

## INTERVIEW WITH ELLEN ELIAS-BURSAĆ: SLD'S 2020 GREISS SPEAKER

Interviewer: Nora Seligman Favorov

*The Slavic Languages Division is pleased to announce that this year's Greiss Lecture will be delivered by Ellen Elias-Bursać, the current president of the American Literary Translators Association and someone with a distinguished career in academia, literary translation, and translating for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. In addition to her Greiss Lecture, titled "Playful Translation," which is being jointly sponsored by the SLD and the Literary Division, she will deliver a second talk about her experiences with the ICTY, "Working in a Tug of War."*

*Elias-Bursać has a long list of literary translations to her credit, including, most recently, Catherine the Great and the Small by the Montenegrin writer Olja Knežević, co-translated with SLD member Paula Gordon (Istros Books, 2020), and Dark Mother Earth by the Croatian writer Kristian Novak (Amazon Crossing, 2020). A partial list of Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian authors she has translated includes Karim Zaimović, Dubravka Ugrešić, Ivana Bodrožić, David Albahari, and Robert Perišić. Her translations have earned numerous awards, including, in 2013, the Independent Foreign Fiction Readers' Prize for Daša Drndić's Trieste; in 2006, the National Translation Award for Albahari's Götz and Meyer, and, in 1998, the AATSEEL Award for best translation from a Slavic or*



Ellen Elias-Bursać

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*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.

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

*East European language for her translation of Albahari's Words are Something Else. Additionally, her more than ten years (off and on) working at the ICTY led to her book Translating Evidence and Interpreting Testimony at a War Crimes Tribunal: Working in a Tug-of-War (Palgrave, 2015), which received the Association of Women in Slavic Studies' Mary Zirin Prize in 2015.*

*Her two talks will be delivered one after the other on Thursday, October 22, "Working in a Tug of War" beginning at 2:00 p.m. and "Playful Translation" at 3:30.*

**You studied Russian in high school before you did your study abroad in Zagreb. What was it that drew you to the former Yugoslavia rather than sticking with Russian? From what I know about the various phases of your career (and personal life), it has been a fateful and rewarding decision, but what thinking and/or circumstances motivated you at the time you made it?**

When I was majoring in Russian language and literature at Macalester College in the early 1970s, there was only one program available for US undergraduates to spend a semester in the Soviet Union: the Leningrad program. Our professors were not keen to send us to Leningrad because they were critical of the Soviet Union. The four of us Macalester Russian-Dept. students requested that they find a program in another Slavic country where we'd be allowed to enroll as guest students and take courses in Russian language and literature. Our professors found a program that had been running for several years and was cohosted by Zagreb University and Portland State University in Oregon. Furthermore, students received subsidies from the US Government through Public Law 480. So off the four of us went to Zagreb University for a year and attended Russian courses, along with the introductory course in Croato-Serbian/Serbo-Croatian. Once there I was intrigued by the prospect of studying the languages and literatures of Yugoslavia, so after graduating from Macalester the next year I went back to Zagreb. I first enrolled in a second undergraduate degree, then a Master's and, finally, a Ph.D. at Zagreb University in South Slavic and Translation Studies. Meanwhile I married there, and both my daughters were born in Zagreb. After living there for eighteen years, I moved back to the Boston area in 1990.

**Last year, you took over the helm as president of ALTA, the American Literary Translators Association. I'm sure that the pandemic has thrown whatever plans you had a bit off course, but what aspirations do you have for your tenure as president?**

A few years ago, the remarkable thirty-year affiliation that ALTA enjoyed with the University of Texas at Dallas ended with the retirement of ALTA founder, Rainer Schulte. For several years after this, ALTA managed more or less adequately as a virtual organization without a home base, but we were overjoyed when the University of Arizona at Tucson welcomed us as an affiliate two years ago. Our staff moved there, and our Tucson office opened last year. So my first aspiration as president of ALTA has been to solidify and enrich our relationship with the University of Arizona.

Meanwhile, interest in translation in general and literary translation in particular has been on the rise among students and professionals across the country. We have seen our conference attendance swell from 250 attendees to over 500 these last few years. A diverse, vocal, creative generation has brought new vigor and commitment. So my other central aspiration is to empower our more recent members, while seeing to it that ALTA retains its appeal for the longstanding members for whom ALTA has, for decades, meant home.

**There are a few authors for whom you've translated multiple books (David Albahari and Dubravka Ugrešić, to name two). In your experience, have you found it important to work with authors whose "voices" come relatively easily to you as a translator? Or is learning to hear and replicate an author's voice, even if it doesn't come easily, an interesting challenge? Purely on the level of writing style, is there an issue of compatibility between the translator and author that is, at times, insurmountable?**

I enjoy translating both an author whose voice is familiar, such as Dubravka Ugrešić and David Albahari, and authors who are completely new to me. I recently translated Kristian Novak's novel *Dark Mother Earth*, in which the characters speak to each other in the distinct dialect of the rural region of Međimurje, very near the Croatian border with Slovenia and Hungary. This was a profoundly refreshing adventure that pushed me to rethink my whole approach to translating as I negotiated the quicksand of rendering a dialect in translation. I also found that translating *Hotel Tito*, a coming-of-age novel by Ivana Bodrožić, was a revelation. Much of the novel is written in the voice of childhood and teen years, also new for me.

But then after these excursions into new territory, I found my return to Dubravka Ugrešić's novel, *Fox*, deeply gratifying, and I've taken up translating the recent short novels of David Albahari and am thrilled to be back in his voice.

**Another question about compatibility with authors. For you, working with a language from a part of the world fraught with so much discord and war, have you had to turn down literary translation projects because you were not comfortable with the author's political viewpoint?**

I haven't had to deal with this as often as could have been expected. Wars divide communities and cultures, and the lines become very sharply drawn. Some of the authors I have translated are outspoken and controversial for their opposition to the nationalist politics that so pervade this part of the world. It may be that the fact that I've translated their work has turned others away. I may never know!

This was more of an issue when I didn't yet know how to read the cultural rifts that were forming in the lead-up to the war in the late 1980s, while I was still living in Zagreb. At that point I sometimes translated texts for people who, I now know in retrospect, chose to affiliate themselves with politics I came to profoundly disagree with. But at the time the sides hadn't been so clearly drawn and we were all bogged down in the same cultural morass.

**I work with Russian, and there are a few words I consider my main nemeses as a translator, words for which, in many contexts, none of the translations offered by dictionaries or on-line resources seem to work: воспитание (education/childrearing/cultivation), острота (sharpness, but often in a sense close to "edgy" or "fraught"), to name a couple that I've recently stumbled over. For our readers working in BCS, could you share some of your own lexical nemeses?**

Yes, *prostor* is always a challenge for translation. Space? Room? Premises? And *mutan*: turbid, murky, muddy, corrupt, sly, opaque? Gestures can be difficult, particularly *mahati rukom* or *slegnuti*. "Shrug" doesn't quite suggest the dismissiveness of *slegnuti*, and *mahati rukom* requires a whole phrase, such as "to dismiss with the wave of a hand" or "to send [someone] packing." Then there's *objekt*, referring perhaps to a building, or to a structure of some kind, or to a facility, but never to an "object." Another enigma is the ever-present *upala* which may apply to a condition of the throat? brain? ears? muscles? ovaries? urinary tract? lungs? kidneys? Does "inflammation" cover this? Infection? What is an inflammation, anyway?

**Ah, yes, as I'm sure you know, объект poses very similar difficulties in Russian. Thank you! We look forward to hearing more on October 22 and only wish it could have been in person.**



# NOTES FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE UNDERGROUND

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

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The decision has been made, the die is cast—ATA61 will be online! As you may have seen, the ATA leadership announced the shift in July and promised further details and registration in August. At the time of this writing, registration has just gone live on the conference website ([ata61.org](http://ata61.org)), along with the session and event schedule. It is still unclear how exactly the annual meeting will work, but we expect that those details will be shared soon. Once all the relevant information has been made available, a preconference overview document will be prepared and posted on the SLD website, and a broadcast will be sent to members. Slavic-related sessions will also be featured on our podcast, *Slovo*. In the meantime, we welcome member input and ideas on how to best organize virtual SLD events during the conference.

Fortunately, since the work of the division throughout the year is by its nature remote, it has continued with relatively little disruption. If you are

itching for some translation-related reading and listening, check out the newest episodes of the podcast (available on SoundCloud, on most podcasting platforms, and through the SLD website), featuring, most recently, Paula Arturo and Katarzyna Hoerner. Please also visit (and subscribe to) the [SLD blog](#), where you will find a new contribution to the CEU Watch feature, which is designed to help certified members identify options for meeting their Continuing Education requirements. The blog also features reprinted articles from past *SlavFiles* that have retained their usefulness and entertainment value. The listserv (Google Group) has also been active with conversations on COVID terms and humor, jewelry, prepositions, and ways to pass the time. If you're not on our listserv yet, you can ask to join at <https://groups.google.com/g/ata-sld-forum>.

See below for a list of Slavic-track sessions.

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## ATA61 Slavic-Track Sessions

### Working in a Tug of War

Hashtag: #ATA61TugOfWar

Presented by Ellen Elias-Bursac, SLD and Literary Division Distinguished Speaker

Thursday, October 22, 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. EDT

Translators and interpreters at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia found themselves in an unusually visible position. Translation and interpreting disputes were raised by the defense and prosecution in almost every session of court, and the translation units were regularly pressured to change their choice of words, phrases, and terms. The speaker will describe the ways translators and interpreters responded to these pressures and the mechanisms that were established to deal with these demands.

### Playful Translation

Hashtag: #ATA61PlayfulTranslation

Presented by Ellen Elias-Bursac, SLD and Literary Division Distinguished Speaker

Thursday, October 22, 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. EDT

Almost every novel the speaker has translated has been focused on the wars that ravaged the former Yugoslavia, but she has discovered that humor and

playfulness are almost always essential to these works. The challenges take many forms: puns and jokes, situational humor, playfully long sentences, and culturally specific innuendo. The speaker will provide examples and discuss her development as a translator, particularly in terms of approaches to translating humor.

### Getting Edited and Getting Ahead in Literary Translation

Hashtag: #ATA61GettingEdited

Presented by Shelley Fairweather-Vega, CT

Friday, October 23, 2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. EDT

Successful literary translation demands careful decision-making and immense creative effort. If all goes well, it results in a new work of art that reproduces the author's style and message and showcases the translator's creative potential. And then...the editor shows up. This session will review real-life examples of translated manuscripts that have been dissected and put back together again by publishing house editors—usually for the best. We will discuss various editing roles and styles, discover what book editors look for in a translation, and identify efficient ways for translators and editors to collaborate for the best possible results.

**Corporate Social What? Introduction to Corporate Social Responsibility and How It's Usually (Mis)interpreted in the Post-Soviet States** Hashtag: #ATA61CSR

Presented by Veronika Demichelis, CT

Friday, October 23, 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. EDT

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been a global buzzword for years, but it's a relatively new concept in the post-Soviet States. The CSR jargon in itself can be confusing for an outsider, and language and cultural barriers can make communication on this topic even harder. Based on her training and experience in the corporate world of CSR in Russia and internationally, the speaker will give examples of how key social responsibility terms are usually understood by stakeholders in the post-Soviet states and share what difficulties usually arise when companies try to implement CSR activities locally.

**How to Become a Literary Translator**

Hashtag: #ATA61LiteraryXl8or

Presented by Evgeny Terekhin, CT

Friday, October 23, 5:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. EDT

The speaker will discuss his experience as a literary translator, from language school graduate to a freelance translator running his own business. The speaker will cover how he found and contacted his first clients, the major mistakes and failures that contributed to who he became, and the main lessons learned along the way.

**Balancing Act: Sneaking Historical Context into a Literary Translation from Russian** Hashtag: #ATA61BalancingAct

Presented by Nora Seligman Favorov, CT

Saturday, October 24, 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Russian history is full of terminology that doesn't translate easily into English. Military ranks, social categorizations, and the minutiae of everyday life all require a degree of explanation in English that would be disruptive in a literary translation. The speaker will discuss a series of decisions she made in translating Sofia Khvoshchinskaya's 1863 *City Folk and Country Folk* that were motivated by a desire to make the novel easily digestible for all lovers of 19th-century Russian literature, whether or not they know much about Russian history.

**Immigration Terminology Traps**

Hashtag: #ATA61TerminologyTraps

Presented by Olga Shostachuk

Saturday, October 24, 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

The speaker will provide a brief overview of the immigration system in the U.S., focusing on the asylum process and relief under the Convention Against Torture Treaty. Attendees will then discuss the terminology in the context of asylum and refugee language assistance and how to better handle terminology traps to respond to the unique needs of asylum seekers who are suffering from trauma or are victims of torture and survivors. This session will help hone and polish the attendees' transfer strategies and improve their terminology management and research skills.

