

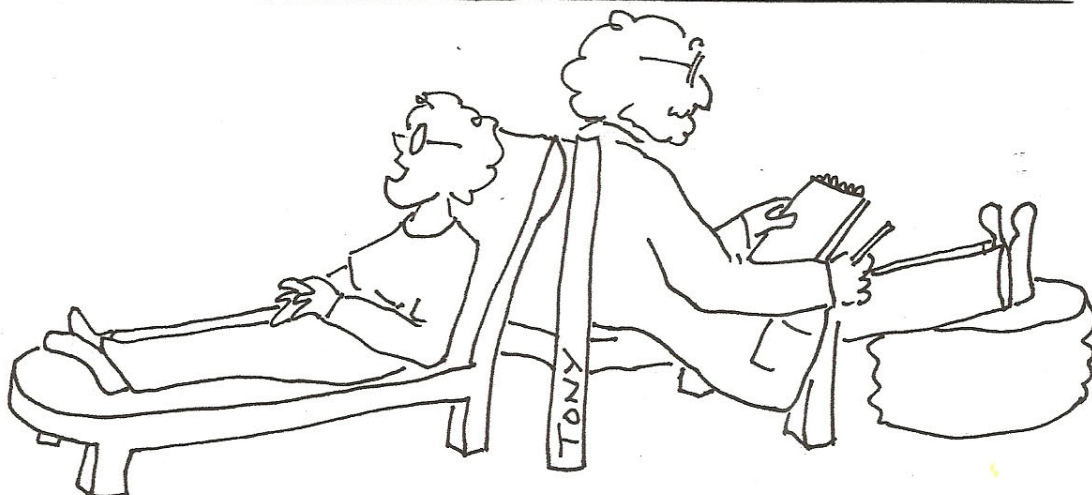
THE ONLINE PUBLICATION
OF ATA'S LITERARY DIVISION

NO. 52

SUMMER 2011

TRANSLATION TANGO, SUTRAS, AND FOLKTALES

BTW



"My voice recognition software is making fun of my accent."

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Michele Aynesworth specializes in translating Argentine and French authors. Her current work, translating Season of Infamy: Charles Rist's Wartime Diary (1939-1945), funded by grants from the NEA and the Kittredge Foundation, is nearing completion. www.mckayaynesworth.com

This issue of *Source* leads off with a moving essay by Cheryl Fain. In it she tells the story of Paul Kletzki, a Polish composer whose work became lost under Nazi persecution, and introduces her translation of three beautiful poems that inspired Kletzki's song cycle *Drei Gesänge*—a work hidden in a trunk in Milan, rediscovered in the 1960s, and finally performed in 2005.

River Plate import Tony Beckwith contemplates the intricate dance of tango translation and adds two more cartoons to our treasure of By The Way chuckles.

Ames Dee presents another kind of song and dance. Ames's interest in yoga as physical form and as philosophy led her to collaborate with her yoga instructor on translating the Sanskrit *Yoga Sutras* into haiku.

The Frogs Who Begged for a Tsar, Lydia Stone's translation of Russian fables by Ivan Krylov, has been artfully reviewed by Boris Silversteyn, who discusses some of the difficulties translators of Russian encounter and gives examples of Lydia's clever and concise renderings of the morals: "And those who truly merit fame / Do not declaim."

Thanks go as always to Jamie Padula for proofreading and to LD Administrator Emilia Balke for her support. (Emilia's Letter from the LD Administrator will return in the Fall issue.) And special thanks to Ames Dee for her helpful suggestions regarding overall format.

The next issue of *Source* will feature an interview with Dirk van Nouhuys, who collaborated with his father to translate two short novels by Flemish writer Jos Vandeloo. The translation's publishing history includes metamorphosis as a republished e-book picked up by Barnes & Noble and iTunes.

For further contributions to the upcoming issue, we're especially interested in:

- stories of collaboration or publishing adventures;
- creative writing inspired by/as some form of translation: e.g. a fairy tale retold in short humorous rhyme or a poem written in some "other" language.

Fall submissions deadline: November 1
michele@mckayaynesworth.com

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BTW Cartoons by Tony Beckwith

TRANSLATING PAUL KLETZKI'S SONG CYCLE FOR ITS WORLD PREMIERE

BY CHERYL FAIN



Prior to embarking on a career as an ATA-Certified German and French into English translator and earning an M.A. from the Monterey Institute of International Studies, Cheryl A. Fain received a bachelor's degree in music and studied voice at the University of Rhode Island and in Salzburg, Austria. Her music-related translations include a book on Mozart as well as liner notes for recordings and concert program notes.

On Holocaust Remembrance Day in January of this year, I recalled a unique and extraordinary opportunity I had to become acquainted with the life and work of Paul Kletzki, a “lost composer” of the Holocaust era.

In May 2005, the Embassy of Switzerland, together with the nonprofit corporation Arts America, presented “Made in Switzerland,” a concert of vocal chamber music written by Swiss composers and by non-Swiss composers while living in Switzerland, beautifully and movingly performed by the Washington, D.C.-based vocal group, Festa della Voce.

