

2015 Greiss Lecture: Early History of Simultaneous Interpretation in the USSR and the West



Sergei Chernov delivering the 2015 Susana Greiss Lecture. PHOTO: Fred Grasso

Presented by Sergei Chernov

Reviewed by Svetlana Beloshapkina

Last year's Greiss lecture, delivered by Sergei Chernov, IMF Deputy Chief Interpreter, not only fully lived up to, but also exceeded my (high) expectations, both in content and presentation. The audience received a real treat, consisting of skillfully delivered rare facts about the birth of simultaneous interpretation, illustrated with plentiful photographs and archival video recordings. What made this presentation special was the fact that, despite being filled with dates and historic facts, it was not at all boring and academic, but rather had the feel of a historical tale, complete with characters and interesting plot twists. A very confident extemporaneous speaker, Mr. Chernov was able to hold the attention of his audience for the entire hour, and could have continued to do so for much longer, had the time allowed.

At the start of the presentation, we learned that what began as—in Mr. Chernov's own words—"a personal journey" became an extensive research project, which led him to numerous libraries and archives. In his lecture, he generously shared the fruits of his research.

Many in and outside of our profession (myself included, prior to this year's Greiss lecture) believe that simultaneous interpretation first emerged during the Nuremberg Trials. Mr. Chernov's lecture set the record straight: the origins of this amazing art date back to the end of World War I. By 1945 the method, as we know it today, had developed, and its efficiency was fully demonstrated during the Trials. The need for simultaneous interpreting was first recognized in 1919, during the Paris Peace Conference, one of the first international conferences that required the use of multiple languages. As Mr. Chernov pointed out, prior to that French was the acknowledged language of diplomacy, and diplomats—inevitably representatives of the elite class—easily communicated with each other in French, thus having no need for

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interpretation. However, with the democratization of international relations the need for multilingual interpreting became apparent, both in the West—with the advent of international organizations, such as the International Labor Union (ILO) and the League of Nations (LON)—and in the newly born Soviet Union, with its Communist International (Comintern). The only existing mode of interpreting at the time—consecutive—was proving to be inefficient for use during conferences. This is well illustrated by a historical detail Mr. Chernov found in the Proceedings of the first and second Comintern congresses. Apparently, John Reed, American journalist and author of the book on the Russian 1917 October Revolution, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, complained that an hour-long speech delivered by a representative of France was rendered into English in a mere 20 minutes.

The recognized inadequacy of consecutive interpreting in conference settings opened a debate on how to solve the problem of communication, which sociologist H.N. Shenton examined in his book titled *Cosmopolitan Conversation: The Language Problems of International Conferences*, published in 1933. Among solutions offered by Prof. Shenton were: a) limiting the number of working languages; b) choosing a new lingua franca, e.g. English; c) introducing an international language, Esperanto (of which he was a big fan, according to Mr. Chernov); and d) using a simultaneous mode of interpreting.

As Mr. Chernov pointed out, the year 1925 happened to be a turning point for inventions in the area of simultaneous interpretation. In the same year, coincidentally, two inventors on opposite sides of the world sent their proposals for a new system and method of conference communication. One of them, Edward Filene, an American businessman-turned-inventor, best known for his families' Filene's department store with its famous basement, sent a letter to the Secretary General of the League of Nations outlining his method for simultaneous interpreting. The other, a Russian physician-turned-inventor by the name of Dr. Epshtein, wrote to the Comintern's Executive Committee outlining *his* method.



Chernov's "Early History of Simultaneous Interpretation in the USSR and the West" drew a large crowd. PHOTO: Fred Grasso

While both inventions involved using equipment to aid interpreters, in essence they were quite different from each other. In the period between 1925 and 1928 each system was tried and improved, and in 1928 the first full scale use of SI occurred at the ILO Labor Conference in Geneva using Filene's invention, while just a few weeks later Epshtein's method was used at the Sixth Comintern Congress in Moscow. The speaker described in detail the original features, as well as stages in the process of testing and improving both Mr. Filene's and Dr. Epshtein's systems, without failing to mention the names and fates of their co-inventors, A. Gordon-Finlay and Isaac Goron, respectively.

What exactly were the specific characteristics of each system? One of the slides in Mr. Chernov's presentation quoted an excerpt from Edward Filene's original letter describing his invention:

"One high quality microphone will be placed on a pedestal or stand at the speaker's location to pick up his words. This microphone will be connected through an amplifier to a number of head sets, which will be installed in an adjoining quiet room.

Each head set will terminate at an interpreter's booth or position in the room. The interpreter's booth will be provided with an ordinary telephone desk stand on which is mounted a high quality close talking microphone which will be connected through another amplifier to a number of head sets located at a designated section of the auditorium or meeting hall. The translated speech of each interpreter would follow simultaneously with the delivery of the original speech."

While this may sound to some of us like the modern method of SI, a few additional features mentioned by Mr. Chernov, such as the use of stenographer and the subsequent "sight translation" of stenographic notes by the interpreter, proved this initial system to be impracticable. The method was later simplified: in the new version the interpreters were seated close to the speaker's rostrum and, while listening to the speech without any sound amplification equipment, i.e., headphones, rendered it into their target language, speaking into a sound dampening device, aka Hush-a-Phone. Mr. Chernov even brought with him an actual Hush-a-Phone to show the audience, to everyone's delight.

The Hush-a-Phone, a noise-reduction device used in early SI systems



The original Soviet method proposed by Dr. Epshtein was, as Mr. Chernov put it, "bizarre." It involved three interpreters for the same language, seated in adjacent booths, who would interpret in relay mode, each interpreting one sentence at a time, using a button, which would activate a light bulb, to signal the next interpreter to start listening and then interpreting a subsequent sentence. This method was thus a sort of "simultaneous-consecutive" interpretation. Mr. Chernov presented a slide with a detailed graph analyzing the method, convincing the audience that in that particular form it also wasn't viable. It too was simplified and improved. In the new 1928 version, which by then had the title RGASPI 493-1-7-068, the interpreter would be seated in a telephone-type booth inside the conference hall, so that he or she could see the stage through a glass window, and would listen to a speaker through a head set, while interpreting simultaneously.

The big question then, as Mr. Chernov joked, was a long-standing one: "Who was first, the Russians or the Americans?" As hard as it may be to believe, both inventions and their refinements took place, so-to-speak, simultaneously.

Mr. Chernov presented a number of fascinating photographs illustrating the use of both systems, as well as archival footage from the events where the SI methods were first used. He highlighted the name and talent of Russian interpreter Casimir Kobylansky as one of those first interpreters whose life was remarkable and who left a legacy as a professor of Italian translation and the author of a memoir.

The talk also briefly covered another SI system that was developed around the same time, a German-made device manufactured by Siemens & Halske, AG. This invention prevented Edward Filene from obtaining a patent for his invention in Germany, and he eventually sold it to IBM in 1932. The audience was amused to hear that among the improvements to the system Filene suggested to IBM at the time of the sale was equipping the interpreters' stations with buttons that could send the following messages to the speaker: "Speaking too quickly," "Speaking too loud," "Not speaking loud enough," and even "Talking too long."

It was equally interesting to learn that, although similar to modern simultaneous interpreting, what was used in the 1930s was actually a mix of interpreting methods including: the reading of pre-translated texts simultaneously with the delivery of the speech; a blend of simultaneous and consecutive (consecutive to the speaker, but done simultaneously into several languages); and "instantaneous interpretation," i.e., actual simultaneous interpretation as it is known

today. Mr. Chernov also listed the major international conferences and meetings of the 1930s that resorted to simultaneous interpretation.

Mr. Chernov concluded his lecture by discussing a number of the reasons for the general failure of the simultaneous mode of interpretation to “catch on” at first: 1) Traditional consecutive interpreters did not want to give up their status as an important and visible part of conferences and become invisible, “telephonic” interpreters. 2) Conference organizers did not want to eliminate opportunities for conference participants to network with each other during pauses for consecutive interpretation. 3) The speakers themselves felt they could not assess the adequacy of interpretation unless it was consecutive. In addition, the high cost of the SI systems was a factor, as were the logistical challenges of transporting and setting up heavy, non-portable (at that time) equipment, as well as the poor sound quality of translation output. Last but not least was the fact that simultaneous interpreting, as a profession, was not yet developed. The absence of interpretation schools, lack of training, the sink-or-swim approach, and a failure to understand proper technique made the interpreters the weakest link in this chain of factors necessary for success.

Fortunately for the profession, after the Nuremberg Trials simultaneous interpretation became the mode of communication most often used during international conferences, and today, according to a statistic cited by Mr. Chernov, up to 40,000 international conferences, congresses, and symposia take place every year around the world, many of them using simultaneous interpreters.

Mr. Chernov provided *SlavFile* with an extensive list of references and recommendations for further reading, which follows this article. During his lecture he referred multiple times to the book by Prof. Jesús Baigorri-Jalón titled *From Paris to Nuremberg: The Birth of Conference Interpreting*, which he highly recommends.

To read an interview *SlavFile* conducted with Mr. Chernov, please see [our fall 2015 issue](#).

Svetlana Beloshapkina is a self-employed translator from English, French and Italian into Russian with 15 years of in-house and freelance experience. She specializes in translation for film subtitling and dubbing, marketing, advertising, and healthcare. She has an MA in Translation and Interpretation from the Monterey Institute of International Studies and an MA in French from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is a member of the ATA's Slavic and Literary Divisions and is a rostered candidate with the United Nations language services.

