

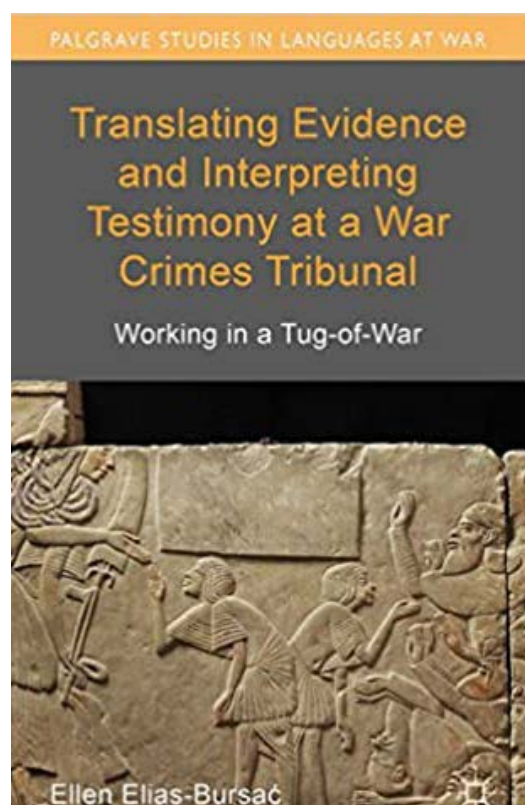
2020 Greiss Lecture Review: “Working in a Tug of War”

Presented by Ellen Elias-Bursac

Reviewed by Eugenia Tietz-Sokolskaya

As translators and interpreters, we often strive to be as invisible as possible, which is why it was refreshing to listen to an entire session at ATA61 about a situation where that was decidedly not the case. This year’s Greiss lecturer (invited jointly with the Literary Division) was Ellen Elias-Bursac, a scholar and translator of Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian. One of her two talks, “Working in a Tug of War,” focused on her experiences at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), highlighting in particular the role translators and interpreters played during the proceedings.

The ICTY was in operation from 1993 to 2017, investigating war crimes that took place as part of the war in Yugoslavia (active conflict 1991–1995). During the tribunal’s preparatory phase (1993–1996), investigators went out in the field interviewing eyewitnesses and victims, which required field interpreters—often people without professional interpreting backgrounds. Once the first trials started in 1996, the Conference Language Services Section (CLSS) expanded to include professional translators in various languages, as well as interpreters to staff the booths in court, up to a peak of 150, making up 10% of ICTY staff.



In this issue:

Steven McGrath

From the Administrative Underground.....4

Minutes of 2020 SLD Annual Meeting 5

Marisa Irwin

Newcomer Report: Conferencing from My Couch..... 7

Nora Seligman Favorov

Russian Literature Week 2020 9

Lydia Razran Stone

SlavFile Lite: Not by Word Count Alone.....21

Lydia Razran Stone

Confusing Idiomatic Usages in US Political News Reporting.....25

CONFERENCE PRESENTATION REVIEWS

Lucy Gunderson

Veronika Demichelis on Corporate Social Responsibility 12

Evgeny Terekhin

Shelley Fairweather-Vega on Getting Edited & Getting Ahead in Literary Translation..... 15

Liv Bliss

Nora Favorov on Sneaking Historical Context into a Literary Translation from Russian..... 17

Maria Guzenko

Evgeny Terekhin on How to Become a Literary Translator 19

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

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

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

Ellen joined the CLSS English Translation Unit (translations into English from various languages) in June 1998, as this expansion was going on. A translator she had known for a long time called her up and asked simply: "When can you come and how long can you stay?" Her work was often world news: at that point in the process, about one indictee was brought in every week, and she was likely to see who it was on the BBC news broadcast at breakfast.

While working on her book, *Translating Evidence and Interpreting Testimony at a War Crimes Tribunal: Working in a Tug-of-War*, in addition to drawing on her own experience and reading through transcripts, Ellen obtained permission to survey her past colleagues and current ICTY staff, so that she could tap into a broader range of perspectives. According to her survey results, some of the rewarding aspects of working at ICTY included helping victims and seeing the guilty convicted, working in a collegial, respectful atmosphere, and, last but certainly not least, the salary. On the flip side, respondents mentioned preserving ambiguity, switching to a new interpreting style, dealing with the difficult subject matter, and maintaining a neutral style under stress as some of the most challenging aspects. The comment on interpreting style, Ellen clarified, referenced the fact that what the interpreters said was entered into the record for that trial, which was likely to come up as evidence at future trials. This of course added to the already-high stress level inherent in courtroom interpretation.

The difficulty of working with the subject matter came up repeatedly throughout the session. Ellen pointed out that, for her, material to which she had some sort of personal connection could be particularly distressing, from crimes committed in areas where she had lived to something as random as a birthdate or street number identical or similar to one in Ellen's own life. Such matching details were unpredictable, and it was therefore impossible to steel oneself for them. The survey responses also included advice on dealing with trauma: making sure you have strong family support, maintaining work-life separation and balance, having a sound constitution and ability to stomach a lot of awful topics, and distancing yourself from the suffering. More resources for dealing with trauma, such as a staff psychologist, were added over time. That psychologist had the interesting opinion that it was slightly easier to be an interpreter when dealing with difficult material, because at least interpreters had the release of speaking what they heard, whereas translators had to sit with the text at length, often alone due to confidentiality rules, which takes its own psychological toll.

The ICTY had three separate courtrooms and several judges, with both French and English as the working languages for proceedings and all documentary evidence translated into English. The judges were quite comfortable working with translated documents and interpreters in the courtroom, often championing the work of CLSS (at one point a judge said the interpreters "are like God"). As Ellen clarified at the end of the session in response to an



attendee question, unlike the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials, where translators and interpreters worked directly for the prosecution, at ICTY the translators and interpreters worked for the registry (the general administration). This meant that the judges could contact the translators directly to ask clarifying questions.

Associating with these “clients” presented some unique challenges. As mentioned above, one key consideration, at odds with the expectations for translating other forms of communication, was maintaining ambiguity, because the document might have been deliberately ambiguous in order to paper over something particularly controversial, so allowing the judges to see that the text was ambiguous on certain points was key. Another challenge was the broad spectrum of documents that needed translation, along with the resulting vast range of topics and terminology. Over time, the staff gathered up to 12,000 terms into an internal glossary, complete with suggested translations and context notes. Sometimes the interpreters helped with problematic language issues facing the translators, by calling or emailing in from the booth when one such matter came up there.

The visibility of translators and interpreters in the court proceedings had its upsides and downsides. Their work was a frequent target of attacks by the defense, particularly by the few defendants who represented themselves. These defendants would often adopt strategies aimed at tying up the language services by demanding translations of documents they were perfectly able to read in the original and befuddling witnesses (some of whom were already intimidated and possibly retraumatized by being in their presence) by challenging the translations and derailing the proceedings. At first, a few translators and interpreters were called to testify about particular translation choices, but the court eventually put a stop to this practice, worrying that it could be used to intimidate ICTY staff into translating a certain way.

Ellen wrapped up her session by quoting one of the few interpreters called to testify. In response to the pointed question, “Is this exactly what [the indictee] said?” he responded, “This is verbatim what he said, through me, and in other words.” Whether we are translating or interpreting at a world-news-worthy tribunal or for any other client, isn’t that what we’re all doing?

Eugenia Tietz-Sokolskaya translates from Russian to English, and occasionally from French, focusing on legal and financial texts. She is the current SLD Administrator and can be reached at eugenia@sokolskayatranslations.com.

Wanted: Articles on Slavic<>English Legal Translation and Interpretation

Do you have a glossary of legal terms you'd be willing to share, or even a single term you could write a whole article about?
Have you come across a book, blog, or online posting that you found especially helpful for your legal translation or interpretation?
Did you recently complete a particularly interesting project you can write about?
Have you developed expertise in an area of legal T/I you'd be willing to share?
Is there a legal translator, interpreter, or lexicographer you'd like to interview for *SlavFile*?
We'd love to have your contributions, short, long, or in-between (deadline: March 15).

The editors of *SlavFile* are planning to devote our spring 2021 issue to legal translation. Please contact Nora Favorov if you would like to contribute:
norafavorov@gmail.com

NOTES FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE UNDERGROUND

Steven McGrath,
SLD Assistant Administrator

How did 2020 go for you? Do you need someone to talk to? For many of us, our experience of the past year has been difficult to describe, at least in words fit for print, so it may be worth trying out this simple line for a start: *We're adapting*. In the transitive sense of the verb, we've been adapting all along. As translators and interpreters, we adapt speech and text from one language medium to another. Intransitively, we have adapted to different cultures, new personal circumstances, changing political and economic headwinds...

And now we're adapting to *this*. Existing formats for remote meeting and learning have risen to meet Covid-era demand. SLD contributed a full slate of educational sessions to this year's online conference. For better or worse, we've learned how to network and conduct division business in a remote format. While we hope to see each other in person in 2021, the tools we used to adapt in 2020 will be available from here forward, helping us to stay in contact.

ATA Webinars and New Mastermind Program

ATA's library of webinars on demand continues to grow. SLD member and former administrator Lucy Gunderson presented on terminology in human-rights translation in September. Along with paid content, ATA provides at least one free webinar per month. November's free webinar introduces ATA's upcoming Mastermind Program, a system for peers to offer each other business guidance set to launch in January 2021.

New Blog Editor!