**Contract Language Categories: Russian versus English**

Hashtag #ATA61RUvsENContracts

Presented by Eugenia Tietz-Sokolskaya, CT

Saturday, October 24, 5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Contracts are powerful texts, imposing obligations, penalties, and limits, clarifying intent, and even causing changes in status. But how does a contract—'merely' words on a page—achieve its purpose? What phrases and structures indicate obligations? Permission? Intention? This session will examine Ken Adams's categories of contract language for English, then turn to Russian contracts to see how the same effects are achieved. Attendees will come away with several practical strategies for translating contract language between Russian and English.

# A Newcomer's Guide to Finding Texts, Contacting Authors, and Submitting Your Translation

Maria Guzenko

I started my career in college by translating articles in lifestyle magazines and subtitles for indie movies but would go on to get a degree that focused on commercial translation and work in non-literary domains. Whenever I heard established literary translators talk about their craft, the thought of contacting authors or publishing houses would feel overwhelming—I didn't know where to start as a translator with no track record in that domain (think MFA, publications, or connections to publishers).

Below are some tips that might help someone who, just like me, is only preparing to take the first step. They are based on my experience and do not constitute legal or financial advice. Consider checking the [Translation Resources page](#) on the PEN America website for useful information on translation contracts, negotiation tips, and lists of publishers.

### Finding a Source Text

If you would like to have your translation published, you need to make sure English translation rights are available. One way of doing that is to use a text in the public domain. You may want to research what works fall under that category because the definitions may differ between the country of original publication and one where you are hoping to have your translation published. I was more interested in contemporary fiction and emerging authors, which meant I had to find out who held the English-language translation rights. In some cases, that may not be the author but rather the publisher the author has turned these rights over to. More information is available in Susan Bernofsky's blog post "[Getting the Rights to Translate a Work: A How-To Guide](#)," which focuses on book-length works.

Despite being an avid if haphazard reader, I do not follow contemporary Russian prose very closely, often only learning of the latest bestseller when it is adapted into a movie or gets an award, so I set out to look for a text in Russian literary magazines. I wanted to start with something small, so that I could complete the translation in a reasonable amount of time, and preferably written by an emerging author I could approach directly.

I started my search on the *Zhurnalny Zal* («Журнальный зал») [website](#), which aggregates



several literary journals. Many authors writing in Russian also publish their work on [Proza.ru](#). Keep in mind, however, that this portal lets anyone post their work, whereas journals are more selective about what they accept. After going through a few issues, I chose “Tamara Khristoforovna” (“Тамара Христофоровна”) a short story by Margarita Ardasheva published in *Novaya Yunost*.

### Contacting the Author

The next step was to get the author's permission to translate and publish the story. I had no contact information other than the author's name, so, to reach out to her, I grudgingly created an account on a popular social media platform. Naturally, depending on the author, different approaches to getting in touch may be required. Some authors may have a personal website with easily accessible contact information. But if that is not the case, it may be worth looking into what social networks are popular in the author's country and contacting the author through them.

I told Margarita I loved her story, shared some information about myself and links to my website, and asked if I might translate the story and submit it for publication. One thing you may want to be clear about at this point is the financial arrangement you are pursuing:

- Are you paying the author or rights holder for the right to publish the translation?
- Are they paying you for translating their work?
- Who is covering the submission costs?
- Is there an honorarium for publication and who will it go to?

In my case, the author and I did not exchange any money, and I covered the submission logistics and costs, with the caveat that I could not promise the translation would be accepted or that there would be compensation. I asked for a written statement that the rights to the English translation were available and provided the wording for the author's convenience.

### Revising and Submitting Your Translation

As I worked on my draft, I asked my peers for feedback, including colleagues working in my language combination and literary translators working with other languages. Another possible source of feedback might be published authors in your target



language. I also used the text-to-speech features on my word processor, such as the Read Aloud function in Word, to hear the translation read back to me. I kept the author of the story in the loop, too, asked her questions to confirm my understanding of the text, and sent her drafts of my translation.

To offer one example, the story mentioned an attractive 30-hour teaching position at a high school (“целых 30 часов,” literally “an entire 30 hours”). I was not sure why 30 hours made this a good job. One of my American reviewers suggested it was a good deal because one only had to work 30 hours a week but would be paid for a full-time job. When I asked an editor working for a Russian translation company, she said 30 hours was a rather heavy workload as these were actual classroom hours an instructor would need to teach. In the end, the author confirmed that a typical teacher’s workload was 18 hours a week, making 30 hours a busier but better paid schedule.

Once you are happy with your translation, it is time to submit it for publication! I had a list of potential journals to submit to from the ALTA Conference, but there are also lists available from [PEN America](#) or the [ATA Literary Division](#). Each journal will have its own stipulations, including:

- the languages it accepts translations from
- the genre
- submission length
- any accompanying documents, such as your and/or the author’s biography, a translator’s note, or a cover letter
- whether it accepts simultaneous submissions, i.e., whether it accepts works also being considered by other journals

You will want to read and follow the journal’s instructions. A lot of publications accept submissions on the [Submittable](#) platform, which makes the process a bit easier to navigate and track. I was warned that I might have to wait for a long time because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but I received my acceptance message from *Tupelo Quarterly* two months after submitting the translation. Consider sending your work to a few journals that accept simultaneous submissions—and be sure to withdraw your translation from the other publications once you have been accepted by a journal you want to see it published in!

*Maria Guzenko is an ATA-certified English<>Russian translator and a certified medical interpreter (CMI-Russian). She holds an MA in translation from Kent State University and specializes in healthcare translation. More information can be found on her website at <https://intorussian.net>*

## An excerpt from Maria’s translation published in *Tupelo Quarterly*

«Тамара Христофоровна» Автор: Маргарита Ардашева Опубликовано в журнале «Новая Юность»	“Tamara Khristoforovna” by Margarita Ardasheva Translated by Maria Guzenko
В гимназии им. Леннона работает Тамара Христофоровна. Она дает очень качественные и прочные знания: говорит детям, что она их математическая мать, а они — шоболды уличные. Когда Тамаре Христофоровне доводится совсем расчувствоваться, она добавляет, что черные колготки носят только проститутки. А как же быть с чулками и носками аналогичного цвета? Точных данных нет. Также доподлинно не известно, отчего Тамара Христофоровна настолько хорошо разбирается в проститутках. После подобных разговоров урочного времени остается от силы семь минут, за которые один из самых исполнительных учеников изображает мелом на электронной доске какое-нибудь непотребство: уравнение или того хуже логарифмическую функцию. Одна радость — с ошибкой.	Tamara Khristoforovna works in Lennon Preparatory High School. She imparts high-quality, lasting knowledge, which consists of telling children that she is their mother-in-math, and they are nothing but back-alley trollops. When Tamara Khristoforovna gets really emotional, she adds that only prostitutes wear black pantyhose. What about socks and stockings of that color? The jury’s still out on that one. It is also unclear how Tamara Khristoforovna knows so much about prostitutes. These kinds of conversations leave seven minutes at best until the end of the class. At that point, one of her more diligent students grabs a piece of chalk and spends the rest of the class scribbling some sort of abomination on the smart board, like an equation or, worse, a logarithmic function—naturally, with a mistake.
Как только раздается звонок, толпа учеников с радостным воем и победным улюлюканьем выносит запертую на два ключа дверь кабинета математики. Тамара Христофоровна остается вершить мелкий ремонт и поливать цветы: пластмассовый фикус и засохшую герань. Ясное дело — занятие тщетное, но в школе все учителя что-то поливают. Отставать от коллектива здесь не принято.	As soon as the bell rings, a mob of students bursts through the door of the math classroom with joyous howls and triumphant hoots. Never mind that the door’s been locked with two different keys. Tamara Khristoforovna stays behind to carry out minor repairs and water the flowers—a plastic ficus and a dried-up geranium. This is clearly an exercise in futility, but every teacher in the school waters something. You’re expected to keep up with your co-workers.

# The Newcomer Corner

curated by Maria Guzenko ([maria.guzenko@intorussian.net](mailto:maria.guzenko@intorussian.net))

SlavFile is grateful to Maria Guzenko for curating our Newcomer Corner. Although this regular column is designed as a forum where more experienced Slavic Languages Division members can share their advice, experience, and expertise with people new(er) to the field, we hope it will be of interest to all our readers. If you have a question, thoughts to share, or are relatively new to Slavic<>English T/I and would like to submit a profile, please contact Maria at [maria.guzenko@intorussian.net](mailto:maria.guzenko@intorussian.net).

## **Scott Ellsworth, German and Russian to English (translate@scottellsworthtranslator.com):**

Perhaps I should give the caveat that I'm actually a "somewhat seasoned" translator. But what I've been doing during the pandemic slowdown is focus heavily on professional development. Most of all I've watched webinars from Jenae Spry's "Success by Rx" blog, learning about marketing. I also read Tess Whitty's *Marketing Cookbook for Translators*, and based on her suggestion I came up with a one-page marketing plan and have started implementing it, month by month. In addition to these things, I've been studying to learn more in my specialty field of info tech. Also, along the way I got some of my work systems organized a little better, including a set of translation templates for official documents that I've translated. All this time I have continued my usual practice of maintaining my standard quota of 8 hours per day of real work, 40 hours per week (counted by the minute, on a spreadsheet).

## **Paul B. Gallagher, Russian to English (paulbg@pbg-translations.com):**

I would say translators need to maximize their vocabulary and mental flexibility. Any sentence in one language can be expressed "correctly" a dozen or more ways in another language; the key to good translation is choosing the right one for the subject and the context and the client. Sometimes you should change a passive sentence to an active one; sometimes you should reorder the constituents, and sometimes you should use a completely different image or metaphor. Read a lot, listen a lot, and practice paraphrasing in your target language. And don't forget to listen to the client—a clear understanding of his needs and purpose in ordering the translation will guide your choices. Least of all, parrot the source wording and syntax—that's not professional translation.

For this issue, Maria has asked several experienced professionals to answer a highly topical question.

In fact, as Maria becomes more "seasoned" herself, she would love a more recently-minted translator or interpreter to assist her in running the column. We hope one or two of our newer readers will reach out to her at [maria.guzenko@intorussian.net](mailto:maria.guzenko@intorussian.net).

## **Newcomer Question**

**What do our well-seasoned members suggest that translation and interpreting newbies experiencing a dry period because of the shutdown do to upgrade their skills and/or visibility during this time?**

## **Peter Nicholson, CT, Polish into English (peter.nicholson@wp.eu):**

- Join the [SLD ATA Certification Examination Practice Group](#) and start preparing to take the exam in your pair.
- The shutdown has prompted many organizations to give free online access to their training resources. ATA members can view [presentations from ATA58](#) (the ATA Annual Conference in 2017), and a [free on-demand webinar](#) is available each month. There is something here for everyone.
- Similarly, the University of Illinois Press has recently opened up unlimited free access to all issues of [The Polish Review](#) from 2010 to 2020 and [Polish American Studies](#) from 2000 to 2019, allowing all articles to be downloaded as PDFs.
- Materials that have always been free include several first-rate YouTube channels. Perhaps the best is [Mówiąc Inaczej](#), where the early episodes offer the option of turning on transcripts and/or subtitles. Also well worth watching are [Mateusz Adamczyk](#), [Wiedza z wami](#), [Polski z Pasją](#), and [Krótko mówiąc](#). Another fantastic resource is Polish Radio's [Lekcje języka polskiego](#). For those who are working on Polish as a second source language, YouTube's [Pozdrowienia z Polski](#), which also provides transcripts and/or subtitles, is a great option.
- Join the newly formed (open to receiving members as of July 20) [ITI Polish Language Network](#). You do not have to be a member of ITI to join the network, but you do have to pay an annual membership fee of £20.