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Slavic Certification Update:

Ukrainian and Polish into English Up and Running in 2016

After many months of hard work by two dedicated teams, Ukrainian>English and Polish>English, have now been added to ATA's certification program. This is the first time that Ukrainian>English has been available through ATA's program. Polish>English is being reinstated after a hiatus of several years, with a new team of graders in place.

Practice tests are available from ATA headquarters,
and these language pairs can be requested for all 2016 sittings.

THE ADMINISTRATORS' COLUMN

Ekaterina Howard



Dear SLD Members,

I am honored to have been elected Slavic Languages Division Administrator and look forward to getting to know even more of you, either throughout the year or later at the conference in San Francisco. Thank you to all of the volunteers who devote their time to the various SLD tasks!

It is still January when I write this, the time when New Year resolutions are still fresh on our minds. As far as the Slavic Languages Division goes, our goals this year include revitalizing the SLD blog and increasing our outreach efforts, targeting both newcomers and translators and interpreters working in Slavic languages other than Russian. Our new [SLD blog](#) editor, Christopher Tauchen, has many exciting ideas for it. If there are topics that you would like to see covered by the blog, please do not hesitate to get in touch with him. Our hope is that blog articles will complement *SlavFile* and become a source of useful and interesting information for SLD members.

Many other exciting ideas were suggested during the Annual Meeting at the ATA Annual Conference in Miami, including establishing connections with translation associations from Slavic countries, attracting more newcomers to participate in ATA conferences, and improving the SLD Banquet experience (more on that later). Although we will not be implementing all of the suggestions this year, they are very much appreciated and we'll plan to work on them in the future.

Speaking of plans, many members have mentioned that the noise level at the banquet made it hard to converse with other attendees. Additionally, with the cancellation of Division Open Houses, there are not all that many opportunities left for the SLD members to connect with each other.

Based on that, an option that we would like to explore is having a reception with heavy hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar instead of a sit-down dinner. Whether or not we opt for this approach, we'll try to find a private room that will make it possible for attendees to talk to one another, ideally one available at no extra cost.

Dear members: would you be interested in such a change? Do you have a preferred option (sit-down dinner versus a reception)? What would you consider an acceptable range of prices for a reception? Please let us know!

Finally, I would like to introduce the 2016 Leadership Council. Please feel free to contact any of the members at the emails given.

You can reach me, Ekaterina Howard, at ekaterina@atasld.org, or Assistant Administrator Fred Grasso at fred@atasld.org. In addition to general SLD business, I will be responsible for the SLD Twitter account.

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**ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SLAVIC LANGUAGES DIVISION
OF THE AMERICAN TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION**

**Thursday, November 5, 2015
Hyatt Regency Miami, Miami, Florida
Lucy Gunderson, Administrator
Fred Grasso, Assistant Administrator
Minutes taken by Jennifer Guernsey**

1. Call to order

Lucy Gunderson, Administrator, called the meeting to order.

2. Acceptance of agenda

3. Approval of 2014 minutes

The agenda was accepted with one amendment, namely that election results were to be announced prior to the discussion of SLD activities for 2016. The 2014 minutes were approved.

4. General comments and summary of 2014-2015 activities

Lucy Gunderson provided the following information regarding the past year's activities:

- The SLD co-sponsored an event with the New York Circle of Translators, a literary translators and publishers lunch. The ATA Board approved funding for this event. The ATA wants to promote more opportunities for future sponsorships of events such as these.
- Progress was reported on the effort to develop Polish>English certification (see announcements on pages 5 and 8), and participants were thanked.
- Thanks are due to Marina Aranovich and Liv Bliss, who served as this year's nominating committee.
- Thanks are also due to the members of the Leadership Council, particularly Jen Guernsey for ar-



Emma Garkavi, Nora Favorov, and Lynn Visson at the conference's opening reception. PHOTO: Galina Raff



Incoming and Outgoing Administrators Ekaterina Howard and Lucy Gunderson conduct the SLD's annual meeting. PHOTO: Fred Grasso

ranging the newcomers' lunch; Nora Favorov for her extensive help with arranging for, meeting, and hosting the Greiss lecturer; Lydia Stone, for serving as editor-in-chief of *SlavFile*; Julia Blain, for running the LinkedIn group; Ekaterina Howard, for running the Twitter feed; and assistant administrator Fred Grasso, for organizing the banquet and helping out all year.

5. Announcement of election results

Lucy announced the election results. Each of the two candidates ran unopposed. Ekaterina Howard was elected administrator and Fred Grasso was re-elected assistant administrator. Lucy turned the remainder of the meeting over to Ekaterina to chair.

6. Discussion of SLD activities for 2016

a. call for volunteers for new Leadership Council

New members are needed for the Leadership Council. Ekaterina noted that the position descriptions are not set in stone – individuals can develop their own.

b. 2016 conference – proposals, session topics, Greiss lecture, banquet

- Banquet: Emma Garkavi suggested that in lieu of a banquet, we have a reception in a separate room so we can have a quieter space. Fred responded that he would look into the possibility. Elena Sheverdinova offered to help with the arrangements and suggested that we splurge a little. Considerations are noise level, walking distance to the restaurant, and a meal versus hors d'oeuvres.

- Greiss lecture: Lucy solicited suggestions for the Greiss lecturer. Nora Favorov noted that it would be nice to have a non-Russian this year, since we have had lectures focused on Russian for the past several years. Greiss lecturer suggestions included Vladimir Pozner, Nabokov's son, and someone from Silicon Valley. [Since the meeting a translator and scholar of Polish literature has been recruited to submit a proposal. We hope to be able to announce her approval in the spring issue.]
- Conference sessions: Suggestions of topics and speakers for the 2016 ATA Annual Conference are being solicited as well. The deadline for submitting a session proposal is March 4.
- Newcomers: Some people did not receive the division's blast emails and thus were unaware of the newcomer lunch. Jen Guernsey offered to investigate with ATA headquarters. It was suggested that we change the schedule so that the newcomer lunch is right after a Slavic session or maybe on Saturday. There was also a suggestion made to meet newcomers at breakfast.

c. professional development and webinars

Professional development and webinars are an opportunity for the SLD to pair with local chapters. The ATA wants more webinars, and the SLD leadership encourages member input. Some divisions are offering 15-minute podcasts from their websites.

d. website, LinkedIn group, blog, Twitter

- Blog: Ekaterina noted that the blog has been somewhat neglected this year, and she would like to reinvigorate it. Sveta Beloshapkina suggested blog posts on conference presentations. She noted that the conference slides are often available on websites; she and Lydia posted theirs in advance of the conference.
- Outreach: Elana Pick suggested finding ways to reach out to younger colleagues and students and offered to help explore outreach in this area.

e. SlavFile

Lydia Stone reported that *SlavFile* is celebrating its milestone 25th anniversary [later corrected to 20th]. Four issues were published in 2015. She would like to see more male authors, as the authorship is preponderantly female; and she would like volunteers to review the Slavic and other relevant conference sessions. She plans to make 2016 the Year of the Book for *SlavFile*, focusing on copyrights, translations, publishers, and so on. She also wants to publish a list of books written or translated by SLD members on the website.

7. Additional business / Open discussion / Introduction of new members

Conference newcomers were invited to introduce themselves.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned on time.

From Olga Shostachuk, *SlavFile*'s editor for Ukrainian

A group of enthusiastic and determined language professionals—Elena Morrow, Kathy Stackhouse, and Olga Shostachuk—is proud to announce the approval of ATA's new Ukrainian-English certification examination and program. For the last four years, we have been working on analyzing, reviewing, and selecting passages for both the practice test and certification exam. This accomplishment would not have been possible without the input, support, and guidance of David Stephenson, Larry Bogoslaw, Carol Stennes, Vadim Khazin, and Nora Favorov. We are very pleased to have been able to contribute in this way to the development of the translation profession and plan to continue working with the program, striving for excellence.

The official announcement that Polish and Ukrainian certification programs testing has been approved and will be available to candidates appears on page 5.

THE GENDER WARS: PEACE IN OUR TIME

A REVIEW OF “SHOULD GRAMMATICAL GENDER BE CONTROVERSIAL?”

Presented by Larry Bogoslaw and Irina Knizhnik

Reviewed by Lydia Stone



Presenters Larry Bogoslaw and Irina Knizhnik (with Vladimir Reznikov and Paul Gallagher in the background). PHOTO: Galina Raff

Bad news first: those of you who were looking forward to a good fight, something like a more civil and civilized version of recent political debates, were certain to be disappointed. Good news next: IMHO there was no way that anyone else would have been. Let me back up a little. In 2014, Larry Bogoslaw gave a talk focused on translating women's job titles from English into languages with other forms of biological gender recognition, especially Russian. At issue were English female job titles with what some consider demeaning endings such as *-ess* or, when titles do not directly suggest a gender, the referential use of the “generic he,” as in “Did the doctor who called say when *he* would call back?”, for example. Rules for eliminating linguistic “gender invisibility” and “gender bias” in English are being recommended and even mandated with increasing frequency, especially by government organizations. While some people may object to such “political correctness” in English, that was not the topic of discussion, which was more how to apply these rules when translating into and out of other languages, especially those such as Russian, where gender specification is considerably more pervasive. In Larry's case, “gender neutrality” is part of the style guidelines for the State of Minnesota social services documents his company translates.

A number of Russian native speakers in the audience objected to the idea of imposing U.S. ideas of gender neutrality (aka political correctness) on

translations into Russian and to a lesser degree to losing information present in original Russian but lost in gender-neutral English translation. One of the most articulate of these objectors was Irina Knizhnik, and it was agreed to continue the discussion in a kind of debate at the 2015 conference. Happily the conference organizers agreed to assign two sessions to this topic, and it evolved into being less of a debate and more of a joint exploration of the topic with areas of disagreement pointed out.