Veronika Demichelis stepped up to serve as the editor of the [SLD Blog](#) at this year's annual meeting, in addition to her ongoing role as co-host of the *Smart Habits for Translators* podcast and her new seat on the ATA's Board of Directors, to which she was elected shortly thereafter (Congratulations, Veronika!). Ideas or drafts for new posts are welcome and may be addressed to veronika@veronikademichelis.com.

SLD Virtual Networking

While an in-person annual dinner was impossible in 2020, SLD members had the opportunity to sit and catch up with each other at an online networking meetup after the division meeting. Since the event appeared to go well, and since HQ has put a Zoom account at our disposal, we can try another of these casual gatherings soon—January, with the possibility of making it a quarterly occurrence. Members interested in participating should contact me (Steven McGrath, steven@mcgrathtranslations.com), to receive updates on the event.

[A postscript from the Editors: on January 31, just as the finishing touches were being put on this issue, the first such SLD networking event was held. It was great to see familiar faces and catch up with colleagues!]



Congratulations Veronika Demichelis!

SLD's own Veronika Demichelis was among the three (out of seven) candidates to be elected to serve on ATA's Board of Directors. Ever since Veronika became involved with the SLD and ATA, she has given generously of her time and talents, first by serving as co-host of the division's new (back then) podcast series, then as a member of ATA's Membership Committee and as chair of ATA's Professional Development Committee, not to mention a few contributions to *SlavFile*. We are pleased to have someone who knows and values our division on the Board and know that she will be a great asset to the organization.

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Slavic Languages Division of the American Translators Association

October 18, 2020

Held online via Zoom

Eugenia Tietz-Sokolskaya, Administrator; Steven McGrath, Assistant Administrator

1. The meeting was called to order at 4:01 PM ET.
2. The agenda was accepted with no changes.
3. The 2019 Annual Meeting minutes were accepted with no changes.
4. Eugenia and Division members presented an overview of Division events in 2020.

VIRTUALLY EVERYWHERE
FOR EVERYONE

a. Report on *SlavFile* and blog

- i. Editor in Chief Lydia Stone reported that Nora Favorov served as chief editor for the 2020 spring and summer-fall issues, and layout editor Galya (Galina Raff) is celebrating her 25th year with the publication. Three issues were published this year, with one more possibly to come after this conference. Lydia counted a total of 39 feature articles, 19.5 of which were on literary translation; there were also 11 administrators' columns and conference previews and reviews and 8.5 articles on other subjects. *SlavFile* published 4 articles on South Slavic languages, but the vast majority concerned Russian. Lydia would like serious work to be done to diversify the languages and fields represented. Nora is now Managing Editor. The SLD Blog has few contributors, but there is a recurring feature called CEU Watch, started by Maria Guzenko. Eugenia is the sole editor.

b. Report on website

- i. The Division does have a website: <http://www.ata-divisions.org/SLD/>. Eugenia manages it. It now contains more archived *SlavFile* issues, in addition to the current issue.

c. Report on online forum and social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter)

- i. Julia Thornton reported on the Division's Google Group. There was a flurry of activity last year after a lull. The group has over 70 subscribed members. Because the Division does not have much control over ATA broadcast emails, this is a good tool to use. Anna Livermore manages the Facebook group. Maria Guzenko will be taking over for Sasha Spencer in the LinkedIn Group, which is not particularly active. Eugenia manages the Twitter account. Members are encouraged to post and tag the groups to help raise visibility.

d. Report on SLD Outreach initiative

- i. Tom Fennell reported that efforts along these lines were stalled due to the pandemic.

e. Report on SLD Podcast (*Slovo*)

- i. Maria Guzenko took over from Veronika Demichelis to manage the podcast this year. There were 5 episodes this year, and it is going well. Suggestions for speakers and topics are welcome.

f. Report on SLD ATA Certification Exam Prep Group

- i. The group continues to operate, but there are dwindling numbers of people looking to practice, partly because people have passed the exam. New participants are welcome. Join by emailing Eugenia or Julia. More information is available on the Division website.

g. Report on human rights webinar

- i. Lucy Gunderson presented, with good turnout, as part of SLD's efforts to organize more programming.

5. New Business for 2021

a. Help Wanted

- i. More volunteers are always welcome. A revised Division Handbook (August 2020) exists to help volunteers.
- ii. A Blog editor is needed to help solicit contributions and guest posts, work with the *Slav-File* editorial team on regular reprints and help members get visibility. Veronika Demichelis volunteered.
- iii. Two SLD members who are also voting members of ATA or willing to undergo active member review to achieve voting status are needed to serve on the nominating committee. Elections for administrator and assistant administrator will be held next year. Eugenia and Steve are eligible for reelection. Tom Fennell and Shelley Fairweather-Vega were nominated to serve on the nominating committee and constituted by acclamation.

b. ATA's 62nd Annual Conference (Minneapolis, MN October 21-24, 2021)

- i. Ideas were solicited for Distinguished Speaker recommendations and session proposals. The session proposal window is February 1 to March 1. Questions about the proposal process can be emailed to Eugenia. Members suggested various topics for sessions: medical; punctuation differences across languages; medical and business translation; localization and transcreation; comparative legal systems and terminology. The 2021 conference may or may not be held online, which has an effect on who SLD can invite to be a Distinguished Speaker.
- ii. Lydia suggested that a medical focus for the Distinguished Speaker would be appropriate given the pandemic. Nora leads the search for the DS and mentioned Robert Chandler as a potential candidate.

c. Division plans for coming year

- i. SLD would like to hold more events for further professional development, particularly language-specific online workshops, rather than webinars. Anyone wishing to develop a workshop should email Eugenia.
- ii. Maria and Eugenia are planning a professional development survey akin to what ATA did to get a sense of where the demand is. Help is welcome in compiling the survey and analyzing the results.

6. Call for feedback and suggestions from the members

- a. Emilia Balke spoke to thank Eugenia and the SLD leadership council for all their hard work and valuable contributions to the Division.

7. Call for newcomers to introduce themselves

- a. Two new members introduced themselves: Marisa Irwin, a University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee graduate student in Russian and German translation, and Elizabeth Seletsky, a certified English-Russian court and medical interpreter in Philadelphia.

8. Members attending the conference were invited to the Division's networking meeting, to be held online that evening.

9. The meeting was adjourned at 4:41 PM.

CONFERENCING FROM MY COUCH

Marisa Irwin



As a student member of ATA, I had grand ambitions to make my debut in the professional translation world at ATA61. Having been told about the importance of networking by numerous professors, I decided to step out of the listserv shadows and begin making those vital

professional connections and maybe sample a Boston cream pie or two along the way. Of course, 2020 had other plans for us. When the ATA announced that it was switching the conference to a virtual format, I was apprehensive as to whether it would still be worth attending. As it turns out, although ATA61 was not held in person, the conference was still incredibly rewarding, especially for someone just beginning a freelance career.

The ATA conference actually began the weekend prior to the official conference dates, with the Slavic Languages Division's annual meeting (which covered division business) and division meet-up event (which gave us a chance to chat informally about our personal and professional lives) taking place the previous

Sunday. Attending the annual meeting helped give me an overview of the division's activities. I was excited to hear that a practice group exists for the Russian>English certification exam, a fact I was quick to share with other students in my master's program.

As a grad student and recovering perfectionist, I am as prone to imposter syndrome as I am to succumb to a fourth cup of coffee before noon. I was therefore a bit intimidated going into the networking event. The members of this division are an illustrious bunch whose articles are often featured in my program's coursework. I was overjoyed to find that although my initial assumption was correct (SLD members are an impressive group), everyone was extremely generous and welcoming of newbies and veterans alike. I left the meet-up excited about the upcoming conference since I felt welcomed as a fellow professional and not simply as a student.

My biggest worry about ATA61 when it switched to a virtual format was the loss of networking opportunities. I would no longer be able to bump into someone in the hallway or make a connection during a coffee break. The ATA made up for this, however, by offering multiple networking events every day. I particularly appreciated the speed networking event



Clockwise from upper left: Emilia Balke (California), Nora Favorov (North Carolina), Tom Fennell (Nebraska), and Lucy Gunderson (New York) catch up in a breakout room at the pre-ATA61 SLD Social

since it allowed me to meet professionals from different language pairs and specializations. Having the networking event online made it less intimidating as well because I could network from the comfort of my own home. Beyond seeing how diverse the T&I industry truly is, my biggest takeaway from the event was that, despite the uncertainties that 2020 has brought, the T&I industry is still thriving and the need for language professionals is ongoing. This was a comforting validation for someone about to embark on a T&I career.

The conference platform allowed for more networking opportunities through its “Community” section. In addition to viewing other people’s profiles, I could also send direct messages to other attendees. Being able to take my time crafting a message took a lot of the discomfort out of the networking process. As with everything else in the conference, I was struck by the generosity and kindness of other attendees. Despite my newbie status, every person that I reached out to took the time to respond to my messages.

The sessions themselves covered a wide variety of topics. One of the benefits of the conference being virtual is that the ATA made session recordings available to attendees for six months after the conference. Knowing that I could watch sessions on demand gave me the freedom to pick and choose sessions without the fear of missing out on other equally useful

ones. For a newcomer to the field, the thought of choosing a specialization can seem a daunting task. Consequently, I really enjoyed being able to explore a wide range of topics and specializations. During one of the networking sessions, I was paired in a breakout group with ATA President Ted Wozniak, who gave me the great advice to attend at least one session that had nothing to do with my language and/or specialization. I plan on following this advice at future conferences since it led me to one of my favorite sessions of the conference: an analysis of the subtitles for the film *Parasite*. The conference provides opportunities to explore new topics or fields of interest, so that regardless of an attendee’s experience level there is always something new to learn.