**Veronika Demichelis, MA, MBA, CT,  
English into Russian (veronika@  
veronikademichelis.com):**

- Work on your translation or interpreting skills. Join a practice group (ahem, SLD has a certification exam practice group!) or form your own with a couple of like-minded colleagues. If you don't have enough paying work to hone your skills and get feedback, it's a good idea to spend some time every day on translating, editing, interpreting, copywriting, etc. If you have to share your workspace with your family or take care of the kids, schedule 30 minutes for practice every day. Every little bit counts.
- Learn more about the field(s) of your specialization. Most organizations offer some kind of virtual learning or networking, and these are great opportunities that even introverts will enjoy. Pick a subject, find a course, webinar, online conference, or virtual happy hour to attend, sign up, and put it in your calendar. To keep yourself accountable, jot down some notes after you attend and share with a colleague or write a post on your blog or LinkedIn page about your main takeaways. Finally, send a short, personalized note by email or through LinkedIn to the speaker or some of the attendees, thanking them for an opportunity to learn and inviting them to connect. If you have an interesting article or good advice to share on the subject of presentation, don't be shy.
- Make the best of your online presence. Make sure that your ATA directory listing is up-to-date. Update your website, or if you don't have one, consider making one with a simple tool like Squarespace or Wix. Create a professional-looking email address and make it easy for clients to find you online, e.g., a clear and attractive LinkedIn profile, a business page on Google, Facebook, Yelp, etc.
- Create a routine and make your day as structured as possible. An online tool like Asana or Trello or a paper calendar/planner can be helpful even if you don't have many work-related deadlines or appointments. Set your own deadlines: e.g. *Take an SEO course on Coursera by August 31. Update my LinkedIn profile by August 15.* If you have limited availability, block the time that you *can afford* to spend on this task daily/weekly. Write down your accomplishments, because our inner critic often diminishes or discards them. Don't compare your wins to someone else's. None of us were ready for the pandemic, and everyone's situation is different.

**Igor Vesler, English-Russian-Ukrainian  
(vesler@gmail.com):**

Simply google "Advice for young translators" (with no quotes) and you'll get ca. 90 million hits. Read the first 10 or 20 of them *ad nauseam*. Then follow your instincts. Your true passion for languages and computers will lead you in the right direction. Oh, one more thing: Diversify your skills. Having an alternative airfield never hurts.

**Evgeny Terekhin, MA, English-Russian,  
Literary and Marketing  
(terekhin11@gmail.com)**

When work gets slow, I keep in mind that "down-time" is a time to sow. Based on my past experience, "throwing the seeds" out there is the most boring part of my work, but it yields the most profit. It's really hard to have no job offers for days and even weeks, but if I use the time to: 1) send out cold emails, 2) craft my resume by adding the most relevant skills, 3) network and share with others what I am learning, 4) building a website, 5) learn to use a new software, 6) read books and articles to expand my mind, 7) answer KudoZ questions, etc. – I actually see over time that this seeming "silence" was a time of growth. It takes a while for seeds to take root and start sprouting. For a while, you don't see anything. But you know the seeds are there. And then... one day they spring up.

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T/I PROFESSION?**

**WILL ATA61 BE YOUR FIRST CONFERENCE?**

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**Buddies Welcome Newbies**

New to the ATA Annual Conference experience? Join us for the Buddies Welcome Newbies event to kick off conference week. "Newbies" (first-time attendees) and "Buddies" (veteran ATA Conference goers) will get to know each other, discuss effective ways to network during the conference, and receive a general orientation about ATA61.

**6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. EDT**

**Wednesday, October 21**

# Russian-English Glossary of COVID-Related Neologisms and Jargon

by Igor Vesler

Слова и словосочетания, включенные в глоссарий, взяты из русскоязычных газет, блогов и социальных сетей за последние два месяца и отражают преобладающее словоупотребление вне зависимости от правил русской грамматики и орфографии. (Например, во всех сложных русских словах, включающих составляющую *корона-*, она должна быть приведена в виде *короно-*, так как в русском языке в сложных словах русского языка допускаются только две соединительных гласных – *о* и *е*.)

Сердечная благодарность Лидии Стоун и Норе Фаворов за неоценимую помощь в редактировании глоссария и предложенные термины.

Термины, приведенные курсивом, предложены составителем и редакторами.



The words and expressions included in this Glossary were taken from Russian-language newspapers, blogs, and social media during the last two months and reflect regular usage that often disregards the rules of Russian grammar or orthography. For example, all Russian compound words that include the component *corona-* from the English term *coronavirus* should read as *короно-* (rather than *корона-*) since in the Russian language there are only two linking vowels, *о* and *е*, used in compound words.

My sincere gratitude goes to Lydia Stone and Nora Favorov for their invaluable help with editing and their terminological suggestions.

Terms in italics are suggestions of the compiler and editors.

<b>антимасочник, антимаскер</b>	Человек, открыто выступающий против ношения лицевых масок и (или) отрицающий их необходимость	<b>anti-masker</b>	A person who openly opposes wearing face masks and/or denies their necessity
<b>безzoomие</b>	Отсутствие у кого-л. программы Zoom, необходимой для дистанционного обучения или преподавания	<b>Inzoomity (Zoom + insanity)</b>	The state of having no Zoom—the application required for remote learning or teaching
<b>бесконтактная доставка</b>	Доставка еды и пр., оставляемой у двери во избежание контакта	<b>contact-free delivery</b>	Delivery of food, etc., left at the door to avoid personal contact
<b>бизумец</b>	Человек, который соглашается на два продолжительных сеанса в программе Zoom без перерыва или вынужден сделать это	<b>bizoomist, bizoomer</b>	A person who agrees or is compelled to attend two long sessions in the Zoom application without interruption ( <i>cf.</i> Russian <i>bezumiye</i> , madness)
<b>бизумие</b>	Два продолжительных сеанса в программе Zoom без перерыва	<b>bizoomity</b>	Enduring two long sessions in the Zoom application without interruption ( <i>cf.</i> Russian <i>bezumiye</i> , madness)
<b>вакцинация</b>	Весёлое пьянство в самоизоляции как профилактика заболевания	<b>vaccinalia</b>	Cheerful drunkenness in self-isolation as a disease prevention measure
<b>вжоперти</b>	Находиться в самоизоляции без средств к существованию (от «взаперти»)	<b>rear-ended by Corona</b>	Staying at home in self-isolation without any resources.
<b>вирузоляция</b>	(Само)изоляция на дому в условиях пандемии корона-вируса	<b>viral isolation</b>	(Self) isolation at home during the coronavirus pandemic.
<b>вирусный суверенитет</b>	Степень самоизоляции регионов России с точки зрения дистанцирования от других территорий	<b>viral sovereignty</b>	The degree of self-isolation mandated in various Russian regions with regard to distancing from other territories
<b>вирусоборчество</b>	Открытое отрицание официальных версий природы вируса и эпидемии	<b>virumachy</b>	<b>Virus + theomachy</b> (outspoken denial of official versions of epidemic/virus nature).
<b>вирусолипсис</b>	<b>вирус + апокалипсис</b>	<b>virus apocalypse</b>	<b>virus + apocalypse</b>

<b>вируспруденция</b>	Наука, разъясняющая, почему мэру не нужны никакие законные основания, чтобы закрыть город	<b>virusprudence</b>	A discipline explaining why a city is closed by its mayor without any legal basis
<b>вывозной рейс</b>	Авиарейс, вывозящий туристов, застрявших за рубежом из-за карантина	<b>repatriation flight</b>	Special flight taking tourists stuck in a foreign country back home
<b>законорея</b>	Патологическое стремление властей по любому поводу издавать законодательные акты и предписания	<b>legisorrhea</b>	The authorities' pathological desire to issue laws and regulations for any reason
<b>застрянец</b>	Тот, кто остался за пределами своей страны в связи с отменой авиасообщения из-за пандемии	<b>corona castaway</b>	A person "marooned" in a foreign country unable to return home because of quarantine measures
<b>зумбомбинг</b>	Явление, когда неизвестный вклинивается в чужой сеанс в программе Zoom и может, например, отправить какой-то неприличный файл всем участникам видеоконференции	<b>Zoom bombing</b>	An uninvited person crashing someone else's session in the Zoom application and, for example, sending some kind of indecent material, etc., to all the participants of the video conference
<b>зумиться</b>	Преподавать или учиться онлайн через сервис Zoom	<b>to zoom or zoommerize</b>	Teach, learn or attend meetings-online using the eponymous service
<b>изоизоляция (карантинное искусство)</b>	Создание в домашних условиях фото- или видеокomпозиций, имитирующих известные картины	<b>isolation art (quarantine art)</b>	Creating staged homemade photographs or video clips mimicking famous works of art
<b>изохобби</b>	Увлечения, возникшие во время самоизоляции	<b>iso-baking, knitting etc.</b>	Activity not usually practiced by an individual but taken up during self-isolation
<b>иконовирус</b>	(1) повсеместное распространение икон как профилактического средства; (2) вирус, передаваемый через прикосновение к иконе	<b>iconovirus</b>	(1) Widespread belief that kissing or other physical contact with icons can prevent coronavirus; (2) virus transmitted through touching an icon
<b>инфопандемия, инфодемия</b>	Лавина информации по теме «коронавирусные заболевания», ведущая к некритическому восприятию явления	<b>infopandemic, infodemic</b>	A negative term for the avalanche of information about "coronavirus disease"
<b>карантец</b>	«полный карантец», «нам всем карантец»	<b>snaflu</b>	This comes from a creative combination of a commonly used Russian expletive for SNAFU and the word "quarantine"
<b>карантикулы</b>	В самоизоляцию россияне ушли с опозданием, а перед этим от души нагулялись, назвав это время «карантикулами» (карантин + каникулы)	<b>quaranacation, coronacation</b>	When Russians finally heard that a lockdown was to be mandated, they celebrated this in advance as an extra vacation
<b>карантин-шейминг</b>	Недовольство окружающих по поводу того, что человек не соблюдает или неправильно соблюдает условия самоизоляции	<b>quarantine shaming</b>	Confrontation (usually public) and castigation of those who do not observe quarantine rules
<b>карантиндер</b>	«Тиндер» для тех, кто сидит в самоизоляции	<b>quaranTinder</b>	Tinder (an online dating service) for those who are in self-isolation
<b>карантинейджеры</b>	Подростки, проходящие или прошедшие самоизоляцию	<b>quaranteens</b>	Teenagers who have gone through or are undergoing quarantine
<b>карантини</b>	Мартини в режиме самоизоляции	<b>quarantini</b>	Martini one makes oneself in self-isolation



<b>карантиниада</b>	«Виды спорта» в само-изоляции (современное пятижорье, перетягивание салата, фигурное питание, спортивная ходьба в «Пятерочку», легкая котлетика, балконный спорт, вялобол, алкогольф и т.п.)	<i><b>Quarantiniad</b></i>	A play on the word Olympiad. Includes Olympic-style “games” held during quarantine
<b>карантинки</b>	(1) (По аналогии с валентинками) смешные тексты и мемы, посылаемые друг другу разлученными карантинном; (2) лакомства домашнего приготовления в самоизоляции	<i><b>quarantine valentines</b></i>	(1) (A play on “valentines”) —jokes, funny memes, etc., people separated by the lockdown send each other; (2) homemade delicacies cooked while in self-isolation
<b>карантинование</b>	По аналогии с Евровидением (мем «Теперь на всех балконах Европы!»)	<i><b>quarantinvision</b></i>	By analogy to Eurovision, somewhat public performances, for example on urban balconies, by people observing quarantine
<b>карантье</b>	Человек, который в условиях карантина сдает напрокат свою собаку для прогулок	<i><b>quarrenter</b></i>	A person who rents his/her dog out for walks during the quarantine, allowing non dog owners to go outside.
<b>ковигист, коронапофигист</b>	Человек, отрицающий опасность вируса и пренебрегающий всеми мерами защиты от него	<i><b>corona/covid nose-thumber, pooh pooher</b></i>	Person downplaying coronavirus dangers or refusing to take precautions
<b>ковидарий</b>	Инфекционная больница, где пациенты и врачи живут в коронавирусном симбиозе	<i><b>covidarium</b></i>	Infectious disease hospital where patients and doctors exist in a kind of a coronavirus symbiosis
<b>ковидарность</b>	Объединение людей, помогающих тем, кому тяжело переносить карантин (напр., петербургский проект «Ковидарность»); солидарность с теми, кто сидит дома	<i><b>covidarity</b></i>	People teaming up to help those who find the quarantine difficult (for example, the St. Petersburg project “Covidarity”); solidarity with those who are confined at home
<b>ковидео</b>	Широко распространяемые видеоклипы, посвященные вирусу COVID-19	<i><b>covideo</b></i>	Widely shared COVID-19 video clips
<b>ковидиот</b>	(1) тот, кто игнорирует предупреждения, касающиеся общественного здоровья или безопасности; (2) панически закупающий и запасающий съестное и прочие товары в громадных объемах	<i><b>covidiot</b></i>	(1) Someone who ignores public health or safety warnings; (2) a person who panic buys food and other goods in humongous quantities
<b>ковидофобия</b>	Преувеличенная боязнь подхватить инфекцию, мнительность	<i><b>covidophobia</b></i>	Exaggerated fear of catching the infection, hypochondria
<b>ковимерсант</b>	Человек, построивший бизнес на пандемии	<i><b>covid (or corona) profiteer</b></i>	A person capitalizing on the pandemic
<b>коронабесие, вирусобесие</b>	(1) Искусственно нагнетаемая и раздуваемая паника вокруг коронавируса; (2) «профилактические» меры властей, фактически ограничивающие права и свободы граждан	<i><b>corona obsession</b></i>	(1) Artificially inflated panic surrounding the coronavirus; (2) “preventive” measures by the authorities that infringe on the rights and freedoms of citizens
<b>коронавирусить</b>	Болезнь, заразившись коронавирусом	<i><b>coronavirulate</b></i>	Suffer from coronavirus
<b>коронавирусник</b>	Пациент, зараженный коронавирусом	<i><b>coronavirusnik</b></i>	Patient infected with the coronavirus