The first part of the talks was devoted to an explanation of what is meant by grammatical (as opposed to biological) gender and how this concept is realized in English and Russian. Grammatical gender refers to a system where nouns are divided into classes on some basis (not necessarily those that speakers of Indo-European languages are familiar with), and other parts of speech associated with them in a particular phrase (e.g., adjectives or verbs) are inflected in a way that indicates the gender of the associated noun. Larry here remarked that in some Australian indigenous languages fruits and vegetables are a gender category. English and Russian's common ancestor, Indo-European, first developed gender by distinguishing between animate and inanimate nouns, and later split the animate class into masculine and feminine. English gradually lost most of the aspects of grammatical gender over the years, and today marks as feminine only a handful of job titles and other terms by adding feminine endings (e.g., *princess*, *dominatrix*) and distinguishes only the pronouns *he/she*, *him/her*, and *his/hers* to accord with the biological gender, if known or obvious, of people and (for some speakers) animals. In addition, male pronouns are used as default (unmarked) forms for grammatical singulars such as *everybody* or *the worker* where gender is unknown, unless the group referred to is held to be majority female. Leaving aside nomenclature for those with unconventional self-assigned “social gender,” it is only in this last case and the smallish class of biologically bifurcated job titles that grammatical gender neutrality is meant to be applied. One point Larry made that I had never thought about before was that if we lose these two markers of grammatical gender, we would only be continuing the gradual loss of grammatical gender English has been undergoing since the 5th century.

Irina Knizhnik began by stating her point of view that a translator has the duty to reproduce all the information readily available in the source. She therefore finds it unacceptable (to put it mildly) to withhold the biological gender information inherent in Russian by virtue of its pervasive grammatical gender system, something that in at least some cases would occur if she adopted gender neutral language in an English translation. She argued that efforts to eliminate grammatical gender in English (something that would be relatively easy as compared to other Indo-European languages) is a simple waste of time and money with no real societal effects. For example, does money spent on changing terms such as *fishermen* to *fishers* in official state documents have any effect on the number of females joining or even considering the profession? Because the English language has such a huge international impact, she fears that the campaign to have a gender neutral language will have negative effects on languages such as Russian, in which a similar goal would simply be unrealizable.

Her hunch is that if there is any correlation between sexism in language and sexism in society it is society that influences language rather than vice versa. On the other hand, her experience as a translator of Chinese suggests to her that perhaps there is no correlation at all. The Chinese language, she told the audience, has never made mandatory grammatical distinctions based on biological gender, but women's social status in China had been consistently very low until at least the 1911 Revolution (think, for example of the practice of foot binding).

The time had now come for the first of the audience discussions. (Oh, the luxury of having a full two hours for a presentation!) A fair amount of the time left was devoted to a topic introduced by the first audience member to speak. She works for the Maryland court, which had mandated some changes in wording based on newly legalized gay marriage: now, marriage and divorce forms have to designate *Spouse 1* and *Spouse 2*, rather than *husband* and *wife*. An analogous change had to be reproduced in translations as well. This may involve a form cluttered with parenthesized alternate gender forms of not only nouns, but adjectives and verbs. Here Larry pointed out that whatever the gender neutral requirement for generic terms and pronouns, individuals typically have a preferred pronoun and marriage partner designation, and it is perfectly appropriate for them to choose or cross out as needed. A very interesting comment was made on this by another audience member who said she had a number of homosexual friends who have emigrated from Russia and that they are very pleased to see

accommodations such as this, confirming what they had hardly dared to believe about freedoms in the U.S.

Another speaker volunteered that he had lived in Germany, and when Germans provide alternative gender forms, they insist on writing out whole words rather than simple inflectional endings, and we all know how long German words are. In the second hour's discussion, Emma Garkavi returned to this topic by stating that in her State of Washington court, they have separate forms for all possible gender combinations and a printer at the ready to print out versions of forms with the appropriate gender or genders.

Also during this discussion period, Larry told a story about how a female professor visiting from Spain was astonished when he asked her how he should translate the English *Welcome*, which (being an adjective in Spanish) would seem to be required to differ in gender depending on who is being addressed. She said no woman in Spain would ever feel that she was not included in the unmarked masculine form. Larry's general conclusion was that it is wrong for PC English speakers to project their ideas about gender neutrality onto languages with pervasive gender marking. I cannot imagine Irina disagreed with him.

Nora Favorov remarked that she had decided to translate into English using gender neutral language some years ago and that she had found it remarkably easy to pluralize the subjects of generic pronouns and use the already non-gender marked *they*. Her initial decision to change her translation practice in this way was inspired by a realization of how much English has evolved over the centuries. She concluded it might as well evolve in a way that reflects our evolving values. Larry pointed out that the current *Chicago Manual of Style* lists a number of different ways to get around the generic masculine and recommended it to the audience.

It seemed everyone agreed that gender neutrality can go too far in into-English translation: in legal translation the gender usage has to reflect the legal system of the source. For example, if a source language legal system distinguishes between the rights of wives and those of husbands, these terms have to be distinguished in a translation.

The second hour started off with a discussion of particular examples. Irina had a number of these, of which two are presented here:

Бывшая чиновница Министерства обороны Евгения Васильева начала возмещать ущерб по делу о хищении.

Yevgeniya Vasilyeva, a former Defense Ministry female official, began to pay restitution in the embezzlement case.

Венгр Бела Ковач подозревается на родине в шпионаже в пользу Москвы.

The [male] Hungarian Bela Kovacs is under suspicion in his own country of spying for Moscow.

With regard to the first, Irina noted that the feminine inflection on Vasilyeva's surname would have been enough to identify her gender to readers of the Russian original (the fact that a feminine form of official

—**чиновница**— was used merely confirmed the obvious). In this case her gender is highly relevant, as she was implicated along with her (male) superior, with whom she was having an affair. Even if this were not the case, Irina believes it is wrong for translators to deprive target-text readers of information that is obvious to readers of the original. She readily admits, however, that actually doing this is complicated and challenging, acknowledging that terms like "female play director" in English are disconcerting in a way that the equivalent terms in Russian would not be. Such awkward gender markings could put ideas into the minds of a translation's end user that were never intended.

In regard to the second example, Irina described the use of *Hungarian* as the first word in the second example as syntactically unusual and hypothesized that this gender-marked indication of nationality may have been inserted because the name Bela could be feminine in Russian (the surname Kovacs does not convey any information about gender).

Larry gave several examples as well. One involved reference to a well-known official, Elvira Nabiullina, by her title (head of the Central Bank, using the masculine form *председатель*), without mentioning her name. The normal assumption would have been that the unnamed official is male, but Larry hypothesized that Russian readers would know from other sources that the official was female, whereas English readers might not. Therefore, there might be a need to somehow indicate this in the English translation. A Russian native speaker in the audience volunteered that she did not think that a preponderance of Russian readers would know or care about the official's gender. This reviewer would argue that gender information in this case, like any other implicit information conveyed to readers in the original language but not required in the target, need be included only when it is necessary for the target audience to properly understand the target text for its intended purpose.

Larry then spoke about the translation of *зелёные человечки* ("little green men"), used sarcastically to refer to green-clad Russian troops during Russia's

takeover of Crimea. While this term could be translated as little green people, Larry felt *men* is more appropriate for two reasons: 1) the reference is to special forces troops who are, indeed, all male (with the possible rare exception of support personnel); and 2) the humorous reference is to the small alien invaders of science fiction, which would be lost if the word *people* were substituted. No one disagreed.

An audience member asked the presenters what the takeaway from these two hours should be. Larry answered first saying: Don't be too violent to the target language in the name of gender neutrality before that language or its speakers are ready for it. He also introduced the concept of "register membership," i.e., the conscious effort people make to use language indicating that they belong to a certain group. Intentional use of gender neutral language is such an effort, and a translator who recognizes that the author of a literary work is making this effort should do the same in the translation.

He did not address the issue of a translator wishing to assert his or her own register membership. I would add that if it is important for readers to get a clear idea of a speaker's or writer's attitudes toward women, it is not appropriate to neutralize any frankly sexist language.

Irina's takeaway message was that it is generally not justified to call a language sexist because of its grammatical treatment of gender, though, of course, the society associated with this language may well be sexist. She also emphasized the importance of translators in molding the development of a language.

Boris Silverstejn ended the sessions with a guideline he had used for a session he himself had previously presented: When all else fails, use common sense.

The speakers and the audience dispersed in a spirit of peace and collegiality.

I, the reviewer, am compelled to say that among the praiseworthy aspects of this presentation, three particularly stand out: 1) the ample time devoted to audience comments, virtually all of which added value; 2) the combination of practical tips for translators and interpreters with a consideration of the "mission" of our profession; and 3) the all too rare demonstration of what can be achieved when people of goodwill but seemingly opposing viewpoints sit down together and discuss their differences.

WHY THE BOOKS? (PART II)

Lynn Visson



Editors' note: Part I of this series dealing with Lynn Visson's books on language and translation can be found [here](#).