The concert was preceded by a lecture on “The Life & Works of Paul Kletzki” given by Professor Timothy L. Jackson, director of the “Lost Composers and Theorists” Project of the Center for Schenkerian Studies at the University of North Texas. According to Professor Jackson, the Project is “dedicated to recovering the music of composers whose works were obscured as a result of the cultural policies of the Nazis and the Holocaust. The Project identifies suitable composers, conducts research, publishes articles and monographs, prepares scores for publication by music publishers, and produces and/or fosters performances and recordings of recovered works.”

One of the “Lost Composers,” Paul Kletzki was born Pawel Klecki in Lodz, Poland, in 1900 and died in Liverpool, England, in 1973. By the early '30s, the young, successful composer and conductor counted the leading conductors of the day, Furtwängler and Toscanini, as his mentors. Performed by the Berlin Philharmonic and other major European orchestras, Kletzki's works were copyrighted and published internationally by important music publishers such as Breitkopf and Härtel, Simrock, Schott and Eschig. When the Nazis rose to power in 1933, everything changed for the composer, a Polish Jew whose works the Nazis regarded as “degenerate.” Orchestras under the influence of

the Nazis stopped performing his compositions. Publishers influenced by the Nazis not only no longer published his works, but even went so far as melting down the copper printing plates for all of his previously published compositions. In 1933, Kletzki managed to escape to Venice and Milan and later to the Soviet Union. In 1936, he temporarily returned to Italy, but gradually came to the realization that the country was a dangerous place to live with Mussolini and his Fascist regime in power. Fortunately for Kletzki, his life was saved by his wife's Swiss citizenship. Having settled in Montreux in neutral Switzerland in 1938, he became a Swiss citizen in 1947. After the war, he enjoyed a flourishing career as a conductor for the next few decades. Yet he no longer composed music after 1942 since, in Kletzki's own words, "the shock of all that Hitlerism" destroyed his "spirit and will to compose."

It was feared that his published works, which were hidden in a trunk buried in the basement of a hotel in Milan, were lost when the city was bombed. Twenty years after the end of World War II, however, they were miraculously recovered. Now, after so many years, they are being introduced to the world once again.

In preparation for the "Made in Switzerland" concert, the Cultural Counselor of the Embassy of Switzerland, where I have worked as the in-house translator since 1994, asked me to translate the lyrics to Paul Kletzki's song cycle *Drei Gesänge*, Op. 11. Although the work was composed in 1925, it did not receive its postwar world premiere until May 2005 at the concert at the Embassy of Switzerland in Washington, D.C.

In translating the three songs comprising Kletzki's *Drei Gesänge*, I was struck by their beauty and by their common themes of suffering longing or loss due to the physical absence or death of a loved one, but finding comfort in the loved one's spiritual presence while experiencing nature. While they share a common theme, the poems Kletzki selected for his *Drei Gesänge* were written by three different poets. The first poet, the author of "Der Tote Park," was Willibald Omankowski, who was born in 1886 and died in 1976. He was a German-language poet strongly associated with his hometown of Danzig (the Polish city now called Gdansk). Swiss poet Adolf Frey, who was born in 1855 in the Swiss city of Külligen, near Aarau, and died in 1920 in Zurich, wrote the poem "Junger Wald." The poem "Herbstnacht" was written by Swiss poet Hans Rölly, who was born in 1889 in the Swiss city of Willisau and died in 1962 in Zurich. And I would like to share the German lyrics of the song cycle and my English translations of them with you.

Drei Gesänge (Three Songs)

DER TOTE PARK

Der tote Park umschweigt
Den schwarzen Weiher.
Die Bäume, trutzig und stark,
Stehen wie Kerzen um den Sarg
Bei einer Totenfeier.

Die Stille tut weh.
Weiche Decken von Schnee
Dämpfen die nachtenden Pfänder,
Und ein Stern rollt in den See.

Da kommt mir wie eine dunkle Gnade,
Dass Du nun ziehst irgendwo über die Erde
Und für mich betest und glühst,
Und dass ich, weil Du bist,
Nicht verderben werde.

THE PARK OF THE DEAD

The park of the dead silently surrounds
The black pond.
The trees, offensive and strong,
Stand like candles around a coffin
At a funeral.

The stillness hurts.
Soft blankets of snow
Subdue the falling night's pledges,
And a star rolls in the pond.

It appears to me like a dark blessing
That you are now floating somewhere above the earth
And are praying and glowing for me,
And that I, because you are here,
Will not become tainted.

JUNGER WALD

Der junge Wald ist ein grüner Rausch,
Aus dem Becher des Frühlings getrunken;
Mein wintermüdes Auge saugt
Die blitzenden Blätterfunken.

Die Quelle schürzt ihr silbern Gewand
Und springt den Reigen am Hange;
Die Kronen sprudeln übertoll
Vom sprühenden Drosselsange.