<b>коронавт</b>	(1) врач в противочумном защитном комплекте; (2) человек в полном «противовирусном» облачении, то есть в маске, защитных очках и перчатках	<b>coronanaut</b>	(1) Physician wearing a full pathogen protective gear/coat; (2) a person in full coronavirus protective gear, such as a face mask, protective glasses/goggles, and gloves
<b>коронагеддон</b>	<b>коронавирус + Армагеддон</b>	<b>coronageddon</b>	<b>Coronavirus + Armageddon</b>
<b>коронаджихад</b>	Термин пришёл из Индии, где власти обвинили в распространении вируса членов мусульманского экстремистского движения «Таблиги Джамаат», якобы плюющих в полицейских и призывающих игнорировать карантин, поскольку COVID-19 «не действует на мусульман»	<b>corona jihad</b>	This term came from India where the authorities blamed the spread of the virus on members of the Muslim extremist movement Tablighi Jamaat who allegedly spat on the police and urged the public to ignore the quarantine since COVID-19 “does not affect Muslims”
<b>коронадиссидент; тж. короноотрицатель, коронаскептик, ковидоскептик</b>	Тот, кто отрицает опасность коронавируса или считает его обычным гриппом	<b>corona (covid) dissident; also corona denier, corona sceptic, cvidosceptic</b>	Someone who denies the danger of coronavirus or considers it no worse than a common flu
<b>коронаоке</b>	Караоке в режиме самоизоляции	<b>coronaoke</b>	Karaoke in self-isolation
<b>коронапсихоз</b>	Патологическая боязнь подхватить инфекцию, экстремальные защитные и профилактические меры	<b>coronapsychosis</b>	Pathological fear of catching the infection, taking extreme protective and preventive measures
<b>коронафейки</b>	Страшилки, ужастики и прочие недостоверные сообщения на тему короновируса	<b>corona fakes, corona canards</b>	Horror stories, tall tales and other fictitious and/or unreliable coronavirus information
<b>корониалы, ковиниалы</b>	(1) Дети, которые сейчас вживаются в виртуальное образование («мой корониал настроил для меня зум»); (2) дети, которые родятся через 9 месяцев после карантина	<b>coronials, covidials</b>	(1) Children making do with online instruction while schools are closed (“This coronial of mine has just set up Zoom for me”); (2) babies born nine months after the lockdown
<b>короноваться, закороноваться</b>	Подхватить вирус, заразиться	<b>to get/be coronated</b>	To catch/to contract the coronavirus
<b>короноверующий</b>	Антоним к <b>коронадиссидент</b>	<b>corona believer</b>	Antonym of <b>coronadissident</b>
<b>коронофрения (коронойя)</b>	Гибрид истерии, паранойи, невежества, глупости и подлости, произведенный соединенными усилиями СМИ, интернет-сетей, политиков, чиновников, правоохранителей и широких народных масс	<b>coronaphrenia (coronoia)</b>	A mixture of hysteria, paranoia, ignorance, stupidity and villainy generated by the combined efforts of the media, social networks, politicians, government officials, law enforcement agencies and the general public during the global coronavirus pandemic
<b>локдаун</b>	Запрет свободного входа или выхода из здания или определенной зоны в связи с чрезвычайной ситуацией. Полное ограничение передвижения людей, например, в связи с эпидемией или стихийным бедствием	<b>lockdown</b>	A state of isolation or restricted access instituted as a security measure

<b>масконошение</b>	Ритуал ношения лицевых масок в публичных местах	<b>mask-wearing</b>	The practice or requirement of wearing face masks in public places
<b>маскосрач</b>	Стычка из-за ношения или неношения лицевой маски	<b>mask brawl</b>	An altercation caused by someone wearing or not wearing a face mask
<b>масочный режим</b>	Требование ношения лицевых масок (особенно на собраниях)	<b>mask-wearing regimen</b>	The requirement to wear face masks (especially at meetings)
<b>пандемиократия</b>	Гибрид бюрократического тоталитаризма, военно-полицейского произвола, искусственно нагнетаемой паники и стремительно наступающей нищеты вследствие пандемии	<b>pandemiocracy</b>	A combination of bureaucratic totalitarianism, military involvement, restrictive police measures, artificially induced panic and rapid onset of economic misery occurring during a pandemic
<b>перчаточный режим</b>	Требование ношения резиновых/латексных перчаток (особенно при посещении магазинов)	<b>glove-wearing regimen</b>	The requirement to wear rubber/latex gloves (especially when visiting a store)
<b>покоронено</b>	От «похоронено» (накрылось короной)	<b>coronacided</b>	Pun on the similarity between the Russian word for to bury and the word <i>corona</i> . Overwhelmed or even destroyed by coronavirus
<b>самоизолектор</b>	Преподаватель, ведущий онлайн-лекции из дому	<b>isolecturer</b>	Someone who teaches online from home
<b>самоизолядки</b>	Напр., «приносить коронавирус с самоизолядок»	<b>quarantine quickies</b>	Sexual encounters while supposedly in self-isolation
<b>самоизолянты</b>	Соблюдающие режим (само) изоляции	<b>self-isolants, isolants</b>	Those complying with the (self) isolation regimen
<b>самоизоляция</b>	В российском культурном нарративе «изоляция» обычно является принудительной, а термин до настоящего времени использовался исключительно в правоприменительной деятельности (напр., ограничение свободы передвижения так называемых «социально-опасных лиц»)	<b>voluntary isolation/confinement</b>	In the Russian cultural narrative, “isolation” is usually coercive, and the term has so far been used exclusively in law enforcement (e.g., restricting the freedom of movement of so-called “socially dangerous persons”)
<b>саморазизоляция</b>	Нарушение режима самоизоляции (законное или произвольное)	<b>self-disisolation</b>	Violation of the self-isolation regimen for any reason
<b>сизо (режим сизо)</b>	Самоизоляция (ироническая аллюзия к «СИЗО» - следственный изолятор (тип пенитенциарного учреждения, в котором содержатся граждане, ожидающие решения суда или отправки к месту отбывания наказания)	<b>S(elf)-IZO</b>	(Voluntary) <b>self-isolation</b> —an ironic allusion to the Russian acronym SIZO, which stands for pre-trial detention center (a type of penitentiary institution where citizens who are awaiting a court decision or being sent to the place where they are going to serve their sentences are temporarily held)
<b>скарантинить время</b>	Скоротать время в карантине	<b>passing/killing quarantine</b>	Getting through the time, however one can, while in quarantine
<b>сокарантинцы</b>	Те, кто находятся вместе в самоизоляции	<b>co-quaranteeners</b>	Those who are together in self-isolation



<b>страшилки</b>	Распространяемые в СМИ и социальных сетях преувеличенные и часто истерические высказывания на какую-л. тему	<b>corona horror stories, fear porn</b>	Groundlessly exaggerated and often hysterical statements disseminated in the media and social networks on any given topic
<b>суперспредер, сверхраспространитель</b>	Заболевший, заражающий при кратковременном контакте необычно большое число других	<b>superspreader</b>	A sick person infecting an unusually large number of others during a short-term contact
<b>удаленка, дистанционка</b>	Режим работы в домашней изоляции	<b>working from home (WFH)</b>	Home-based work performed by a full-time employee during the stay-at-home (self-isolation) period
<b>уханька</b>	Коронавирусная инфекция (по аналогии с «испанкой»)	<b>Wuhan flu</b>	Play on “Spanish flu”
<b>хароновир</b>	Намёк на смертоносность коронавируса (Харон – перевозчик в царство мёртвых)	<b>Charonovirus</b>	A veiled reference to the lethality of coronavirus (Charon being the carrier of the souls of the dead to the underworld)
<b>хоумсексуал, домосек</b>	Новые гендерные роли и сексуальные ориентации в самоизоляции	<b>quaranqueer</b>	Punning reference to a generally heterosexual person who turns to homosexual practices because of diminished opportunities in quarantine

Igor Vesler has served as a senior research associate at the Ukrainian Institute of Scientific and Technical Information (Kyiv, Ukraine) (1973-1989) and Manager, Production and Product Development, at the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (New York, NY) (1990-2000). Since 1975, he has worked as a freelance Russian and Ukrainian legal and technical translator and interpreter. Currently, he is an independent consultant at Diken Research (New York, NY), an LSP in industries such as oil and gas, nuclear engineering, aerospace engineering and missile technology, international banking and project financing, law. He is a member of ATA, ITA, and AIAA and can be reached at [vesler@gmail.com](mailto:vesler@gmail.com).

## Web Watch

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

Nora Seligman Favorov

This edition of Web Watch recommends two items related to this SLD's 2020 Greiss lecturer, Ellen Elias-Bursac, who is associated with some very interesting online reading.

#### 1. Interview with the Ad Hoc Tribunals Oral History Project

In addition to providing background on this fascinating project, this link leads to the 48-page transcript of an interview conducted by two project researchers with Elias-Bursac. Although questions relating to translation and interpretation are not the primary focus, given the nature of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), they come up repeatedly. The Tribunal was a Europe-wide undertaking dealing with evidence in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian that grappled with decisions as to when it was important to distinguish among them in dealing with vital questions of guilt, innocence, and justice. It makes for gripping reading.

#### 2. Interview with Paula Gordon and Ellen Elias-Bursac, translators of *Catherine the Great and the Small*

This interview was conducted by Translating Women, a UK-based project that describes itself as “located in the context of both social movements (such as #metoo and #timesup), and shifts within the publishing industry (such as The Year of Publishing Women and Women in Translation month).” The project is spearheaded by Helen Vassallo, a senior lecturer in French at the University of Exeter. She has also published an [interview with Olja Knežević](#), author of *Catherine the Great and the Small*. In the translator interview, Gordon and Elias-Bursac discuss their collaboration process and philosophies.

# Humor in a Time of Plague

Liv Bliss

Here is a selection of COVID-19-related jokes that a Russian-speaking friend sent me recently. I thought I'd share, because, of all the things we could be doing right now, I vote for *smiling*.

Многие, находясь на самоизоляции, вообще перестали за собой следить. Усы топорщатся, бороды клочьями, пивные животы. Жуть. А про мужиков я вообще молчу...	A lot of people in self-isolation have stopped taking care of themselves: bristly mustaches, scraggly beards, beer bellies. It's horrendous. And about the men, the less said, the better.
Кто-то знает, как долго в карантине нельзя никого пускать в дом? А то жена четвертый день стучит в дверь, меня это уже нервирует...	Does anyone know how long we have to keep people out of our homes during the lockdown? Because my wife's been knocking on the door for four days, and it's getting on my nerves.
Самое эффективное средство против коронавируса – стакан спирта, три раза в день. На вторую неделю профилактики вирусы становятся видны невооруженным взглядом и их можно уничтожить обычной мухобойкой.	The best remedy for the Coronavirus is a tumbler of hard liquor three times a day. By the second week of this preventive treatment, you'll be able to see the viruses with your naked eye and can snuff them out with just a fly swatter.
Пришли с мужем домой из магазина. Сняли маски. Оказалось, муж не мой! Будьте бдительны!!!	Husband and I came home from the store. Took off our masks. Turns out, it wasn't my husband. Watch out for that!
Третий день карантина. Случайно разговорился с женой. Очень даже ничего баба оказалась.	Lockdown, day three. I accidentally had a talk with the wife. Fact is, she's not a bad old broad after all.
Пробыв несколько дней дома, я понял почему кот постоянно просит жрать...	After a few days at home, I understood why the cat keeps fussing to be fed.
Неизвестно сколько продлится эта ситуация. Я советую купить елку.	Nobody knows how long this is going to go on. I advise buying a Christmas tree.
А врачи предупредят, когда снова можно будет руки не мыть?	Have the doctors announced when we'll be able to go back to not washing our hands?
Собаки в шоке – все люди в намордниках.	The dogs are in shock. All the people are wearing muzzles.
Купил сахар, дрожжи. В выходные попробую изобрести вакцину.	I bought sugar and yeast. This weekend, I'll try inventing a vaccine.
Самое сложное в безделье – это то, что нельзя остановиться и передохнуть.	The trickiest part about doing nothing is that you can't stop for a breather.