To pick up where I left off in the fall 2015 issue of *SlavFile*, although five of my ten books dealt with translation and interpretation, the others were on far different subjects. Brought up in an émigré family, I had always been interested in how Russians adapted to America—and not just linguistically. For émigré Russians, their native cuisine was not merely a gastronomic matter, since both cooking and socializing around the table provided the social glue that bound together people from highly different backgrounds and pasts. Regardless of whether they had been monarchists, Social Revolutionaries or Social Democrats, they all appreciated a steaming борщ or juicy пирожок. Food was an unbreakable, nearly genetic link to the past, one that transitioned easily into the present and was easily passed on to the next generation. Given the frequent food shortages and dearth of ingredients available during the Soviet period, the preservation of classical Russian cuisine fell to the émigrés. When that generation died out, I feared, so would this outstanding cuisine.

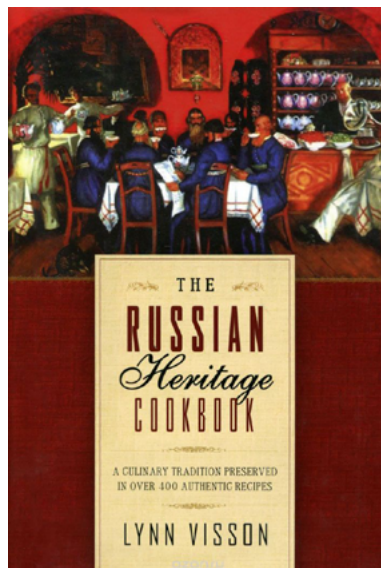
Since preserving the memory of the past has always been vitally important for me, I started collecting recipes from my mother's friends and acquaintances, recipes that had traveled through Paris, Berlin, Belgrade and Latin America before settling down in New York. Though these women often did not really understand why anyone outside their circle would be interested in how to make a *kulebiaka* or a *kulich*, they treasured and preserved their recipes. The result, along with short biographies of the donors, was a collection of over 400 recipes. After testing them, I selected 200 for the book. The first edition of *The Complete Russian Cookbook* was published by Ardis in Ann Arbor in 1982, with subsequent editions in 2001 and 2004. Today it is available as *The Russian Heritage Cookbook*, revised and updated, published by The Overlook Press in 2009. A smaller version of the book, *200 блюд русского зарубежья. Рецепты классической кухни*, containing slightly longer biographies

and photos of the contributors, appeared in Russian in Moscow (RValent, 2001, 2008). It was deeply gratifying to know that after their long and bumpy decades of flight and travel, these wandering recipes had finally come “home” to Russia.

Another short foray into the cuisines of the former USSR, *The Art of Uzbek Cooking*, was written for Hippocrene Books, a New York house that was putting out a line of international cookbooks. In response to the publisher's interest in a book on the cuisine of one of the Soviet republics, I decided on the cooking of Uzbekistan. That was motivated by the considerable material available in Russian, my own two trips to Uzbekistan, and the circle of New York friends from Tashkent that my husband and I had acquired over the years.

That marked the end of my “culinary” publications, for in the meantime I had become very interested in the dynamics of Russian-American marriages. Not surprisingly, I and my (late) husband, Boris Rabbot, who was from Moscow and arrived in the U.S. in 1976, were meeting many other Russian-American couples and exchanging our impressions. Boris was often as puzzled by the behavior of some of the American spouses as I was by the Russians regarding roles in the marriage, attitudes toward family, parents and children, friends, work and leisure, time, money, entertainment, language—behavior in virtually all spheres of life. And if I, speaking Russian from childhood, raised in an émigré family, with a Ph.D. in Slavic Languages and Literatures and numerous trips and stays in Russia, was continually surprised by the behavior and statements of my Russian husband—then what, I wondered, must such a marriage be like for an American spouse with no Russian background or knowledge of the language and culture?

Since almost nothing had been written on Russian-American unions, I began by studying the general literature on cross-cultural marriages. All in all, Boris and I met with and interviewed some 100 Russian-American couples, ranging from well-known individuals such as Susan Eisenhower and Roald Sagdeev to couples who had met via Internet dating services. The book began with a short overview of the history of such marriages—including



Isadora Duncan and Sergei Esenin—and discussed the role of the American journalists and diplomats stationed in Moscow who had acquired Russian wives, as well as American Communists and blacks who left for Moscow in the 20s and 30s and married Russians, exchange students and faculty from the U.S. academic world, and émigrés who married Americans. The result was *Wedded Strangers: The Challenges of Russian-American Marriages* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1998, 2001). Its Russian edition, *Чужие и близкие в русско-американских браках*, was put out by P. Валент in Moscow in 1999.

This was the book that finally taught me what writing was all about, for the manuscript was edited and reworked by Anthony Austin, a former *New York Times* Moscow correspondent and staff writer for the *Times* Sunday magazine, whom I had met when he edited an article Boris did for that publication. With infinite patience and an infinite supply of red pencils Tony managed to shake off the dust and excess verbiage firmly embedded in my clumsy and lumbering academic prose, for which I will be forever grateful to him.

The book was highly successful. I was interviewed by numerous American and Russian journalists, and received hundreds of e-mails from Russian-American spouses and readers on both sides of the ocean. In a nutshell, because of the stiff hurdles Russian men encountered in obtaining exit visas due to security and military considerations, the overwhelming majority of the 70s to 80s mixed marriages were between Russian women and American men, men who were enchanted by the femininity of Russian women. These ladies were far better groomed and more attractive than aggressive American feminists. And many American women fell for strongly masculine, romantic Russian men, who were taken with the relative independence and professionalism of American women. The Russian wives I interviewed were highly appreciative both of the respect with which their American husbands treated them and the absence of alcohol abuse. Many young Russian women who had been abandoned with a small child by an alcohol-abusing husband and met their American spouses through Internet sites and the travel groups to Russia for American men that flourished in the 90s, were

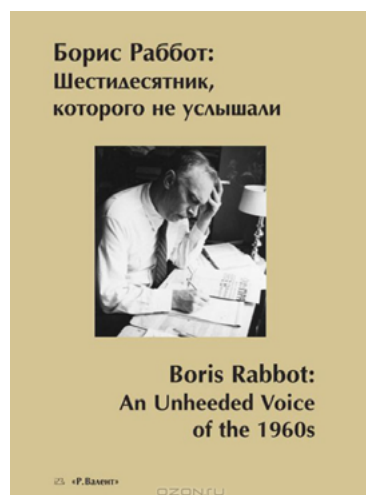
deeply impressed by how the American men treated the children as their own rather than as step-children.

Some Russian-American couples—though these were distinctly a minority—opted to live in Russia, for either professional or family reasons. At least in those cases, the American spouse did not have to wonder “Does he (or she) love me or my passport?” By the year 2000, however, many couples had moved to the U.S. or at least spent a good part of the year there.

Toward the end of the 90s, the increase in Internet marriages and the easing of visa restrictions had considerably changed the parameters for these marriages. Both my American and Russian publishers wanted an updated edition of the book, but *glasnost*, the removal of most travel restrictions, the huge flow of information in both countries regarding each other’s culture, better language training, and more realistic expectations on the part of the future spouses meant that a new edition would have involved a considerable amount of time and effort to update a rather outdated book. While I did a magazine piece on the children of Russian-American marriages and continued discussing cross-cultural unions on the lecture circuit, my interests were turning elsewhere.

Following up on the concern with keeping alive the stories of past generations, I was prompted by my father’s death in New York in 1976 to try to preserve his heritage and the account of his tortuous path from Kiev to Copenhagen to Berlin and to Paris, and ultimately, in 1941, to New York, his home for the rest of his life. In 1986 Hermitage Publishers put out my father’s memoirs, Vladimir Visson: *Fair Warning: Memoirs of a New York Art Dealer* (New Jersey: Hermitage, 1986), which I had edited. In a slightly expanded version, the Russian translation of the book, Владимир Виссон. *Судьба жить искусством. Мемуары директора нью-йоркской галереи “Уилденштейн,”* was published in Moscow (P. Валент, 2002, 2013). This was of particular interest to Russian readers since my father’s family had been obliged to leave Kiev during the Revolution of 1917. For over thirty-five years he was director of exhibitions at New York’s renowned Wildenstein Gallery, and the book included photos of many notables such as Jacqueline Kennedy, Sol Hurok, Edward G. Robinson and Igor Stravinsky, who came to the gala openings of exhibitions at the gallery or purchased Old Masters there. The book also included an account of his travel back to Russia nearly a half-century after he and his family were forced out by the Revolution.

Half in English and half in Russian, my second “memory” book was a memorial volume for



my husband, Boris Rabbot, who emigrated from Moscow in 1976 and for years prior to that had been a sociologist and political adviser to the liberal wing of the Kremlin's political leadership. Compiled and edited with the assistance of Vasilii Arkanov, *Борис Раббот: Шестидесятник, которого не услышали/Boris Rabbot: An Unheeded Voice of the 1960s* (Moscow: RValent, 2012), contained Boris's published and unpublished writings on political issues and foreign relations, and reminiscences of him from former friends and colleagues in Russia and the U.S.

In addition to my own writing, I have translated several books from Russian, starting with *Reason and Being* (*Разум и бытие*) by Boris Kuznetsov (Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, edited by Robert S. Cohen and Marx W. Wartovsky, Vol. 17, Dordrecht and Boston: D. Reidel Publishing, 1987). A close personal friend, Kuznetsov was a well-known Moscow philosopher of science and a leading, world-renowned expert on the work of Albert Einstein. The book's philosophical and scientific terminology made for plenty of translation difficulties, but Kuznetsov was a clear and brilliant thinker whose arguments always shone clearly through the verbal nets surrounding them.