O wüsste ich, wo du einsam gehst
An den sprossenden Wälderlehnen!
Die webenden Gründe hauchen und wehen
Und bringen mir dein Sehnen.

YOUNG FOREST

The young forest is a frenzy of green,
Drunk from spring's cup;
My eye, tired of winter, imbibes
The gleaming sparks on the leaves.

The spring gathers up its silvery garment
And leaps into a round dance on the slope;
The treetops are bursting with
The exuberant thrushes' song.

O if only I knew where you are walking alone
On the sprouting forest slopes!
The weaving grounds whisper and blow
And bring your longing to me.

HERBSTNACHT

Ich kann jetzt oft durch kühle Nächte gehen,
Wunschlos am Wege jedes Dunkel und
Über mir die Sterne sehen.
Weisst du, wie dieses Wandern tut?

Du müsstest einmal bei mir sein,
Denn so für mich, für mich allein
Es tut nicht gut.

Doch klaglos will ich weiter gehen,
Im Herzen nur das wilde Flehen
Um eine letzte Nacht, die es mir gönnte,
Dass ich dir alle meine Sterne zeigen könnte.

AUTUMN NIGHT

Now I can often walk through cool nights,
Without a wish on each dark path
And see the stars above me.
Do you know how this walking feels?

You would have to be with me once.
For no good will come of
My being so alone.

Nevertheless I want to go on without complaint,
In my heart, only wildly praying
To be granted one last night,
When I could show all my stars to you.

Further information on the “Lost Composers and Theorists” Project of the Center for Schenkerian Studies at the University of North Texas can be found at <http://music.unt.edu/mhte/node/58>.

BY THE WAY

TRANSLATION TANGO

BY TONY BECKWITH



Tony Beckwith was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, spent his formative years in Montevideo, Uruguay, then set off to see the world. He came to Texas in 1980 and now lives in Austin, where he works as a writer, translator, poet, and cartoonist. E-mail: tony@tonybeckwith.com

Tango is music and words and movement. It is also an attitude: a way of talking about how life treats us, and how we feel about that.

It was originally the expression of an urban working class that saw life in terms of raw, limited options. In the world of tango, passions are barely restrained, betrayal lurks in every shadow, and rejection finds no solace. Like any art, tango is also a form of therapy that allows us to experience the giddy sweep of emotions involved in the perceived lifestyle of the tango singer, as portrayed in black-and-white movies from the thirties.

Tango lyrics evolved into an art form that sets trenchant, often cynical observations against a musical background that ebbs and flows with the provocative rhythms of the piano, the base, and the *bandoneón* (an accordion-like instrument).

I learned to shield my foolish heart
from those who laugh as they tear my world apart
They say that love and faith are lies
I look away, sheltered by my alibis (*)

Tango began as an after-hours event, a nighttime celebration that made daily burdens easier to bear and provided a forum for the boundless energy of youth. It was the blues, the jazz, the flamenco of Argentina and Uruguay—it was the music of ordinary people, the disenfranchised, tiny cogs in the incomprehensible machine of a newly industrialized society.

Backstreet dives in seedy barrios in Montevideo and Buenos Aires created the environment where tango music and lyrics fused together and movement was added by the dancing public. Now the triangle was complete, with the beating heart of the music and the mournful lament of the words bewitching the dancers as they stepped away from their everyday lives and surrendered to the seductive power of the tango.

Time passed and the tango made its way into the black tie world of the swankiest clubs in town. It was taken to Europe where it was enthusiastically received by the notoriously after-hours crowds in Paris, London, and Berlin. Along the way it did some social climbing, traveled on first class ocean-going liners, and hobnobbed with celebrities at the horse races. All this helped to intensify tango's world-weary outsider quality, and allowed the lyrics to ponder life from different perspectives. The boundaries became more elastic and all the while the music and lyrics became more intense, more introspective, exploring different moods and sensual experiences as the dancers moved around the floor in a trance.

Tango, then, is a physical experience as well as a virtual or a literary one. So how should we go about translating a tango? We should read it like a poem, for tango is certainly poetry. We should sing it like a song, of course. And we should view it like a movie, with a soundtrack that fills in the gaps of the story and conveys the mood. That—the soundtrack—is what we must translate, but we should not separate the words too much from the music. For the music and the lyrics are like two tango dancers, both involved in the same event but each approaching it from a different angle, blending and intertwining in ways that are as mystifying as they are beautiful. The lyrics aren't necessarily structured in a standard recurring pattern and don't always appear to fit smoothly into the music, as they do in some styles. The singer and the orchestra sometimes seem to be dancing both with and against each other in a tense partnership that proves that it takes two to tango.

The singer—purists will say tango singers can only be from Argentina or Uruguay—understands this dynamic and knows how to stretch and squeeze the words to make them fit the cadences of the music, trimming his or her lyrical sail to flutter and billow in the musical winds.