And two more that have nothing to do with COVID-19 but tickled my funny bone anyway.

Хочу жить вечно! И пока все идет нормально...	I want to live forever. So far, so good...
Пошел сдавать кровь... Но они задавали слишком много вопросов: – Чья кровь? – Где взял? – Почему в ведре?	I went to donate blood. But they asked too many questions: Whose blood is it? Where did you get it? Why's it in a bucket?

Liv Bliss is an ATA-certified Russian to English translator who lives in the White Mountains of Arizona and enjoys a bad joke as much as anyone. She can be reached at [bliss.mst@gmail.com](mailto:bliss.mst@gmail.com).

## TRANSLATION FEAST IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Paul Gallagher and Igor Vesler announced to those who receive mail through the *ata-sld-forum* the availability at <http://www.pbg-translations.com/COVID%20Glossary.pdf> of five successively expanded and updated versions of an English-Russian glossary of COVID-19 terms. English to Russian and Russian to English translators and interpreters are invited to stop reading SlavFile and download this treasure immediately. SlavFile asked medical R<>E translator, interpreter and trainer of medical and legal T/I, P. Elana Pick, to comment on this work.

## REVIEW OF COVID GLOSSARY

P. Elana Pick

Last spring, I was very grateful when our colleagues, Paul B. Gallagher and Igor Vesler, started generously sharing with us versions of a **COVID Glossary** they co-authored. I received their 32-page final version on June 3, 2020.

This glossary is, first and foremost, a very helpful practical tool, especially since there are very few available resources nowadays on corona viruses in general and COVID-19 in particular. It offers carefully chosen examples that are relevant to medicine in general and COVID-19 in particular, as well as clear definitions and, in some cases, explanations and expansions of acronyms and abbreviations.

It includes terms that are widely used in the medical field (ambulance, triage, mortality rate, to name a few), the proper way to translate terms that have been discussed by medical translators for a long time (for instance, *больной* and *пациент*), and very specific terms related to diagnostics, medical instruments, treatment, and specialized areas such as virology, immunology, etc. The acronyms and abbreviations it includes are incredibly important for interpreters, who often need to come up with a proper translation right away, either on the phone or at a medical office.

Additionally, it provides examples of how to translate COVID-19 related terms. There are quite a few different ways of translating “COVID-19” itself into Russian, including leaving it in English (which is seen even in official UN documents), or keeping both Russian and English, which leads to a mishmash in documents coming out of different UN agencies (see,

for instance: <https://www.un.org/ru/coronavirus>). In the Russian media you can see *корона вирус*, *короновирис*, *коронаВирис*, *КОВИД-19*, *коронавирус* SARS-CoV-2, and variations thereof. By the way, the idea behind those possible translation versions is well explained in the glossary, adding to its value as an educational tool.

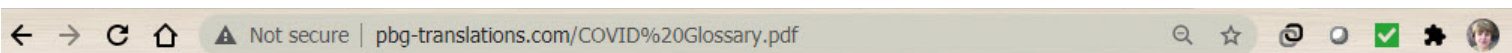
The glossary is clearly structured. Rather than just giving terms and definitions, explanations and alternate terms are provided, where indicated. The glossary consists of four columns labeled: **English Term or Phrase**, **English Definition/Explanation**, **Русский термин (словосочетание)**, **Русское определение (примечание)**.

It is introduced with **Editor's Notes** and ends with a two-page list of recently added **Supplemental Entries**, which are also included in the main dictionary. A brief last section cites a number of **Additional Resources**.

To reiterate, I find this glossary to be a great resource for everyday work and professional development for all of us and our students. I am extremely grateful to Paul and Igor for sharing it with our Russian translator/interpreter community. Kudos!

A sample page from the glossary can be found on the next page.

P. Elana Pick, Ph.D. is an ATA-Certified Translator (EN>RU), Grader, Federal Court Certified Contract Interpreter, Certified Medical Interpreter, and Conference Interpreter who has served as a subject-matter expert for The National Board for Certification of Medical Interpreters. She is based in Brooklyn, NY. She can be reached at [pick.ep@gmail.com](mailto:pick.ep@gmail.com).

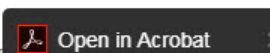


### COVID Glossary Version 5.0 (Updated Final) of June 3, 2020

By Paul B. Gallagher and Igor Vesler  
Proper attribution when citing or quoting will be appreciated.

#### Editor's notes:

1. Although the term *больной* is widely used in Russian, the official standard is *пациент*—a person who may or may not be





English Term or Phrase	English Definition/Explanation	Русский термин (словосочетание)	Русское определение (примечание)
force of mortality		сила смертности	
forward survival estimate		перспективная оценка выживаемости	
frailty		старческая астения	
frontline [healthcare] worker		медицинский персонал, работающий в условиях возможного контакта с инфицированными лицами	буквально, медперсонал-«фронтовик» (в «войне» с пандемией)
gene/DNA sequencing		расшифровка последовательности ДНК (секвенирование ДНК)	
gene-spliced vaccine		генно-ниженерная (рекомбинантная) вакцина	См. <i>recombinant vaccines</i>
generalized infection		генерализованная инфекция	
genome		геном	
genome length		длина генома	
genomic sequencing		определение (расшифровка) нуклеотидной последовательности генома	
geographic spread		географическое распространение	
global burden of disease		глобальное (мировое) бремя болезни	
[latex or vinyl] gloves	disposable for all healthcare workers	перчатки резиновые (латексные, виниловые)	
gold standard	the very best model/approach/procedure/etc., against which all other options are measured	эталон (эталонные правила, процедуры, тесты и т.п.)	«золотой стандарт»
government facility	location	медицинское учреждение, контролируемое государственными органами	местонахождение
gown	disposable paper for all healthcare workers	халат (накидка)	медицинский одноразовый
gradient of infection	range of possible host reactions to an invading pathogen, from inapparent subclinical through mild clinical to severe to fulminating and overwhelming generalized fatal bacteraemia/viremia.	градиент инфекции (размах инфекции)	
ground-glass opacities		снижение прозрачности лёгочной ткани (симптом «матового стекла»)	
group-specific antigens		группоспецифические антигены	
hand hygiene		гигиена рук	
hand sanitizer		антисептик (дезинфицирующее средство) для рук	
hazmat suit	slang for “hazardous material suit” that protects the wearer against hazardous materials (term also used for suits that protect against infectious agents)	защитный костюм (костюм химзащиты, противочумный костюм)	комплект защитной одежды врача-инфекциониста, комплект индивидуальной медицинской гражданской защиты (КИМГЗ)
healthcare-associated infection (HAI)	<a href="https://health.gov/our-work/health-care-quality/health-care-associated-infections/national-hai-action-plan#actionplan_development">https://health.gov/our-work/health-care-quality/health-care-associated-infections/national-hai-action-plan#actionplan_development</a>	госпитальная (нозокомиальная) инфекция	(инфекция, вызванная лечением или уходом)
healthcare facility (HCF)/health facility		лечебно-профилактическое учреждение (ЛПУ, медицинское учреждение, лечебное учреждение)	

# American News and Political Jargon: An Explanatory Guide to Contemporary Usage

*Paul B. Gallagher*

Term or Phrase	Explanation
above the fold	(of story placement) prominently displayed on the top half of the front page (since broadsheet papers are folded in the middle); implies top priority
advance work	preparations made by a politician's or campaign's staff to ensure that an event goes smoothly as planned: arranging a venue, contacting local officials (especially allies) for coordination, arranging travel and accommodations for the speaker(s) and staff, promoting the event among prospective attendees, providing appropriate signage for the venue and attendees, etc.
Again, ...	In response to a question, politicians and spokespersons often begin with this word as a way of saying, "I already said this," even if they haven't already said it. In other words, "why don't you stop asking me this?"
ammunition	material (information, reports, etc.) that can be used to attack an opponent
backlash	negative or critical response to one's action, statement or policy position
baked in (the cake)	already taken into account (in a decision-making process), especially said of derogatory information already known to the voters: more details will not <i>move the needle</i>
base	(a politician's or party's) core voters, (his/her/its) most committed supporters
belt	geographic region linked by a cultural or industrial theme: Bible Belt (religious South from southern VA to MO to TX), Corn Belt (agricultural Midwest from OH to NE), Rust Belt (industrial Midwest formerly supported by the steel industry, from central NY to southeastern WI), Snow Belt (region around the Great Lakes prone to lake-effect snowfall), Sun Belt (hot southern region from SC to southern CA), etc. See <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_belt_regions_of_the_United_States">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_belt_regions_of_the_United_States</a>
the big picture	the overall situation in general terms, as opposed to the details; cf. <i>down in the weeds</i>
bleed into	(of a news story) combine with, overlap with, not remain separate from (another story)
blowback	unintended consequences, unwanted side-effects, or repercussions of one's action, statement or policy position [originally an intelligence term]
briefing	organized explanation of some issue, policy position, major event, etc. by a person in a position to know or a <i>spokesperson</i> . Can be for the press or public, or can be within an organization for its members or officials
by all accounts	everyone says (at least, everyone we asked); the consensus is
(not) in the cards	(un)likely to happen, (not) expected
(quote) chapter and verse	direct, exact quotation of some document, reference, law, rule, etc.; to speak specifically with relevant detail
clickbait	a highly provocative headline designed to cause web visitors to click and view the story, which is actually much more banal; the aim is to earn money by serving (delivering) ads. As a pejorative, denotes an <i>incendiary</i> story with <i>no there there</i>
color me <adjective>	count me as <adjective>, consider me <adjective>
columnist	an opinion writer with an arrangement to publish a column at regular intervals

Term or Phrase	Explanation
commentator	a person frequently seen publicly commenting on the news; not always an expert; see <i>columnist</i> , <i>pundit</i>
conspiracy theory	[pejorative] a claim that current events are not as they appear to a rational person, but can only be explained by a harebrained theory in which unseen forces are controlling them. Related: <i>conspiracy theorist</i> (lunatic); <i>tinfoil hat</i> .
crickets	Silence. Imagine sitting on a porch in the countryside in the evening, where there is no traffic noise, no music, no voices, no sound at all but the chirping of crickets. Used when a public figure, party, etc., has said nothing on an issue.
cross the line	violate established norms of behavior or propriety; see <i>over the line</i>
dark horse	candidate regarded as unlikely to win based on current polls, but possibly underestimated, not to be ruled out
derail	prevent (some process) from attaining its goal, especially a candidacy, legislation, or movement (see <i>on track</i> )
dig up dirt (on <someone>)	succeed in discovering derogatory information (on <someone>) that will destroy their reputation or <i>derail</i> their candidacy (see <i>oppo</i> )
(not) in <someone>'s DNA	an inherent, immutable part of <someone>'s nature that can never be added or subtracted (as the case may be)
dog bites man/man bites dog	Which is news? If the headline reads, <i>Dog Bites Man!</i> it's not news and shouldn't even be published. But an unusual, atypical, unexpected event ( <i>Man Bites Dog!</i> ) is news.
double down	(of a politician) after one's policy or position is rejected or discredited, to increase one's effort to promote that failed policy or position [originally from blackjack]
(get) down in the weeds	(delve into) arcane details that will interest only the nerdiest listeners/readers and will be beyond the comprehension of all others
draw a line in the sand	establish a boundary that must not/will not be crossed without serious repercussions, dare an opponent to "make my day" [Clint Eastwood quote]. Cf. <i>red line</i>
drill down	pursue a line of discussion/questioning into the details, get <i>down in the weeds</i>
dustup	minor fuss, <i>kerfuffle</i> , much less than a <i>firestorm</i> . Like "row" in British usage, which is little known in the U.S.
the elephant in the room	the obvious, unavoidable fact or issue that must be faced, can no longer be ignored (no relation to GOP mascot)
fallout	negative consequences, repercussions, especially of an error; cf. <i>blowback</i>
fan the flames	take action/make statements that will intensify a controversy; cf. <i>firestorm</i>
feeler	same as <i>trial balloon</i> , but done privately
fever swamp	imaginary place where <i>conspiracy theories</i> breed, source of insane or harebrained ideas
(put one's) finger to the wind	(of a politician) determine which position is likely to be most popular and adopt that one (opposite of <i>voting one's conscience</i> )
fishing expedition	asking unjustified general questions in the hope of accidentally <i>digging up dirt</i> (cf. <i>gotcha question</i> , <i>witch hunt</i> )
firestorm	intense criticism from many sources, not always multilateral (may be only from opponents)
flak	"incoming fire" (in the figurative sense), i.e., criticism