ATA61 gave me ample networking opportunities, but more important, it provided me with the confidence to tackle my first year as a freelance translator. I would encourage anyone who is on the fence about attending the ATA Annual Conference to take the plunge. The networking connections alone are worth the price of admission.

I’m still waiting on the Boston cream pie though...

Marisa Irwin is a soon-to-be graduate of the MA in Translation and Interpreting program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She will be embarking on a freelance career in RU>EN and GE>EN translation and can be reached at mirwin@mlitranslate.com.



Participants in the pre-ATA61 SLD social catch up.

Russian Literature Week 2020: Reading Russian Literature During Hard Times

Nora Seligman Favorov

Russian Literature Week, a mostly semi-annual event established in 2015, is a celebration of Russian writers and the translators who make them accessible to Anglophone readers. In the past, I've been fortunate to attend a few Russian Literature Week sessions in person. These were held in New York, although Russian Literature Week has also visited London, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia. This past December, I attended most of the events included in the first ever *virtual* Russian Literature Week. The theme this year was Reading Russian Literature During Hard Times, an idea contributed by the translators [Carol Apollonio](#) and [Lisa Hayden](#). There was much talk of Russian literature as "balm for the soul." For me personally, seeing the familiar faces of colleagues, and connecting names I've grown to admire with faces and voices, acted not so much to soothe as to boost my spirits and jolt me out of a pandemic-induced feeling of disconnectedness.

Russian Literature Week is just one of the valuable programs conducted under the auspices of Read Russia/Читай Россию, whose [website](#) should be bookmarked by anyone with an interest in Russian literature. Read Russia also has a [YouTube page](#), which is home to recordings of the talks described below, as well as past talks by Russian authors and their translators. Founded in 2012, Read Russia is the brainchild of Peter Kaufman, a man of seemingly boundless energy and an enthusiasm for Russian literature and culture that dates back to his boarding school days at Choate Rosemary Hall, after which he pursued his interest in the Slavic world at Cornell and at the graduate level at Columbia. Kaufman seems to have cobbled together a successful career out of think-tank, web, and media endeavors, using every opportunity along the way to promote his passion, Russian literature. (As just one example, Intelligent Television, which lists Kaufman as president and executive director, produced the film [Russia's Open Book: Writing in the Age of Putin](#), narrated by Stephen Fry.) Read Russia's programs are run with practical and financial support from Moscow's nonprofit Institute for Literary Translation, while also receiving funding from a number of foundations and individuals.

A great advantage of this year's Russian Literature Week being virtual was its trans-Atlantic nature, with a high percentage of participants joining from the U.K. A particular highlight was a talk by Antony Wood, "On Reading and Translating Pushkin." Wood is the well-deserved recipient of this year's [Read Russia Prize](#) for his simply titled *Alexander Pushkin: Selected Poetry* (Penguin, 2020). Wood discussed his approach to translating Pushkin and the challenges posed to translators of Russian verse by the differences between the two languages: the abundance of monosyllabic words in English and the greater syntactical freedom afforded by Russian. By choosing faithfulness to meaning, word placement, repetitions, parallelisms, emphasis, and register (including Pushkin's frequent and effective deviations



Artwork: readrussia.org

from a seemingly set register) over meter and rhyme (sometimes opting for trochees where Pushkin used iambs, for example, and rhyming fewer lines), he managed to achieve an effect closer to the conversational, natural diction Pushkin's contemporaries would have experienced.

It was lovely to see Wood and other speakers in their natural habitats—veritable jungles of books and papers. As another personalizing touch, Wood's wife was in attendance and mentioned how relieved she was early in their relationship to realize that Antony's persistent muttering was actually the recitation of Pushkin's poetry under his breath.

That was Monday. On Tuesday, we heard from Donald Rayfield, whose talk was titled "Rehabilitating Leskov." This talk also came from Britain. Rayfield, together with co-translators Robert Chandler and William Edgerton, is one of the proud parents of a new collection of Leskov's stories: *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk: Selected Stories of Nikolai Leskov* (NYRB Classics, 2020). He continued the theme of challenges posed by his author, who suffers an undeserved obscurity and is probably best known for the Shostakovich opera based on *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. These challenges were very different from those posed by Pushkin's poetry. Leskov was an unusual author with a penchant for telling his stories through narrators who spoke the Russian of a variety of very specific social segments and laced their tales with Ukrainian, Church Slavonic, and professional jargon, so that even native Russian scholars of nineteenth-century Russian literature are not always sure what certain wordings mean. Rayfield also opened a window onto Leskov the man, who was full of contradictions, being utterly nasty in his personal life while exhibiting a tolerance for Jews, Roma, Tatars, and other scorned minorities that was rare for his time.

Wednesday was a busy day, with three excellent talks. The first, "Mikhail Bakhtin, Isaiah Berlin, and the Need for Dialogue," was an interdisciplinary treat.

I have been consulting Gary Saul Morson's writings on nineteenth-century Russian literature and Bakhtin for decades, but I knew nothing of his venture into the world of economics. He appeared together with the labor economist Morton Schapiro, president of Northwestern University, where Morson teaches. The two have joined forces to author two books: *Cents and Sensibility: What Economics Can Learn from the Humanities* (Princeton University Press, 2018) and *Minds Wide Shut: How the New Fundamentalisms Divide Us* (Princeton University Press, 2021). They also co-teach the interdisciplinary course "Economics and the Humanities: Understanding Choice in the Past, Present and Future," which explores how seemingly unrelated disciplines can learn from one another specifically because they look at the world from very different angles. The two men are obviously friends, and the talk was full of jokes and banter that made it particularly entertaining. How nice to see Bakhtin's arcane theories of dialogue, polyphony, and unfinalizability escaping the ivory tower for the broader marketplace of ideas!

Next came the prolific translator Robert Chandler, whom any subscriber to the SEELANGS listserv (not to mention any serious student of recent translations from Russian) would know from his always interesting and enlightening queries to the community. Chandler's translation (done together with his wife Elizabeth) of Vasily Grossman's *Stalingrad* (Harvill Secker and NYRB, 2019) was singled out among translations [shortlisted for the Read Russia Prize](#) to receive a "Special Commendation." Chandler spoke about the relationship between Grossman and Andrei Platonov, both of whom he has extensively translated in recent years. The two were friends and both are strongly associated with writing focused on the cruel sweep of Soviet history. For his talk, Chandler chose to direct our attention to extremely tender and intimate excerpts from their writing about animals: two of Grossman's last short stories (one about an Italian artillery mule and another about a dog sent



The top two (of many) rows of Robert Chandler's intent Zoom audience as he read from the works of Grossman and Platonov

into outer space) and a passage from Platonov about the interaction between a railway worker and a hare in a Northern forest. This passage was from what Chandler described as Platonov's "still little-known masterpiece," the short story "Among Animals and Plants," which was published in *The New Yorker* in 2007 in a translation by the Chandlers and Olga Meerson.



Wednesday was rounded out by a talk by Carol Apollonio and Lisa Hayden that had the homey feel of sitting around the table with friends discussing a favorite topic. Throughout, the two kept holding up to the camera the covers of books they found particularly well suited to our current time of plague. Apollonio (president of the North American Dostoevsky Society Executive Board) plugged *Notes from Underground* and *Notes from the Dead House* as worth (re)reading as we reflect on our current confinement, and *Demons* as prophetic of current times (along with Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* as one of the darkest things she's ever read, but a book that offers a joyous catharsis at the end). If Dostoevsky is too gloomy for you these days, Hayden, who's been reading a lot of "odd" books this year, suggested Antonina Bouis' translation of Alexander Beliaev's *Professor Dowell's Head*, along with two books yet to be translated that she particularly enjoyed: Ksenia Buksha's *Churov i Churbanov* and Inga Kuznetsova's *Provezhutok* (Interval). Books translated by both of the speakers made the Read Russia Prize Longlist: Apollonio's *Bride and Groom* by Alisa Ganieva, (Deep Vellum, 2018) and the prolific Hayden's *Three Apples Fell from the Sky* by Narine Abgaryan (Oneworld, 2020); *Solovyov and Larionov* by Eugene Vodolazkin (Oneworld, 2018); and *Zuleikha* by Guzel Yakhina (Oneworld, 2019). Another book by Vodolazkin that Hayden translated, *Laurus*, was mentioned by multiple speakers throughout the week as particularly fitting pandemic reading (it is set amid a medieval plague).

On Thursday we got to hear from the jury, all based in the U.K., which had the daunting task of choosing from among close to fifty entries for the 2020 Read Russia Prize: Bryan Karetnyk of University College London; Muireann Maguire of the University of Exeter; and Anastasia Tolstoy of Wolfson College, University of Oxford. Beside sounding a bit overwhelmed by the flood of worthy entries, the panel was gratified by, in addition to the generally high quality of both the works and translations, their breadth in terms of genre (and chronology—with authors ranging from Griboyedov, born in the eighteenth century, to a number of Russia's youngest contemporary writers).

Finally, on Friday, we had not only translators, but the writer they were translating: Maxim Osipov, author of the story collection *Rock, Paper, Scissors* (NYRB Classics, 2019) and a practicing cardiologist in Tarusa, Russia. He appeared alongside two of his translators, the SLD's 2019 Greiss Lecturer Boris Dralyuk and Alex Fleming. Given the theme of Russian Literature Week 2020 (and 2020 in general), it was particularly fitting to close out the week with a medical doctor, from whom we can apparently look forward to a series of "short, satirical feuilletons" related to the pandemic. In addition to discussing his writing, Osipov shared stories about how Russian politics has, somewhat analogously to the U.S. situation, collided with medical exigencies to complicate the taming of the virus (apparently, reporting side effects of the vaccine is punishable under Russia's 2019 law against "fake news").

