



SLD's 2018 Greiss Lecturer, Sibelan Forrester

## Interview with the SLD's 2018 Greiss Lecturer, Sibelan Forrester

Interviewer: Nora Seligman Favorov

SlavFile is pleased to announce that Sibelan Forrester will be our 2018 Susana Greiss speaker. Dr. Forrester is Susan W. Lippincott Professor of Modern and Classical Languages and Russian at Swarthmore College in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, where she teaches Russian language and literature and presides over a translation workshop. Her scholarly specialty is poetry of the Russian Silver Age. She has translated fiction, poetry, and scholarly prose from Croatian, Russian and Serbian and has won several translation prizes. Her translated books include Milica Mićić Dimovska's *The Cataract* (2016), parts of *Russian Silver Age Poetry: Texts and Contexts* (2015, co-edited with Martha M. F. Kelly), the folktales in *Baba Yaga: The Wild Witch of the East in Russian Fairy Tales* (2013), and Vladimir Propp's *The Russian Folktale* (2012). She now serves on the Roth/Scaglione Translation Prize Committees for the Modern Language Association.

Her Greiss lecture, to be delivered Thursday, October 25 at 3:30 at the ATA Annual Conference in New Orleans, is titled: "A Translator's Path to Eastern Europe." She will give an additional talk, scheduled for Friday, October 26 at 11:15, titled: "From a Double Margin: Translations of Croatian and Serbian Women Writers into English."

**You have taught many literature-in-translation courses. When you have a choice, how do you go about choosing a translation? What is it that you're primarily looking for? Do you have your students compare translations and discuss the differences?**

When there's a choice of various translations (say, if you are teaching Tolstoy or Dostoevsky, or Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*), I look both at the cost of the books (thinking of students' budgets) and the quality of the translations. I always reread everything as I'm teaching it, so I don't *have* to adhere to a version I

## In this issue:

Nora Seligman Favorov	
Interview with Greiss Lecturer Sibelan Forrester .....	1
Nora Seligman Favorov	
Appreciation of Alex Lane (1951-2018) .....	4
Ekaterina Howard and Eugenia Tietz-Sokolskaya	
The Administrators' Column .....	6
SlavFile Editors	
Interview with Larry Bogoslaw on His Book	
<i>Russians on Trump</i> .....	7
Vladimir Kovner	
On <i>English-Russian Sports Dictionary</i>	
by Kovner & Stone.....	10
Lydia Razran Stone	
On Laura Wolfson's New Book	
and Two Literary Awards .....	14
Liv Bliss	
On Translating for Kiva.....	16
John Riedl	
On Ethics for Translators .....	18
Lydia Razran Stone	
SlavFile Lite .....	21
Martha Kosir	
The Slovenian Poetry of Alja Adam .....	24

## SLAVIC LANGUAGES DIVISION

### OFFICERS

Administrator: Ekaterina Howard  
[ekaterina@atasld.org](mailto:ekaterina@atasld.org)

Assistant Administrator: Eugenia Tietz-Sokolskaya  
[eugenia@sokolskayatranslations.com](mailto:eugenia@sokolskayatranslations.com)

*SlavFile* is published four times yearly.

Articles of interest to Slavic translators and interpreters are invited.

Designation of Slavic Languages Division membership on ATA membership application or renewal form provides full membership.

Write to ATA, 225 Reinekers Lane  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Submissions become the property of *SlavFile* and are subject to editing.

Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor or of the Division.

### EDITOR

Lydia Razran Stone  
[lydiastone@verizon.net](mailto:lydiastone@verizon.net)

### ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Liv Bliss  
[bliss.mst@gmail.com](mailto:bliss.mst@gmail.com)

Lauren Cammenga  
[lcammenga@gmail.com](mailto:lcammenga@gmail.com)

Nora Seligman Favorov  
[norafavorov@gmail.com](mailto:norafavorov@gmail.com)

Steven McGrath  
[steven@mcgrathtranslation.com](mailto:steven@mcgrathtranslation.com)

Galina Raff  
[galina.raff@gmail.com](mailto:galina.raff@gmail.com)

### COPY EDITORS

Jennifer Guernsey  
[jenguernsey@gmail.com](mailto:jenguernsey@gmail.com)

Christina Sever  
[csever17@yahoo.com](mailto:csever17@yahoo.com)

Galia Williams  
[galia@sarandor.com](mailto:galia@sarandor.com)

Thanks to Jamie Padula of ATA Headquarters for his advice and help.

used in the past—especially since I don't write in my books. (I take any notes on paper, or more recently and more cleverly, on my computer, which makes the notes searchable.)

In some of the classes I teach, though, there's only one translation of the work I want even if the author is a Nobel Prize winner, so that is what we use. I've been teaching long enough now that I've seen some vitally important works in marvelous translations go out of print (for example, Stanisław Lem, who used to be my example of an East European author whose work stayed available in translation, perhaps because he was not marketed as being from Eastern Europe, unlike the Soviet Russian science fiction writers). For a few years after things go out of print you can ask students to order used books from whatever source they prefer, but there's a moment when there are too few copies or when the price hops up too high. (Sometimes I wind up doing my own translations—that's how I got started as a translator, in the early 1990s.)

Several times I have had students complain that they liked the works too much: instead of selling back their own copies, they were buying extra copies to give to family members at the holidays, since they were sure their cousin wouldn't have read Lem's *Cyberiad* (in Michael Kandel's brilliant translation!), for example, and that would further diminish the supply available to students in subsequent years, even though I was glad.

Asking students to compare different versions of a work read in the class is a great idea. It's been a while since taught a literature class with multiple versions to choose from, but the next time I will do that for sure.

In the Translation Workshop I teach we do compare multiple versions.

### **How has the negative light in which Russia is currently being cast in the news affected enrollment and student attitudes toward the study of Russian?**

I've talked about this a lot with colleagues at Swarthmore and other schools, and it's hard to say. Certainly negative press about the USSR didn't seem to stop people studying Russian during the Cold War—it may even have made them more curious. Our literature and culture classes seem to be doing fine, but our language classes are smaller than they used to be. There was a moment when high schools and some universities were gleefully cutting their Russian programs (post-cold-war "We won!"), which meant we had fewer students coming in with a background in Russian, but recently we've had more students who began Russian as high school students by taking classes at the local college or university. I think the small number in language classes is less due to the bad press and more due to the addition of exciting new languages: Arabic and Japanese, in the case of Swarthmore. Russian is now in the position of being "too hard" for some students and "too easy" for others.

**Please tell us a bit about your research and teaching in South Slavic literatures. What are you currently working on and what about it attracts you?**

At the moment my big projects are from Russian, but I am working on some wonderful poems by Marija Knežević. (Born 1963, lives in Belgrade—and has an MA in Comp Lit from Michigan State University: with e-mail and Skype and easier international travel, the authors we translate are more cosmopolitan than they used to be.) She writes prose as well as poetry, and I think two of her novels have been translated into English, but so far not too much of her poetry. I like its phonetic density and intellectual challenge. Also, I like KNOWING the person I am translating, when that is possible: Marija's English is great, and I can ask her about anything I don't immediately understand.

**What was the hardest translation you have ever done and what about it was most difficult?**

The hardest thing was a piece of avant-garde poetic prose by a Serbian author (Mirosljub Todorović). The vocabulary wasn't all that tricky, but the excerpt was a single long run-on sentence, and I kept losing my place as I made my first "bulldozing" version. No challenge of meaning or form has ever been so frustrating.

**You have translated quite a bit of poetry. Perhaps you would allow us to include a poetry translation you're proud of here, in parallel text. Feel free to comment on a challenge or two.**

Here's a brief one by Maria Stepanova:

Озноб, обнимающий талью.  
Подставь ему профиль дочерний,  
Как дерево, не улетаю.  
Ли—площадь под бременем черни.  
И царь ты, и тварь ты, и дверь ты.  
Пустуй, как парадная зала,  
Тоскуя, как львица из вельда  
Зевает у львиного зева.  
Мурлыча на прозвище кисты  
В ознобе, который, и ладно,  
Тебя понимает – от кисти  
Хвоста. Поэтапно. Полапно.

(from *Тум-свет*, SPb: Pushkinskii fond, 2001.)

A chill that embraces your waist.  
Boost your daughterly profile up,  
Like a tree, without flying away.  
Wheth—a square weighted down by the mob.  
You're a tsar, and a cur, and a door.  
Stand empty, like a fancy hall,  
As you're longing, the way a veldt lioness  
Yawns by the lionlike maw.  
Purring to the kitty's nickname  
In a chill, which, and well enough,  
Comprehends you – from the tuft  
Of your tail. Step by step. Paw by paw.

I was happy to have approximated SOME of the rhyme (in the even-numbered lines; rather less in the odd-numbered ones), and I like the sounds in my version—I even shifted the meaning slightly in a couple of spots for the sake of the music, which can't be neglected in a poetic translation. Stepanova is tricky because she'll truncate a word or sometimes change its form or gender. You want to do something similar (here I put "wheth-," figuring it was clear which word was meant—not always the case in English), but it can easily look like a mistake or a typo, especially if there aren't a lot of those spots in a particular text. I always tell my students to provide a little introduction to their translations, of course with some biographical information about the author, which readers tend to like, but also laying out any issues like that one. Then you hope the reader will realize you're doing what you're doing on purpose.

**You mentioned that you're studying Estonian this summer. What prompted that ambitious undertaking?**

I have been teaching a novel by the Estonian author Jaan Kross (1920-2007) in one class for twenty years or so. Then last spring a student asked me a question I couldn't answer about the archival background of the novel (*Professor Martens' Departure*). I googled a bit but couldn't find much helpful information in English or Russian. Then last fall I happened to meet, in Tomsk, a wonderful Russian professor from Tartu University, who pointed me to some resources in Russian that the University had recently published. But the question struck a spark for me, and when I saw that Indiana University was teaching intensive beginning Estonian this summer I thought it was a sign.

It was 1985 when I last started a new language (a year of Czech, which long ago evaporated in contact with more active Croatian), and I had only taken an intensive course before in Russian, at a point when I already knew it pretty well. Now it feels as if the new words are hurting my brain as they go in! But I do like playing with them once they're inside, like bright pebbles on a beach. I just

have to persist once the summer is over. Our teacher recently finished her PhD at the University of Washington and is giving us some poetry to read,



showing us some films—there’s a lot more there than just Jaan Kross, wonderful though he is.

**SlavFile readers can learn a lot about you from an interview that appears on the Swarthmore website. In that interview, you describe translation as “the best and most devoted kind of reading.” Can you elaborate on what you mean by that?**

Hmm, that interview is twenty years old!—I should do a new one. But I do still agree with that description of translation.

The ethics of translation demand conveying as much as possible of what the author is doing—in sound, in rhythm, in meaning, in the impact the

writing had and has on a reader in its own language. All that is impossible if we ourselves can’t tell what the author is doing. As a non-native speaker of the languages I translate, I know that I sometimes slide by words as I read, not even noticing that I don’t know the word or haven’t seen it in this construction before. In a translation, there’s no sliding by: you have to look it up, ask native speakers, and then check with readers you trust to make sure you are getting the results you hope for in your destination language. Even if a text is straightforward, not playing games with sound or invoking literary references, it’s a serious undertaking to make sure the meaning is conveyed as precisely as possible. Ethics, I say.

---

## In a Class of His Own: Alex Lane (1951-2018)

*Nora Seligman Favorov*

Alex Lane had an amazing brain. People talk about being left-hemisphere or right-hemisphere dominant, but Alex had amazing left-side (science, math, logic, and, obviously, language) and right-side abilities (artistic creativity). A trained engineer and proficient software developer, he was a real super geek who worked primarily with the space program and the petroleum industry, both as a translator and interpreter. But he also displayed amazing talent when it came to translating poetry (see, for example, his translation of Okudzhava’s “Ваше благородие, госпожа разлука,” published in the [Winter 2003 issue of SlavFile](#) and his translation of Pushkin, see page 5).