Term or Phrase	Explanation
flack	lackey (not to be confused with <i>flak</i> )
flesh out	provide/acquire more details to give/gain a complete understanding
float <an idea, a proposal>	make a tentative preliminary proposal without a firm commitment, to <i>test the waters</i> , see whether it will <i>fly</i>
fly	(of an idea, proposal, etc.) to gain support or acceptance
fly under the radar	act quietly, even surreptitiously, not flagrantly or ostentatiously, so as to go unnoticed until the time is right
fodder	material or information that can be used for the stated purpose (grist for one's mill)
frontrunner	leading candidate in the polls, expected to win unless he/she <i>shoots him/herself in the foot</i>
get out over one's skis	try to accomplish too much before <i>laying the proper foundation</i> (lining up support); cf. <i>overplay one's hand</i> ; also, try to draw conclusions before knowing all the facts
get/gain traction	(of a proposal) begin to gain support or <i>move the needle</i>
get up on <one>'s hind legs	(of a normally docile/compliant person or organization) offer uncharacteristic resistance, show unexpected backbone/courage (imagine a horse rearing)
go down this path	pursue this line of inquiry/discussion
go to the mat on <something>	offer all possible resistance on <something>, fight tooth and nail for <something> [originally a wrestling term]. See also the <i>hill</i> <someone> <i>wants to die on</i>
gotcha question	a question designed to trap the interviewee, e.g., "When did you stop beating your wife?" Often used by politicians as a charge against media who ask legitimate hard questions that they don't want to answer. Includes cases where the interviewee considers the material arcane, something no one can be expected to know off the top of his/her head
grip and grin	event where a politician shakes hands with supporters or prospective allies but says nothing of substance. See also <i>rope line</i> .
(not) the hill <someone> wants to die on	an issue that is (not) of such vital importance to <someone> that they will fight to the death over it (figuratively speaking)
hold <someone>'s feet to the fire	force someone to account for their behavior/decisions/actions, refuse to accept vague platitudes
horse-race coverage	news coverage focused on who's winning or likely to win, ignoring the candidates' character and positions on issues
"If it bleeds, it leads"	basic principle of local news: any story involving injuries or fatalities will draw a lot of attention, so it will be placed <i>above the fold</i> . See also <i>clickbait</i>
incendiary	(of remarks/a statement) likely to provoke a <i>firestorm</i> of criticism; may or may not be intentionally so
jockey for position	compete to be seen in the best light—with the right policy positions, as the leading candidate, etc.
kerfuffle	minor fuss, <i>dustup</i> , much less than a <i>firestorm</i>
know where the bodies are buried	know all the details of someone's transgressions (usually one's superior or one's organization), be in a position to reveal the <i>smoking gun</i>
laser focus	absolute, total attention to exactly one point

Term or Phrase	Explanation
lay the foundation (for <something>)	prepare (the political environment) by organizing allies, making statements that raise concerns about the issue to be addressed, etc. so that when a formal proposal or announcement is made, a prompt and enthusiastic positive response results
leave <one>self an out	give <one>self <i>wiggle room</i> , allow <one>self the ability to change <one>'s position
litany/laundry list	a long list of something, especially an exhaustive one
the lunatic fringe	people around the margins of the community or of a discussion who have wild and crazy theories but need not be taken seriously because they are so few in number. Same as the <i>tin-foil-hat crowd</i> .
move the needle	make a difference, cause a change in policy; change polling results (i.e., voters' minds)
no there there	(a matter of) no substance or consequence, a <i>nothingburger</i>
nonstarter	an offer or proposal that is so unreasonable/unacceptable that no negotiation/discussion is possible; the other side won't even consider it
(this is) not his/her first rodeo	this person is experienced, not a rookie
nothingburger	a tempest in a teapot, a controversy with <i>no there there</i>
off the rails	failing, progressing not as intended (see <i>derail</i> ), especially blatantly or abjectly (not used for slow progress)
be/get onboard with <something>	be/become sympathetic with <something>, especially a position or policy goal; join a special-interest group, bloc, or caucus
on track <to do something>	progressing as necessary to attain a goal, expected to succeed, especially of a candidacy, legislation, or movement (see <i>derail</i> )
oppo((sition) research)	the result of research/investigations aimed at <i>digging up dirt</i> (discovering derogatory information) on an opponent; the full form can also mean the research process
optics	appearances; how something will look to the public
over the line	an action or statement that violates established norms of behavior or propriety; see <i>cross the line</i>
overplay one's hand	try to accomplish too much with insufficient resources (cf. <i>get out over one's skis</i> )
party line	official coordinated position of a party or bloc on an issue or set of issues
photo op(portunity)	a public event where officials or candidates appear before journalists but take no questions
play the <issue> card	use <issue> to political advantage, to win the public debate (often used to decry an opponent's allegedly unfair tactic when the speaker cannot respond effectively)
political football	subject of political debate, especially when neither side wants to address the substance and both sides just blame each other
(press) pool	a group of news organizations that combine/pool resources to cover a story or official when all cannot be accommodated (e.g., due to space limitations). For long or ongoing events, the various media rotate personnel to share the load
pool spray	a brief <i>photo op</i>
press gaggle	an informal briefing of the press by a White House spokesperson, on the record but with no video; the term could also be used of other public offices in the future (originally from how a flock of geese behaves)

Term or Phrase	Explanation
press conference/presser	an event at which a politician or his/her spokesman takes questions from the press, often preceded by a prepared statement; the answers to predictable questions are often written in advance and read out when the question is asked
press secretary	official spokesman, especially for a head of state or other high-ranking politician
pressure	actions designed to overcome initial resistance, especially through threats or intimidation
pundit	expert (real or putative) who discusses topical issues on TV (same as <i>talking head</i> , but not pejorative). From Sanskrit पण्डित (paṇḍita)
push báck (v.), púshback (n.)	resist, oppose; resistance, opposition
rabbit hole	from <i>Alice in Wonderland</i> : an inescapable place where normal logic and rules do not apply. Used of a line of inquiry: if we make these assumptions and follow them to their logical conclusion, we will be hopelessly confused.
race to the top/bottom	a contest whose participants win by becoming the best/worst. May describe a political race, or may describe competition among various organizations—businesses, schools, etc.
on <someone>'s radar	in <someone>'s conscious awareness, on <someone>'s mind
ramp up	increase gradually (transitive or intransitive)
ratchet up/down	increase greatly (transitive or intransitive), especially used with <i>pressure</i>
red line	boundary or limit beyond which serious repercussions will ensue; usually in a warning that the other party must not do such-and-such or else there will be hell to pay
relitigate	reopen debate on an issue thought to be already settled, especially one the actor has lost
reporting	in theory, should mean publishing the results of investigative journalism, but lately journalists have used the term <i>reporting</i> for their investigative process: "We've done a lot of reporting on this, and we're finally ready to publish." "Our reporting shows that..."
rope line	situation where a politician "works" a crowd separated from him by a rope line, offering handshakes, smiles, hugs, words of welcome/gratitude/encouragement, often tailored to the individual (see <i>grip and grin</i> )
rule out	say something is impossible, either as a matter of fact, of policy, or of political feasibility
sacred cow	a subject that absolutely must not be touched, a proposal that absolutely must not be suggested (in India, harming a cow brings stiff penalties). See <i>third rail</i>
shoot oneself in the foot	harm one's own reputation/standing/prospects through one's own actions, make an <i>unforced error</i>
smoking gun	incontrovertible proof of someone's guilt
snowflake	[pejorative] a person who is very sensitive to criticism, who cannot withstand a challenge, who melts in the slightest heat. Cf. the axiom, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen" (if you're not tough enough for this situation, withdraw). Originally used by conservatives to tell liberals to shut up and accept the status quo; more recently used by liberals as well



Term or Phrase	Explanation
(to) spin	Verb: to offer a self-serving interpretation of current events, to cast something in the most favorable light for oneself or one's client. Noun: activity as described above. Related: <i>spin doctor</i> (practitioner of this activity); <i>spin control</i> (management of interpretations offered by various sources)
spokesman/woman/person	person whose official job is to speak for a public official when the latter is unavailable, can't be bothered, or doesn't want to be seen saying awkward/ugly things him/herself
stenographer	[pejorative] a reporter who takes down what a politician says word for word and reports it without analysis or fact-checking
stop short of	take a position almost but not quite as firm/extreme as the named one
suck up all the oxygen (in the room)	attract all the attention, so everything and everyone else goes unnoticed
surrogate	politician or public figure who campaigns on behalf of a friend or ally so the ally can effectively campaign in two places at once
takeaway	conclusions (useful information gained from an event, experience, document, etc.)
take <something> off the table	remove <something> from consideration, declare <something> a nonstarter, promise not to do <something>
talking heads	experts (real or putative) who discuss topical issues on TV (same as <i>pundits</i> , but pejorative)
talking point	prearranged or prepared idea that a speaker is determined to convey no matter what the subject of discussion, often coordinated among members of one party, bloc, etc.; an element of the <i>party line</i>
test the waters	take tentative steps toward an action or position in order to gauge the reaction; <i>put one's finger to the wind</i>
third rail	a subject that absolutely must not be touched, an idea that absolutely must not be suggested (in subways, the "third rail" is the electrified one). See <i>sacred cow</i>
through <some kind of> lens/through the lens of <something>	as seen from the perspective of <something>
throw <someone> under the bus	betray/abandon <someone> (usually a henchman or accomplice, sometimes an innocent associate or subordinate), leaving the media to blame them instead of oneself
throw up one's hands (at <someone> or <something>)	give up, abandon hope of persuading/convincing/understanding <someone> or <something>; usually due to the other person's fault
tin foil hat	headgear that supposedly protects you from government surveillance and mind control according to the nuts who wear or recommend them; more generally any crazy idea. <i>The tin foil-hat crowd = the lunatic fringe.</i>
(send up a) trial balloon	(make) a tentative, exploratory public proposal, without an overt commitment, a <i>feeler</i> , cf. <i>test the waters</i>
To your point/question:	To address your point:/To answer your question:
unforced error	an error that a person makes on his/her own, without prompting, not a clumsy response to someone else's provocation
unpack <a subject>	break down, analyze <a subject>
unsanitized	pure, complete with unpleasant information (see <i>unvarnished</i> )
unvarnished (truth)	facts not softened or obscured for the faint of heart (see <i>unsanitized</i> )

Term or Phrase	Explanation
vote one's conscience	(of a legislator) do what one knows is right, despite expected <i>blowback</i> (opposite of <i>put one's finger to the wind</i> )
walk <someone> through <a subject>	explain <a subject> to <someone> step by step, point by point
walk and chew gum (at the same time)	perform two or more tasks simultaneously (especially as proof of one's basic competence); multitask
walk back	retract (a misstatement), especially surreptitiously by gradually revising it, hoping listeners/viewers will forget the original error and think you had it right all along
weaponize	convert to a weapon: put material or information to use in attacking an opponent
What do you make of... ?	What's your analysis/interpretation of... ?
What's your take on... ?	What conclusions do you draw from... ?
wiggle room	flexibility, room to maneuver, the ability to change one's position later
witch hunt	the practice of harassing an innocent opponent with unjustified investigations (cf. <i>fishing expedition</i> ); used only by the target to deride the investigation as unjustified

After six years of graduate school majoring in linguistics, Paul B. Gallagher left academia to become a Russian-to-English translator in 1985. Most of those 35 years have been devoted to sci-tech texts. He is an avid consumer of television and print news media.

## ATTENTION: TECHNICAL, SCIENTIFIC, MEDICAL, BUSINESS AND LEGAL TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS

We (the editors of *SlavFile*) are well aware that recent issues have leaned heavily toward features and articles concerned with literary translation (as well as journalistic, which in this day and age may well be considered a subset of literary).

While we hope our readers have enjoyed these issues, we know this does not represent the primary work of the majority of SLD members.

This simply reflects the nature of the articles submitted to us.

We are eager to have more variety and better representation in our future pages.

Please: if you are working in a field that has not been well represented in *SlavFile* of late, we would love to have you write about it for us—share your thoughts, your glossaries, your professional experiences, your tips.

You will enhance your on-line presence, earn recognition from your peers, and, if you have ATA certification, CE points.