Like all the previous talks, the theme of Russian literature as a refuge came up here as well. Moderator Peter Kaufman suggested that the vaccine should be administered along with a dose of Russian literature. "Who do we know at Pfizer?" he asked.

Nora Seligman Favorov is a Russian-to-English translator specializing in Russian literature and history. She serves as *SlavFile*'s Managing Editor and can be reached at norafavorov@gmail.com.

LET US HELP YOU SPREAD THE WORD

Many readers of *SlavFile*, in addition to being translators and interpreters, are writers.

Whether translated or original,
if you have published a poem or short story in a magazine,
a scholarly article or a book, or if you have a T/I related blog,
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CORPORATE SOCIAL WHAT?

Unpacking Corporate Social Responsibility with Veronika Demichelis

Reviewed by Lucy Gunderson

Before attending Veronika Demichelis's talk "Corporate Social What? Introduction to Corporate Social Responsibility and How It's Usually (Mis)interpreted in the Post-Soviet States," I had only the vaguest notion of what corporate social responsibility even is. Does this term refer to responsibilities a corporation has to its employees? Responsibilities it has to investors? To people residing in its area of operation? I wasn't quite sure, and for good reason. As it turns out, this is an umbrella term that encompasses the idea that companies have, as Veronika put it, "a responsibility to not be irresponsible" and reflects the general belief that modern businesses have an obligation to society at large.

To start her talk, Veronika shared a clip from *The Lorax* of the Once-ler singing the song "How Bad Can I Be?" to illustrate some common misperceptions about corporate social responsibility (CSR). "How bad can I be?" the Once-ler asks, "I'm just building the economy, Just look at me petting this puppy...A portion of proceeds go to charity...Who cares if a few trees are dying? How bad can this possibly be?" In fact, as Veronika went on to demonstrate, CSR extends way beyond token measures like donating to charity and petting puppies.

So what does CSR really mean? This concept covers other societal stakeholders beyond investors to whom companies have obligations. These include consumers, employees, communities, the public at large, government, and the environment.

The scope of CSR depends on potential impact and varies across industries. For an automotive company, it may involve job protection, worker safety, and environmental impact, while a financial company may be more concerned with access to banking services, money laundering, and socially responsible investment.



Ideally, a socially-responsible company will be a company that is compliant with internal and external requirements, applies best available performance standards, manages social risks and impacts, has honest dialogues with local stakeholders, does not violate human rights or labor standards in its supply chain, and has high local content (local labor supply and supplier development). A socially responsible company should also make social investments in the community where it is operating that will continue to produce benefits long after the company has left.

But what prompts companies to be socially responsible in the first place? Aside from concerns about reputation, financial risk, and bad news traveling fast, there is awareness of the expectations and demands of stakeholders, potential impact on people and the environment, and social activism and empowerment of local communities. There are also external requirements imposed by governments, banks, and contracts, issues of competitive advantage and risk mitigation,

Right/Wrong vs. Safe and Popular



- Common areas of CSR focus in post-Soviet states:
 - Music, art, and culture
 - Children, elderly people, underserved populations
 - Sports
 - Infrastructure improvements
- Less common but, arguably, more impactful focus areas:
 - Education, training, skills- and competence-building
 - Local supplier development
 - Environmental protection

Throughout her presentation, Demichelis emphasized that Corporate Social Responsibility is too often confused with public relations

and voluntary commitments. In a nutshell, companies pursue CSR policies because of financial and reputational risks. These notions are relative, however, and an understanding of them depends to a great extent on history and culture, which, in the case of the former Soviet Union, have affected companies' willingness to engage in CSR.

The external requirements referred to above come from a number of standards, guidelines, and best practices, including those spelled out in the UN Global Compact, the Equator Principles, and a number of International Labor Organization declarations, to name just a few guiding frameworks. In most cases, companies that sign on to these documents undertake to follow certain standards and file periodic reports on their implementation of these standards (these reports generally have to be in English). The main focus areas of these documents are transparency, human rights, labor standards, human resources and supplier management, environmental and social impacts, and stakeholder dialogues.

While there are companies that take these obligations very seriously and comply with all the reporting requirements, there are others that just throw money at CSR or try to keep under the radar. This latter approach is the one seen most often in the former Soviet Union.

The concept of CSR (корпоративная социальная ответственность) first appeared in the former Soviet Union in the early 2000s. In general, companies are still uncertain about what standards and guidelines apply and are unwilling to publicly state their commitments to CSR. This is partly because CSR covers subjects like human rights that are tricky to support openly. But the greatest source of confusion lies in the name itself and what it implies in Russian. Of specific concern is the word "responsibility" and the question of who it applies to. Is this the state's responsibility or the company's? In many cases, a company's response when questioned about its actions or policies is, "Isn't that the government's responsibility? Why does our company need to pick up the slack?" Perhaps a better translation of this concept would be ответственность бизнеса (перед обществом) or something that suggests corporate citizenship.

Other ambiguous problem words that lead to misunderstandings include социальное развитие (social development), сфера социальной ответственности (area of social responsibility), проекты социальной направленности (social projects), and социальная ответственность бизнеса (social responsibility of business). As Russian speakers will notice, these "equivalent" terms actually have

very different meanings and implications in Russian than they do in English. To me the very concept of "social" is key here because the Russian cognate it is often associated with government-provided services and government responsibility instead of "society."

Thus, common areas of CSR focus in the FSU include culture; infrastructure improvements; children, the elderly, and underserved groups; and sports, while more important areas like education, training, local supplier development, and environmental protection are not addressed. Veronika's solution to this is to establish a clearer separation between charity and social responsibility (i.e., local growth and sustainability) to help guide CSR policymaking.

Finally, Veronika spoke about documents in this area that need to be translated and edited. Some examples are CSR/sustainability policies and reports, Environmental and Social Impact Assessments, communications with partners, and training materials and handbooks. As in other areas, translation and interpretation are generally treated as an afterthought, which creates opportunities for enterprising T&I professionals who are not afraid of providing client education or seeking out the proper contacts at companies. In terms of getting into the field, Veronika suggested researching some of the standards organizations listed above and the institutions that have adopted their principles, looking at what various companies are saying about CSR on their websites, and reading as much as you can about this topic in all of your languages. Using the websites of the International Investment Bank, the Equator Principles, and the International Finance Corporation as examples, Veronika showed how to search for a list of institutions and companies involved, find the projects that they are working on, and download reports and documents.

This was an excellent, well-organized, and engaging presentation that anticipated and addressed many of the questions audience members might have. I would encourage anyone who missed this presentation to view the recording and anyone who attended this presentation live to view it again so that you can really soak up all the information provided. The recording is only available to ATA61 attendees, but Veronika has generously shared the links to many of the resources she mentioned.

A list of examples of CSR reporting and recommended resources can be found on the following page.

Some examples of CSR reporting:

- **Sakhalin-1 (EN/RU)**
<https://www.sakhalin-1.com/ru-RU/Company/Who-we-are>
- **Sakhalin-2 (EN/RU)**
<http://sakhalinenergy.ru/ru/hse/hsespms/>
- **BP projects in Azerbaijan (Shah Deniz, ACG, and BTC) (EN/AZ)**
https://www.bp.com/en_az/azerbaijan/home/news/environmental-and-social-documentation.html

Recommended resources:

- **UN Global Compact (multilingual)**
- **International Finance Corporation`s Performance Standards (multilingual)**
- **Principles for Responsible Investment (multilingual)**
- **International Labour Organization: country information and data**
- **ISO 26000 (in EN, RU, and FR)**
- **OECD Responsible Business Conduct - Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises**
- **Global Reporting Initiative standards (11 languages)**
- **Transparency International: knowledge hub and local chapters**
- **World Bank Environmental, Health, and Safety Guidelines (multilingual)**
- **IFC Performance Standards (multilingual)**
- **Equator Principles (multilingual)**
- **IPIECA (multilingual)**
- **Human Rights Watch (multilingual)**
- **Amnesty International, Amnesty International Eurasia (RU), and Research (EN and multilingual)**
- **CommDev**

Lucy Gunderson, CT is an ATA-certified Russian>English translator specializing in human rights, academic, legal, and literary translation. She has a master's degree in Russian from the University at Albany and a certificate in translation studies from the University of Chicago, where she also served as a tutor in the Russian>English translation program.

Lucy has been translating for non-governmental organizations for the past ten years and follows the human rights situation in Eurasia closely. She has presented on human rights translation for ATA and the New York Circle of Translators. She is a past chair of ATA's Divisions Committee (2015-2019) and a former administrator of the Association's Slavic Languages Division (2011-2015).

“Getting Edited and Getting Ahead in Literary Translation”

Presented by Shelley Fairweather-Vega

Reviewed by Evgeny Terekhin



Shelley Fairweather-Vega’s presentation “Getting Edited and Getting Ahead in Literary Translations” hit a nerve with me as a literary translator. Being edited is always an uncomfortable experience that requires a lot of humility. The word “humility,” by

the way, comes from the Latin “humus,” “the earth.” Humility is the very soil we are reduced to, which, over time, brings forth unbelievable fruit—if we pay attention to what’s being said.