Alex gave generously of his talents, both to his clients, who treasured him as an exceptionally competent professional, and to the Slavic Languages Division in particular and ATA in general. He served as the division’s assistant administrator and administrator in the early aughts and made at least ten highly entertaining and educational presentations at ATA Annual Conferences on subjects ranging from the ever-changing protocols governing Google searches to “Developing and Using Rocket and Space Terminology.”

A native of New York City, after graduating from Stony Brook University with a BE in engineering science and a BA in Russian language and literature, he made his way to Russia, where, in addition to honing his Russian language skills, he met his wife of 41 years, Galina. (I’m sure he had many good reasons for choosing his bride, but finding one whose name could combine with his for such a perfect company



name for an aerospace translator/interpreter—Gallexi Wordcraft—was certainly a plus!)

To his remarkable brain and impressive work ethic, add an impressive CV’s worth of experience. Alex’s career took him on frequent trips to the Johnson Space Center in Houston, from where, among other things, he interpreted for the astronauts on the International Space Station, and to the former Soviet Union, including Baikonur in Kazakhstan, from which Russia still launches its rockets.

And what a gift for gab! Alex, who had a sonorous and always audible voice, was a fabulous storyteller, and when a tamada was needed at our SLD banquets, he was always the obvious choice.

When not traveling, he loved being home with family in Pagosa Springs, Colorado, savoring a view of the Continental Divide out his kitchen window. Jim Walker, another former SLD administrator, recalled recently how Alex and his wife invited him and his wife to their home the year the conference was in Denver. “Alex took us for a beautiful hike in the San Juan National Forest. He was a good friend.”

Ever the workhorse, Alex plugged away at translation until the week before he died of cancer. Manager

of Operations for Language Exchange Translations Irina Krasnokutsky, whose company worked with Alex for 27 years, shared the following.

*There are four categories of translators in my opinion:*

- 1. Rare to find amazing language experts (Paul [Gallagher], Alex Lane, Larry Cannon)*
- 2. Translators*
- 3. People who think they are translators (stay away from them)*

*Alex was the cream of the crop, standing out in a class of his own. Because he gave a damn. He*

*cared about what he did and who he did it for. Never once upset or mad (and clients can be difficult). Just doing his job. Extremely reliable. He was seriously ill, in agony, yet finished a very complex assignment one week prior to the day he passed away, because he knew how important it was to meet the deadline.*

*Paul once asked me how I would characterize Alex if I had to. The two words would be Semper Fi—the motto of the US Marines (and he was a former marine). This is what he was—always loyal. To his family, to his clients.*



Seated next to Greiss speaker Michael Heim at the SLD banquet in Atlanta (2002)



At the head of the table as SLD toastmaster at the banquet in Phoenix (2003)

### Стихи, сочиненные ночью во время бессонницы

Мне не спится, нет огня;  
Всюду мрак и сон докучный.  
Ход часов лишь однозвучный  
Раздается близ меня.  
Парки бабье лепетанье,  
Спящей ночи трепетанье,  
Жизни мышья беготня...  
Что тревожишь ты меня?  
Что ты значишь, скучный шепот?  
Укоризна или ропот  
Мной утраченного дня?  
От меня чего ты хочешь?  
Ты зовешь или пророчишь?  
Я понять тебя хочу,  
Смысла я в тебе ищу...

Alexander Pushkin, 1830

### Verses Composed at Night during Insomnia

I can't sleep, the fire's dead;  
Vexsome dreams and gloom prevailing.  
Steadfast ticking, e'er unfailing,  
From the clock, pervades my head.  
Trifling thoughts The Fates dissemble,  
Sleeping night is all a-tremble,  
Frantic pace of humdrum's tread...  
Why do you disturb my bed?  
Tedious whisper, what's your point?  
Grumbling, are you out of joint,  
Jealous of my day that's fled?  
What is it you want of me?  
Do you call, or prophesy?  
You I want to comprehend,  
With your purpose to contend...

Translation by Alex Lane  
October 2002



## THE ADMINISTRATORS' COLUMN

*Ekaterina Howard (ekaterina@atasld.org)*  
*Eugenia Tietz-Sokolskaya (eugenia@sokolskayatranslations.com)*



### ATA CONFERENCE: BEFORE WE MEET IN NEW ORLEANS

Dear SLD members,

As we did last year, in 2018 we will be posting a pre-conference primer for easy reference on all things SLD in one place. You will be notified when and where it is available.

Veronika Demichelis has put an unbelievable amount of work into preparing a series of mini-conference episodes for the SLD Podcast so that you can get a sneak peek at conference sessions presented in the Slavic languages track, as well as ones outside of it that we thought might be of interest.

#### SLD Call for Nominating Committee Members

This year we need to form a Nominating Committee to nominate a new SLD Administrator and Assistant Administrator for the 2019-2021 term.

As a reminder: full information on the election process is publicly available in the ATA Division Handbook:

[www.atanet.org/divisions/divisions\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.atanet.org/divisions/divisions_handbook.pdf).

Short version: any SLD member who is not currently a member of the Leadership Council and a voting member of ATA can be on the Nominating Committee. We need at least two members for the committee, so please consider volunteering and get in touch with Ekaterina Howard at [ekaterina@atasld.org](mailto:ekaterina@atasld.org).

If you would like to run for one of the administrator positions, but are not (yet) on the Leadership Council, please consider joining to have a better idea of the scope of work and time commitment that would be required.

#### SLD Events

Our SLD Annual Division Meeting is taking place on Thursday, October 25, from 4:45 pm to 5:45 pm.

Our SLD Dinner is happening on the same day (see announcement on page 13). This year our venue is practically across the street from the hotel, just 1 minute away according to Google Maps.

Hope to see you there!

### WAYS TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH FELLOW DIVISION MEMBERS

Whether or not you are coming to ATA59, this year's ATA Annual Conference, there are many ways to stay in touch. If you are not a member of the SLD LinkedIn, Facebook or Google Forum groups, you can join them any time, as well as start following SLD on Twitter and subscribing to the SLD Podcast on iTunes and Google Play

#### SLD FACEBOOK GROUP

A closed group for SLD members on Facebook is a recent addition to SLD's social media accounts. To join the group, go to the ATA Slavic Languages Division Group on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/groups/225902787923738/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/225902787923738/)) and click **Join Group** in the top-right corner. A request will be sent to the group administrator and, once approved, you will have access to the Group's activity.

#### SLD LINKEDIN GROUP

The Slavic Languages Division has its own LinkedIn Group, and all SLD members are welcome to join. LinkedIn is mainly intended for professional networking, but it is also a great forum for discussions and keeping updated on the activities of other SLD members.

Please go to [http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4279025&trk=myg\\_ugrp\\_ovr](http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4279025&trk=myg_ugrp_ovr) and request to join if you're interested. We look forward to seeing you there.

#### SLD BLOG

The blog of the SLD Leadership Council covers a wide range of topics of interest for translators working with Slavic languages: <http://atasld.org/blog>.

#### FOLLOW SLD ON TWITTER

SLD on Twitter brings together professional translators and interpreters working between English and Slavic languages. Learn more: <http://bit.ly/SLDTweets>

#### FOLLOW THE SLD PODCAST ON ITUNES OR GOOGLE PLAY

Just search "ATA SLD" and be sure to subscribe. Note that it takes 12-24 hours for the newest episode to appear. The latest episodes are always available on the ATA SLD SoundCloud channel: <https://soundcloud.com/atasld/>.



# INTERVIEW WITH SLD'S LARRY BOGOSLAW

SlavFile Editors

On the publication of *Russians on Trump: Press Coverage and Commentary*.

Edited by Laurence Bogoslaw. East View Press, 2018.

[www.eastviewpress.com/Books/RussiansonTrump.aspx](http://www.eastviewpress.com/Books/RussiansonTrump.aspx)

**SF: This is a very unusual book. Can you describe it for our readers and tell us who the intended audience is?**

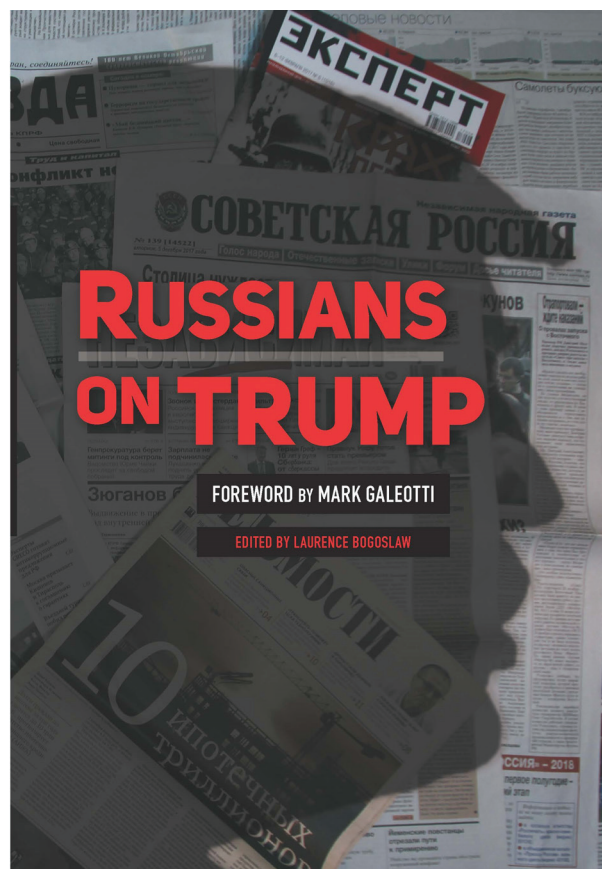
LB: You're right that this is an unusual book in that it tackles a topic that is well known to general readers—namely, Donald Trump and his rise to power—but presents that topic from a fresh perspective: how Russians see Trump. It contains 100+ news articles, opinion pieces, analyses, interviews and more from the Russian press, most of which have never appeared in English before—at least, not in book form.

The intended audience is a bit unusual as well. On the one hand, the subject matter is familiar to Anglophone readers, particularly those regularly exposed to the American press, and the content is presented in an accessible way. At the same time, some articles present detailed data that are annotated in accordance with the standards of academic rigor required for research and teaching purposes—including adoption as a textbook for university classes in Russian history, international politics, etc.

**SF: You state that the material in the book was generated in the course of daily work for East View Press and that the translations are a kind of small group effort with roles of lead translator and editor traded off. Can you tell us how that works, and what you find are the advantages and disadvantages of doing things that way?**

LB: You're right: a major part of my day job is to translate and edit articles from Russia that are then assembled in a weekly publication called *The Current Digest of the Russian Press* (East View Press). For each issue, our core group of three staff—Xenia Grushetsky, Matt Larson and myself—divide the responsibilities of translation, editing and proofreading. We also have two freelancers who work as contractors; for the articles they translate, the other staff and I do editing and proofreading.

As for the work process, it is a great benefit to have sufficient time to translate interesting material carefully and, in the process, to consult with colleagues on opaque phrases, arcane cultural/literary references, proverbs, and other puzzles that are peculiar to our profession. I learn something new literally every day, and the quality of what our team produces—which



often includes creative renderings, footnotes and contextual annotations—is something I'm very proud of. I already had felt fortunate to have a collegial translation-plus-quality-control process as an ATA grader (Russian to English since 2006), but to get a full-time job where I could go through a similar process in 2010 was doubly lucky.

**SF: Are all the articles the book includes from the Trump era? If not, how did you select what to include?**

LB: The book's main time frame is 2015–2017, which goes from Trump's presidential campaign through the first 200 days of his presidency. However, I also wanted to include some background that shows what Trump's relations and contacts with Russia looked like before then. So the collection goes back as far as 1997, with a prologue called "Business, Buildings and Beauty," the latter referring to the 2013 Miss Universe contest that Trump arranged to hold in Moscow. The prologue also has an article on a previous political foray: Trump's brief candidacy in the 2000 presidential primaries, going up against Pat Buchanan.