### INTERESTED?

**CONTACT Lydia ([lydiastone@verizon.net](mailto:lydiastone@verizon.net)) or Nora ([norafavorov@gmail.com](mailto:norafavorov@gmail.com)).**

# SLAVFILE LITE: NOT BY WORD COUNT ALONE

Lydia Razran Stone

## Translating *The Cherry Orchard* for Young American Actors and Audiences

*I, Lydia, found the text that follows, the first presentation I ever made at an ATA Annual Conference, as I was packing up my papers to move. My memory is that this presentation was made in Salt Lake City, which means 1993. It thus predates both the Slavic Language Division and the SlavFile. One of my daughters had been heavily involved with her high school drama program, which is how I came to know its director and why she asked me to look over the Chekhov script she had ordered for her next production. The director, Robin Bennett, knew everything there was to know about the theater, but less about nineteenth-century Russia. She generally accepted my authority on the subject but on two points would not give in. I finally had to bring a real USSR citizen, who had come over with a delegation to NASA where I was then working, to back me up in my strong opinion that: 1) a samovar did not produce brewed coffee and 2) no matter how cold the climate in Russia, men returning from an auction in August would not have been wearing fur hats!*



The plays of Chekhov, and *The Cherry Orchard* in particular, are considered by many Americans to be dull, depressing, and difficult—the sort of thing unlikely to be voluntarily attended or responded to by any but the most doggedly highbrow adolescent. In contrast, for almost a century, Russians have found this same play lucid, hilarious (as well as moving), and eminently suitable for young audiences. One source of this discrepancy may be the commonly available English translations, which downplay the humor of a work Chekhov himself considered a comedy. In addition, many English translations do little to clarify critical aspects of the motivations and relationships in the play likely to be mysterious to Americans, although immediately apprehensible to Russian-speaking audiences. Working with the director of a prize-winning high school drama department and a group of very dedicated young actors, I attempted to create a translation of *The Cherry Orchard* specifically intended for young American audiences that would overcome at least some of such impediments to interpretation and understanding.

Our highest-order goal was to create an English version of *The Cherry Orchard* that our intended audience would respond to with something approximating the immediacy of the reaction of Chekhov's original audience. This required not only rendering the meaning of Chekhov's words in language that was alive for the audience, but also conveying the motivations underlying these words. Ultimately the audience would have not only the words of the translation, but also the actors' interpretations to help them

understand the play. Our young cast members, however, would initially have only the words (and what the director and I told them) on which to base these interpretations. This was one reason for involving them in the translation process. Another, even more important reason was that sessions with the cast served as a kind of forum for gauging young people's responses to alternative English versions of each line of the play. More than once it was a teenager who came up with the best rendering.

We started by going over my initial edited standard translation line-by-line, or, more precisely, word-by-word, with the director and the entire cast, revising the script as we went. Comments and alternatives were solicited in spots where I was still dissatisfied (and were sometimes volunteered, including for wordings I was already satisfied with). At times, the variants used were chosen by voice vote, although the director and I had veto power. Occasionally, the young people would prove more conservative about Chekhovian language than I. For example, they unanimously rejected my tentative suggestion of replacing “two and twenty misfortunes” as a sobriquet for one of the characters (двадцать два несчастья) with “the walking disaster.”

Because the best translation of lines in a play can only be considered in the context of the underlying meaning of the speech, discussion of the translation with the cast merged with the director's discussion of character motivation. For example, in the first long speech in the play, Lopakhin, the enterprising



businessman, explains his devotion to the heroine, Lyubov Andreyevna, by referring to an incident in which she, evidently the young mistress of the house, helped him clean himself up after he, a peasant boy of 15, had been punched by his father. He describes her, using diminutives, as having been young and slender (молоденькая, худенькая). When translated literally this line loses most of the implications conveyed in the Russian. It is emphatically not implied that the no-longer-slender character has let herself go, nor was this a society in which sexual attractiveness was universally associated with slenderness—quite the reverse. The implication instead is that the heroine was barely out of childhood herself. The diminutive terms used in Russian emphasize the tenderness Lopakhin continues to feel for Lyubov and his continuing perception of her as touchingly vulnerable. The audience also realizes that perhaps the age difference between them was not so great after all and may be moved to wonder what feelings she evoked and perhaps continues to evoke in Lopakhin. We ended up translating this line: “Of course, she was still young then, scarcely more than a girl, really.”

Once a working translation was developed and agreed upon, the play went into rehearsal without the participation of the translator. At the discretion of the director, certain lines were changed because, for one reason or another, they were not working. For example, the old servant, one of the most comic of the characters, repeatedly refers to his 50-year-old master in Russian as “young and green” (“молодо-зелено”). My initial translation of “he’s young and foolish” was changed to “young and stupid,” because the actor simply could not pronounce “young and foolish” with the right intonation. (Incidentally, this line ultimately became “still wet behind the ears” when “young and stupid” failed to provoke the anticipated laugh.)

During the last two weeks of rehearsals and the performances themselves, I reentered, tracking the performance against the Russian original and generating further suggested revisions. It is difficult to conceive of a better proving ground for polishing and repolishing a translation. Because at this point the cast was highly motivated to have the play and their characters “show up,” a surprising number of my suggestions were actually incorporated into an already well-rehearsed performance. The five performances themselves provided a unique opportunity to observe audience response and to flag lines that failed to provoke the anticipated reaction or simply did not work in an actual performance. Although only a few changes were incorporated between performances, most did appear in the final copyrighted translation. A

unique benefit of the procedure was that, because I had heard the play performed so many times, I learned the script by heart, and even six months later, I occasionally encountered an English phrase and suddenly realized it was just what was required for a certain speech in the play.

*The Cherry Orchard* is a play about the collapse of a social order. One way Chekhov emphasizes this is through the distortion of relationships among members of various social classes who used to “know their places.” In order for this to be a source of tension and humor in the play, and for the ultimate meaning of the play to be understood, one has to know what the original relationships were. This was totally obvious to Russian audiences, as well as to Soviet ones, who still had great familiarity with prerevolutionary Russian society and responded automatically to difficult-to-translate verbal cues (e.g., the use of familiar vs. the formal “you” in address). This is not the case for American audiences, but many English translators have apparently not considered it important to take measures to correct this. We did consider this effort necessary. For example, the housemaid, overjoyed her young mistress has returned home, kisses her and uses a number of terms of endearment. While these might be translated simply as “darling” or “sweet-heart,” the fact that they are folk terms and the asymmetry of forms of address leaves no doubt in Russian as to the relationship between the two girls. In English, we had the servant call her mistress not “darling” or “honey,” but “my precious little mistress.” Similarly, when one of the characters, Gayev, sententiously claims that the reason the peasants respect him is that he has suffered for his convictions, this seems funny to a Russian audience because the only unreconstructed peasant in evidence, the servant Firs, fusses over Gayev as if he were an incompetent child. We dealt with this point, highly likely to be missed by American audiences, by having Gayev indicate Firs with a gesture when he pronounced the line.

One of the most confusing aspects of the play to Americans (even our director who had literally spent her life in the theater) is the treatment of the older “adopted” daughter of the play’s heroine. This character, while treated affectionately, acts as the family’s housekeeper and eventually goes off to work as an employee in another household. Although the description of this character’s status in the *dramatis personae* (приёмная дочь) would normally be translated as “adopted daughter,” that wording might mislead American audiences. The character, Varya, was clearly born to peasants or other lower-class people on the estate and taken in to raise after she was orphaned,

quite a common occurrence. This is stated explicitly by Chekhov rather late in the play. However, this reference, which can be literally translated as “she is from/of the simple (i.e., of the lower class) folk” (“она из простых”) unfortunately is rendered in more than one translation as something like “she is a simple person.” We found that even an accurate translation was not immediately understood appropriately. Our cast member informants indicated that the only way to make this statement clear to our audience was to translate the line as, “Her real parents were peasants,” although neither parents nor peasants are mentioned explicitly in the Russian. Even before this speech, it is clear that Varya has a different status, from the “real” daughter Anya. The differences in the way the two girls address their mother and uncle suggest from the beginning that differences in their position are due to status rather than favoritism. Such modes of address are very difficult to render in English; however, one thing we did do is preserve the difference in the words that Varya and Anya use to address and refer to Lyubov: Anya uses the French “Mama,” which would be the standard for the upper and middle classes; while Varya uses the diminutive “Mamochka,” a children’s word with a tinge of folksiness. While “Mommy” would not be an inappropriate English translation, it does not have the proper connotations at all. Given the choice between retaining “Mamochka” or using something like, “Mama Lyuba,” the cast and director chose the former. We also described Varya’s situation explicitly in the character list, sacrificing faithful translation to sociological clarity, although Chekhov does not do so.

In *The Cherry Orchard* virtually every character has one or more “signature phrase” used by the characters themselves or about them or both. These include what we translated as “how sublime,” “my lips are sealed,” “we’re above love,” “perennial student,” “why have you gotten so homely,” “amaaazing” and “a man of the most amazing intellect,” “I’m such a delicate little thing,” “how primitive,” “you juicy little cucumber,” “still wet behind the ears,” “two and twenty misfortunes,” and “oh, you nincompoop.” Such signatures, which come straight from the Russian comic tradition, are one of the primary sources of humor in the play, yet some translators neglect to translate them identically each time. In one translation, “oh you nincompoop” (недотепа) for example, is translated at its first introduction as “the girl is hopeless.” This presumably represents a failure to recognize the centrality of the comic aspects of the play. Aside from ensuring these phrases were translated identically at each occurrence, we put a fair amount of effort into making them as funny as possible to our

audience. One of our biggest laugh getters, “what a juicy little cucumber,” (огурчик) said by the valet to the housemaid, comes almost literally from the Russian, with “juicy” used to render the flavor of the Russian diminutive. However, most translations I have seen offer a much more Anglicized expression, such as “You’re quite a little peach.”

We paid a great deal of attention to the word eventually translated as “nincompoop” (недотепа), used in a signature phrase of the ancient servant. To parallel the Russian, the word had to be slightly archaic, polysyllabic, and sound funny. In addition, the grammatical form of the Russian has connotations of incompetence or, more precisely, an inability to complete actions and is used by one of the other characters as a euphemism for sexual impotence. Additionally, as the last word of the play pronounced by the dying servant after he is inadvertently locked in the soon-to-be-demolished house, it serves as an epitaph for the entire world of the play. “Nincompoop” with its similarity in form and sound to “incompetence” seemed by far the best choice.

In some cases, I was unable to predict which phrases would induce laughter and which would not. For example, “perennial student” was evidently more amusing than “moth-eaten gent” when applied to the same character. Incidentally, one line, which I am fairly certain was never intended to be funny, invariably got a laugh from American teenagers: “I’m so glad to see you’re still alive,” said by the mistress to her ancient decrepit servant. Despite some failures, we were generally satisfied with our efforts to convey the humor in the play. Our audiences, primarily high school students, did laugh when appropriate and were not heard to complain that the play was depressing.

What I consider one of my major failures with this translation is my inability to find a living modern equivalent of the archaic, or at least highly dated, “scoundrel” (подлец). We needed this word only once in the play: its approximate Russian equivalent is used by Varya to describe the servant Yasha. We were simply unable to come up with a term that had the requisite combination of general disgust and scorn on the part of the speaker and imputation of low ethical standards. This is a laugh line in the Russian version, partially because the word, while not inappropriate on the lips of the pious Varya, is slightly unexpected. We considered and rejected the archaic “cad” and “scoundrel” itself, the obviously inappropriate “asshole” and “bastard,” the too slangy “scum” and “louse,” and reluctantly settled on “jackass,” which lacks the element of moral turpitude but had the exactly right comic effect when pronounced by Varya and actually

did describe the ludicrous and unprincipled poseur Yasha. I am tempted to conclude that this is one of the gaping holes in modern English that possibly only translators discover.

Many Americans think of Chekhov's plays as being full of characters declaiming on one topic or another. With respect to *The Cherry Orchard*, at least, this accusation is not altogether unjust. The play contains histrionic passages of all sorts, ranging from speeches starting with "Oh, my sins" to those beginning "All of Russia is our orchard," to "I did it, I bought the estate where my father and grandfather were slaves." *The Cherry Orchard* is ultimately a play about orchards that produce flowers but little fruit and people who talk but don't act. Florid speeches are thus very relevant to a central theme. In the last act, one of the characters (a declaimer himself) tells another that he really ought to stop waving his arms around and that all his grandiose talk is just another form of arm-waving. In spite of all our emphasis on creating immediacy of response through understandable language in our translation, we took pains to preserve the purple passages in many of the declamatory speeches.