Being reduced to dust is no fun—especially when you are so invested in your work that every bit of criticism feels like a stab in the heart. Yet, it pays off a hundredfold if we look into those edits and discover that all those red marks in “track changes” do not spell a death sentence but are, in fact, the necessary “drawing of blood” to alleviate the symptoms of too much ego.

Shelley spoke of four types of editorial corrections—mechanical, logical, structural, and cultural—pointing out that some corrections are worth your time and some aren’t. What matters the most is a fruitful conversation with the editor, who may not know the source language and may need some explanation of your word choice.

The final decision is still up to the translator—you can fix the mistake, accept the edit, or justify your choice. You might also need to educate your editor every now and then because they might not know the cultural aspects behind your translation. Through such a collaboration, you, as a translator, will gain insight into how others perceive your wording that will help you make future decisions wisely.

Being able to justify your choice is a skill in itself—translators often claim to have been “on autopilot” while translating. Even though we may “feel” the right translation in our guts, we still have reasons behind our choices. And we can identify and communicate them to the editor.

Shelley gave some guidelines for how to respond appropriately to the editor. You should prioritize the edits, stay humble, check your translation, propose alternatives, know your reasons, and educate your editor if necessary. Being gracious, patient, and thankful when interacting with the editor is a useful mental habit that helps to facilitate communication. You can’t go wrong with expressions of good will, such as: “Thank you,” “Good catch,” “Yes, good idea,” at least when you agree with your editor.

At one point in the presentation, Shelley invited the audience to consider how a modern-day editor might look at the text of the Gettysburg Address. As we were discussing an imaginary editor’s revisions to Abraham Lincoln’s speech, I thought that the archaic “four score and seven” sounded much grander and more exalted than the plain and simple “eighty-seven.” And I wondered how I would respond to an editor who suggested such a change in the first place. My main argument for keeping the “four score and seven” would be the authority-infused cadence of the phrase. “Eighty” sounds too light, in my opinion. I believe, to retain the authority of the original, the word choice must also exude authority.

Shelley reminded her audience of the importance of learning from your editor and not being the “prima donna” translator who doesn’t listen to other people’s advice. To paraphrase the Persian poet Rumi, only those who think of themselves as righteous are in

<p>EDITED TEXT:</p> <p>Four score andEighty-seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty<u>liberty</u>, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.</p> <p>Now we are engaged in a great-terrible <u>Ceivil W</u>war, testing whether that-this nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure <u>for long</u>. We are met<u>are meeting today</u> on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that-this field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives <u>here so</u> that that-this nation might live. It is <u>an</u> altogether fitting and proper that we should do this thing to do.</p>	<p>SF Shelley Fairweather-Vega sexist language</p> <p>SF Shelley Fairweather-Vega “all men and women” or “all people”</p>
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Fairweather-Vega led her audience through a lively and thought-provoking discussion of how a contemporary editor might suggest revising the Gettysburg Address

danger of overlooking their faults. Knowing the job of the editor helps us realize that we are being given invaluable information, which, if used wisely, will contribute to future success.

As we collaborate with our editor, we build a lasting relationship, which creates a shared pool of knowledge. Gradually, this collaboration helps us to grow in ways that otherwise would not be possible. As one of the participants commented, in the final analysis, “it’s all about dealing with your ego.”

Shelley mentioned that she makes about four rounds of edits before she sends off her work to the client, working first in Trados to have both the source and target in front of her eyes, then exporting it to a Word document to check again for flow and accuracy.

She also made a good point that as you collaborate with the editor and the author (if alive), you work around three egos. Building a relationship with these people while learning to compromise is key because literary translation is a small-circle business—it pays to be flexible. They need to know your personality, and demonstrating that you are easy to work with will give you an advantage over less flexible translators.

When all is said and done, the translator’s name will appear on the first page of the published book—regardless of how many corrections have been made. The editor’s name is usually not mentioned.

Shelley spoke about several types of editing, including developmental editing, which looks at how well the characters are developed and checks for plot structure and cultural snags; copy editing, which ensures coherence, style, voice, etc.; proofreading, which is the last check before the work is published. Lastly, there is translation-specific editing.

Consulting with the author, if possible, is a wonderful idea if you don’t see eye to eye with the editor. Unfortunately, it’s not always an option. I remember asking Owen Barfield’s grandson what some of his grandfather’s jokes meant in *The Silver Trumpet*, and he said he had no clue. Owen Barfield died in 1999.

I asked a few English native speakers about it and

they all said something different. So, I just had to guess what he may have meant, based on the broader context, style, and what I know of him from his other writings. Even if I am wrong, I had great fun exploring this mystery and coming up with ways to express my understanding in Russian.

Shelley answered several questions at the end, including how to convince clients that they need to hire an editor too, not just a translator. As for me, I have only had one client who didn’t want to get an editor for my translations. Even though I promised to do my best I told her she would still need to have someone proofread it before publishing. Eventually, she concurred.

On a side note, based on my own experience, it seems a good idea to transfer your work to a totally different format before you take a final look at it.

Often, seeing the text in a different font or layout gives you an immediate insight into what should be tweaked. I would add that hearing your translation read aloud to you is another great way to catch mistakes on the fly—something I have been doing for a while with good results.

I must say that when I first started to work with CAT tools, I would never have believed I would use them to translate literary content. But now I do. I guess it’s become a habit by now, even though the only advantage to it seems to be having the TM readily available so you can ensure terminological consistency. In all other respects, CAT tools seem to be detrimental to the literary translation process, mainly because you see just segments.

When your mind gets used to segmenting the text, it becomes harder to perceive the text as a whole, which gets in the way of flow and readability. As for me, I proofread my translation outside of CAT tools several times and usually CHANGE A LOT before I am sure it’s “mature” enough to send off to the client.

Shelley’s presentation leaves us with an ultimate paradox—“Getting Edited and Getting Ahead in Literary Translations.” Counterintuitive as it may seem, getting edited IS getting ahead. Accepting your limitations is a step up, not down. The road to success is strewn with the corpses of your little egos that you have dropped along the way.

Evgeny Terekhin is an ATA-certified English to Russian literary and marketing translator and interpreter. He lives in Friendswood, TX, with his wife and three children. He has a master’s degree in English and German from Omsk State Pedagogical University, and he has translated and edited over 100 books including works of Martin Luther, Charles Spurgeon, John Calvin, C.S. Lewis, and Owen Barfield.

Response Strategy Best Practices



- Prioritize. Don’t sweat the small stuff
- Stay humble (and gracious, patient, thankful)
- Check your translation
- Propose alternatives
- Know your reasons
- Educate your editor



PARASOLS AND PITCHFORKS

A REVIEW OF “BALANCING ACT: SNEAKING HISTORICAL CONTEXT INTO A LITERARY TRANSLATION FROM RUSSIAN”

Presented by Nora Seligman Favorov

Reviewed by Liv Bliss

Nora Seligman Favorov’s presentation—one of the high points for me in what was, after all, a most unusual ATA Annual Conference—was a long time in the making. Well, not so much the presentation itself as its inspiration, the ground-breaking translation into English of Sofia Khvoshchinskaya’s 1863 novel *Городские и деревенские* [*City Folk and Country Folk*]. Nora’s translation, which is only the second time that any of Khvoshchinskaya’s writings has appeared in English (the first being a [memoir](#) of her time at the Catherine Institute), was begun in the late 1990s and was published in 2017 by Columbia University Press, as part of its Russian Library series. It promptly went on to win AATSEEL’s 2018 award for best literary translation into English.

Amazon allows you to “Look Inside” Nora’s lively translation at <https://tinyurl.com/y2z8e4tt>. And, for those who enjoy a challenge, the Russian original in pre-Revolutionary orthography can be accessed at <https://tinyurl.com/y56lufde>.

In her engaging self-introduction, Nora explained that she had picked Khvoshchinskaya out of a fascinating group of now-underappreciated Russian women authors of the nineteenth century while she was settling on a thesis topic for her Master’s program at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. “I was captivated,” Nora told her virtual audience, “by her wry wit and, especially in the case of *City Folk and Country Folk*, her masterful construction of plot.” (The time, place, and premise are different, of course, but I still couldn’t help thinking of Jane Austen’s lovely plot work and her bright, feisty, sometimes misguided but always warm-hearted heroines, and I became smitten, sight unseen, with both Khvoshchinskaya and Olenka, her leading lady.)

The introductions over, Nora went on to “open up a corner of my workshop” (to quote an author of mine), to show us, through concrete examples, the kind of contextual balancing act she performed during the

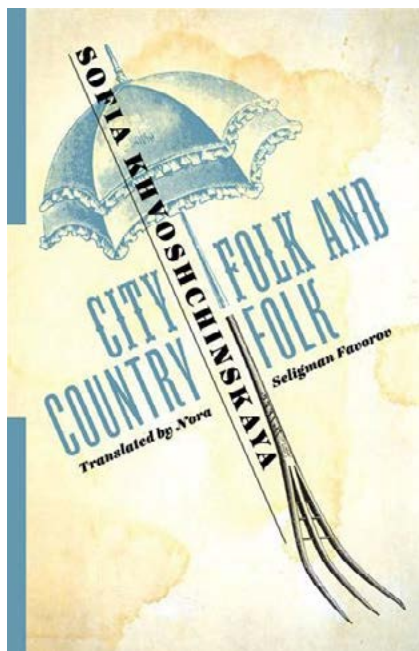
many years, and many iterations, of her labor of love.