The translator must be aware of these factors and the tension of opposites that holds them in place, and must attempt to recreate as much of all that as possible in the target language. Like an actor, the translator seeks inspiration in personal experience, and looks inward to find the emotional charge needed to express tango's signature bitterness and despair:

Full of hope, a man searches every day
for the path that he once dreamed of
as he yearned to find his way.
Knowing that the road is long and hard
he is bloodied and he's scarred
by the dream he won't betray.

He drags his poor body over thorns
for the one who cruelly scorns
him as he worships at her feet
until his heart has ceased to beat.
That's the cruel price he has to pay
for all those kisses gone astray
and fickle love that slips away:
a heart that's wept until it's drained and bruised
from being so callously abused. (**)

Montevideo and Buenos Aires are port cities where waves of migration from Spain and Italy washed ashore in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. These migrants either went out to the sheep and cattle ranches of the interior, or stayed in the city and worked in the slaughterhouses, the packing plants, and the docks. They were tango's earliest audience. The overlapping of languages and cultures created new words and expressions, and a nascent slang—*lunfardo*—soon found its way into tango lyrics that reflected the gritty, rootless lifestyle of these new Rioplatenses.

If I still had the heart
that I once had and freely shared;
If I could love again
as once I gladly dared;
Then I could kiss you
as I gaze into your eyes
without remembering the lies
that I once failed to recognize
until too late
when they had sealed my wretched fate. (**)

In its early days, tango was a kind of theater, a vehicle for exhibitionist behavior, and has never lost its sensuality or its sense of melodrama. After all, Italian street opera and Spanish *zarzuela* are in its genes. It can at times sound very much like a soap opera, a *telenovela*, of the kind churned out in Argentina and much beloved everywhere in the Spanish-speaking world. Tango speaks of love in all its phases and guises, but is at its

most eloquent when describing the heartbreak of love betrayed, unreciprocated or rejected. These are lyrics to sing in the wee blurry hours of the morning, when passions are either inflamed or doused, and tomorrow is a thousand miles away.

I was the prettiest girl
in my barrio
Nuns ran the school
where I used to go
And though my parents
were always broke
I hung around with
lotsa swanky folk

Now I'm an artist, singing in a cabaret
they call me a floozy and other things too
I'm just a party-girl, an easy lay
because I believed a man's lies were true

Colored lights attract the nightlife throngs
to the cabaret's exciting charade
Where I live out their fantasies and sing their
songs
and try to forget the mistakes I've made (***)

The emotions expressed in tango are not, of course, unique. Songs in every genre speak in anguish or joy about roughly the same things, and the lyrics of all long-established forms become smooth and well-polished over time. The translation must attempt the same smoothness and convey the same moods. A translator must, naturally, have a keen ear for speech patterns, especially for slang in the target language, because a tango singer will often be singing directly at someone or something—a lover, a friend, a honeysuckle vine clinging to a wall—and the translation is essentially a soliloquy. Tangos frequently tell stories, and the translator must also be skilled at working with narrative. Exercising in these various forms of writing is good for the translator; it broadens us and makes us ever more versatile. It takes us beyond prose, where the absence of music—actual or implied—deprives us of the challenge of fitting lyrics into an existing structure by chopping up sentences into single words and rearranging them in pursuit of mood and flow as much as meaning.

Pain takes isolation to extremes
and suffering makes us blind, or so it seems.
But I am cursed by a cruel coldness
worse by far than burning coals of hate,
than the void where lost souls congregate,
than the ghastly tomb where my love endures its fate:
cursed and robbed forever of all my dreams. (**)

Tango is an emotional rollercoaster, like soccer, the other national obsession. One day in 1964 I was in the Bar Dos Hermanos, half a block from where I lived in Montevideo. A soccer match had just ended badly for a local team. Manolo, behind the bar, twiddled the dial on the radio till he found a station playing tango music. He turned up the volume. “That’s how it is,” he said. “We have *fútbol* or we have tango. *Fútbol* can make you happy or sad for a few hours, but tango is with you every day of your life.”