**SF: The articles fall into different sections, some of them based on time and some thematic. Did these seem obvious to you or did you have to work to divide the material into sections of relatively equal size?**

LB: The main sections are chronological and the division was fairly obvious from the start: the prologue (pre-2015), the campaign (June 2015 to November 2016), and the first months of the presidency (January to August 2017). The two main conceptual difficulties were (1) where to stop, and (2) how to weave in the theme of “Russia ties.”

The East View staff and I took it for granted that the latter would be the book’s biggest selling point, but the trouble was that the events most intensely covered in the US press—involving Paul Manafort, Donald Trump Jr., Michael Flynn, etc.—were spread over many months, spanning much of the campaign and continuing until well after Election Day. So, if we had laid out the articles strictly chronologically, the juiciest stuff would have gotten buried. In addition, some of the details of those events didn’t come to light until almost a year later—for example, the June 2016 meeting in the Trump Tower with attorney Natalya Veselnitskaya. So, I gathered the most incisive articles on Russia ties, including hacking activity, and inserted them into a section between the election and the inauguration. The final section covers aspects of Trump’s foreign policy once he assumed the presidency. It consists of four geographic/thematic subsections: Europe, the Middle East, nuclear policy (including Iran and North Korea), and finally Russia.

This brings me back to the first conceptual difficulty I mentioned above. My colleagues and I went back and forth for weeks deciding where the book should stop, and eventually agreed on the endpoint as Trump’s signing of the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act in August 2017. We observed that the overall tone Russian political analysts took toward Trump became markedly more critical and disillusioned at that point. Before then, most commentators were willing to give him the benefit of the doubt, portraying him as an earnest sort of “everyman,” who wanted to change the cold-war system of international relations but had to fight the Washington establishment at every turn. But once he signed the sanctions act, even the more pro-American experts agreed that Trump was part of that system and that his presidency would not be “good for Russia” after all.

**SF: Now for the questions that are most likely to fascinate our readers. Those of us who follow the English translations of some Russian reactions to Trump and**

**his era have found that in many cases the exact word choices used in different translations of the same Russian statement or word seem to carry very different tones, for example, “babble” vs. “claptrap” for трепотня. Was this issue omnipresent in your translations? What guidelines did you use to ensure that you conveyed tone as accurately as possible? Did you have a policy of always translating a term in the same way in different articles (within reason of course)? What kinds of arguments did you have within your translation group over issues such as these?**

LB: The most notoriously misunderstood word in the whole Trump campaign was probably Putin’s back-handed compliment, яркий. As you know, this term was almost universally translated in the American press as “brilliant,” leading Trump to take it a giant step further by claiming, “Putin says I’m a genius.” We could call this a game of “translational telephone”! My colleagues and I knew that “brilliant” was misleading because it conveys in English an obligatory connotation of exceptional intelligence that яркий definitely does not. Some of our colleagues in the Slavic Languages Division had a fascinating email exchange about this topic at pretty much the same time the statement and its translation became public, where we explored the connotations of the Russian term and its various possible English equivalents. I passed on the SLD’s ideas to Xenia and Matt; we narrowed down our favorite translations as “colorful” and “striking.” But because we found the question so interesting and did not settle on a single solution, we added an annotation when the term appeared in the *Current Digest*. I expanded on that explanation in my editor’s introduction to the Trump campaign section of the book.

Another buzzword that comes to mind is скандальный, which we already knew from past experience does not always equate to “scandalous,” although in Trump’s case it often did. The Russian term is more objective: it refers to a statement, action, or (occasionally) person that prompts strong public reaction, gossip, outcry, etc. The English cognate, however, almost always carries a negative value judgment. One case where the cognate did not fit was a 2005 article where a columnist described Trump as один из самых скандальных миллиардеров Америки. Since there was no particular moral or ethical scandal brewing back then, we decided to use the word “controversial.”

There were other vivid expressions that I had never seen before, and which my colleagues and I



brainstormed about and then came up with ad-hoc equivalents for. One of these was a phrase that a well-known political analyst, Vladimir Frolov, used to describe the contents of the infamous Christopher Steele dossier: развесистая клюква. (literally “widely branching cranberries”). In cases like this, it is so valuable to have native Russian speakers to consult with. We had fun tossing around various options, and eventually settled on “poppycock.”

One other word I can think of that was quite rare before 2016, but that has become all too common since then, is троллинг.

**SF: Can you give us some examples of intriguing or thorny translation issues you encountered? Are there one or more particular articles you would like to quote and discuss from the standpoint of translation?**

LB: One problem peculiar to foreign reportage is verifying Russian journalists’ translations of comments that were originally made in English. In most cases, as I point out in the preface to the book, the Russian sources do quite a good job. But occasionally there’s a discrepancy in meaning that is worth noting. For example, after Paul Manafort got fired as Trump’s campaign manager, Aleksandr Panov quoted Clinton campaign chief Robby Mook as saying, Вы можете избавиться от Манафорта, но этим не заканчивается одиозный “броманс” Трампа и Путина.

When we checked Mook’s original quote, we found one small difference, which we decided to annotate: “You can get rid of Manafort, but that doesn’t end the odious [*sic*: odd] bromance Trump has with Putin.”

Other than that, every page of translation I’ve ever undertaken has its own challenges. That’s something I often tell my students. One article that was particularly challenging to work on—in a positive way—was an exuberant piece published in the right-wing newspaper *Zavtra* just after the 2016 election. The tone is so idiosyncratic here that I sometimes had to venture rather far off the track of standard journalistic formulations. One example is the sentence Случилось невероятное: самозванец, упрямец... Трамп одолел. The word самозванец, of course, has heavily loaded, even treacherous connotations when you look back at Russian history, and yet in this context it’s being used in a complimentary sense. A similar conundrum of combined negative/positive spin goes with упрямец, based on an adjectival root meaning “stubborn.” In both cases, one has to convey disruptiveness, iconoclasm and other rather upsetting qualities in a tone that shows admiration. What I came up with, and

my East View colleagues approved, was, “The improbable has happened: Trump, the upstart, the maverick... has prevailed.”

**SF: Do you foresee a series of books like this, or is the need for it a result of a particular confluence of circumstances in the current period?**

LB: East View has actually produced a number of collections of *Current Digest* articles off and on since the 1990s. The early ones, about the size of thick magazines, were called “Digest Readers.” *Russians on Trump* is what I consider the press’s third full-length book that focuses on a topic that’s drawn a lot of Russian coverage in a relatively short time. The first of the previous ones was *Countdown to War in Georgia*, about the five-day conflict in August 2008. The next one, *War in Syria*, came out just last year. We hope that the Trump book will draw a wider readership than any of the other collections. And I will continue to keep an eye out for other compelling themes in the Russian press that lend themselves to book-length treatment. By the way, I have just been promoted to director of East View Press, so future publication decisions will be up to me, in consultation with the company management.

**SF: Is there anything else you would like to discuss for our readers?**

LB: I do want to mention what can properly be called the therapeutic value of having worked on this book. Reading how Russians view the controversial figure of Trump and the American political process in general was good for my psyche in helping me see beyond the day-to-day hype in the US press, including highly polarized opinion pieces on both sides. And I’m hoping it does the same for those who read *Russians on Trump*. If you’ll indulge me, I’ll quote a snippet from a positive review that appeared in Kirkus just last week: “The well-structured book goes far toward addressing the often myopic view of U.S. readers by challenging the American public to see Trump from an international perspective.”

I also want to point out that the Russian perspective actually encompasses a variety of viewpoints that manage to coexist under Putin, from official policy mouthpieces to the pro-Western left wing to the nationalist right. So, I hope that this range of opinions will also make an impression on American readers, helping them see that not all of Russia is enamored of Trump—or of Putin—and that the post-Soviet Russian press is still a venue for lively, informative discourse.

Larry Bogoslaw is an active member of SLD who has given a number of well attended presentations. In addition, he is the official Grader Trainer for ATA’s Certification Program. He can be reached at [larry@translab.us](mailto:larry@translab.us).

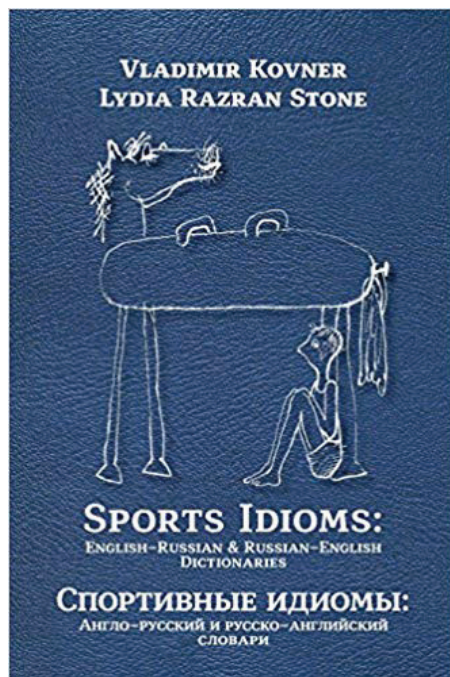
# Our Newly Published English>Russian Sports Idiom Dictionary (With a Russian>English Appendix)

Vladimir Kovner

*From Lydia: In 2005 attendees at the annual SLD meeting were asked what they would particularly like to hear a presentation on at the following ATA Annual Conference. An interpreter and native speaker of Russian asked for a presentation on translating English sports idioms, which, she complained, frequently flummoxed her when she had to interpret for Americans, especially businessmen. Although I am far from an expert on sports, I had recently begun to collaborate with Vladimir Kovner, who I knew to have been an amateur athlete, and I volunteered the two of us for the presentation. We both enjoyed collecting, discussing, defining and translating sports idioms and continued even after our presentation was a thing of the past. Eventually we had more than 1000, the makings of a dictionary. However, I soon tired of the punctilious work of editing, proofing, formatting and indexing what we had into a publishable work and threw in the towel. Vladimir continued and it is solely due to his determination that the work is finally available on Amazon.*

From Vladimir: In June 2018, *Sports Idioms: English-Russian & Russian-English Dictionaries*, the fruit of more than 10 years of work, was made available on Amazon.

English, especially the English spoken in the United States, is full of colloquial words and phrases whose original source is various sports and games. Such usages are particularly frequent in casual conversation, journalism, politics, and business. For example, a recent survey of 5000+ idiomatic and metaphoric terms and phrases used on the pages of the US newspaper *The Washington Post* by reporters and columnists in their discussion of the 2016 US Presidential campaign contained more than 500 different idioms and extended metaphors originating in sports and games. No other realm of life gave rise to more than 200 entries in this data set. We have found that these idioms are difficult to understand for many non-native speakers, including translators and



interpreters. In particular, they have few analogues in Russian. Our dictionary provides explanations and examples of the generalized meaning of these idioms in English and Russian.

Usually dictionaries of idiomatic usages are limited to one category, such as slang, idioms, clichés, catchwords, quotations, and allusions. We have considered it most useful to include all of these, as long as their source is sports and games.

In the body of the text, idioms are grouped together according to the sport or game in which they originated. The “sports” covered are as inclusive as possible, including traditional sports, indoor games, gambling, and even children’s games. The organization of the entries by theme makes it easy for even a casual reader to become intrigued with the origin and nature of sports idioms. On the other hand, **the extensive and user-friendly key word and phrase (idiom) indexes at the end of the book offer the working translator and interpreter a fast reference resource.** We have numbered idioms continuously from the beginning to end of the dictionary to make it easy to use the index to find a particular word or phrase.

Each of 1,010 entries in the body of the dictionary is followed by an English definition (1), with additional information about source and/or usage where indicated (2). In rare cases, the literal meaning of a term in the context of the specific sport is provided. This is followed by a Russian equivalent or a related Russian idiom from sports or other realms, if one exists, or a definition that is not merely a translation of the English (3) but includes whatever additional information the Russian author felt was necessary to make the meaning, connotations, and conversational tone clear to a non-native speaker (4). A highly colloquial English example of one or two sentences (5) follows. The Russian examples are close idiomatic translations of the English examples (6) with the Russian rendition of the particular idiom shown in bold letters (7).