Reason and Being marked the beginning and the end of my career as a translator of philosophy and science. I then accepted an offer to translate I. Grekova's (pseudonym of Elena Sergeevna Ventsel') *Russian Women: Two Stories* (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983). In Russia these two tales, *Дамский мастер* [*Ladies' Hairdresser*] and *Хозяйка гостиницы* [*The Hotel Manager*], had been extremely popular. While I loved Grekova's writing, I did not have any love whatsoever for the American copy editor, who stubbornly insisted on turning this middle-aged Soviet woman writer into a blazing American feminist. After a few major battles, e.g., I was not willing to distort "Он в последнее время редко приходил к ней по ночам" into "They didn't have sex much any more"). In disgust, I signed the translation using my pseudonym, Michel Petrov.

That foray into fiction was followed by a retreat into the much safer world of classical ballet, with a translation of Elizabeth Souritz's *Soviet Choreographers in the 1920s* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990) [Э. Я. Суриц. *Хореографическое искусство двадцатых годов*]. While the book presented problems in finding the correct classical ballet terminology equivalents in Russian, French and English, it provided a fascinating overview of many productions that set the stage for hundreds of future ballet performances in both Russia and abroad. Translating these detailed descriptions

of ballet plots, steps, performances and scenery was a thoroughly enjoyable exercise.

Then came translations of the exhibition catalogues in two art books featuring lovely layouts and illustrations: Albert Kostenevich, *Hidden Treasures Revealed: Impressionist Masterpieces and Other Important French Paintings Preserved by the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1995) and *Master Drawings from the Hermitage and Pushkin Museums* (New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1998-99). While the articles in these volumes were written and translated by several people working in both Russia and America, I worked on the translations of the descriptions of the paintings and drawings, a difficult task because of the highly technical terms used in describing the art works.

The last book I translated, the three Harriman lectures that Andrei Sinyavsky gave in 1966 at Columbia University, was a "double translation" exercise. I was handed Sinyavsky's texts (from which he departed quite frequently) and had the chance to ask him questions before he spoke. Andrei Donatovich was a charming, very quiet and friendly man, but before he could open his mouth, his wife, Maria Rozanova, turned to me with the answers, starting with "Here Andrei Donatovich wants to say" or "Here he means." Sinyavsky merely smiled and nodded approvingly. I don't think he got to say more than 25 words during our half-hour "conversation." These brilliant lectures on the Russian intelligentsia were taped by the Harriman Institute. I was asked to translate and edit the lectures, which were then published as the book, *The Russian Intelligentsia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997). This proved to be a complex exercise, as I was working from the Russian tapes of Sinyavsky's talks and Columbia's transcript of my oral interpretation of the lectures. This meant editing the written text of what I had originally interpreted — something that UN interpreters occasionally do when they need to refine their interpretation of a difficult text.

Though for the last 25 years I have primarily worked as an interpreter rather than a translator, I feel that translation is an indispensable exercise for interpreters, who are often forced by time pressure to compromise on precise meaning in order to produce presentable but sometimes highly condensed sentences. When faced with a written text—and given the luxury of time—the interpreter can reflect on sentence structure, style, synonyms and register. The Sinyavsky book provided an excellent and rare opportunity to be simultaneously both interpreter and translator.

In 2016 I am expecting the publication of my translation “swan song,” a book intended for translators rather than interpreters, focusing on the problems posed by texts dealing with the “non-verbal” arts, i.e., painting, music and dance. While the Russian texts about these art forms and their English translations are essentially verbal material, *Невыразимое словами. Перевод текстов о живописи, танце и музыке* [*Inexpressible in Words: Translation of Texts on Painting, Dance and Music*], tackles the problem of dealing in words with material that is by definition nonverbal. Unfortunately, the translation of texts on painting, dance and music has received very little attention, and I hope that others will continue to expand the small corpus of literature on this important translation subfield.

In the meantime I have begun work on a kind of memoir, an account of the wide range of various Russian individuals and groups (from Yeltsin to coal miners) for whom I have interpreted since 1963, showing through accounts of conversations and contacts how American perceptions of Russians and Russian perceptions of Americans have changed and

developed over the last fifty years. And—if I ever finish that project—next on the list will be a memoir of my parents’ generation and the relatives, friends and others who left Russia during the 1917 Revolution and made their way to the U.S. via France, Germany, Yugoslavia, Iran and Latin America.

So there is plenty on my plate. I would hope that some of these books may prove of interest to colleagues and teachers in our field of translation and interpretation.

Lynn Visson received a Ph.D. from Harvard University in Slavic Languages and Literatures and has taught Russian language and literature at Columbia and other American universities. After working as a freelance interpreter for the U.S. State Department, for more than twenty years she was a staff interpreter at the United Nations, working from Russian and French into English and heading interpreter training programs there. She now freelances at the UN and teaches interpretation in Monterey, Moscow and at various universities.

Of Russian background, she is the author of numerous books and articles, published in the U.S. and in Russia, on various aspects of Russian language, literature, culture and cuisine. She is the member of editorial board of *Mosty*, the Moscow-based journal on translation and interpretation.

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From our Polish Co-editors

A CALL FOR POLISH CONTRIBUTIONS

Kate Jankowski and Christine Pawlowski

With this new issue of *SlavFile*, the Polish input is under the new joint editorship of Kate Jankowski and Christine Pawlowski. We are both members of the group that has been working to re-establish the ATA Polish>English certification examination. In this capacity, we have devoted our time and energy over the past year—together with Keith Goeringer, and mentored patiently by Nora Favorov—toward selecting and preparing the passages required for the practice test and the certification exam. Much of what we have done is volunteer work, but it has yielded many personal benefits—collaboration, growth in linguistic skill, and much laughter! It has also been gratifying to contribute to this important step toward maintaining the quality of Polish to English translation and recognizing excellence in translation via certification.

For 20 years, *SlavFile* has offered a forum for the ATA Slavic community to share knowledge and creativity with the group at large. As translators and interpreters, it is easy to remain in isolation, not sharing skills and talents with one’s colleagues, except perhaps during chapter meetings or at the ATA annual conference. Certainly, a conference presentation is an optimal way to offer new information and to display the fruits of one’s research. But it is not the only way. We welcome your contributions in the format of your choice. Would you be interested in contributing to the Polish SLD blog or in writing a column in *SlavFile* on Polish T or I? Have you made a new translation of a poem? Have you visited Poland recently and can you provide new insight for our readers into the way the language is evolving? Do you have a particular glossary you’ve managed to create based on work in an area not well represented by bilingual dictionaries? Are there any new resources for Polish>English or English>Polish translators you would like to review?

If so, please contact us at: kate.jan@att.net (Kate), pawlow@verizon.net (Christine). We would love to hear from you.

JURE JAKOB

Translation and introduction by Martha Kosir



Jure Jakob was born in 1977 in Celje, Slovenia. He earned his Master's degree in Comparative Literature at the Faculty of the Arts in Ljubljana, where he now lives and works as a freelance writer and poet. He has published four books of poetry so far. His first collection, *Three Stops (Tri postaje)*, which was published in 2003, thoroughly reshuffled the cards of contemporary Slovenian poetry. *Three Stops* won Jakob the Zlata ptica (Golden Bird) award and secured him a prominent spot in the anthology of young Slovenian poets titled *We Come Back in the Evening (Mi se vr-nemo zvečer)*. For its title, the author of the anthol-ogy, Matevž Kos, selected a verse from one of Jakob's poems featured in the anthology. The collection *Three Stops* was quickly sold out and was reprinted in 2009. Jakob's second collection, *Wakefulness (Budnost)*, was published in 2006, and his third collection, *Abandoned Places (Zapuščeni kraji)*, in 2010. His lat-est collection, *Particles of Work (Delci dela)*, was pub-lished in 2013. With his poetry, Jure Jakob has firmly established himself as one of the outstanding voices of his poetic generation. His poems have been trans-lated into English, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Czech, Macedonian, Serbian and Hungarian. In addition to

poetry, Jakob has published a mono-graphic study of Lojze Kovačič's narrative entitled *A Child's Look (Otroški pogled, 2010)*, and a col-lection of prose entitled *Houses and Other Compositions (Hiše in drugi prosti spisi)* in 2015.

The poems in this article were selected from Jakob's latest collection, *Particles of Work (Delci dela)*. They demonstrate the poet's remarkable ability to find beauty in things that for many would go unno-ticed. By contemplating the details of the world and the life that surrounds him, the poet explores the es-sence and the innermost depths of the self. His poet-ry finds beauty in the intricacy of apparent simplicity. There is, however, always much more than meets the eye, and this supposed outward simplicity can never be taken at face value. Jakob recreates magic in the seemingly ordinary details of life and continues to sur-prise the reader by steadily delving into the complex-ity of the universe and the self. It is precisely this ele-ment of surprise that makes Jakob's poetry intriguing, exciting and enduring.



Jure Jakob
PHOTO: Tihomir Pinter

Poetika

Vsak dan je treba vstati
in gledati slivo
na vzhodnem koncu vrta.

Od vseh dreves, živali,
vremenskih pojavov, odtenkov svetlobe,
skrivnostnih in razorožujočih
špranj v pokrajini,
ki si v duhu in besedi
neomajno vzamejo svoj prostor,
je bolje gledati slivo
na vzhodnem koncu vrta.

Niti blago sonce,
ki se zgodaj zjutraj nežno stakne z vejami,
niti dekle,
ki me je ošinila z očmi
bežno kot cvetje.
Dovolj je dosti manj.
Ni dovolj hoteti,
ampak gledati slivo
na vzhodnem koncu vrta.

Rad delam,
kar je treba.

Poetics

It is necessary to get up every day
and watch the plum tree
at the eastern end of the garden.