I don’t recall Lawrence Venuti’s notorious, and possibly overstated, dyad of domestication versus foreignization (the conformation to vs. the blanket exclusion of the target culture in a work of fiction) coming up in so many words during this presentation. Yet it was ever present, as it would have to be in a translation culture that labors (or thrives, depending on your point of view) in the relentlessly foreignized ambiance championed by the ubiquitous translation team of Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky.

As she worked toward a satisfactory correlation of domestication versus foreignization in her translation, one of Nora’s considerations was her desire to introduce Khvoshchinskaya’s gem to the broadest possible Anglophone readership: “I wanted my translation to be readable and enjoyable, to be something that was read for pleasure, not just as a scholarly tool. So, when faced with the choice between fidelity and readability, I opted for readability.” This, of course, opened her up to criticism, along the lines of “Favorov does not seem to trust Khvoshchinskaya’s [sic] text, adding and leaving out words and phrases that seem redundant.”

While this critique refers to one of several preliminary drafts of the text, and while I would be willing to bet that later drafts would hew closer to the Russian original (as mine often do), these are criticisms that a translator who cares for her readers at least as much as for her author simply has to live with.

In Nora’s case, however, it was less a matter of risking having Olenka come across like a Henry James heroine (heaven forbid!) than of dealing with the realities of Russia in the early 1860s, which are inextricably interwoven into the novel and are crucial to a meaningful understanding of this wonderfully multifaceted work. And



Лето прошлого года Настасья Ивановна Чулкова, вдова пятидесяти пяти лет и [1] помещица пятидесяти уже [3] временнообязанных душ [2] в селе Снетки, могла бы назвать самым замечательным летом своей жизни и записать его таковым в своих мемуарах, если бы только она вела мемуары. Во-первых, над нею в самом воздухе ее жилища пронеслись новые струи [4] воспитания, которым веет со всех концов нашей отчины; во-вторых, в ее жилище совершилась борьба старых и новых понятий, и Настасья Ивановна боролась сама и даже одержала победу, сама того не зная; в-третьих, она чуть-чуть не стала [6] развитой женщиной на удивление себе и на зависть [5] мелкопоместным соседкам. И что же? Неблагодарная не только не порадовалась, а назвала все это [7] «напастью».

Nastasya Ivanovna Chulkova, a fifty-five-year-old widow and the [1] mistress of fifty souls, who were by then working on her Snetki [2] estate [3] under temporary obligation, might have called last summer the most remarkable summer of her life and described it as such in her memoirs, if only she had kept memoirs. First, above her, through the very air of her home, new currents of [4] education had blown through in a gust, that same education that is wafting from every corner of our native land; second, her home had been the site of a struggle between old and new ideas, and Nastasya Ivanovna had taken part in this struggle and, without realizing it, had even achieved a victory; and third, to her own amazement and the envy of the [5] ladies of the neighboring small estates, she had come within a hair's breadth of developing into an [6] enlightened woman herself. And can you imagine? Not only did the ingrate fail to rejoice, she called the whole affair a [7] calamity.

that enormous challenge began with *the novel's very first paragraph*, which Nora justifiably called “a translator’s delight and despair” (see box above).

This was, believe it or not, only a foretaste of challenge after challenge to come, some of which were detailed in this tales-from-the-translation-trenches presentation. A translator’s sleight of hand can only go so far, though: some of the contextual clarifications had to be consigned to footnotes (at least—thank you, Nora and Columbia—not chapter or book endnotes). And the first of those was attached to that very first paragraph and concerned the head-scratcher “temporarily obligated.” “I would have loved to find a way to ‘sneak’ this historical context into the text proper, but obviously the information in the footnote was too complex for such ‘sneaking,’” Nora acknowledged ruefully. Such a far cry from her work for the bimonthly magazine *Russian Life*, where she can frequently avoid footnotes altogether by adding or recasting information “to make it more easily digestible by an American audience.” How interesting, though, that the demands of, and approaches to, *City Folk and Country Folk* and *Russian Life*, so very different on the face of it, have actually fed into and enriched each other. It’s all part of the alchemy of translation.

One would be forgiven for thinking that the presentation’s concluding riff on hats, complete with illustrations, was inserted for comic relief. But no... headgear was yet another of the historical realities that mattered, although less for the sake of the text than for Nora’s desire to find the perfect book jacket for her

translation, one that would match comfortably with Columbia’s balanced and contrastive leitmotiv for its Russian Library series covers. What better than an illustration that included the citified hero’s “ponderous panama hat” and Olenka’s “Garibaldi hat”? Alas, not only did the search through the byways of Garibaldi’s Italian revolution and its head coverings not come up with a hat that convincingly resembled the design it should have had, per the text, but Nora’s publisher had gone ahead in the meantime and produced a cover without seeking any input from her. And that is where the parasols and pitchforks came in, despite the fact that Olenka and her mother, the “country folk,” have never wielded a pitchfork in their lives (!) and none of the ladies (country or city) are ever seen with parasol in hand. Book jacket hits and misses would surely provide material for an entire, and very entertaining, presentation at some future conference (and do I have some misses for you...).

The Conference presentations will eventually be made available on a paid basis for those who were unable to attend the virtual shindig. I don’t think I need say which presentation would be especially worth the cost of admission for anyone who wasn’t able to catch it the first time around.

Although many (even most) of us will never dedicate ourselves to a project of such complexity, magnitude, and significance as *City Folk and Country Folk*, I do believe that this presentation offers some important takeaways for us all:

- 1) Love—or at least like—your project, large or small, long or short. Hostility between translator and text is rarely the beginning of a rewarding relationship.
- 2) Trust your translatorial instincts while respecting those of your reviewers (be they agency personnel, direct clients, Beta readers, a publishing house pre-publication team, or whatever). They won't necessarily be right; they could be nit-picking just for the fun of it; but some may offer insights that you, as close to the text as you are, might have overlooked.
- 3) Do sweat the small stuff. Because there is no small stuff.
- 4) If a translation, especially a creative translation, is going fast and painlessly, you're either very, very lucky, or something's very, very wrong.

Liv Bliss is an ATA-certified Russian to English translator who lives in the White Mountains of Arizona and enjoyed the virtual conference far more than she expected to. She can be reached at bliss.mst@gmail.com.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATION REVIEW

“How to Become a Literary Translator”

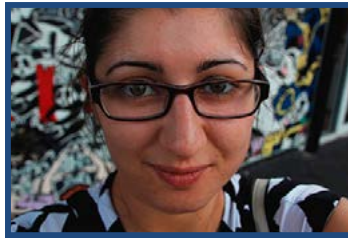
Presented by Evgeny Terekhin

Reviewed by Maria Guzenko

Despite its title, Evgeny Terekhin's session at this year's virtual ATA Annual Conference went beyond getting started in literary translation and featured tips that translators in any domain may benefit from to improve the quality of their work. The speaker talked about his professional journey and the lessons he has learned over the years that have helped him get to where he is today.

Evgeny started by sharing his professional background. He is an ATA-certified translator (English into Russian) who has been translating since 1993 and moved to the US from Russia in 2016. Evgeny started his career by applying to be an interpreter for US missionaries who were going to spend a summer in Omsk. Later, they approached him about translating a study guide, and he discovered his love for translation. This led him to send some 200 cold emails and samples to potential clients all over the world. That effort brought him four or five steady direct clients based in Latvia, Russia, Ukraine, and the US.

Yet Evgeny's work for those clients was not always easy. He would get frustrated when his translations came back full of corrections. Evgeny was starting to doubt whether he was cut out to be a translator when his editor reassured him that he was getting all this feedback precisely because the editor believed he had what it takes to be a good translator. By going over his mistakes, Evgeny identified some best practices translators should follow to improve their work. These best practices could be roughly divided into two main groups—fluency and work philosophy.



Fluency Collocations

One of the most frequent comments Evgeny would get on his translations was “we don't say things like this.” Often, the problem was the way he combined words in a phrase, also known as collocation. Evgeny's editor would provide some recommended reading to help him learn how Russian expressed a particular idea. In addition, Evgeny has learned to consult Google search trends (<https://trends.google.com/trends>) to see how people usually phrase their queries. [If I, Maria, might add to Evgeny's tips, I would suggest resources like the Russian National Corpus (<https://ruscorpora.ru/>) and Karta Slov (<https://kartaslov.ru/>). These websites allow the user to search a word or phrase in context or compare which phrasing is more common.] Finally, Evgeny recommended listening to each translation—read aloud either by another person or the computer—to catch any awkward wordings.

Cohesion

Evgeny's editor would sometimes tell him his work lacked cohesion; in other words, there was no connection between adjacent sentences. Translating the English connectors “here” or “this” literally may not work in Russian or may be too ambiguous. It is best to state explicitly what “this” actually stands for—for example, a particular event or the way someone does things. In addition, Evgeny recommends looking at each paragraph as a whole rather than translating sentence by sentence. He pointed out that many newer

CAT tools have a preview feature that allows the user to see the entire text. In the same vein, Evgeny recommended translating the title of a text only after translating the rest of the text and understanding its main ideas.

Repetitions

Avoiding unnecessary repetitions can also improve a translation. This refers not only to verbatim repetitions in the same paragraph but also to similar expressions with an identical meaning. Once again, listening to the translation read aloud may reveal redundant wording and offer an opportunity to make the translation more concise.