**31. Four-letter man:** (1) a stupid athlete. (2) (Originally meaning a college athlete so good that he has been awarded varsity “letters” in four sports; students generally receive only one actual letter, usually the first letter of the name of the school. At Ivy League colleges like Harvard and Yale, it was common for athletes to wear varsity sweaters or woolen jackets with a big letter made of chenille and sewn on them with insignia embroidered or special pins attached to show which sports athletes participated in. To have four insignia on a varsity sweater would be unusual and distinctive. But for those who don’t like athletes, the term has come to refer either to profane four-letter words or to the four letters d-u-m-b, reinforcing the prejudice that college athletes are less scholarly than less athletic fellow students.)

(3) **Спортсмен — олух (“олух царя небесного”); балбес; болван; невежда; простофиля; тупица.** (4) (В оригинале — игра слов, слово "letter" имеет два значения. 1. Буква алфавита. 2. Физическая буква, сделанная из плотной ткани (обычно это первая буква названия колледжа), которую пришивают к специальной куртке или свитеру, и данная атлету за достижения в каком-то виде спорта. На этой букве вышивают эмблему, или прикрепляют к ней значок с эмблемой того вида спорта, в котором преуспел атлет. Т. е. здесь речь идёт об атлете очень сильном, получившем такие “буквы” за достижения в четырёх видах спорта. Однако среди тех, кто не любит спортсменов, существует распространённое представление о большинстве из них как безграмотных тупицах. В английском языке их описывают или непристойными словами из четырёх букв или словом из четырёх букв “dumb” — олух. Известна российская шутка: “У мамы было три сына — два умных, а третий — футболист”.) (5) *Yes, my athletic son may grow up to be a four-letter man. I just hope he will learn the rest of the alphabet.* (6) *Боюсь, что из моего сына-атлета может вырасти* (7) **отличный спортсмен, но безграмотный о-л-у-х.** *Хочется надеяться, что кроме этих четырёх он выучит и остальные буквы алфавита.*

Some of our entries have two different meanings. Although they are assigned the same entry number, each meaning is additionally designated by 1) and 2).

**34. Game face:** 1) a facial expression indicative of someone who is wholeheartedly concentrating on the matter at hand, like a game, or being in a state of readiness, especially for conflict or competition. **Выражение лица, показывающее концентрацию и готовность к борьбе.** 2) slang for the menacing expression worn by certain tough young men living in inner cities. **Устрашающее выражение лица.** *Everyone at the auction had their game faces on ready to bid on the antiques. У всех участников аукциона было написано на лице — они готовы биться за этот антиквариат.*



If an idiom has more than one usage context these are designated a) and b):

32. a) **Fun and games:** nothing but amusing, non-productive, worthless activities. **Одни только забавы; пустая трата времени; сплошные развлечения/забавы.**

*All right, Bill, the fun and games are over. It's time to get down to work. Ну ладно, Билл, довольно развлекаться/с развлечениями покончено. Пора приступить к работе.*

b) **Fun and games, not all:** usually a sarcastic statement that life or some particular part of it may include hard work and even suffering, in addition to pleasant and/or amusing aspects. **Жизнь — это не только развлечения и потеха, в ней может быть и тяжёлая работа и даже страдания.**

*I'm glad you're enjoying yourself in college, son — as long as you realize that education is not all fun and games. Я рад, сынок, что тебе нравится в колледже, если, конечно, ты понимаешь, что учёба — это не одни только развлечения.*

### Sports Idioms: Russian - English Dictionary

Following the English-Russian part, there is a brief 112-entry Russian-English part containing all the sports idioms we were able to identify in Russian. The entries in the Russian-English dictionary are structured like the entries in the English-Russian dictionary. Three examples may be found below.

1. **Вне игры** (из европейского футбола, волейбола, тенниса...): вне/за пределами разрешённого правилами, законами и т.п. пространства для игры / каких-либо действий / какого-либо поля деятельности. **Out of bounds; out of play; out; offside position.**

*(Из Интернета) В России издали закон, по которому передача и раскрытие внутренней информации о каких-либо фирмах для получения выгоды на акционерной бирже оказались вне игры. A law has just been passed in Russia declaring disclosure of any internal information about any company in order to make a profit on the stock market to be out of bounds.*

78. **Отфутболить:** 1) отвязаться. **Get rid of.**

*(Из Интернета) Как отфутболить парня, если он в тебя безумно влюблён? How can you get rid of a guy if he is madly in love with you?*

2) Перенаправить человека, задание, документ и т. п. кому-либо или куда-либо в другую инстанцию, напр. отфутболить жалобу в другую инстанцию. **Unload onto (with negative connotations); redirect or reassign (neutral).**

*Он ненавидел спешку и всегда старался отфутболить срочную работу кому-нибудь другому в отделе. He hated rushing and always tried to unload tasks that had to be done in a hurry onto somebody else in his department.*

23. a) **Второе дыхание:** новый всплеск/прилив энергии у кого-либо после периода усталости. **Second wind.**

b) **Поймать/обрести второе дыхание** (о человеке, о бизнесе и т. п.): обрести новые силы / новые надежды / новую энергию. **Get a second wind.**

*Я думала, что иметь ещё одного ребёнка после всех этих лет будет безумно трудно, но, похоже, у меня открылось второе дыхание. I thought that having one more child after all these years would be incredibly difficult, but it looks like I got my second wind.*

At the end of the book, following the indexes for English idioms, the reader will find an index of Russian idioms; however, that list is too short to require an index of key words.

Our search for additional Russian sports idioms was intense and as exhaustive as we could make it. The 112 listed here were all we could find. An analysis of why English has so many more idioms in common use that derive from sports is intriguing and, we believe, reflects differences in societies. However, our conjecture about this matter has no impact on the nature or use of this dictionary.

We hope readers will write to us with comments and additional idioms, especially in Russian, and

perhaps even with proposals for using the English material as a basis for creating a dictionary between English and languages other than Russian.

Our book can be found on Amazon sites by searching for “Sports Idioms”, or “Vladimir Kovner” or “Lydia Razran Stone” or any combination of these terms.

Vladimir Kovner ([19volodyak05@comcast.net](mailto:19volodyak05@comcast.net)) is an engineer, journalist, translator and editor, specializing in poetry, songs, ballet and idioms. His major publications: a book of poetic translations from English «Приласкайте льва» (*Pet the Lion*), a bilingual English-Russian *Edward Lear. The Complete Limericks with Drawings*, and, in collaboration with Lydia Stone, *Okudzhava Bilingual*.

## SLAVIC LANGUAGES DIVISION DINNER

**WHEN: Thursday, October 25, 7:00-10:00pm**

**WHERE: Creole House Restaurant**

509 Canal St

New Orleans, LA 70130 (1 minute from conference hotel)

504-323-2109

<https://creolehouserestaurant.com/>

**WHAT: CREOLE HOUSE MENU**

**~Creole House Salad~** Mixed salad greens topped with mixed cheese and cherry tomatoes, served with balsamic vinaigrette.

**Choice of Entrees:**

**~Creole Stuffed Fish~** Southern Gulf fish filet stuffed with crawfish dressing, baked and topped with a crawfish cream sauce. Served with sautéed vegetables and garlic mashed potatoes.

**~Shrimp & Grits~** Gulf shrimp tossed lightly in white wine and butter with cherry tomatoes, shallots, fresh herbs and garlic, served over our creamy Gouda cheese grits.

**~Red Beans & Rice~** Creamy, slow-simmered red beans served with white rice, andouille sausage, and alligator sausage.

**~Cajun Alfredo~** Fettuccine pasta tossed in a creamy Alfredo sauce, topped with your choice of blackened chicken or shrimp.

**~Blackened Chicken Jambalaya~** Cajun jambalaya topped with spicy blackened chicken.

**~Southern Fried Fish Platter~** Gulf fish fillets fried to golden brown, served with fries, hushpuppies, tartar and cocktail sauce.

**~Pasta Primavera (Vegetarian)~**

**Dessert:~New Orleans Style Bread Pudding~** Served warm with caramel sauce.

**NOTE: Event will be cancelled if enough people have not reserved by October 20.  
Please make reservations before then.**

**HOW: COST / RESERVATIONS: \$40.00 per person** (incl. sales tax & gratuities).

Seats can be reserved and tickets purchased 1) via PayPal (preferred) or 2) by check received not later than Friday, 10/19/2018.

1. For PayPal choose hit the “Send Money” tab. Choose the “Friends and Family” option. Send to [eugenia@sokolskayatranslations.com](mailto:eugenia@sokolskayatranslations.com).

2. Send checks, payable to Eugenia Tietz-Sokolskaya, to the address 565 Juniata Ave, Swarthmore, PA 19081

**For questions or to coordinate special dietary requirements**

Contact Eugenia Tietz-Sokolskaya: [eugenia@sokolskayatranslations.com](mailto:eugenia@sokolskayatranslations.com); cell: 610-955-7940

# Former *SlavFile* Editor's Recent Literary Laurels

Lydia Razran Stone

Long-term members of SLD will remember Laura Esther Wolfson as *SlavFile*'s first Associate Editor and the author of a delightful series in *The ATA Chronicle* under the rubric *Miss Interpreter Speaks*. For a taste of Laura's style and subject matter, see [this collection](#) of her writings for *The ATA Chronicle*, *SlavFile*, and *Hemispheres Magazine* [on the website of her alma mater, Cornell](#).

Laura retired in 2017 from a career at the UN that included work as an interpreter of Russian and French to English and translator of Russian, French and Spanish to English in order to pursue writing (as distinct from translation). She is my own all-time favorite essayist, her works combining humor, elegance and insight. (Full disclosure: Laura is a close friend.) I am not, however, alone in my opinion of her writing. Laura's essay "Losing the Nobel," which addresses matters of translation, interpretation and Russian literature, was one of the winners of the prestigious Notting Hill Editions Essay Prize for 2017.

"Losing the Nobel" has been published along with the other Notting Hill Editions prizewinning works.

In 2017, Laura also won the Iowa Prize for Literary Nonfiction for her long-form, first-person essay collection, *For Single Mothers Working as Train Conductors*. This work is available from the University of Iowa Press ([www.uiopress.uiowa.edu](http://www.uiopress.uiowa.edu)) and elsewhere.

Here's what some of the reviewers have to say:

From *Kirkus Reviews*: "A translator's command of language belatedly finds her translating her own life. Wolfson describes herself as working 'in a difficult-to-name genre containing generous helpings of the lived, the observed and the overheard.' ... Her writing attests to a remarkable life, one rendered with a remarkable verbal facility..... Where essayists often strain to find topics to muse about, this evocatively detailed and richly experienced writing reflects a life with no dearth of material. But as she tells an aspiring writer, 'what's important about a book is not so much what happens in it, but how the writer tells it.' Wolfson unquestionably tells it well. An impressive literary debut."

From author Meghan Daum, the judge who awarded Laura the Iowa Prize for Literary Nonfiction: "*For Single Mothers Working as Train Conductors* is as poignant, sophisticated, and as soulful as it is brainy. I admire it immensely."

Below are some excerpts from *For Single Mothers Working as Train Conductors* that take up matters of particular interest to Slavic linguists. The titles given below each excerpt refer to the respective sections of the book.

