urgency that makes her poem so memorable. I found a solution buried in the etymological root of свиданье: the verb stem вид- “see.”

I worked this opening phrase (“Let me see you again”) into every line in which Petrovykh has “Назначь мне свиданье,” except for the final one (whose literal rendering would be “Set a meeting for me with your blue eyes”). It would not have been worth the anaphoric candle to produce an absurdity like: “Let me see you again with your blue eyes,” so in this instance, I replaced “see” with “meet.” However, I placed the identical syllable (“sea”) elsewhere in the line, to modify the color blue, to recall the repeated phrase and to convey the particular hue that Petrovykh specified: not light-sky blue, but deep-dark blue. As a bonus, the word “sea” echoes the first syllable of the Russian adjective синих.

The “see/sea” homonyms also appear as a rhymed pair in the translation, paralleling Petrovykh's near-homonyms выйдем and видим (lines 35 and 37).

I felt these additions of “sea” justified in that the longed-for place in the poem is by the sea, which is constantly undulating through Petrovykh's amphibrachs. I freely admit that my ternary beats are not as identical: sometimes I opted for a masculine rhyme followed by an anapest instead (e.g., “town / Where the winds...”), a variant that may stem from excessive reading of Dr. Seuss in childhood!

In an effort to make the poem more “universal,” I omitted two of Petrovykh's temporal and geographical references (в двадцатом столетье and с акцентом нерусским), replacing them respectively with “in the years I am given” and “accents that didn't resemble our own.” However, I kept one proper name (переулок Гранатный – Garnet Lane): native Russian consultants confirmed that the red jewel tone conveys the passion and exoticism that are so vividly expressed in the original.

<p>НАЗНАЧЬ МНЕ СВИДАНИЕ НА ЭТОМ СВЕТЕ</p> <p>Назначь мне свиданье на этом свете. Назначь мне свиданье в двадцатом столетье. Мне трудно дышать без твоей любви. Вспомни меня, оглянись, позови! Назначь мне свиданье в том городе южном, Где ветры гоняли по взгорьям окружным, Где море пленяло волной семицветной, Где сердце не знало любви безответной. Ты вспомни о первом свидании тайном, Когда мы бродили вдвоем по окраинам, Меж домиков тесных, по улочкам узким, Где нам отвечали с акцентом нерусским. Пейзажи и впрямь были бедны и жалки, Но вспомни, что даже на мусорной свалке Жестянки и склянки сверканьем алмазным, Казалось, мечтали о чем-то прекрасном. Тропинка все выше кружила над бездной... Ты помнишь ли тот поцелуй поднебесный?.. Числа я не знаю, но с этого дня Ты светом и воздухом стал для меня. Пусть годы умчатся в круженье обратном И встретимся мы в переулке Гранатном... Назначь мне свиданье у нас на земле, В твоём потаённом сердечном тепле. Друг другу навстречу по-прежнему выйдем, Пока ещё слышим, Пока ещё видим, Пока ещё дышим, И я сквозь рыданья Тебя заклинаю: назначь мне свиданье! Назначь мне свиданье, хотя б на мгновенье, На площади людной, под бурей осенней, Мне трудно дышать, я молю о спасенье... Хотя бы в последний мой смертный час Назначь мне свиданье у синих глаз.</p> <p>1953, Дубулты</p>	<p>LET ME SEE YOU AGAIN IN THE WORLD I LIVE IN</p> <p>Let me see you again in the world I live in. Let me see you again in the years I am given. For lack of your love, it's so hard to breathe free. Remember me, turn back and call out to me! Let me see you again in that warm southern town Where the winds raced among rolling hills all around, Where the rainbow sea held us enthralled and excited, Where my heart didn't know love that wasn't requited. Remember our first rendezvous, when we stole Away to the outskirts of town, and we strolled Along tight little byways Past cramped little homes, Hearing accents that didn't resemble our own. The scenery was really quite poor and pathetic, But even a trash dump seemed somehow poetic: The jars and tin cans with their diamond like shine Appeared to be dreaming of something sublime. The path circled higher above an abyss... Remember how under the heavens we kissed?... I don't know the date, but right then I felt plainly That you were the light and the air that sustain me. Let the years circle backward and whisk us away To meet in our old Garnet Lane for one day... Let me see you again in our place on this earth, Where I can bask in your heart's hidden warmth. Let's run toward each other back there by the sea, While we can still hear, While we can still see, While we can still breathe – And through this refrain Racked by tears, I implore: Let me see you again! Let me see you again, At least for a moment, On a crowded town square, In an autumn storm's foment, It's so hard to breathe, set me free from this torment... At least in the hour before I die, Let me meet once again with your sea-blue eyes.</p> <p>1953, Dubulity</p>
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