One very delicate aspect of the translation was the question of how much parody should be injected in any of these speeches. In general we kept them serious, feeling that the play would lose a great deal if the elegiac mood were completely eclipsed, rather than just undercut, by the burlesque. There are some notable exceptions to this, however. There are a number of grandiloquent speeches that are clearly meant to be played as parodies. Even if we could not trust our own sensibilities in this, the response of the other characters is evidence enough ("Uncle, you really ought to keep quiet"; "He's an agreeable enough fellow, but you never can understand a thing he says"). When I was confident that a speech was meant to be exaggerated, I felt justified in going as far as possible to ensure that this was apprehended by the audience. Thus my translation of Gayev's famous address to his bookcase was even more flowery than previous translations I have seen. "Thy silent unflagging call to fruitful endeavor has sustained in generations of our family courage and faith in a better future and has inculcated in us the ideals of goodness and social consciousness" (твой молчаливый призыв к плодотворной работе не ослабевал в течение ста лет, поддерживая в поколениях нашего рода бодрость, веру в лучшее будущее и воспитывая в нас идеалы добра и общественного самосознания).

In the classical tradition, all of the servants in this play can be taken at one level as parodies of the masters, playing out the foibles of the latter at a more

obvious and ridiculous level. This certainly is true for their declamatory tendencies. Indeed, there is one character, the clerk Yepikhodov, known as "two and twenty misfortunes" (двадцать два несчастья), who is nothing but a combination of pratfalls and disjointed sentences filled with inappropriately used polysyllabic words. The English translations I have read render this rather mildly, and I have a hunch that many American audiences, finding the language of all the characters stilted, fail to register the difference. In my translation I made sure that Yepikhodov's speech patterns would not go unnoticed and that there would be no doubt why the other characters complain they are unable to understand him. A typical translation renders one of his speeches as, "That old Firs— frankly speaking, I mean, he's beyond repair, it's time he joined his ancestors." No attempt is made to convey the use of archaic and inappropriately used words. Our translation on the other hand, read, "It is my terminal opinion that the venerable Firs is beyond redemption, and ought to rejoin his progenitors." It happened that during one performance the parents of the actor playing Yepikhodov were sitting in back of me. After this speech, the father turned to the mother and asked, "What did the kid say?" I knew that here at least I had succeeded at what I was trying to do.

I have a few other anecdotes that suggest to me that our production was a success. To one performance I brought a friend of Jamaican descent who is very aware of being descended from both slaves and slave owners. He told me that he cried at the speech about how the boy who was not allowed farther than the kitchen had grown up to buy the whole estate. The director reported that the day after performances students who had attended were quoting our "signature phrases" at each other, mimicking the actors' intonations. I am more than willing to give all the credit for these successes to the talent and commitment of our actors, but, for once at least, I like to think that the translation didn't get in their way.

P.S. Note to readers: I have the copyright to this translation and would be glad to send it to anyone interested in reading or producing it.



# Slavic Poetry In Translation

Feature Editor: Martha Kosir

## BINA ŠTAMPE ŽMAVC

Translation and introduction  
by Martha Kosir

**Bina Štampe Žmavc** is a poet, writer, and playwright, born in 1951 in Celje, Slovenia. She is one of the leading Slovenian authors of children's and young adult literature, however, her poetry collections for adults are equally admired. She maintains that, for her, little difference exists between writing for children and for adults. She takes the same serious approach to writing for both groups of readers. Her extensive literary opus has been recognized through a number of literary awards at home and abroad.

Štampe Žmavc became intensively involved with literature, in particular poetry, during her high school years. She co-edited the school newsletter, participated in the theater club, and performed as a soloist in the school choir. Music and theater have always been extremely important to her. After graduating from the University of Ljubljana with a degree in Comparative Literature, she worked in education for five years. During that time, she ran children's improvisational theater. She continued to do so for another eight years and created a series of high profile and award-winning performances for children.

Regarding her poetry for adults, to date Štampe Žmavc has published a total of nine poetry collections. Her first, entitled *Pesek v pesem* (*Sand in a Poem*),



was published in 1999, and her latest collection, *Nabiralka samot* (*Gatherer of Solitudes*), in 2018. She has distinguished herself as one of the principal Slovenian authors of sonnets.

The poems presented in this article come from diverse collections published over the years. The first two poems are examples of Štampe Žmavc's sonnets. Although the translator recog-

nizes the importance of form and the poet's mastery of the form in the original language, in translation, fidelity to form alone would compromise the intensity of the message conveyed. The translations therefore appear in free verse. The last two poems come from the poet's latest collection, *Gatherer of Solitudes*. These poems were originally written and translated in free verse.

Štampe Žmavc's poetry embodies a captivating journey through the complex universe of human existence, often beset by uncertainty, struggle, and solitude. Her poetry is characterized by a profound self-examination that, as literary critics have observed, is truly possible only through essential solitude. Although seemingly alone, one's self is inherently linked to the universe in which it exists and persists, be it in the present, past, or future. And like the tiny snowdrop in the poem below, it struggles to overcome obstacles and reach the light.

### ANTIKA

Razstavila sem svoje stare sanje  
v vitrini za spreminjastim vitražem  
in zdaj oprezam, skrita za opažem,  
čeprav nihče še ni povprašal zanje.

Očitno jih razstavljam pač le zase –  
figurice iz krhke steklovine,  
posestnica relikvij in tišine  
si tabernakljam lepe zlate čase:

božične urice iz antikvara  
in sliko princa (še ko spi, me vara),  
ki konja je prodal pred prvo ježo,

in pesnika, ki me je v vigred svežo  
kot Beatrice rimal v popku stiha,  
a zdaj, ko le pozdravi, se zadiha ...

(iz zbirke sonetov *Poševno sonce*, 2001)

### ANTIQUITY

I exhibited my old dreams in a showcase  
behind changing stained glass panels,  
and although no one has looked at them yet,  
I wait and watch, hidden behind the frame.

They appear to be on display for me alone—  
fragile glass figurines,  
A keeper of relics and silence,  
I marvel at the good old times:

Christmas clocks from an antique shop  
and a picture of a prince (even asleep, he is unfaithful to me),  
who sold his horse before the first ride,

and a poet, into whose rhyme I was entwined,  
like Beatrice into the navel of a spring verse,  
now runs out of breath through a greeting alone ...

(from the collection of sonnets *Oblique Sun*, 2001)

## ZVEZDNA GAZ

Prek neusnulih zvezd speljana gaz –  
dejal bi astronom – zgolj rep kometa,  
in pesnik – pesem duše nedopeta,  
ki išče svojo pot si na Parnas.

In skeptik – čista optična prevara,  
med zvezdami ni hiš in ne dvorišč,  
da kdo bi odmetaval zvezdni blišč –  
dokazi so, da je nebo utvara ...

Pa vendar je med zvezdami speljana,  
kot dih zariše tenko sled v mraz –  
ta gaz, od polne lune obsijana:

nekdaj je bil in zdaj ga več ne bo –  
napotilo ga je v brezčas nebo,  
tja onkraj nedosežnega pristana ...

(iz zbirke sonetov *Vaze*, 2008)

## Samota Itake

Odložili so te  
v shrambo samote.  
Čudovito shrambo nevidnosti.  
Tu, v lepi tišini,

nemotenega minevanja,  
se ne kvariš nikomur na očeh.  
Lahan in neviden, ne vznemirjaš  
nikogar.

Obstajaš kot prah. Tih na polici,  
za katero nikomur ni mar,  
da bi jo pobrisal. Davno  
nekoč je Bog ali pesnik –  
lahko, da je bil oboje hkrati,  
ustvaril moškega.

In samoto  
Itake za žensko.

Statve so zmeraj prazne  
v nesmotrnosti svojega početja.

Kot preja, v katero se  
neopazno spreminjaš, ko paraš.

(Pričakovanja ženske  
so pričakovanja lune,  
da bi postala sonce.)

Prijatelji, znanci, sorodniki,  
tudi sinovi seveda – ne spominjajo se te več.  
Tako po posvetitvi so te zapustili.

Samota je visoka svečenica.

Morda niso hoteli motiti  
svečanosti posvetitve.

Ali bolj kot to – čutiti se  
neposvečene v misterij.

## STARRY PATH

A path carved through the sleepless stars—  
just a comet's tail—an astronomer would say,  
and a poet—an unfinished poem of the soul,  
that seeks its way to Parnassus.

And a skeptic—a mere optical illusion,  
there are no houses or patios among the stars,  
no place to disperse the starlight—  
there is evidence that the sky is an illusion ...

And yet the path runs through the stars,  
like breath it draws a trace into the cold—  
a path illuminated by the full moon:

it once was but no longer is—  
it was carried into the timelessness of the sky,  
over there, beyond the distant harbor...

(from the collection of sonnets *Vases*, 2008)

## The Loneliness of Ithaca

They placed you  
into the pantry of solitude.  
A marvelous pantry of invisibility.  
Here, in delightful silence

of uninterrupted demise,  
you spoil discreetly.  
Light and invisible, you do not disturb  
anyone.

You exist like dust. Quietly,  
on a shelf that no one cares  
to wipe down. Long ago,  
God or a poet—  
or perhaps both,  
created a man.

And the loneliness of  
Ithaca for a woman.

In the futility of their endeavor,  
weaving looms remain eternally empty.

Like the yarn into which you fade  
invisibly as you unravel the fabric.

(The expectations of a woman  
resemble those of a moon  
that hopes to turn into a sun.)

Friends, acquaintances, relatives,  
not to mention sons—they no longer remember you.  
They abandoned you shortly after the consecration.

Loneliness is a high priestess.

Perhaps they did not want to disturb  
the dedication ceremony.

Or more likely—they did not want  
to feel barred from the initiation mystery.

Boječ se zgodbe, ki je preblizu,  
da bi jo mogli uzreti.  
Strah podoživetja  
jim je nadel plašnice.  
Snubci menda ne zahajajo  
sem že od davna.  
Odiseji mornarji brez kopna.  
Kopna sidra brez kril.  
Naselbina žalobnih metuljev  
v herbariju sanj.  
Jadra polnijo daljave.  
Tako stari mački  
ne bo treba  
nikogar prepoznati.

(iz zbirke *Nabiralka samot*, 2018)

### Posvetitev zvončka

Zvonček je prisluškoval.  
Poslušal zemljo nad sabo.

Zaman se je stegoval kvišku –  
zvonil je le o neslišnosti  
svojega obstoja.  
Globoko v sebi je čutil  
črno zmrzal zemlje,  
ki mu je trgala koreninice,  
ko se je skušal pognati kvišku.  
V spomin čebulice hotel  
priklicati ostalino sonca.  
A tu spodaj ni imel glasu,  
komaj še senco spomina.  
Pomislil je, da sneg nad njim,  
ki še zmerja pokriva zemljo,  
diši po neuresničenosti pomladi.  
Prst ga je neizprosno  
oklepala v nekaljivo odsotnost.  
Potem se je zgoraj nad njim  
nekaj spremenilo.  
V prstih svojih koreninic  
je zaznaval šibko ščemenje.  
Spomnil se je, da ščemenje  
odganja prstenost smrti  
in se znova silovito pognal kvišku,  
S čebulico pogumno kljubujoč  
strašni sili naprezanja,  
ko se je skozi plitko zmrzlino  
snega pridihal nad zemljo.

Svetloba ga je končno pripustila.  
Tam, nad njegovo glavo,  
na še čisto golih vejah magnolije,  
je slišal peti ptico.

(iz zbirke *Nabiralka samot*, 2018)

They feared a story that was  
too close to be seen.  
The terror of reliving it  
put blinders on them.  
Suitors have not passed by here  
in a very long time.  
Sailors, like Odysseus, are unable to find land.  
An anchor lacks arms.  
A settlement of mourning butterflies  
remains in a herbarium of dreams.  
Horizons are filled with sails.  
And the old cat  
does not need to recognize  
anyone anymore.

(from the collection *Gatherer of Solitudes*, 2018)

### Consecrated Snowdrop

A tiny snowdrop was eavesdropping.  
It was listening to the ground above.

In vain it was reaching upward—  
resounding in the silence  
of its own existence.  
Deep inside, it felt the  
black frost of the earth,  
that tore apart its roots  
as it tried to push upward.  
Remembering its bulb, it strove  
to evoke the vestiges of the sun.  
But down here, it had no voice,  
barely a shadow of its memory.  
It felt that the snow above it,  
which still covered the earth,  
smelled like the unattainable spring.  
The dirt clung onto it,  
propagating relentless absence.  
Then something above it  
changed.  
In the fingers of its roots  
it began to perceive a faint tingling sensation.  
It remembered that tingling  
repelled the unpleasantness of death,  
so it violently pushed upward again.  
With its bulb bravely defying  
the terrible forces of strain,  
it broke through the shallow  
frost on the ground.

The light finally let it in.  
There, above its flower,  
it heard a bird sing on still bare  
branches of a magnolia tree.

(from the collection *Gatherer of Solitudes*, 2018)