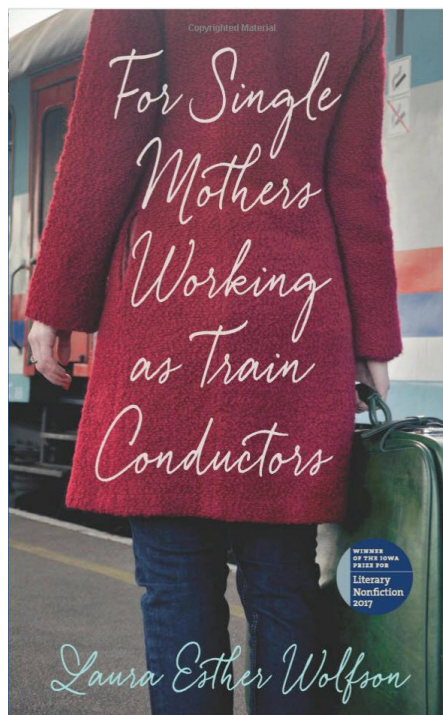
*It struck me anew how ill-matched Russian and English are. So many Russian sentences lack an identifiable grammatical subject. Who is performing the action? This makes perfect sense in the Russian-speaking world, where impersonal forces have held sway since time out of mind, deciding fates and disposing with impunity of small and impotent beings.*

*In English, this leads to incomprehensible gaps. Yet if the subject was left implicit in the original, who was I to put a name to it in the translation? In Russian, everyone understood who was doing what. Hints were rife; unspecified connections were mysteriously clear. But what read as compelling and merely elliptical in Russian became, in English, a loose bundle of irrelevancies and non sequiturs. In Russian, there was a deep, narrow well of unuttered meaning in that small white space between the full stop at the end of one sentence and the uppercase letter that began the next. I might tumble into one of those wells, never to reemerge.*

"Losing the Nobel," page 151

*"Would you like a Walkman?" my husband would hear me saying on the phone. "Aleksandr found it in the garbage and made it work." I would say this in English or in Russian, depending on who I was talking to—we knew almost as many Russian-speakers in New York as English-speakers.*

*I felt him seething. Why? I thought what he was doing was so admirable, required such skill. I'd never known anyone with his talent for bringing machines back from the dead.*





*I polled my Russian-speaking informants. Musor, Russian for “garbage,” was a most unsavory word, one of them told me. Since so many people in the USSR were poor, it was the custom there to throw out only those items that were utterly revolting or unusable. In addition, this person said, musor was related to the Russian word srat’ meaning “to s--t” and its numerous colorful derivatives, such as sral’nya, or “s--thouse,” and so, to the Russian ear, Russian musor was far fouler than American “garbage.” For a long time, I thought that Aleksandr was deeply offended to hear me saying that he was rooting around in the musor, when in fact he was doing something much, much cleaner.*

*Over the years, though, I’ve asked many other Russian-speakers about musor versus garbage, and I’ve encountered no one who agrees with this explanation, no one who finds musor more revolting than garbage or believes that the word partakes of the stench that rises off the semantic defecation field. Just that one person, whose identity is now lost to time.*

*Yet I remain irrationally attached to the garbage/musor duality. I believed it for so long, and I want language to be at the root of everything, because language is what I do. And so I’ve come full circle: where once I was loath to believe that language and cultural difference had any bearing on our problems, I see now that I sometimes overestimated their role.*

*Garbage is musor is garbage, all of it vile and evil-smelling. What happened was simply this: I shamed him—blindly, foolishly, inadvertently—in a way that transcended language.*

*“The Husband Method,” pages 17-18*

*“Good afternoon,” I said in Russian. Russian has become a minority language in post-Soviet Lithuania, one that many people will speak only under duress, but it was the best I could do. [...]*

*“Is Sonya there?”*

*“Sonya got married and moved to Spain,” she said, adding a grammatical fillip that made the phrase ‘got married’ function like a Russian verb of motion (a category usually limited to forms of ‘walk,’ ‘drive,’ ‘ride,’ and ‘fly’), transporting Sonya to the land of castles and castanets on a magic carpet woven out of language.*

*“The Book of Disaster,” pages 68-69*

*The talk: I remember little, except that as we spoke, history sat off to the side, glowering like a large, angry dog. I speak Russian fluently, yes, I’m right there as the conversation unspools, a full participant, but I immediately forget a great deal, chunks just break off and float away. Cognition is a zero sum game, is how I explain this to myself: the additional effort required to comprehend and formulate in a foreign language is subtracted from the capacity for recall. When it’s over, you run a search on your recollections only to realize that the conversation has left shockingly few traces. When you leave your native language, you breathe a different substance, and like a mermaid who comes ashore, you cannot comfortably stay for long. Your native depths keep calling you home.*

*“The Book of Disaster,” page 79.*

## **ATTENTION READERS WHO WORK WITH SLAVIC LANGUAGES OTHER THAN RUSSIAN!**

Are you disappointed to find so few articles in our pages pertaining to your Slavic specialty? Frankly, so are we, but only you can do something about this deplorable situation. Volunteer to write something pertaining to your language(s); alternatively, suggest an article you know of that we might get permission to reprint. We do not require our authors to be members of ATA; we are pleased to publish relevant articles from those who are not. We do require that articles be under 2500 words in length and written in English, except, of course, for examples in Slavic languages. We very much look forward to hearing from you!

Send contributions related to:

Polish to Christine Pawlowski [pawlow@verizon.net](mailto:pawlow@verizon.net)

Ukrainian to Olga Shostachuk: [olgalviv27@yahoo.com](mailto:olgalviv27@yahoo.com)

Bosnian, Serbian and/or Croatian to Martha Kosir: [KOSIR@gannon.edu](mailto:KOSIR@gannon.edu)

We are without language coordinators for the remaining Slavic languages. Would you like to volunteer for your language? Send contributions on them to Lydia Stone: [lydiastone@verizon.net](mailto:lydiastone@verizon.net).

# Looking for a Volunteer Opportunity? Translate for Kiva

Liv Bliss

“Why on earth would she be writing about a sacred space used by certain Native American tribes for religious rituals?” I hear you cry.

No, this is a different kind of kiva. This is the Kiva through which individuals can lend as little as \$25 to fund a loan, for personal or business use, to a borrower in this country or elsewhere in the world. As the loan is paid back (and the vast majority *are* repaid), those funds are credited to the lender’s account and can be loaned again to another borrower.

To learn more about Kiva, go to [www.kiva.org](http://www.kiva.org). If you want to see what loan profiles look like, you can click on the “Start lending” button or the “Get started” link on the home page. Don’t worry: you won’t be roped into anything; you can just browse there anonymously. After that, you can go and explore the “Get to know us” section from link at the bottom of the page.

What you will probably not gather from the site is that, in reality, the loans have usually been funded at the time they are posted. What lenders are really doing is reimbursing the in-country loaning entity. Some people find that off-putting; I don’t.

Kiva has four (out of four) stars on Charity Navigator ([www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)), but if you poke around on the internet, you will quickly find organizations and individuals taking issue with Kiva’s business model, executive compensation, and other features. For me, though, the good far outweighed the questionable, and I became a Kiva lender many years ago.

Now how, you may wonder, do all those loan profiles end up in English? I’m so glad you asked.

Kiva uses volunteer translators, from French, Portuguese, Spanish, and Russian, and editors for profiles that have been submitted in English. I am well familiar with the debates on pro bono translation—some are vehemently pro, some adamantly anti, and the rest of us operate on a case-by-case basis. Depending on which camp you fall into, read on or don’t.

These are the basic requirements for volunteer applicants:

Native or near-native English speakers

- Highly proficient in a foreign language
- Translation experience or coursework strongly preferred
- Detail-oriented
- Able to commit at least 2 hours per week (i.e., about 20 loans per month) for a minimum of 6 months, though one year is preferable

- Responsive to email
- Comfortable with new technology [nothing fancy, just basic computer literacy]
- Able to access a desktop or laptop computer, as loan profiles cannot be properly processed on a tablet or mobile device

The application form is at [www.kiva.org/work-with-us/reviewers](http://www.kiva.org/work-with-us/reviewers)

(Don’t worry about the “reviewers” part; that means editors and translators. The Kiva terminology is quite specific but becomes second nature before long.) You may not be contacted immediately, or even soon, to take a test, because that timing is dependent on how well the waitlist for a given language is populated, the level of volunteer retention, and the number of loans being posted.

After you pass the test, you enter training. That involves being sent actual (past) loan profiles to translate and submit for assessment. You have a deadline, but it’s generally 48 hours. The feedback is unfailingly gentle, encouraging, informative, and patient. There’s something in me that just doesn’t enjoy translating onscreen without paper backup (I know, I know...), so I committed some magnificent howlers during my training, but they didn’t hold it against me.

During training, you will be asked to read a lot of background information and instructions on Kiva procedures and policies. It’s easy (or it was easy for me, at least) to become overwhelmed—until one realizes that those documents aren’t going anywhere and will be available to consult at any time in the future.

Once your training is over, you will be pointed to the link to an agreement that covers confidentiality and other basic issues. Then you are let loose on the site. Kiva translation and editing happens on a section of the site called Viva, which is exclusive to Kiva volunteers and is separate from the area where loans are posted and funded.

You “grab” a loan, look it over, and decide if it has any problems that you need time to resolve. If it does, you can get a generous extension for research, for querying your colleagues or your team leader, etc. Otherwise, you have three hours to complete the translation; if you don’t complete the translation in time, it goes back into the queue and is not, of course, credited to your quota for the month. Each loan text,



in my experience, ranges on average from about 80 to 130 source words.

The site is very forgiving. You can accidentally navigate away from the translation page or even shut down the tab you were working on, and your translation-in-progress should be there when you find your way back. (Though periodic “saves” are always a good idea.) And even when you think you’re done and you’ve gone on to the Review phase (more on that later), you can still backtrack and fix things in your translation that belatedly jump out at you.

As you work, you will find the resource called Colibri (which you can access from the top left of many areas of the Viva site) to be invaluable. I won’t go on at length here about what’s there, but I will say that when you discover it, you’ll be like a kid in a candy store. The FAQs are a constant go-to, as is the searchable glossary for each language that Kiva covers, and the discussion boards are fun, helpful, and foster the spirit of collegiality that is a hallmark of the Kiva translation community.

Speaking of community, you will have a team leader. The Russian-to-English team has been dubbed Russiva, and the Russiva Team Leader is always there to inform, encourage, answer questions, and escalate the questions that he can’t answer. He sends out a weekly e-newsletter to keep the team informed of Kiva-wide and Russiva-specific events, policy or procedure changes, milestones met, etc. As a team member, you will be known by your first name and last initial, and you will have a profile that highlights your recent activity and “stats,” and is also accessible to your team-mates. Russiva currently has 25 members, in four countries and seven US states.

As a Kiva translator, will you only be translating? Not quite. As soon as you submit each translation, it goes live on the site; at this point, no one will be overseeing your work or the factual accuracy of the loan profile. So, there is a Review stage prior to submission. In Review, you do your own quality check on the profile, in the sense of making sure that the accompanying borrower photo is appropriate and that the loan’s Sector and Activity are correct (information in Colibri makes both of those things easier than they sound), that the applicant’s privacy has not been compromised, that his/her gender has been correctly indicated, and that there are no contradictions in the loan amount, the stated purpose of the loan, or other



## Where Kiva works

Kiva serves borrowers in more than 80 countries on 5 continents. We're headquartered in San Francisco, with offices in Nairobi and staff stationed around the world. We also have incredible volunteer fellows working in the field throughout the year.

In addition to all these dedicated Kivans, we would not be able to reach so many communities and scale our impact without the extensive network of Field Partners and

elements of the profile. There is a simple procedure for querying those and other issues, and if your query is deemed legitimate, the loan text will go back to Kiva’s in-country field partner to fix the problem.

I admit: this scared the heck out of me at first. I wasn’t expecting that level of responsibility while I was still gasping for breath in the deep end of the pool. But very quickly it became one of the most enjoyable and rewarding parts of the whole process. And usually it doesn’t even take as long to do as it does to describe.

And, in case you’d like to get more than a warm glow of satisfaction out of being a Kiva volunteer, it can earn you Continuing Education points – one CEP per two hours of work. Which means that after 12 hours spent translating for Kiva, you would be able to claim the maximum six points for CEP Category E in the given year. Kiva, for its part, does not keep track of the hours that you spend online translating, only of the number of loans you translate and submit.