Of all the trees, animals,
weather phenomena, shades of light,
mysterious and disarmed
crevices in the landscape,
which in spirit and in words
relentlessly take their place,
it is best to watch the plum tree
at the eastern end of the garden.

Not the mild sun
that gently touches the branches
early in the morning,
nor a girl
who glances at me as quickly
as she does at the flowers.
Much less is enough.
It is not enough to want
but to watch the plum tree
at the eastern end of the garden.

I like to do
what is necessary.

<p><i>Daljnovid</i></p> <p>Poševen sneg, nedelja, odprta v nebo. Igra vode in mraza se odvija v rednih, fantastičnih nadaljevanjih. Tri postave sekajo neskidan pločnik kot privid. Sedim za mizo ob oknu, vstavljenem v debel severni zid. Otrok spi in z dihanjem divja po sobi, kot da se bode s snežnim metežem. Dve misli se zapodita v spolzek klanec. Na vrhu počijeta, z hrbta snameta sanke in se usedeta. Glej, mama nama maha. Glej, tam. Sanke drvijo čez belo čistino kot nore, piš vetra in pršec snega si podajata divje zagledani otroški obraz, nagnjen čez zamišljen rob. Potem zakašlja, zjavka. Sedim in sledim temu kot buden pes, na preži pod visokim daljnovidom jem nedeljski sneg.</p>	<p><i>Power Lines</i></p> <p>Oblique snow, Sunday, open to the sky. The outdoor play of water and cold unfolds in regular, fanciful sequels. Like a hallucination, three figures slash into the unshoveled snow on the pavement. I sit at the table by the window inserted into a thick northern wall. A child is asleep in the room, breathing in a rage as if fighting a blizzard. Two thoughts dash up a slippery slope. They rest at the top, remove the sleds from their backs and sit down. Look, mom, they are waving at us. Look, over there. In a frenzy, sleds rush down through the white clearing, gusty winds and misty snow exchange wild looks with their child-like faces, leaning over an imaginary edge. Then they cough, moan. I sit and keep an eye on this like a watchful dog, on the lookout, under high power lines, I feed on Sunday snow.</p>
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<p><i>Mlada vrana</i></p> <p>Prišla je mlada vrana. Sedi v črnem pekaču za torto, ki sem ga pustil na vrtni klopci, da ne bi pozabil nabrati bezgovih cvetov. Pekač je poln mlade vrane, ki odpira kljun in predirljivo vpije. Potem skoči na tla, nerodno zataca po vrtu in se vrne. Bezgov grm diši do sem, ona pa hoče drugam. Ne zna še leteti. Pekač odnesem v kuhinjo in vse povem. Zvečer sedimo za mizo. Pojemo ocvrti bezeg, od zunaj se sliši šumenje vetra. Spet grem zadnji v posteljo. Tako ko zaprem oči, zagledam vrano. Svet je mlad. Potem se ne spomnim več.</p>	<p><i>Young Crow</i></p> <p>A young crow has dropped by. It is sitting in a black cake pan that I left on the garden bench so I would not forget to pick the elderflower blossoms. The cake pan is filled with the young crow, who screeches through its gaping beak. Then it jumps onto the ground, trudges through the garden and returns. The scent of elderflower reaches all the way over here, but the crow is headed elsewhere. It does not yet know how to fly. I take the cake pan back to the kitchen and tell everyone about it. In the evening, we sit at the table. We finish eating the breaded elderflower blossoms, and the rustling of the wind can be heard outside. Once again I am the last to turn in. As soon as I close my eyes, I see a crow. The world is young. Then I remember nothing more.</p>
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<p><i>Donava</i></p> <p><i>Osrečuje me, da imam rad reke</i> R. Carver</p> <p>Plovilo, nekaj med domišljjskim parnikom in splavom, plava po reki, ploščato, lagodno navzdol, lena, debela donavska pošast.</p> <p>Snežinke v zraku in elegantne ženske, bradati moški, zazrti v vodo, ki si mislijo, da so mornarji, z rokami v žepih in nasmeški na ustnicah vlečejo pipe.</p> <p>Ptica, ptica, reče natakaraica v bifeju z vrto, pod katerim teče reka, v jeziku, ki ga le napol razumem, in spretno zapluje med obložene mize.</p> <p>Tekoča gmota šumov se ne ustavlja, počasi in vztrajno leze vate, kozarci žvenketajo lahkotno melodijo, telo gre ob telesu kakor brzica ob brzici.</p> <p>Mehke besede in mokre sladke kapljice, razpenjene predstave, ki se umivajo in nage in sveže zaplešejo in špricajo v naklonjen zrak.</p>	<p><i>The Danube</i></p> <p><i>It pleases me, loving rivers</i> Raymond Carver</p> <p>A vessel, something between an imaginary steamer and a raft, floats evenly and leisurely down the river, a lazy, flabby Danube river monster.</p> <p>Snowflakes in the air and elegant women, bearded men staring at the water, imagining they are sailors, with hands in their pockets and smiles on their lips, smoke pipes.</p> <p>A bird, a bird, says a waitress at the bar with a garden, under which the river flows, in a language that I barely understand, and she swiftly moves between tables laden with food.</p> <p>A flowing mass of noise does not stop, slowly and steadily it creeps into you, glasses clink a light melody, and bodies, like rapids, slide against each other.</p> <p>Soft words and lush sweet spirits, strained images that cleanse themselves, naked and refreshed, they dance again and splash the water through the benevolent air.</p>
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<p><i>Nekdo prepisuje Tranströmerja</i></p> <p>Miren zaliv, zadaj za rtom šumenje vetra kot opomba, da je to le eden od svetov.</p> <p>Neko dekle plava na način, ki ga ne poznam, trije surferji s kričeče oranžnimi jadri so kot smeti na šipi skoz katero se vidi neverjetno daleč.</p> <p>Listam <i>Skrivnosti na poti</i>, a v resnici ne berem, ampak kukam skoz besede k motnemu siju na koncu obzorja.</p> <p>V vsakem verzu je spravljena škaticla vžigalic.</p> <p>Vsakič ko neroden galeb vzprhuta in zavpije, se ustrašim, da se je svet od brleče vročine in nepazljivosti prepisovalca nenadoma vžgal.</p> <p>Pod gladino jata rib zašumi kot voda, ki jo zliješ na žerjavico, potem pa blažena tišina, kot da je delo za danes že zgodaj popoldne končano.</p>	<p><i>Somebody Is Transcribing Tranströmer*</i></p> <p>A quiet bay behind the cape, the rustling of the wind reminds us that this is only one of the worlds.</p> <p>A girl swims in a style that I don't know, three windsurfers with blazing orange sails are like flecks on a window pane through which one can see incredibly far.</p> <p>I leaf through <i>Secrets on the Way</i>,** without truly reading but glancing at the words toward the misty glow at the edge of the horizon.</p> <p>Every verse contains a box of matches.</p> <p>Every time a clumsy seagull flaps its wings and screeches, I am terrified that the world has suddenly caught fire from the glimmering heat and the carelessness of the scribe.</p> <p>Under the surface, a school of fish scatters like water poured over hot coals, then a blessed silence, as if today's work had been finished early in the afternoon.</p>
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* Tomas Tranströmer (1931 – 2015) was a Swedish poet, writer and psychologist. He is considered one of the leading figures of Scandinavian and European poetry. His works have been widely translated into English and other world languages. Tranströmer was the recipient of the 2011 Nobel Prize for Literature.

**Secrets on the Way, Tranströmer's second book of poetry, was published in 1958.

Martha Kosir is *SlavFile*'s editor for Poetry. In addition to translating poetry from Slovenian into English, she has done poetry translations from English into Spanish, from Slovenian into Spanish, and from German into Spanish and English. Her research focuses on translation studies, foreign language pedagogy, and film studies. She works as an Associate Professor of Spanish at Gannon University, kosir001@gannon.edu.

SLAVFILE LITE: NOT BY WORD COUNT ALONE

Lydia Razran Stone

Dear Readers, To celebrate the 20th anniversary of *SlavFile*, we have declared this the *Year of the Book* and ask readers to send us articles pertaining to any Slavic- and/or translation-related books you have worked on—published or unpublished. If you wonder whether something you are considering submitting would be considered appropriate, feel free to write me (lydiastone@verizon.net) and ask. Meanwhile I call your attention to the book-focused articles in this issue by Lynn Visson and Liv Bliss. I myself am planning to use this column to cite some material from what I affectionately think of as the GUA (aka Great Unpublished Archive.)

For those of you for whom the unpublished outweighs the published, in bulk and possibly in quality, I would like to share my personal experience with you. Ever since I realized, with an enormous sigh of relief, that there was no longer any need to contribute financially to the education of four children, I have stopped soliciting paid work and concentrated on literary translation and what might be called philological articles. In that time (my first book was published when our youngest was 28), I have published 5 bilingual books, a large amount of poetry and other literary translations, and a fair number of what might be described as philological contributions—the two most recent in *Mosty*, the Russian translators' journal, and the *International Journal of Lexicography* (on a recommendation from the late Sophia Lubensky). I am telling you this not to boast but to let you know that every single one of these publications arose ultimately out of a contact I made through the SLD—people who were either contributors to the *SlavFile* or fellow conference attendees. A word to the wise!

And now to the latest addition (hopefully not permanent) to the archive!