Work Philosophy

The 80/20 Rule

The last few tips Evgeny shared had to do with translators' overall approach to their profession. First, he mentioned the Pareto principle, also known as the 80/20 Rule. When applied to a freelancer's income, this rule, also known as "the law of the vital few," describes a situation where around 80 percent of all results or profits come from 20 percent of all clients, projects, or contributors. In other words, 80 percent of all results are derived by focusing on 20 percent of one's work. In practical terms, that could point to the wisdom of concentrating on the most lucrative or otherwise rewarding projects. Evgeny advised against accepting low-paid, high-volume translations and spreading oneself too thin. Before taking on a project, translators should ask themselves how it fits with their long-term vision.

Flow

Finally, Evgeny talked about reaching a flow state when working on a translation. "Flow" is a term coined by the Hungarian-American psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. It refers to an optimal state of mind where someone is totally absorbed by the task at hand and is "in the zone." Translators can achieve this mental state if they work on a task that is challenging enough and have a skill level that is high enough to rise to the challenge. Evgeny pointed out that, for experienced translators, this process becomes automatic and a translator's natural instinct kicks in. To improve a translation, Evgeny recommended taking a break and coming back to the text later.

Towards the end of the presentation, Evgeny shared an excerpt from *The Silver Trumpet* by Owen Barfield and asked the participants what they noticed about the text from a linguistic standpoint. A few audience members were then given an opportunity to share their observations in real time. That was a nice interactive feature in the midst of this year's largely one-way, online conference.

Evgeny's presentation gave the audience a few actionable tips for improving their work. Few of them came as a surprise to experienced translators, but it is always nice to be reminded of good work habits, the importance of seeking feedback, and the need to revise a first draft to improve its readability.

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. Maria is a co-founder of the SLD certification exam practice group and the host of the SLD podcast, now rebranded as *Slovo*. More information can be found on her website at <https://intorussian.net>.

Minneapolis, Here We Come!

If you haven't already, mark your calendars.
ATA62 will be held in Minneapolis, MN October 27–30, 2021.

Presentation proposals are due March 1.

The page linked above informs us that ATA62 "will be a hybrid (in-person and virtual) Conference. All speakers should be prepared to present in person, in Minneapolis, unless ATA makes a decision to hold a fully virtual event. You will be asked to note your willingness to present in person only, virtually only, or either in person or virtually on the proposal submission form."

SLAVFILE LITE: NOT BY WORD COUNT ALONE

Lydia Razran Stone

Dear Readers: In these dark times, I feel moved to use this column to add a little humor—although perhaps not light (or even lite)—to these pages.

First, a poem written while I was working with an immigrant Russian poet. It is dedicated to a niche publisher who had agreed in principle to publish our bilingual work.

Our [insert two-syllable iambic name of your choice] finds the best excuses
For why we face one more delay.
While antics such as this amuse us,
We long for publication day.
His son and daughter aren't speaking;
The car won't start, the roof is leaking;
The fonts we sent him can't be read;
He's off to see his uncle wed;
A trip to Europe's in the offing;
He can't recoup his last book's cost;
The box with all our drafts got lost;
It hurts to pee, he can't stop coughing;
He's reading at the famed U.N.,
Can't do our book till after then.

It really starts to try our patience
To hear his latest alibi:
Disasters, illness, celebrations—
Meanwhile, the weeks and months fly by.
He never got our latest faxes;
He had to do his income taxes;
George Bush's win has him undone;
His new computer doesn't run.
What else can he dream up to plague us?
His cousin's wife has left him flat;
He must go gambling in Las Vegas.
He's worried sick about his cat.
We nod and sigh, but want to shout,
"When will our [insert one-syllable verb of your choice]-ing book come out?"

The poem below is one of Oster's, ostensibly for children. My translation is not entirely faithful, in that I could not resist the temptation to add rhyme. I have been translating Russian children's poems into English for years, mainly for my own amusement. At this point in a lifetime of already serious length, I would be happy to share the bilingual file (nearly 200 pages) with anyone who might want to read it and especially to read it to children. Of course, if you can suggest any possibility for getting some or all of the poems published, even for only free copies as recompense, please let me know.



Если в школу опоздал
 На урок литературы
 И придумать не сумел
 Уважительной причины,
 Говори, что поправлял
 Дяде хворому подушку,
 Потому что дядя твой
 Уважать себя заставил.

If to class you barely make it,
 Missing most of Russian Lit.,
 Do not worry, you can fake it:
 To the teacher just admit.
 That Onegin's so inspiring
 That, like him, you went to sit
 With your uncle who's expiring.

Finally, my rather free translation of a wonderful tour de force written by a Russian poet in 1969.
 No reference to current events intended.

ГИППО-ПОЭМА

Вячеслав Куприянов

Нашему времени повезло:
 Мы поняли, в чем заключалось зло.
 И в этом мы виноваты сами—
 Зло заключалось в Гиппопотаме.
 Он жил, чураясь наших забот,
 А мы проливали гиппопо-пот,
 Он же на труд не растрчивал сил,
 Но гиппопо-ел и гиппопо-пил,
 Гиппопо-спал и гиппопо-пел
 За счет своих гипотетических дел.
 Молол он ги-патетический вздор
 И этак все выше и выше пер,
 И вот для него мы всего лишь ноли,
 Он же — Гиппопо-пуп земли.
 А кто-то, верный в расчете простом,
 О том сочиняет гиппопо-том,
 Потом его слава в ораве уст,
 Уже установлен Гиппопо-бюст,
 Вот Гиппопо от головы до пят,
 И гиппо-подонки вокруг вопят:
 Гип-гип-ура! Гип-гип-ура!
 Так наступила Гиппо-пора.
 Гиппопо-мед — тем, кто поймет,
 Что он по гиперболе к счастью ведет.
 На тех, кто не верит в этот гипноз,
 К Гиппо идет за доносом донос,
 И Гиппо казнит всех негибких сам.
 Но это уже перегиб-попотам!
 История не простит перегиб!
 И вот от гриппа Гиппо погиб.
 Гиппо погиб! Гиппо погиб!
 Да не повторится подобный тип!
 Теперь забьем мы осиноый кол
 И землю избавим от меньших зол...

Но слухи ползут, что Гиппо живет
 Под новой фамилией — Бегемот!

HIPPO-PO-POEM

Vyacheslav Kupriyanov

One thing we learned in our time full of shame:
 We all learned to cringe when we hear evil's name.
 And how can you blame us?
 It's justly infamous--
 Tsar Hippo-po-tamus!
 He lived off our labor for many long years.
 He lived off our hippo-po-blood, sweat and tears,
 While he hippo-po-wined, and he hippo-po-dined
 And made merry on hippo-po cushions reclined.
 He grew rich making hippo-po-thetical deals,
 Spouting hippo-po-hype in his hippo-po-spiels.
 Thus he soared to the top of the hippo-po-heap,
 While we, his poor subjects, did nothing but weep.
 We were treated like zeros—to him our true worth,
 While he thought himself hippo-po-hub of the earth.
 On his hippo-po-bio they wrote boring tomes.
 His hippo-po-portraits disfigured our homes.
 And hippo-po-paeans assaulted our ears
 As his hippo-po-flunkies led hippo-po-cheers:
 Hip-hippo-hoorah, hip-hippo-hooray,
 Give thanks for our hippo-po-era today.
 True hippo-po-crits were assured of success,
 While back-sliders were punished and made to confess
 And those who resisted such hippo-po-nosis.
 Were sent to locked wards to treat hippo-psychosis.
 So you see, we had reached hippo-bolic extremes,
 Which, luckily, don't last forever, it seems.
 Kind fate put an end to our hip-tatorship:
 We heard that the hippo was dead of the gripe.
 He was dead of the gripe, or the hippo-po-flu.
 Whatever, we'd never see his like anew.
 Of the hippo-po-plague we were finally rid
 And no other we'd ever let do what he did.

Yet rumors now claim he is not dead in truth,
 But lives under an alias -- Tsar Be-he-muth.

To finish up, my translation of Marshak's famous Багаж.

БАГАЖ

Самуил Маршак

Дама сдавала в багаж:
Диван,
Чемодан,
Саквояж,
Картину,
Корзину,
Картонку
И маленькую собачонку.

Выдали даме на станции
Четыре зелёных квитанции
О том, что получен багаж:
Диван,
Чемодан,
Саквояж,
Картина,
Корзина,
Картонка
И маленькая собачонка.

Вещи везут на перрон.
Кидают в открытый вагон.
Готово. Уложен багаж:
Диван,
Чемодан,
Саквояж,
Картина,
Корзина,
Картонка
И маленькая собачонка.

Но только раздался звонок,
Удрал из вагона щенок.
Хватились на станции Дно:
Потеряно место одно.
В испуге считают багаж:
Диван,
Чемодан,
Саквояж,
Картина,
Корзина,
Картонка...
- Товарищи!
Где собачонка?

BAGGAGE

Samuil Marshak

A lady checked with baggage claim:
A steamer trunk
A box of junk
A picture frame
A casket
A basket
A seat
And a teeny and a weeny
Puppy—cute and neat.

They gave the lady at the station
Four tickets (green) as confirmation
To substantiate her claim for:
A steamer trunk
A box of junk
A picture frame
A casket
A basket
A seat
And a teeny and a weeny
Puppy—cute and neat.

Before the train was due to start
These things were loaded in a cart
And then onto the train:
The steamer trunk
The box of junk
The picture frame
The casket
The basket
The seat
And the teeny and the weeny
Puppy—cute and neat.

Before they could yell "all aboard,"
The puppy, of his own accord,
Fled from that noisy stuffy place
And left behind an empty space,
Which the porters could not miss.
Fearfully they checked their list:
"A steamer trunk
A box of junk
A picture frame
A casket
A basket
A seat...
But wait the set is incomplete...
Comrades, what is going on.
Where has the teeny puppy gone?"