Finally, what if you can’t complete your 20 loans or can’t do any loans at all in a given calendar month? What if there’s a vacation coming up, or if illness or a family crisis strikes? What if your regular work is just too heavy right now? Contact your Kiva team leader. My team leader tells me that your temporary absence will be understood and accommodated. However, if you remain unavailable for several successive months because you’re just too darn busy (the exact number of months depends on the team you belong to and other variables), you will be contacted by the volunteer coordinator, and you may be moved to “alum status.” This is a sort of hiatus that allows you to leave the team with the option of rejoining at a later date, if there is a need for more volunteers at that time and if the alumnus/alumna completes a brief refresher course.

The main thing to remember is that, like any other volunteer gig, working with Kiva is supposed to be *fun*, not a chore or a source of stress.

At the time of writing, Kiva was active in 85 countries, with at least 375 volunteer reviewers, who together handle an average of 17,000 or more loans per month. To each her own, of course, but it means a lot to me to be part of that effort.

Have more questions about Kiva? Liv should be able to help or at least point you in the right direction: [bliss.mst@gmail.com](mailto:bliss.mst@gmail.com)



# THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

John Riedl

*“It is one thing to write as poet and another to write as a historian: the poet can recount or sing about things not as they were, but as they should have been, and the historian must write about them not as they should have been, but as they were, without adding or subtracting anything from the truth.”*

—Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *Don Quixote*

In recent years, I have spent much of my time translating scholarly articles in economics and the social sciences. These texts often contain very strong political opinions and harsh criticisms of the United States, its government, and its citizens. Of course, I don't always agree, but I am no longer surprised by the range of opinions found in the Russian culture, and I try to faithfully reproduce the author's meaning in English. This is what we do as professionals.

As a professional, however, I believe it's time to break one of our most basic taboos and talk politics. Don't worry, I'm not going to bore you with my opinions on American politics, let alone politics in Russia or the other Slavic countries. Rather, I'd like to discuss the ways our highly politicized world raises the stakes for the translator and multiplies the effects of mis-translation. In that sense, the purpose of this article is to argue for the integrity of our profession.

Before I begin, it makes sense to review what it means to be a professional translator. The first tenet of our American Translator's Association Code of Ethics states that its members accept as their ethical and professional duty “to convey meaning between people and cultures faithfully, accurately, and impartially.”<sup>1</sup>

In this article, therefore, I will survey translations of recent political discourse to illustrate how conscious or unconscious failure to follow these guidelines can result in distortions of meaning that may have political consequences. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, I have chosen to cite only sources easily found on the internet so that readers can verify claims and sources for themselves.

I will begin with the guideline for impartiality. In this respect, recent political discourse in the United States has focused on how implicit bias affects human interactions and the implementation of laws and political programs. However, the topic of bias has relevance to translators themselves, as bias can affect our work in ways we are not even aware of. We forget that not all native speakers perceive a cultural reference or idiom in the same way. For example, when I first heard President Trump use the term “little rocket

man,” I didn't even consider the possibility that the president was referring to anything other than the Elton John song,<sup>2</sup> which means a lot to me. It wasn't until our discussions at ATA58 that I realized that I was looking at the meaning of the phrase from my own perspective and not the president's.



I suspect other translators may have made the same mistake, thereby taking some of the sting out of the president's comments. For example, one Russian translation of “little rocket man” is “chelovek-raketa” (rocket man), which follows the pattern of “chelovek-pauk,” the translation of Spiderman, a superhero in American comic books and movies. However, I prefer коротышка с ракетой, because the president is known to use “little” as a disparaging term to those he considers his rivals or even enemies. From this perspective, little rocket man and President Trump's other characterizations (little Marco, lying Ted, etc.) are effective because they evoke the schoolyard taunts Americans hear as children.

As a schoolyard taunt, “little rocket man” can be broken up into separate insults. First, “little,” actually works both as a reference to Kim Jong Un's weight, as when my relatives call me “little Johnny” (I am not small), and as a diminutive in the sense of “wanna be,” for example, when someone calls a bossy co-worker a “little dictator.” Second, it is also semantically possible that little modifies rocket, thereby suggesting that Kim Jong Un is playing with toy or “little” rockets. There is some justification for this interpretation in that the president later compared the size of his “button” to Kim Jong Un's. The comparison also has a rather childish sexual connotation, implying that the North Korean leader is less manly than the president. Finally, “rocket man” actually diminishes Kim Jong Un by reducing him to one of his distinguishing features: his association with North Korea's missile program. In that way, the object of the taunt becomes a caricature of himself.

I use this example to illustrate the following point: however open to interpretation or rich in (possibly unintended) cultural resonance a politician's comments may be, it is our primary duty as translators to render the politician's intended meaning as best we understand it.

## Trump campaign adviser argues over definition of 'meeting' with Russian ambassador

By BIANCA PADRÓ OCASIO | 03/03/2017 09:39 PM EST

Share on Facebook

Share on Twitter

A former campaign adviser to President Donald Trump on Thursday sought to clarify the nature of his interactions with Russian ambassador Sergey Kislyak, saying he has “never spoken with Ambassador Kislyak for more than ten seconds.”

In an interview with CNN’s Anderson Cooper on Friday, Carter Page refused to answer whether or not a conversation took place with Kislyak, arguing back and forth with Cooper about what exactly would constitute a “meeting.”

candidate Trump and on Russian-American relations.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, not all inaccuracy is unintentional. In a world saturated with political spin, inaccuracy can also be beneficial. Perhaps the best example of this phenomenon is provided by former Trump campaign advisor Carter Page. Despite having a short-term and relatively unimportant official position in the Trump campaign, Mr. Page is on record telling the Russian media (in English) that he had been in several “meetings” with then candidate Trump. When asked why the White House would deny that he had ever met with Trump, Mr. Page fell back on his knowledge of Russian. He said that

in Russian митинг means “demonstration,” and he had attended several Trump rallies of various sizes.<sup>10,11,12</sup> Clearly, митинг is a classic false friend.

The duty of an ATA translator to convey meaning faithfully is difficult if not impossible to untangle from the duties to convey meaning impartially and accurately. For the purposes of this article, therefore, I will define faithfulness as fidelity to the author’s intent. Of course, a lack of such fidelity can serve a political purpose. Here’s an example. On a recent airing of Russians version of *60 Minutes*, one of the show’s participants, Ol’ga Skabeeva, said, “Трамп всё-таки наш” (Trump is still our guy). In some places on the web, including on some partisan sites, this phrase was translated as “Trump is ours” without any of the irony that is evident in the comment.<sup>13,14</sup> This makes the statement much more ominous than was intended, since it evokes the politically and emotionally charged phrase “Crimea is ours.” The television channel Rossiya 24 also noted this discrepancy and criticized the incorrect translation.<sup>13</sup> That said, Russian media personalities use the phrase “Трамп наш” relatively often and in various contexts.<sup>14,15,16</sup> To this American observer, qualifiers such as всё-таки are beginning to sound empty.

With respect to US political discourse, the faithful translator is also challenged by the large minefield of code words regularly emerging from our dog-whistle politics. In this environment, even the most conscientious translator can either miss a cultural reference or be forced into a less than satisfactory translation. For this reason, I highly recommend that a non-native speaker consult a native speaker colleague when attempting a political translation, especially when these translations touch upon hot-button social issues. Because these code words are intentionally designed to be opaque to those outside the target audience and because they are new and have evolving meanings,

Like bias, inaccuracy can be both intentional and unintentional. One example of an unintentional error, and, perhaps, a cautionary tale, is the infamous “reset” button. Of course, I am referring to Hillary Clinton’s presentation of a “reset” button to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. The photo op started well, but Secretary Clinton was soon put in an uncomfortable position when Mr. Lavrov pointed out that “reset” was incorrectly translated into Russian as перепрыжка (overload) and not перезагрузка (reset).<sup>3</sup> This mistranslation fed into existing Russian stereotypes about the intelligence of Americans and quality of our education system.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the button has remained in the Russian consciousness, and on November 11, 2016, while basking in the glow of Donald Trump’s recent victory, the website of *Zvezda*, the Russian Defense Ministry’s television channel, chortled that all that was left of Secretary Clinton was the “overload” button.<sup>5</sup>

How did this happen? The American conservative website *The Blaze* says the error occurred because Clinton’s staffers failed to consult the normal State Department translators and did the translations themselves.<sup>6</sup>

One can suppose that another example of home-made translation is the infamous translation of яркий, Vladimir Putin’s characterization of Donald Trump. We all remember how Mr. Trump demonstrated his well-documented love of flattery by repeating over and over that Russian President Putin considered him a “genius.”<sup>7</sup> In fact, the word means something closer to “colorful,” which is the word used in some Russian translations into English.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps, an amateur translated this as “bright” or “brilliant” in an article that caught Trump’s eye, or perhaps a staff member was trying to please or manipulate the boss. In any case, the results of this translation may have had repercussions both on the electorate’s view of then

native speakers also risk misunderstanding them and might also benefit from consultations.

With respect to political translations, one must say that for the most part translators from English into Russian catch the obvious references but may miss some of the nuances. For example, a former Miss Universe, Alicia Machado, reported that then candidate Trump called her “Miss Piggy” and “Miss Housekeeping.” The first comment was a reference to her weight, and the second to her weight and stereotypes connected with her Latin American heritage. The Russian press translated these comments literally: “Мисс Пигги” after the Muppet character and “Мисс домашнее хозяйство” with the explanation that the nickname has to do with Ms. Machado being from Latin America.<sup>17</sup>

On the whole, these translations are near misses. For example, I am not sure that the president was referring to the Muppet of that name when he called Machado “Miss Piggy,” although this may have been the image conveyed to many younger Americans. American children have been calling their overweight peers “piggies” since long before the appearance of *The Muppet Show*, and the Muppet image, which is largely positive, helps to soften the insult. With respect to “Miss Housekeeping,” I’m not sure if this is even translatable. The term “housekeeping” has emerged in the United States as a euphemism for the

janitorial or cleaning staff in a hotel, hospital, or other large institution. Since such roles are often filled by minorities and immigrants, Miss Housekeeping is a crude reference to certain racial stereotypes and the menial tasks often performed by legal and illegal immigrants from Latin America. The Russian translation doesn’t work that well because *домашнее хозяйство* refers more to keeping house or home economics and does not have any of the original’s class or racial overtones.

In conclusion, I started this article on a rainy Sunday morning, when the news was dominated by pro-Democracy protests in Warsaw, demonstrations in Moscow, and American political pundits engaged in yet another round of “Fake News verses Freedom of the Press.” On that morning, I couldn’t help but think that in these hyper-politicized times, many of us will feel pressure to compromise our professional ethics to serve the political goals of a client or government. How would you respond?

John Riedl is a freelance Russian>English translator and grader for ATA’s Russian>English certification exam. After receiving undergraduate and graduate degrees in engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, he worked as an electrical engineer for several companies, including GE Medical Systems. He left the corporate world in 2002 and taught seventh grade math for two years as part of the New York City Teaching Fellows Program. He has been translating ever since he completed the University of Chicago’s Translation Studies Certificate Program in 2006.