One of the most enjoyable and undoubtedly quixotic things I did in 2015 was to translate approximately 400 Russian proverbs into English verse. I thought I would try a few after reading a suggestion in a book on idiom and proverb translation I was reading for our (with Sveta Beloshapkina) ATA presentation in Miami, to the effect that Russian proverbs should be translated in rhyme to make them seem more “proverb-y.” But after I got started, I simply couldn't stop. I set 350-400 as a goal thinking that I could find a publisher for a “Russian proverb of the day tear-off calendar.” Well, lots of luck with that, Lydia! I would be effusively grateful if anyone can suggest a way to bring this particular baby out into the world.

So let me squeeze a few cups of lemonade out of these lemons before their shelf life expires and turn a selection of them into a column. I think I will present 30 of my favorites in the form of an identify-the-original quiz. Those of you who have limited familiarity with Russian proverbs or who dislike guessing games may wish to turn directly to page 23, where we cite English and Russian equivalents and additional information for each of the selected proverbs.



1. A duckling shouldn't teach a duck,
Nor you your granny eggs to suck.
2. A man whose belly shouts for bread
Hears nothing else inside his head.
3. An uninvited guest—
There is no bigger pest.
4. Because my hut's so far from town,
I never know what's going down.
5. Believe the ancient sage who said:
You can't jump over your own head.
6. Don't give your word to every Joe and Jack,
But once it's given, do not take it back.
7. Don't take too long to say good-bye;
It just gives folks more time to cry.
8. For better do not moan;
Leave well enough alone.
9. From what I've seen, I'd have to say:
We all go nuts in our own way.
10. Good reputations stay at home,
While bad ones through the city roam.
11. I want to but I'm scared to,
And Mama says don't dare to.
12. If there's a trough filled with edible stuff,
The pigs will find it soon enough.
13. If you're going to pay,
We'll do what you say.
14. It wasn't me; I wasn't there.
That horse you see is not my mare.
15. It's true not just of wheels, you know:
Things must be greased before they go!
16. Little children bring small woes,
Which grow when they do, heaven knows.
17. Lobsters are the only creatures
Ill-fate endows with rosy features.

18. May your road be smooth and clear—
And may it take you far from here.
19. Moscow has no faith in tears;
She's seen so many through the years.
20. Most things grow old and turn to dust,
But love can age and never rust.
21. Once you've spent the night in bed,
You will have a clearer head.
22. See that gentle gray-haired man?
Avoid him, ladies, if you can.
23. Some folks till the ground
While others hang around.
24. The alphabet he doesn't know;
Can't tell his ass from his elbow.

25. The crab can't help but walk sideways.
We all must do what nature says.
26. Nothing in this world avails
To keep good folk from telling tales.
27. Those who're not afraid to dare
Will always get the lion's share.
28. To flour life will grind
This trouble too, you'll find.
29. When I vowed to be your dearest friend,
I didn't mean my smokes I'd lend.
30. With seven nursemaids, you would think
The baby's diaper would not stink.

For those of you who actually took the challenge,
you can check your answers on page 23.

Happy 2016, everyone.

Of Interest to Our Readers

First an apology from Lydia: In the Fall 2015 *SlavFile* issue and at the November SLD meeting I boldly announced that we had been publishing this rag for 25 years. Well, somehow, despite the round numbers, I miscalculated; the actual correct figure is 20 years. I deeply regret any inconvenience this misstatement may have caused.

Despite the duration shortfall, we hold to our declaration to make this the year of the book in our pages. Your attention is called to the two articles on books translated and/or written by our members. We encourage readers to submit articles on any aspect of books you have translated or written (they need not have been published) that would interest our members. Descriptions of adventures dealing with copyrights, publishers, agents, authors, editors, etc., are most welcome.

Twenty years of SlavFile. I only discovered my anniversary miscalculation when I was calculating some cumulative statistics of the last 25 20 years of *SlavFile*. The arithmetic for these was done by Excel, but I would not blame anyone for doubting their accuracy. Nevertheless, for what they are worth, here they are!

Since late 1995, we have published 77 issues (including three double issues in 2003, 2004, and 2009) comprising 1642 pages and consisting of 952 articles/features (a mean of 21.6 pages and 12.5 articles per issue). Articles were written by 234 authors, whose contributions ranged from a total of one over the period to more than one per issue. In 20 years we have published a disappointing, but not disgraceful, 108 articles dealing with Slavic languages other than Russian. We hope to do better in the next 20 years. The mean ratio of articles authored by females to those by males is approximately 10:6 in favor of the former, which is, however, higher than the proportion of males on our editorial staff. The ratio of articles by Anglonates to those by Slavonates is a more even 10:8. (The slightly smaller number of Slavonate authors may be a partial function of the fact that we require our articles to be in English.) We once again urge those working with Slavic languages other than Russian to send us your contributions. We urge the same of our underrepresented males—feel free to consider yourselves a disadvantaged minority.

Maria Guzenko invites SLD members to form practice groups for ATA Certification Exam preparation

Here's Maria's plan: "My idea is that each participant will pick an appropriate English text that the other participants would not be privy to in advance. We then translate a text of another participant's choosing and have that person 'grade' it."

Interested in participation? You can reach her at maria.guzenko@intorussian.net. Maria is looking for En>Ru practice buddies, but other language pairs are welcome, as well.

CONGRATULATIONS TO EUGENIA SOKOLSKAYA

FOR PASSING HER ATA R>E CERTIFICATION EXAMINATION

Genia attended her first ATA Conference in 2014 and was featured in the Newcomers' Column in our Summer 2015 issue, at which time she was pursuing a Master's Degree in Translation.

Translation: A Grubby Job, but Lots of Us Are Doing It

A Literary Case Study

Liv Bliss

Whenever I read about Constance Garnett, doyenne of Russian-to-English literary translation, sitting in the garden and banging out her work with scarcely a break for reflection (“She would finish a page,” D.H. Lawrence tells us, “and throw it off on a pile on the floor without looking up...”), I don’t know whether to laugh or cry. Garnett’s reference sources must have been sparse when they were not nonexistent, and she could not even have dreamed of firing off an email to a colleague (or, better yet, the author) with “Huh?” as the subject line. And as a result, she should surely be forgiven for misreading, misconstruing, and outright omitting words, sentences, or even whole paragraphs that would only have slowed her down and that she might never have been able to render to her own satisfaction.

In my work on Dmitry Chen’s *The Pet Hawk of the House of Abbas* (Montpelier, VT: Edward & Dee/RIS Publications, 2013), I had no such leeway. There really is no excuse for getting things hair-curlingly wrong these days. And whenever I was about to do just that, my actively involved author was there to stop me, for which I will be endlessly grateful. As a stranger barging into such a strange and wonderful land, I needed all the help I could get.

My research, be it into unfamiliar language or elusive facts, follows no discernible plan. Basically, I flail around, beginning with my favorite online sources, widening my search in an effort to confirm or refute, and bugging my colleagues mercilessly when all else fails. Beyond that, I have no great desire “to open up a corner of my workshop,” as Dmitry Chen, in his afterword to *Hawk*, tells us he always yearns to do. It’s way too messy in here.

But I thought it might be interesting to look at just one of the topics that the author and I batted to and fro at some length before reaching a conclusion we could both live with.

The problem, as I learned to my dismay, was that back in the eighth century C.E., there was no such thing as a Byzantine Empire. Who knew? Well, probably every historian worth his or her salt and, of course, Dmitry Chen. The term “Byzantina” was apparently first used in print to refer to the city and the territory it ruled by a German historian in 1557.

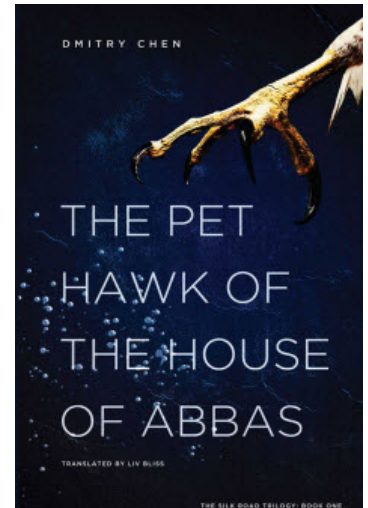
Byzantium, it turns out, had been the name not of an empire but of a colony on the site of what would become the Emperor Constantine’s capital.

Constantine dubbed his newly founded city Constantinople in the fourth century, replacing a nod to the area’s reputed but probably mythical founder Byzas with a name that, Constantine must have thought, gave credit where credit was due.

During the period in which *Hawk* is set, the people inhabiting what we now call the Byzantine Empire firmly believed they were living in the Roman Empire—which they actually were. Or, to be more precise, the eastern Roman Empire, the better known western part having fallen onto the ash heap of history in the fifth century. But, I mused, the term “Roman Empire” would be associated with Julius Caesar informing us that all Gaul is divided into three parts, in any normal Eurocentric reader’s mind. (And a *normal* readership is surely what most translators aspire to.) There was, therefore, no place for any “Roman Empire” in this book.

Meanwhile, the problem was not going away. The translated manuscript, which by that point was almost ready for prime time, was peppered with “Byzantium this” and “Byzantium that,” and the author simply wasn’t having any of it. So, after much soul- and Internet-searching, a round of compromises was hammered out, which he may not have relished but graciously tolerated. What did we end up with? “The lands of Roum, which some call Byzant” and “the lands where Byzas once ruled.” And the then-defunct western Roman Empire was introduced to the reader as “the empire that men called Roum”: note the past tense there. (In the Russian original, “Rome” had been rendered as “Rum,” which caused a whole separate round of head-scratching.)

This was only one of numerous tough decisions that had to be made—and ditched and remade—in the months it took to bring *Hawk* to press. And the book, I believe, deserved no less. Constance Garnett may even be envying me just a little.