Notes

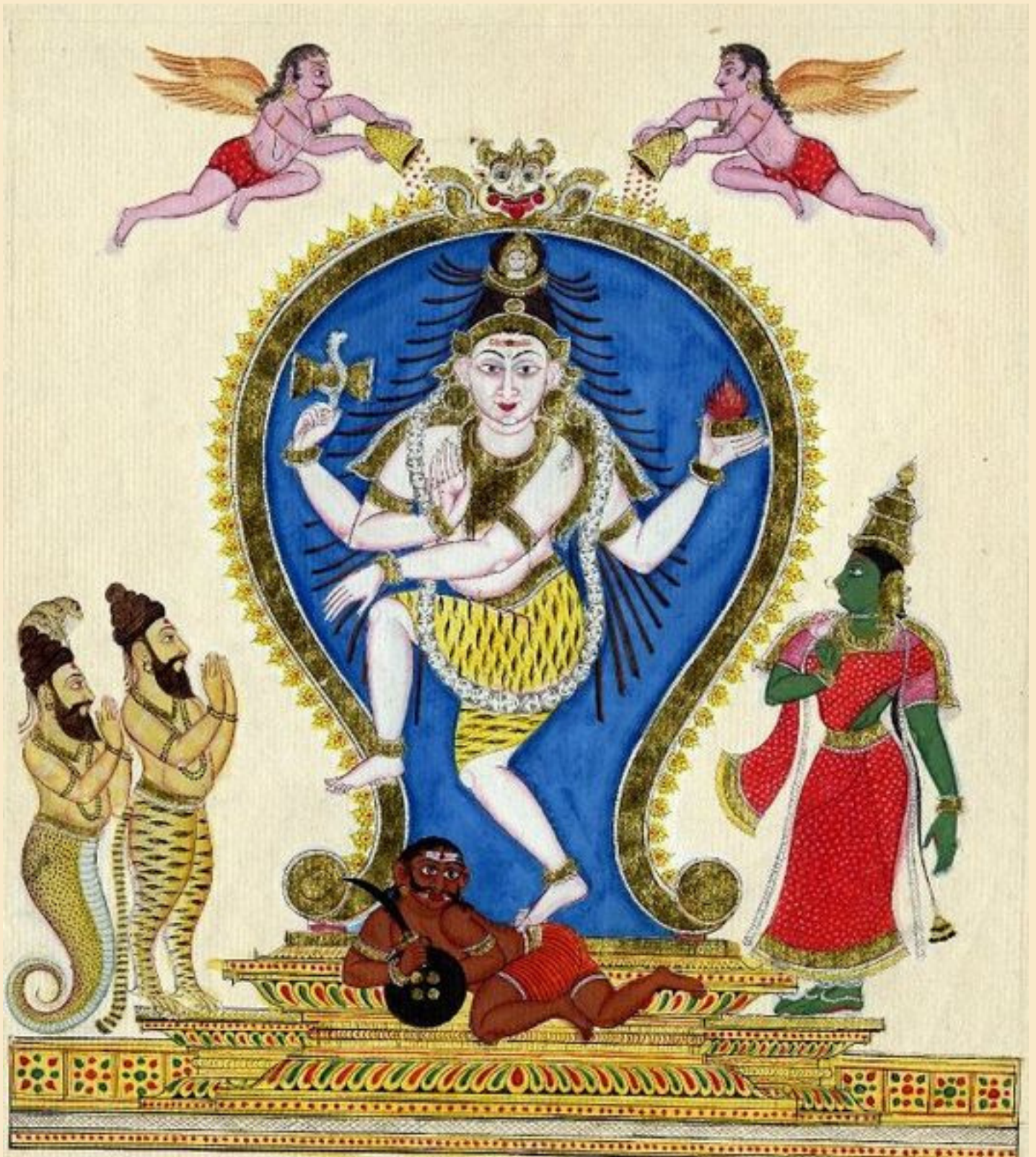
(*) From *Madreselva* (Honeysuckle), 1930: lyrics by Luis Cesar Amadori; music by Francisco Canaro. First performed at the Maipo Theatre (Buenos Aires) by Tania, who then recorded it in 1931. Later performed by Libertad Lamarque in the 1938 Argentine movie of the same name. Translated in 1996 by Tony Beckwith.

The other lyrics are from *Gracias por venir*, the musical by Adrian Sorrentino performed in Washington, D.C. in November 2010. The two tangos featured here are:

(**) *Uno* (A Man), 1943: lyrics by Enrique Santos Discépolo, music by Mariano Mores.

(***) *Mi barrio* (My Neighborhood), 1923: music and lyrics by Roberto Goyeneche (“El Polaco”).

Translations (including tango lyrics) by S. Alexandra Russell and Tony Beckwith.



Depiction of Patanjali (lower left, with snake tail) watching Shiva dance and perform the mystic Karanas, foundation for Natya Yoga.

TRANSLATING YOGA SUTRAS INTO HAIKU

BY AMES DEE



Ames Dee is a poet, fiction writer, and former editor whose work has appeared in previous ATA publications: Source No. 51 (Spring 2011) and Beacons X (2007).

Patanjali was a sage who lived more than two millennia ago. Little is known about him. Some think Patanjali (accent on the second syllable) was more than one person, like the three Biblical Isaiahs or the four redactors of Genesis; others, that he was an incarnation or manifestation of the Hindu god Vishnu.

The *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* summarize the philosophy and practice of yoga in 196 sutras divided into four chapters, or books. A *sutra* is an aphoristic statement in Sanskrit, akin to a verse in the Hebrew Book of Proverbs. Each *sutra* is identified by its chapter and verse. Sutra I.2, *Yogash chitta vritti nirodhaha*, is considered the most important *sutra* of all because it defines succinctly *what yoga is: the stilling of mental turmoil* — as when the surface of a pond into which rain had been falling resumes its placid nature.

Interestingly, only two of the *Yoga Sutras* refer to actual *asanas*, the physical poses most of us think of as yoga. Yoga for Patanjali is a way of life: a habit of mind that through faithful practice frees us from suffering and gives us mental clarity and peace.