Вдруг видят: стоит у колёс
Огромный взъерошенный пёс.
Поймали его - и в багаж,
Туда, где лежал саквояж,
Картина,
Корзина,
Картонка,
Где прежде была собачонка.

Приехали в город Житомир.
Носильщик пятнадцатый номер
Везёт на тележке багаж:
Диван,
Чемодан,
Саквояж,
Картину,
Корзину,
Картонку,
А сзади ведут собачонку.
Собака-то как зарычит.
А барыня как закричит:
— Разбойники! Воры! Уроды!
Собака — не той породы!

Швырнула она чемодан,
Ногой отпихнула диван,
Картину,
Корзину,
Картонку...
— Отдайте мою собачонку!

— Позвольте, мамаша,
На станции,
Согласно багажной квитанции,
От вас получили багаж:
Диван,
Чемодан,
Саквояж,
Картину,
Корзину,
Картонку
И маленькую собачонку.
Однако
За время пути
Собака
Могла подрасти!

The worried porters looked around
And spied a giant, scruffy hound.
They caught and stuffed him in a spot
Where the little dog was not.
Next to the trunk,
The box of junk,
The casket
The basket
Beneath the seat,
Though he was neither cute nor neat.

At Zhitomir, their destination,
A porter brought out to the station:
A steamer trunk
A box of junk
A picture frame
A casket
A basket
A seat
And an awfully mangy, awfully rangy
Giant dog with muddy feet.
The dog began to growl.
The lady gave a howl:
“That dog’s not mine; he’s nothing but
A huge misshapen dirty mutt.”

And she kicked her steamer trunk,
Pushed aside her box of junk,
Then the casket
And the basket.
She dealt the folding seat a whack
And yelled, “Give me my puppy back.”

“Now listen, lady: at the station,
According to this confirmation,
You checked in for future claim:
A steamer trunk
A box of junk
A picture, framed
A casket
A basket
A seat
And a teeny and a weeny
Puppy—cute and neat.
But no one promised you, you know,
That on the trip he would not grow.”

(Even More) Pitfalls, Spitballs, and Pratfalls: Sources of Bewilderment or Confusion for Translators in the Idiomatic Language Used in American Political News Reporting

Lydia Razran Stone

Dear Readers: Since I last wrote [a column of this type](#), I have continued to read the news and collect examples. I now have a list of 7500+ and may go on until I hit 10K if the quarantine persists.

Recently the phrase *salt the earth* (*посыпать землю солью*) has appeared more than once, referring to the ancient practice of retreating or victorious troops adding salt to enemy farmland to destroy fertility. This phrase, which in itself does not appear in Multitran, may well be confused with the Biblical phrase *salt of the earth* (*соль земли*), with the very different meaning of the world's best and most necessary people.

This pair has inspired me to list more of the confusable pairs in my data set.

1. Below the belt vs. under one's belt. *Below the belt*, as in the phrase *hit below the belt* (*удар ниже пояса*), comes from boxing, where such a blow is illegal and thus refers to an illegitimate or unfair negative action against someone. *Under one's belt* (*за плечами*), which originally meant having eaten or drunk something, refers to past accomplishments or experience: *He came to the job with years of relevant experience under his belt*.

2. Up to the moment vs. up to the minute. I have seen *up to the moment* used several times to mean that someone is capable of dealing with (*способен справиться*) a current very difficult situation. The meaning is similar to *up to the challenge* (*готов к вызову*). (I cannot find a translation on Multitran or a definition in English on Google, but I am sure of its meaning.) *Up to the minute*, frequently used of news reports, refers to the most current (*актуальная*) information possible.

3. To hit home vs. to hit a homer. *To hit home* (*попасть в точку; задеть за живое*) is a phrase used often to refer to a comment or the like that has had the intended, generally negative (e.g., shame or embarrassment), effect on someone. It may also be used to describe something evoking a strong emotion or memory in someone. *To hit a homer* (or a home run) (*преуспеть*) means to accomplish something excellent or even spectacular.

4. Lead by a nose vs. lead (around) by the nose. *Lead by a nose* (*немного опередить*), from horse racing, means to be slightly ahead in some contest. *Lead [around] by the nose* (*водить за нос*) means to control someone virtually completely.

5. Stand up for someone vs. to stand up to someone vs. stand someone up. *To stand up for someone* (*заступиться*) is to defend that person against criticism, ill treatment, etc., frequently (but not always) verbally. *To stand up to someone* is to vigorously defend oneself or one's position against someone, usually someone in power (*давать отпор*). *To stand someone up* (*не явиться*) is to fail to show up for a date, appointment, or other agreed-upon meeting.

6. To troll for vs. to troll (online). *To troll for* (*ловить рыбу на блесну [с движущейся лодки]*) is to attempt to catch fish from a moving boat, and by implication to search for other things in a somewhat relaxed manner or by searching a number of sources. *To troll* (*троллить*) (based on the noun "[internet] troll") means to attempt to upset or offend people on Internet platforms.

7. Legwork vs. footwork. *Legwork* (*беготня*) is work, usually not very interesting, that involves going around to many places to get information. *Footwork* is the manner, frequently admirable, in which someone moves their feet in a sport or dance (*работа ногами*) and, by implication, can refer to adroit maneuvering in general (*маневрирование*).

8. Tee up vs. tee off. *Tee up* (based on the T-shaped peg on which a golf ball rests for the opening stroke) means to start up or prepare something (*начинать, организовать*). *Tee off* can mean the same but has the further common meaning of angering or annoying someone (*сердить*).

9. Run the gamut vs. run a (the) gauntlet. *Run the gamut* (frequently followed by a phrase of the "from A to B" type) means to cover the entire range of something (*охватывать весь диапазон*). *Run the gauntlet* (*пройти через тернии, рисковать головой*; literally: *наказание штирпуненами*)

refers to a former military punishment in which the offender had to run between two rows of men who beat him as he passes (originally with the armored gloves known as gauntlets). Currently the phrase is only used metaphorically for a verbal, emotional, or physical ordeal.

10. Give someone a piece of your mind vs. give someone peace of mind. This one would probably only cause confusion in oral language; still, the confusion would be serious. To give someone a piece of one's mind (*отчитать*) is to tell them all the negative things you think about them or an action of theirs. (The use of the phrase without *give* or some synonym is very unlikely.) *To give someone peace of mind* (*успокоить*) is to reassure them about something that has been worrying them.

11. In a spot vs. on the spot vs. spot on. To be *in a spot* (frequently, *a tight spot*) means to be in some kind of trouble (*в трудном положении*). *On the spot* can mean either right at that time or at that exact place or both (*тут же; сразу*). *Spot on* (*то, что надо; точно*), which is primarily, but not exclusively, British usage, means "absolutely correct."

12. Pick a fight vs. pick one's battles. *To pick a fight* means to purposely incite a person (*затеять ссору/драку*). *To pick one's battles* (*не лезть на рожон; расставить приоритеты*) means to choose to fight only when you consider it absolutely necessary or to your advantage.

13. Get over something vs. get something over with. *To get over something* is to no longer have a negative feeling about, or suffer from, something (*смириться; прийти в себя*). *To get something over with* is to do something unpleasant sooner rather than later, in order to be finished with it (*покончить с чем-л. раз и навсегда, отстреляться*).

14. Levels of government vs. levers of government. This is another one that would be most confusing orally. The "levels" in question in *levels of government* generally refer to city, state, and national government (*уровни власти*). *Levers of government* are the various means available to a government to effect changes (*рычаги государственного воздействия*).

15. Part ways vs. partway. *Part ways* is a verb + object construction meaning to separate or stop closely associating with (*расскаться*). *Partway* (*частично; на полпути*) is an adverb meaning part of the way along or simply partially.

16. The police used restraint vs. restraints. *Restraint* (*сдержанность*) in this context means that the police used no more force than was necessary. *Restraints* (*ограничители; спецсредства*) refers to the use of various devices preventing a detainee's movement.

17. A long stretch vs. a (big) stretch. *A long stretch* refers to a long time (*надолго*) as well as possibly a long distance. It is often used regarding a lengthy term of incarceration. *A (big) stretch* is frequently a reference to stretching the truth and means that a statement, argument, or theory is very difficult to believe (*преувеличение; с натяжкой*).

18. Spells trouble vs. a spell of trouble. *To spell trouble* means to entail or bring trouble (*сулить неприятности*). *A spell of trouble* is a (probably shortish) period of trouble (*временные затруднения, сложный период*). "Trouble spelling" is of course something else again.

Thanks to Maria Guzenko and Galina Raff for their invaluable help with Russian equivalents.

A New Home for the Russian Translators Club

The former home of the Russian Translators Club, Yahoo, is no longer hospitable. Thanks to Galina Raff for researching and setting up a new platform

groups.io/g/Russiantranslators
for Russian<>English translators and interpreters to post queries, discuss puzzling terms, help clients and language professionals find one another, and share relevant articles and resources. Russian T/I professionals have been helping one another through the RTC since 1999.

Please note: we have transferred members of the Yahoo RTC onto the new site, but there were 60 members whose emails were not listed in their profile, meaning we could not transfer their membership ourselves. These members will need to contact us for an invitation.

Posts to this group are unmoderated, and the archive is visible to members only. ATA membership is not required for RTC membership. RTC membership is by invitation (and members can unsubscribe themselves at any time).

To receive an invitation, please contact Nora Favorov at norafavorov@gmail.com