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www.russianlife.com/books/fiction/silk-road-trilogy/

Helpful and/or Interesting Resources Discovered by SlavFile Editors and Readers

From Paul Makinen, SlavFile's editor for South Slavic languages:

Croatian Integration into the EU Has Improved the Availability of Terminology

IATE (InterActive Terminology for Europe), the EU-sponsored terminology portal, has now added Croatian as a source and target language. This valuable resource can be accessed at <http://iate.europa.eu/SearchByQueryLoad.do>. This terminology resource, which also includes abbreviations, is especially valuable for EU-related material.

Another useful item, especially for legal translation, is the excellent *Priručnik za prevođenje pravnih propisa Republike Hrvatske na engleski jezik*, published by the Croatian Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. It has an extensive glossary of Croatian government terms and general legal language, provides sample translations for a variety of standard documents/reports, and includes a style guide.

This resource (and several other useful items) may be found at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs website: <http://www.mvep.hr/hr/hrvatska-i-europska-unija/hrvatska-i-europska-unijao/prirucnici-za-prevođenje/>

From Nora Favorov, SlavFile associate editor:

Lately, I've had the great pleasure of working on a nineteenth-century literary translation. The novel in question features a great deal of dialogue, some of it quite colloquial. One of the main challenges, of course, is avoiding putting non-contemporary words and idioms into the mouths of nineteenth-century Russians (we don't want an 1860s барышня using twentieth-century sports idioms!). For this purpose I've been spending a lot of time with two resources—one free, the other quite pricey.

Google Books [Ngram Viewer](#)

This resource automatically charts the frequency of terms and collocations occurring in publications from a particular time span. You can further narrow your criteria using filters like "English Fiction" or "American English." Just as in any Google search, you can then browse the publications to see how the expressions were used and by whom. Was "to turn tail" used in the mid-nineteenth century to mean "run away"? Yes! Did people "hold up their end of the bargain" in the nineteenth century? Apparently not, although they did "keep their end of the bargain."

[Oxford English Dictionary Online](#)

This is the expensive one, a whopping \$29.95/month. The online edition gives you searchable access to approximately 600,000 words and numerous dated examples of their usage over the history of written English. At least as long as I'm focused on the nineteenth century, I consider the price worth it (although I could have saved myself some money if I'd sprung for the CD-ROM edition months ago—currently \$295). The full paper edition is 20 volumes and £750.00 (I couldn't find a USD price online).

SEND SUGGESTIONS FOR WEB WATCH TO Nora Favorov (norafavorov@gmail.com)

SLAVFILE LITE, part II

Lydia Razran Stone

The chart below provides the Russian originals for which I wrote the rhymed English translations on pages 19-20. Additional commentary readers may find of interest is given in the third column. We invite you to send comments and equivalents to these and other proverbs to lydiastone@verizon.net.

	VERSE TRANSLATION <i>Equivalent English proverb or colloquial phrase cited below in italics.</i>	RUSSIAN ORIGINAL Literal translation	Substitutions, compromises and comments
1	A duckling shouldn't teach a duck, Nor you your granny eggs to suck. <i>Don't teach your grandmother to suck eggs.</i>	Яйца курицу не учат. Eggs don't teach the chicken.	Chicken→duck English equivalent added in distorted syntax for humor
2	A man whose belly shouts for bread Hears nothing else inside his head.	У голодной куме хлеб на уме. A hungry person has bread on his mind.	Sound (shouts, hears) metaphor introduced
3	An uninvited guest— There is no bigger pest.	Незванный гость хуже татарина. An uninvited guest is worse than a Tatar.	I want to stick as close to the original as I can, but not if it means perpetuating ethnic stereotypes. (Besides nothing rhymes with Tatar.)
4	Because my hut's so far from town, I never know what's going down. <i>Why are you asking me?</i>	Моя хата с краю, я ничего не знаю. My hut is on the outskirts, I don't know anything.	Modern "what's going down" added for rhyme and humor
5	Believe the ancient sage who said: You can't jump over your own head. <i>One can only do so much.</i> <i>You can't hoist yourself up by your own bootstraps.</i>	Выше головы не прыгнешь. You can't jump higher than your head.	Higher than→over Framing statement added (line 1)
6	Don't give your word to every Joe and Jack, But once it's given, do not take it back. <i>Be slow to promise and quick to perform.</i>	Не давши слово, крепись, а давши — держись. If you haven't given your word, stick to that. If you have, keep it.	Not an accurate translation Addition of particular names
7	Avoid a too prolonged good-bye. It just gives folks more time to cry.	Дальние проводы, лишние слезы. Long partings (lead to) superfluous tears.	Accurate
8	For better do not moan; Leave well enough alone. <i>Leave well enough alone.</i>	От добра, добра не ищут. If something is good, do not search for (more) good.	Recast but the same moral
9	From what I've seen, I'd have to say: We all go nuts in our own way.	Всяк по-своему с ума сходит. We all go crazy in our own way.	Framing statement added (line 1)
10	Good reputations stay at home While bad ones through the city roam. <i>Good fame sleeps, bad fame creeps.</i>	Добрая слава лежит, а худая бежит. A good reputation lies down, a bad one races.	Some rephrasing but not a critical difference
11	I want to but I'm scared to, And Mama says don't dare to.	И хочется и колется и мама не велит. I both want to and am of two minds about it, and Mama has forbidden it.	"Don't dare to" adds to rhyme and humor
12	If there's a trough filled with edible stuff, The pigs will find it soon enough.	Было бы корыто, а свинья и найдутся. If there's a trough, there will be pigs.	"Edible stuff" and "soon enough" are additions, but both seem implied
13	If you're going to pay, We'll do things your way. <i>He who pays the piper calls the tune.</i>	Кто платит, тот и распоряжается. The one who is paying gets to be in charge.	Speech act changed from description to address
14	It wasn't me; I wasn't there. That horse you see is not my mare.	Я не я, а лошадь не моя. I am not I and the horse is not mine.	"It wasn't me" while not as funny seems justified. Double rhyme added

15	It's true not just of wheels, you know: Things must be greased before they go! <i>You gotta grease the wheels.</i>	Не подмажешь—не поедешь. If you don't grease (it), (it) won't go.	Particular example (wheel) added
16	Little children bring small woes, Which grow when they do, heaven knows.	Маленькие детки—маленькие бедки (а вырастут велики—будут большие). Little children, little troubles, and when they get big, the troubles get big (too).	Conversational phrase (“heaven knows”) added
17	Lobsters are the only creatures Ill-fate endows with rosy features.	Горе только рака красит. Misfortune turns only crabs red (beautiful).	Crab→lobster
18	May your road be smooth and clear And may it take you far from here. <i>Don't let the door hit you on your way out. What's keeping you?</i>	Скатертью дорога. May your road be (as smooth) as a tablecloth (used sarcastically).	Particulars of the comparison left out—sarcasm made explicit
19	Moscow has no faith in tears; She's seen so many through the years.	Москва слезам не верит. Moscow does not believe in tears.	Conclusion/explanation added. Justified?
20	Most things grow old and turn to dust, But love can age and never rust.	Старая любовь не ржавеет. Old love does not rust.	Parallel but implied statement added
21	Once you've spent the night in bed, You will have a clearer head. <i>Let's/let me/we should sleep on it.</i>	Утра вечера мудренее. Morning is wiser than evening.	Metaphor made explicit
22	See that gentle gray-haired man? Avoid him, ladies, if you can. <i>(He's) an old leech.</i>	Седина в бороду – бес в ребро. (There's) Gray in his beard, but a devil in his gut. (Literally, “rib”.)	Metaphor made explicit; speech act changed from description to address
23	Some folks till the ground, While others hang around.	Люди пахать, а он руками махать. People are plowing while he just waves his hands.	Reinterpretation of “waves his hand” to a more familiar Anglophone idiom for doing nothing.
24	The alphabet he doesn't know; Can't tell his ass from his elbow.	Ни аза в глаза не знает. He cannot even recognize az (first letter of the alphabet) by sight.	Outdated idiom made over into an irresistible bilingual pun
25	The crab can't help but walk sideways. We all must do what nature says.	Криво рак выступает, да иначе не знает. The crab walks crooked, but he knows no other way.	Major generalization of last clause of original
26	There's nothing in this world avails To keep good folk from telling tales.	На всякий (чужой) роток не накинешь платок. You can't put a gag over everyone's (someone else's) mouth.	Loss of rather banal metaphor
27	Those who're not afraid to dare Will always get the lion's share. <i>Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Fortune favors the brave.</i>	Кто смел, тот и съел (два съел). He who dared got a good (a double) share to eat.	Reinterpretation of “good/double share”; “Lion's share” well-known in Russian
28	To flour life will grind This trouble too, you'll find. <i>This too will pass. What will it matter 100 years from now?</i>	(Все) Перемелется, мука будет. It will be ground up and will become flour.	Implied meaning (“this too will pass” = be forgotten) made explicit
29	When I vowed I'd be your dearest friend, I didn't mean my smokes I'd lend.	Дружба дружбой, а табачок врозь. Friendship is one thing, but tobacco (supplies) should be kept separate.	Particularized, use of “smokes” and distorted syntax for rhyme and humor
30	With seven nursemaids, you would think The baby's diaper would not stink. <i>Too many cooks spoil the broth. What is everybody's business is nobody's business.</i>	У семи нянек дитя без глазу. No one does a good job of keeping an eye on a child when it has seven nannies. (Not “the child loses as eye,” as some have thought)	Particularization, idea of “smelly diaper” added for humor; conversational idiom added for meter