The scholarly bent of my yoga teacher, Jennifer L. Hanson, herself a writer, led her to India to study Sanskrit. She has been teaching me portions of the *Yoga Sutras* word by word in their original language using a transliteration of the Sanskrit text. In order to capture their essence for myself, I began translating each *sutra* I studied into haiku. I owe Jennifer much gratitude for patiently conveying her deep understanding of the *sutras* as well as for her keen editorial eye on my English versions. As a newcomer to Patanjali and to Sanskrit, I also

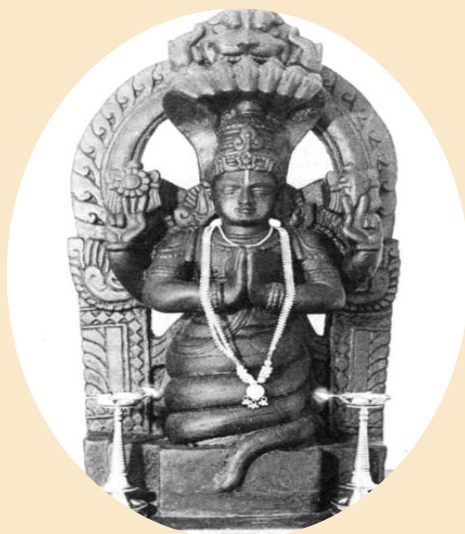
consulted several additional sources including works by Chip Hartranft and Richard Freeman.

“Yoga Haiku Sutras” is my English translation into haiku of highlights from Book I of Ptanjali. I learned to write haiku, a form popularized by the seventeenth-century Japanese poet Bashō, in a college class taught by the poet Stephen Stepanchev. I later studied with Thomas Hand, a Jesuit who spent decades in Japan. Among various English forms of haiku, I prefer the seventeen-syllable version — three lines of 5-7-5 — in which it sometimes suits my purpose, as here, to choose abstract language over the traditional Japanese elements of seasonal words and nature images. The brevity and strict syllabification provide a compact container in which I attempt to state a concept concisely. When I succeed, an idea that might have required paragraphs of prose ends up clearer in only seventeen syllables.

Patanjali’s language is dense with many-layered meanings. Sutra I.20, for instance, which names different but overlapping means to reach the highest spiritual state, required six haiku to convey six Sanskrit words. As I struggled with the nuances of Patanjali and riffed on Bashō, I saw that the haiku I’d written for myself might offer others a glimpse into the beautiful philosophy that underlies the physical forms of yoga. Thus I was careful in my translation to use language accessible to a person with no background in these esoteric realms.

In *The Mirror of Yoga*, Richard Freeman writes, “The *Yoga Sutra* gives us a radical vision of the potential of our own lives. It is like a potent medicine, one that cures us of our *avidya* [ignorance] by waking us up into our open, fresh, radiant nature.”

If you, reader, have never experienced the deceptive whirling of your busy mind or the need to awaken to openness and freshness, you have no need of Patanjali or me.



Patañjali as an incarnation of
Adi Sesha

YOGA HAIKU SUTRAS

TRANSLATED FROM THE SANSKRIT
BY AMES DEE

I.1

Begin: be here now —
yoga connects everything —
practicing, we learn.

I.2

Stop your busy mind
from its deceptive whirling:
yoga is just this.

I.3

A mind that is stilled
is like a clear smooth mirror —
abiding Witness.

I.12

Mental clarity
is wrought by nonattachment
combined with practice.

I.13

Keep your mind steady,
calmly regarding all things —
that's what practice is.

I.14

Practice a long time —
earnestly, without ceasing,
trusting the process.

I.15

Nonattachment frees —
mastery over wanting
awakens the Self.

I.20

Remember and heed
what you've learned from your practice —
hold these truths with faith.

Whatever you do,
do with enthusiasm —
conviction strengthens.

Engrave good habits
within your mind and body,
building memory.

Sit with mindfulness,
focus with concentration —
ponder; contemplate.

Seek your highest Self —
already known within you
through ancient wisdom.

Faith, strength, memory,
contemplation, and wisdom
are pathways to God.

I.23

Total surrender —
Love God, and do as you will —
that's another path.



THE FROGS WHO BEGGED FOR A TSAR (AND 61 OTHER RUSSIAN FABLES)

A review of Lydia Razran Stone's translation from the Russian
BY BORIS SILVERSTEYN



Boris M. Silversteyn is an ATA director, chair of ATA's Divisions Committee, and a past chair of ATA's Dictionary Review Committee. He is a Russian and Ukrainian translator and interpreter specializing in science and technology, finance, business, law, and environment. He is an ATA-certified English<>Russian translator and is a grader for ATA's English>Russian and English>Ukrainian certification exams..
(bsilversteyn@comcast.net)

Author: Ivan Krylov

Illustrated by: Katya Korobkina

Publisher: Russian Life Books

Date of publication: 2010

No. of pages: 143

www.russianlife.com/store

Some of *Source's* readers know that Ivan Krylov (1769-1844) was a famous Russian author of fables. Written in the first half of the 19th century, Krylov's fables are as relevant to our current life here in the U.S. as they were to life in Russia 150-200 years ago. And this is why his fables have been immensely popular in Russia and the former Soviet Union throughout Tsarist, Communist, and post-Communist times. Their popularity is due to the universal character of the themes and ideas contained in the fables: human foibles – greed, stupidity, vain, arrogance; ideas of enlightenment – rationalism, progress, freedom, science; sins against organizational progress such as corruption (power corrupts) and official inefficiency; the respect a lowly anonymous worker deserves. The fables are very funny.