## Notes

1. [https://www.atanet.org/governance/code\\_of\\_ethics.php](https://www.atanet.org/governance/code_of_ethics.php)
2. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/bernie-taupin-tells-the-story-behind-1972s-rocket-man-1522849896>
3. <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/07/world/europe/07diplo.html>
4. <https://memepedia.ru/tupye-amerikancy-nu-tupye/>
5. [https://tvzvezda.ru/news/vstrane\\_i\\_mire/content/201611101739-y7ld.htm](https://tvzvezda.ru/news/vstrane_i_mire/content/201611101739-y7ld.htm)
6. <https://www.theblaze.com/news/2014/03/03/remember-hillarys-russian-reset-button-guess-where-she-got-it>
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/e88668da-4f8c-11e8-9471-a083af05aea7>
8. <https://www.factcheck.org/2016/05/putin-did-not-call-trump-a-genius/>
9. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/08/why-wont-trump-criticize-putin/536556/>
10. <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/03/carter-page-russian-ambassador-trump-235677>
11. <https://www.rawstory.com/2017/03/anderson-cooper-torches-carter-page-in-embarrassing-interview-on-russia-and-his-role-with-trump/>
12. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82ZcZ7s-3O8>
13. <https://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=2995446>
14. <https://twitter.com/juliadavisnews/status/973745388795592704?lang=en>
15. <https://twitter.com/JuliaDavisNews/status/958704454991302658>
16. <http://euromaidanpress.com/2017/05/14/trump-is-again-ours-moscow-commentators-say-euromaidan-press/>
17. <https://lenta.ru/news/2016/09/28/trumpmissuniverse/>



# SLAVFILE LITE: NOT BY WORD COUNT ALONE

Lydia Razran Stone

Once again — the Tolstoy File (featuring a special guest appearance by Anton Chekhov):

First, LNT: A political and humor columnist for *The Washington Post*, Alexandra Petri, published a recent column entitled “If male authors described men in literature the way they describe women.” The column was meant to be more or less apropos of the Me Too movement. Here is the Tolstoy paragraph:

“Vronsky had once been beautiful. His hands, once white and soft, were thin and wasted from the labors of child-rearing, and his face appeared pinched and unattractive. His voice had acquired a querulous tone. His arms, once the right shape, were now the wrong shape, because of the passage of time and the moral degradation that came with it. There was a horse who suffered an awful accident, and Vronsky was like that in a way.”

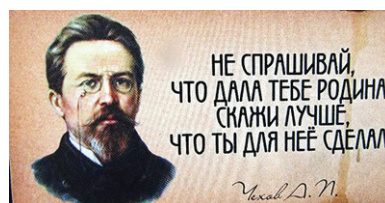
The striking thing to me here is that, though the columnist seems minimally familiar with the events and characters of *Anna Karenina*, the voice and style are absolutely nothing like Tolstoy’s. And this concocted description of Vronsky, which a reader might have expected to be a takeoff on one of Anna, the novel’s heroine, actually fits only her sister-in-law Dolly, who is a victim of marital infidelity but not at all of the harassment that Me Too is protesting. It may be relevant to note that the first few sentences vaguely parallel the very first description of a woman in the novel, which one encounters after only having to plough through at most three pages. The remainder of the description is about as far from the style of the novel as the fairly recent movie adaptation was. Marian Schwartz, who translated *Anna Karenina* in 2014 for Yale University Press, agrees, answering a message asking her opinion as follows: “Of course this sounds nothing like Tolstoy, particularly because he is compassionate toward everyone, no matter how miserable they might be.”

*Anna Karenina* is among the most highly regarded novels of all time by, one assumes, people who have read it and more or less understand it. However, it is also among the most frequently referenced in the US media, as an allusion to a generically highbrow (and long) novel, written almost always by someone who appears at best to have read a plot summary or seen a film (what in my day was called “reading the Classic Illustrated Comic”). If we are to believe the saying that all publicity is good, this is a good thing. I myself am beginning to doubt it.

P.S. For a fascinating discussion of the image of Anna Karenina in readers’ (and filmgoers’ minds), see [this](#) blogpost from *Slate*.

Now on to Chekhov.

From a well-reviewed 1993 American novel I picked up somewhere: “It thrilled her and made her wonder if people really did have some deep center and if the soul of another did not necessarily, as Chekhov says, lie in darkness.” Research confirms my long-held belief that this quote is more correctly attributed to a Russian proverb, although who is to say that Chekhov did not refer to it somewhere in his works or letters, maybe even more than once.



A refrigerator magnet kindly given to me by an SLD member returning from a trip to Russia contains the phrase “Не спрашивай, что дала тебе родина. Скажи лучше, что ты для нее сделал,” along with a picture of Chekhov and a facsimile of his signature. Now, this seemed to me a reasonable if not literal equivalent of “Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country,” which I had known only as a quote from John F. Kennedy’s 1961 inaugural address. I believe almost all of us born in the US, even if not old enough to have listened to that very inspiring speech, would have had the same impression. However, Chekhov does predate Kennedy, so could indeed have originated it. As we all do nowadays, I went to the internet. I could find no English language sites attributing the English quote to Chekhov, while JFK actually having said these words is beyond any doubt. However, there is documentation that Cicero voiced a similar sentiment. According to a number of his former classmates, Kennedy may have assimilated the sentiment through something comparable that the headmaster of Choate, Kennedy’s prep school, was frequently heard to say. Kahlil Gibran also said something similar, after Cicero but before Kennedy. The exact source of the Cicero analogue has evidently not been publicly identified.

Some Russian sites attribute the phrase to Kennedy, both in the Russian version I quoted and in a more literal Russian translation, and some (not exclusively the refrigerator magnet purveyor) to Chekhov. A lively JFK vs Chekhov discussion [can be found](#) on the popular Russian social media site VK. Two arguments made there against Chekhov being the author are that: 1) No specific source for the Chekhov version has been identified; and 2) The sentiments do not accord with Chekhov's other documented statements of opinion. Two arguments in favor of Chekhov are that: 1) American politicians and/or their speech writers steal phrases all the time (clearly it would not have been possible for Chekhov to steal from Kennedy); and 2) The Russian statement could not have been written by an American, since Americans have no concept of *родина* (motherland) (!).

I myself am willing to give Kennedy (and/or his writer) a pass on any charge of plagiarism. First of all, the quoting of a phrase without reference to its source is done with impunity all the time. Statements of sentiments cannot be copyrighted, and it would be even more difficult to require this when one is only an approximate translated equivalent of the other. The only source I give any credence to is the Choate headmaster, and I imagine that the president was far from anxious to interrupt the flow of his speech to call attention to the fact that he had attended one of the most prestigious and expensive prep schools in the country.

Finally a comment on new terms added to the *Oxford Dictionary* for 2018: "Perhaps the most chilling of all is the acronym TL; DR; Too long; didn't read. Sorry Leo, sorry Marcel."

## Part II

I continue to survey the media, mainly *The Washington Post*, and Yahoo and Google news, for idioms, metaphors and references that I believe would be difficult for non-native speakers to understand and render fully in translation. Here are a few:

1. *Garden of earthly delights* – an ironic description of deletion of incriminating or contradictory statements on social media or from the public record. The reference is to the title of the lascivious-seeming Hieronymus Bosch triptych more or less analogously translated in Russian as "Сад земных наслаждений." The mildly amusing mocking pun can only be recognized if a non-native speaker is familiar not only with the painting, but also with its English title. I suppose a somewhat analogous Russian pun could be discovered, but why bother?
2. *His bully pulpit was reduced to a social media platform.* This partisan comment strikes me as extremely witty. It depends on knowing that Teddy Roosevelt used the term "bully pulpit" in referring to the presidency as providing a wonderful opportunity for having one's thoughts and opinions heard. (In TR's time, the word *bully* was used predominantly to mean good, a sense now more or less occluded by its association with schoolyard harassment.) To understand this reference, one needs to recognize the quote; fail to be confused by the currently predominant meaning of "bully"; and realize the similarity between a pulpit and a physical platform used as a metaphor with regard to social media.
3. *Rebel without a pause button* – a punning description of someone endlessly and rebelliously speaking, writing or tweeting against something. The pun is based on famous 1955 film *Rebel Without a Cause*.
4. *She was a riddle wrapped in an enigma wrapped in a belted double-breasted dress from "Theory."* This very clever but somewhat snarky description refers to an elegant and expensively dressed woman who was called before Mueller's investigation, where she declined to answer questions about possible interactions with Russians during the presidential campaign. The first part is a reference to a remark made in 1939 by Winston Churchill, referring to the difficulty of predicting the actions or motivations of Russians during World War II. Theory is a very expensive purveyor of women's fashions favored by female political "power dressers." Whether or not they are truly dresses that "wrap around," they do give that appearance. Note that this sentence contains no new information and could be omitted from a translation without real loss of meaning. Even if a well-informed translator knew of the Churchill quote, it seems that the reference to Theory is likely to be baffling to even most native speakers of English.
5. *[It was] a down-to-the-wire contest that kept people on edge all night.... For pure theater, it exceeded expectations by a mile.* Translation into non-metaphoric language: The outcome of the election was not decided until the last possible moment, and was very dramatic and stressful for those following it, considerably more so than had been predicted. This rather short statement contains two physical metaphors for nonphysical situations (*on edge* and *by a mile*), with the second usually referring to various physical races, especially those involving horses, as does the

metaphor *down to the wire*. The phrase for *pure theater* means that an event was dramatic (and is itself a metaphor meaning “arresting” and “containing a number of ups and downs” [in its turn a physical metaphor for an emotional situation], as considered from the standpoint of its audience).

6. *[Someone] has a past baked into the equation*. Meaning: any attempt to understand some person’s motivations or actions must consider that person’s past. The expression *baked into the equation* is, surprisingly, not uncommon and is almost always used for something that cannot actually be baked and has never been a common component of any sort of equation.

Enough for now! I would love to keep this feature going, so please contribute analogous phrases in English or Slavic languages!

P.S. When I originally wrote this column, I did not know of any Russian analogues of the above examples to include. Within days, by sheer serendipity, I found one in the most unlikely place. A bit of background: one of my daughters, who participates in a regular “game night” with friends, asked me to be on the lookout for any unusual board games at the yard sales and thrift stores she knows I frequent. Last Sunday, I acquired “Outrageous Quotations” for a dollar. I could not resist looking through the 500 authentic quotations it contained. And there I found: *If you start throwing hedgehogs under me, I shall throw two porcupines under you*, attributed to none other than Nikita Khrushchev.

My first question was: did he really say that? I was able to sense the meaning, as something like “If you do me a moderately bad turn, I will immediately retaliate with a worse one.” But why *throw under* rather than *throw at*, and why choose these particular weapons, likely to do as much damage to the thrower as the throwee? The use of *shall* in the context of this folksy metaphor also seemed discordant, but I attributed its use to the translator, not the Premier.

As usual when I need this sort of question answered, I resorted to the Russian Translator’s Club

on Yahoo and, as usual, I got my answers. The original Russian, I learned, is: *Вы начнете бросать ежей под меня, я брошу пару дикобразов под вас*.

Marina Aranovich explained to me that the use of *бросать под* (throw under) was probably an analogy to *копать под* (meaning to undermine both literally and metaphorically), while the hedgehog and porcupine were probably suggested by the words *колючий* (prickly) and *колючость* (a caustic remark), from which a currently nonexistent phrasal verb, *колкать под*, might be coined, to mean undermine by uttering caustic insults (whence the prickly animals).

One of my Yahoo informants, Rostislau Golad, suggested to me that it was useless to try to make a rational (or even discernible) connection between what Nikita Sergeevich said and what he wanted to imply, citing the wonderful phrase: *Ну и мы ноздрями мух не бьем* (We too do not kill flies with our nostrils) meaning “We too have advanced technology.” Marina put it more gently: “He had a lot of problems speaking literary Russian.” As for me, I think the man was a kind of folk poet, a creative genius with language, though some might want to call him a linguistic idiot savant. I am going to peruse the site of his quotations suggested by Marina, looking for more such gems:

<http://stuki-druki.com/Aforizmi-Khrushchev.php>.

To join the Yahoo Russian Translators Group, contact Nora Favorov ([norafavorov@gmail.com](mailto:norafavorov@gmail.com)).

Lydia Razran Stone, an ATA certified Russian to English translator, has been editing *SlavFile* since 1995, and has written a Lite column for every issue. She invites unsolicited articles and reader comments both general and particular, which may be sent to [lydiastone@verizon.net](mailto:lydiastone@verizon.net)

**ARE YOU A NEWCOMER TO SLD OR TO A PROFESSION IN SLAVIC TRANSLATION AND/OR INTERPRETATION?**

**DO YOU HAVE SOME ADVICE TO OFFER THOSE WHO ARE OR DO YOU SEEK ADVICE FROM THE MORE EXPERIENCED?**

**WOULD YOU SIMPLY LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO OUR READERS?**

**CONTACT LAUREN AT [lacammenga@gmail.com](mailto:lacammenga@gmail.com)**



# Slavic Poetry In Translation

## ALJA ADAM

Translation and introduction by Martha Kosir



The Slovenian poet Alja Adam (born 1976) graduated from the University of Ljubljana with a degree in comparative literature and sociology of culture. She earned her doctorate in 2007 in gender studies and feminist literary theory, likewise from the University of Ljubljana.