Unfortunately, nowadays Krylov is practically unknown to the average English speaker. The reason is simple: I have only been able to find three cases of published English verse translations of Krylov's fables – that is, until *The Frogs*. First, two fables – “The Ass and the Nightingale” (in a footnote, Bowring mentioned that he had been given the fable by Krylov himself, before Krylov published it), and “The Swan, the Pike, and the Crab” – were included in *Specimens of the Russian Poets* by Sir John Bowring, published in 1821-1823. Second, there is a 1920 edition of Krylov's fables “translated into English in the original metres by C. Fillingham Coxwell.” And third, Bernard Pares's *Russian Fables of Ivan Krylov with Verse Translation* was published in 1942 but is currently unavailable (according to Amazon).

Note: A longer version of this review appeared in the Winter 2011 issue of ATA's *SlavFile* and can be accessed at www.americantranslators.org/divisions/SLD/slavfile/winter-2011.pdf.

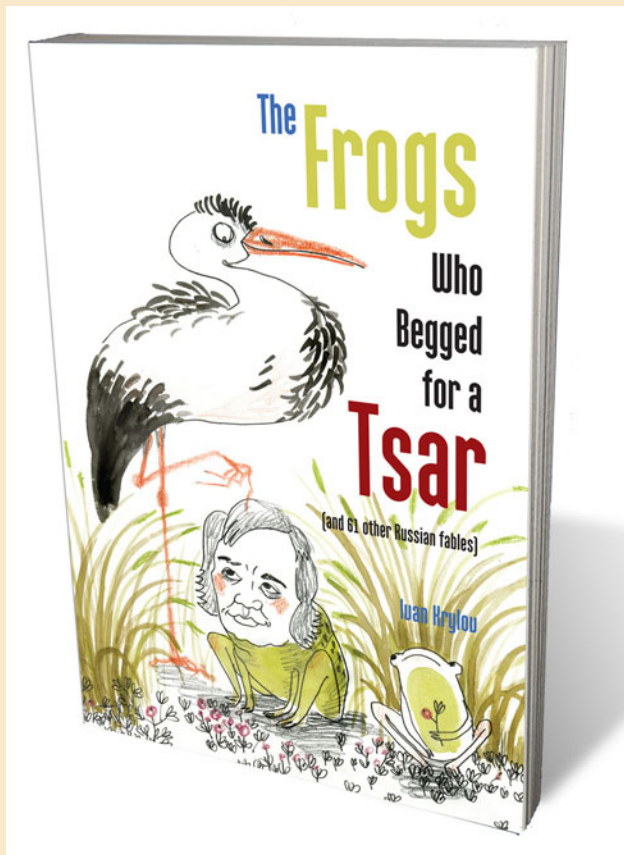
So we all owe a word of gratitude to Lydia Razran Stone for translating Krylov's fables. She had to deal not only with the bear (the term Lydia uses to characterize Russian language and culture in general and Krylov in particular), but also with something all Russian translators have to deal with – the impediments to anyone attempting to translate Russian poetry.

Source readers know that in this country it is hard to find a publisher for poetry, especially for translated poetry. Lydia Razran Stone was fortunate to find such a publisher. Two things

she found out that the company that publishes *Russian Life* magazine and *Chtenia*, a literary journal she has been translating poems for, was also publishing books. Assured that no copyright was involved, they agreed to publish the fables. And another stroke of luck: the publisher helped Lydia to find a terrific and extremely efficient (Lydia's words) illustrator in the person of Katya Korobkina.

This is how the book, *The Frogs Who Begged for a Tsar* (and 61 other Russian Fables), came to life. It was published last October and comprises 62 fables (out of the 205 Krylov wrote). The original Russian text and the English translation of each fable are printed together, on opposite pages. This format makes it easy for those who read Russian to compare the two versions (and admire the translator's talent in faithfully rendering the author's ideas); it also introduces the English-speaking world to one of the greatest Russian poets – for the first time in at least 70 years!

Lydia has told me that, to her surprise, the impediments and roadblocks she had anticipated encountering in the process, such as specific formal features of Krylov's work, complications associated with the gender of animals in Russian, appropriate register, rendering 19th-century moralizing today, and different types of fables contained in Krylov's opus (Aesopian – through La Fontaine – adaptations, Russian folk, and philosophical), were overcome relatively easily. Or actually she made it easy for herself; rather than reproducing the poem and line length of each fable, she simply worked within the corpus limits as Krylov himself seemed to do.



were working in her favor. First, because Krylov died in 1844, there were no copyright problems (author's life + 70 years) like those she had encountered trying to publish translations of poetry by contemporary authors. Second,

Though she thought she was working in unmarked modern literary language, she kept sticking in archaic but understandable nineteenth-century words and phrases such as “ ’twas, for naught, there to regale, a speck I scarce can see,” etc., while also adding modern colloquialisms for the sake of humor.