Alja Adam is the author of three poetry collections: *Zaobljenost* (*Roundedness*, 2003), *Zakaj bi omenjala Ahila* (*Why Mention Achilles*, 2009), and *Dolgo smo čakali na dež* (*We've Long Waited on the Rain*, 2015). Her poems have been translated into thirteen languages, and have appeared in diverse publications and anthologies in Slovenia and abroad. She is considered one of the most prominent authors of her generation.

### Žaba

V otroštvu sem pogosto molčala,  
da ne bi, v trenutku nepazljivosti,  
iz mojih ust skočila ogabna žaba,  
varuhinja temnih skrivnosti.

Morala sem sedeti vzravnano,  
nič na obrazu ni smelo trzniti,  
da ljudje ne bi opazili izbuljenih oči,  
zrkel, napihnenjen kot mehur.

Dolgo let sem molčala,  
ker sem želela pripadati človeštvu,  
kot pokrajina na zemljevidu  
širšemu geografskemu ozemlju.

Medtem so gradili betonske domove,  
se obdajali s predmeti  
in bodečimi žicami, v poskusih,  
da bi pregnali tujost.  
In nisem vzdržala:  
ko so živali prečkale mejo,  
nevedoč, da kaj takega obstaja,  
je moja koža zakravela.

Her third collection, *We've Long Waited on the Rain*, was nominated for the Veronika Prize in 2016. The collection *Why Mention Achilles* was published in Spanish translation by the publishing house *e.d.a. libros* in 2012. It was also published in Italy in 2009, and in Croatia in 2014.

Alja Adam regularly participates in literary festivals at home and abroad. In addition to poetry, she writes essays, fairytales, and scientific articles. She is a mentor of creative writing, and a lecturer on world literature at the University of Nova Gorica, Slovenia. She also focuses on research into and the development of innovative educational programs for children and adults, in which she blends creative writing practices with Gestalt therapy and yoga.

The poems presented in this article have not appeared in English translation before. All the poems, except for "Žaba" ("Frog") come from Adam's latest collection, *We've Long Waited on the Rain*. They are striking for their subtle messages, convincing imagery, and intensity of reflection, communicated through a beautifully natural and unpretentious style. The element of suspense and growing anticipation, so perfectly recreated in her poetry, constitute the intrinsic beauty of Adam's poetry. Each of her poems, reprinted here with permission, exemplifies a distinctive experience that leaves a profound impression on the reader.

### Frog

In my childhood, I often kept silent  
to stop an appalling frog, a keeper of dark secrets,  
from springing out of my mouth  
in a moment of carelessness.

I had to sit up straight,  
with my face completely motionless,  
so that people would not notice the bulging eyes,  
and the distended eyeballs.

I kept silent for many years  
because I wanted to belong to humankind,  
like the landscape on a map belongs  
to a broader geographical space.

In the meantime they have built concrete homes  
and surrounded themselves with possessions  
and barbed wire, in an attempt  
to chase away the otherness.  
I could not take it any longer:  
when the animals crossed the border,  
unaware of the existence of it all,  
my skin began to bleed.

## Tekstilna delavka

Preden so jo odpustili,  
je bila desetletja zaposlena  
za tekočim trakom v tovarni.  
Sedaj se s poškodovano hrbtenico  
in črnimi obrobami pod očmi  
javlja na oglase za delovna mesta.

Zjutraj si na obraz nanese ličilo  
in zglati robove na bluzi,  
da bi naredila vtis na moškega,  
ki za luksuzno mizo vpisuje njeno ime  
v stolpce, ozke kot epruvete,  
v katerih so alkimisti v srednjem veku  
poskušali ustvariti človeško bitje,  
ločeno od ženskih teles.

Ko se vrača domov, začuti, da svoje žalosti  
ne more ločiti od drgeta kože,  
kot tudi ne gibanja krošnje od vetra.  
Nato se ustavi in opazuje niti svetlobe,  
ki prodirajo skozi veje.  
Vsako noč, v polsnu, tke nevidna oblačila.

## Radirka

Hčerka me kliče po imenu,  
zato pogrešam eno od svojih identitet,  
pesnica, tatica, voajerka.  
Skozi ključavnico zrem v otroštvo,

kako kradem radirko  
s sošolkine mize, jo skrivam v žep.  
Kako načrtujem, da je luč ugasnjena,  
da pravočasno iztegnem dlan,

in vsrkam vonj po urejenosti,  
predmetih, v katere je njena mama  
odtisnila nežne kretnje, s katerimi  
drsi prek zvezkov, zlaža svinčnike  
in gladi platnice knjig.

Kako se doma oklepam radirke  
v žepu in nočem sleči plašča.  
Dokler mi je ne izpuli iz dlani.  
Kot takrat, ko mi je z nitko  
izdrla zob in je kri zalila  
prazno mesto.

## Textile worker

Before they let her go,  
she had been employed for decades  
on a conveyor belt at a factory.  
With an injured back  
and bags under her eyes,  
she now answers the classifieds.

She puts make-up on in the morning  
and irons out the creases in her blouse  
to make an impression on a man who  
behind a lavish desk populates the narrow,  
test-tube-like columns with her name,  
the same test tubes that medieval alchemists once used  
when they tried to create a human being  
outside of a woman's body.

When she returns home, she senses that her sadness  
cannot be detached from her trembling skin  
or from the movement of a tree canopy in the wind.  
She stops and contemplates the threads of light  
that permeate the tree branches.  
Every night, half asleep, she weaves invisible garments.

## Eraser

My daughter calls me by my name,  
that is why I am missing one of my identities:  
poet, thief, voyeur.  
I contemplate my childhood through a keyhole;

I see myself steal an eraser  
from my classmate's desk and hide it in my pocket.  
I plan meticulously for the light to turn off  
in time for me to extend my palm

and absorb the scent of order,  
of objects, into which her mama  
had imprinted tender motions,  
caressed her notebooks gently, assembled her pencils,  
and smoothed out the creases in her book covers.

At home, I clutch the eraser  
in my pocket and refuse to take off my coat.  
I do so until she yanks it out of the palm of my hand;  
the same way she had yanked out  
my tooth with a string, and blood filled  
the hollow space.

---

## Dictionary Exchange Planned for ATA59

Among the events planned for New Orleans, the following announcement caught our eye (and we happen to know that there will be a number of Russian dictionaries available):

### RECYCLE YOUR RESOURCES!

Donate the dictionaries you no longer need and find ones you can put to good use. One linguist's trash is another linguist's treasure. Tables will be available throughout the conference for you to drop off and/or pick up used dictionaries.

Open to 3-Day Conference Attendees Only

**WEDNESDAY 7:30AM – SATURDAY 5:00PM**

## ***I long for one more night on Earth***

Neverjetno srečo imam, da premorem dve roki,  
dve nogi in na sredini prsnega koša rdečo, utripajočo mišico,  
da poznega avgusta hodim ob severni obali  
in se čudim kopalcem, ki se pri osemnajstih stopinjah  
namakajo v vodi,  
da lahko na koži občutim toploto perja,  
v katerega je raca zarila svoj kljun,  
in morje, ki se kot debel šal ovija okoli otoka.

Mogoče je sreča celo to,  
da ne morem pozabiti, da 2.500 km stran tanki grozijo ljudem,  
da bodo razstrelili membrane njihovih teles,  
jim vzeli svetlobo, skrito v reži srca,  
da zgolj začasno prebivam na tem planetu:  
ker potujem skozi atmosfero zemlje kot nit skozi šivankino uho,  
ker je potrpežljivost edina moč, ki jo potrebujem,  
in je vsaka natančno odmerjena misel vbod,  
vsak korak, s katerim se približam drugemu,  
šiv, ki ne bo zažil ran tega sveta,

da sta moški in ženska (včeraj sem ju  
videla, kako nad odbleski sonca  
objeta hodita po rjavih deskah pomola)  
sedaj samo še izginjajoča podoba domišljije,  
košček počenega ogledala, v katerem se ogleduje prazna soba,  
ko ni nikogar doma,  
da to praznino nosim s seboj in bo obstajala  
še dolgo potem, ko bom potovala po drugih galaksijah,  
kjer se namesto topovskih strel  
oglašajo valovi, mehki, slani copati,  
in podrsavajo po hrbtu oguljene pečine,  
ki kot stara, orjaška pošast  
vsake toliko zadovoljno vzdihne  
in ponovno omahne v spanec.

## ***I long for one more night on Earth***

I feel incredibly fortunate to have two arms,  
two legs and a red, beating muscle in the center of my chest,  
to walk in late August along the north coast  
and marvel at the swimmers soaking in  
cold water at barely eighteen degrees.  
I feel fortunate to sense the heat of the feathers on my skin  
into which a duck has buried its beak,  
and the sea that enfolds the island like a thick scarf.

Maybe it is good fortune, too  
that I cannot forget that 2,500 km away, tanks  
are threatening to blow up the membranes of people's bodies,  
rob them of the light hidden in the slits of their hearts;  
I live on this planet only temporarily:  
because I travel through the atmosphere of the earth like a thread  
through a needle's eye,  
because patience is the only power I need,  
and each precisely measured thought is a stitch;  
every step that brings me closer to another  
is a seam that fails to stitch up the wounds of this world;

a man and woman (I saw them yesterday  
as they walked with their arms around each other  
over the weathered boards of a pier, above the glare of sunlight),  
are nothing more than a disappearing figment of the imagination,  
a piece of a broken mirror in which an empty room  
studies itself when no one is at home;  
I carry this emptiness inside me, and it will continue  
to exist long after I have traveled across other galaxies,  
where instead of cannon shots  
the sounds of waves can be heard, salty and soft slippers  
that slither over a barren cliff,  
which, from time to time, sighs  
with pleasure and then nods off again  
like an old, giant monster.

## **ARTICLES BY PAST CONFERENCE NEWCOMERS FOR 2018 CONFERENCE NEWCOMERS**

For a number of years we have been publishing reviews written by first time conference attendees. We have stipulated that criticisms as well as praise are welcome, though you [spoiler alert] will find more of the latter. Articles also include tips for making the most of your first or even subsequent conferences.

- 2017 Steven McGrath [www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/SlavFile-2018-1-Winter.pdf](http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/SlavFile-2018-1-Winter.pdf) pg. 10  
2016 Natalie Mainland [www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2016-4-Fall-SlavFile.pdf](http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2016-4-Fall-SlavFile.pdf) pg. 1  
2015 Daria Toropchyn [www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2016-2-Spring-SlavFile.pdf](http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2016-2-Spring-SlavFile.pdf) pg. 8  
2015 Christopher Tauchen [www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2016-2-Spring-SlavFile.pdf](http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2016-2-Spring-SlavFile.pdf) pg. 9  
2014 Ekaterina Howard [www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2015-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf](http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2015-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf) pg. 7  
2013 Adam Fuss [www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2014-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf](http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2014-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf) pg. 10  
2012 Sam Pinson [www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2013-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf](http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2013-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf) pg. 5  
2010 Todd Jackson [www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2011-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf](http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2011-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf) pg. 1  
2009 Vitaliy Plinto [www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2010-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf](http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2010-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf) pg. 10  
2008 Monika Pilecka [www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2009-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf](http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2009-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf) pg. 9  
2007 Tom Fennell [www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2008-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf](http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2008-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf) pg. 5  
2006 Lucy Gunderson [www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2007-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf](http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2007-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf) pg. 14  
2005 Kathleen Davis [www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2006-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf](http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2006-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf) pg. 8  
2004 Leah Misbin [www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2005-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf](http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2005-1-Winter-SlavFile.pdf) pg. 3