Most characters in Krylov’s fables are animals – probably the only way he was able to avoid censorship in tsarist Russia. The fables’ morals are rational (avoid this fault/sin of society or you will suffer, or at the very least you will be a laughing stock) of the what-you-sow-so-shall-you-reap type. And, as in a good story, they are often unexpected, which makes the fables even more memorable.

Even the most moralistic of morals sounds good in Krylov’s verse and in Lydia’s translation (because of the witty way they are phrased). Here are two examples:

Кто про свои дела кричит всем без умолку,
В том, верно, мало толку,
Кто делов истинно, - тих часто на словах.
Великий человек лишь громок на делах,
И думает свою он крепко думу,
Без шуму.
 (“Две бочки”)

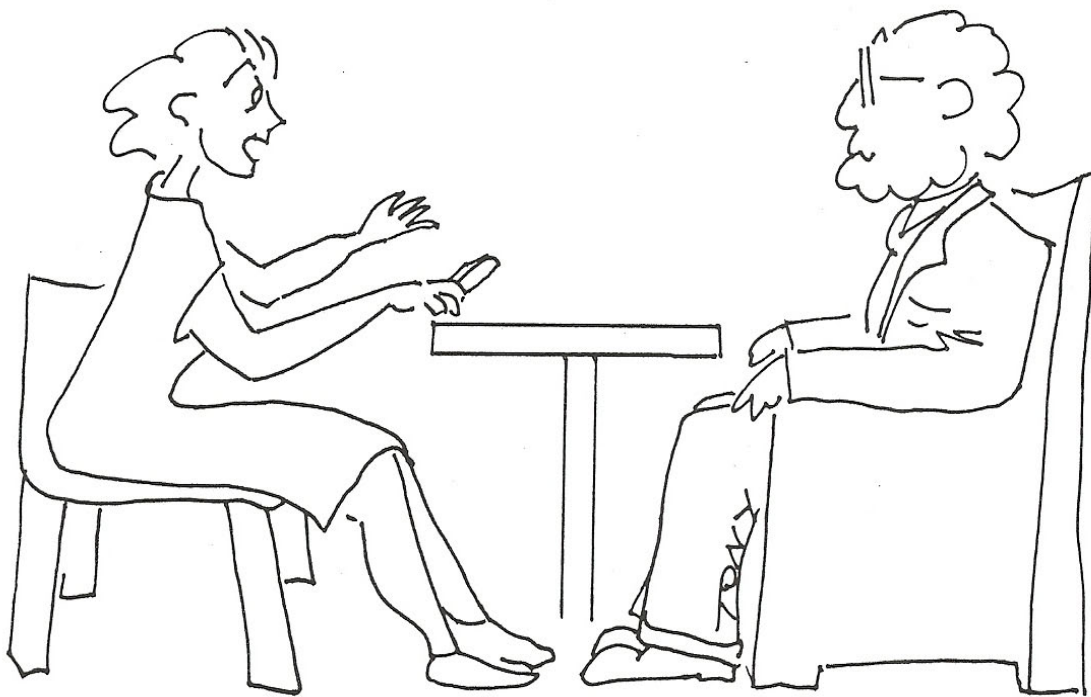
A person who declaims about his every deed
Is liable to be one we need not heed.
While one deserving of our praise
Prefers the worthy act to idle phrase.
And those who truly merit fame
Do not declaim.
 (“The Two Barrel Carts”)

Сказать ли на ушко яснее мысль мою?
Худые песни соловью
В когтях у кошки.
 (“Кошка и соловей”)

The moral here? It’s simply that
You can’t expect to hear sweet songs
From birds trapped where no bird belongs—
Within the clutches of a Cat.
 (“The Cat and the Nightingale”)

Compared with other translations, Lydia’s are shorter and much closer to the original. I am sure those of us who enjoy poetry, satire and wit, will take great pleasure in reading this book.

BTW



"What do you mean, there's no app for Smart Phone addiction?"

CREDITS

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Depiction of Patanjali watching Shiva dance

Wikicommons, image in the public domain.

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chidambaram_Shiva.jpg

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Ames Dee, Self-Portrait

P. 16

“Patañjali as an incarnation of Adi Sesha”

Published with permission. Date: 6 September 2006

Source:en:Image:Patanjali.jpg

Author: en:Rpba, PD-Self

see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Patanjali.jpg>

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Photo of Boris Silversteyn taken by his wife.

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Source is published by ATA's Literary Division.
American Translators Association
225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590
Alexandria, VA 22314

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Please include a photo and brief bio
of two or three sentences.

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