

Literature and Translation

Translation Studies before 'Translation Studies'

Nothing happened?

Edited by

Kathryn Batchelor and

Iryna Odrekhivska

UCLPRESS

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13 Ukraine, 1927–1932

Discussions of translation methods in Soviet Ukraine in the late 1920s–early 1930s

Lada Kolomiyets and Oleksandr Kalnychenko¹

Introduction

By Lada Kolomiyets and Oleksandr Kalnychenko

After their defeat in the Ukrainian War of Independence, which lasted from February 1917 to November 1921, Ukrainians found themselves as the largest stateless nation in Europe. Although an independent Ukrainian state emerged and developed during this time, much of it was eventually incorporated into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, part of the USSR since 1922. Despite the defeat of the Ukrainian People's Republic, the war resulted in the Bolsheviks finally recognising Ukrainians as a separate nationality from Russians (something that did not exist in the Russian Empire) with their own language, traditions and way of life. In 1923, to strengthen their control over national republics and enhance the national profile of the state and Party institutions and thus legitimise Soviet rule in the eyes of the local population, the Bolsheviks launched a policy of 'indigenisation', promoting the use of native languages in education, publishing, workplaces and government; in Ukraine, this policy was known as 'Ukrainisation'.

It was the idea of national revival that sparked substantial growth in both literary and non-literary translation in the 1920s and early 1930s. This era is commemorated in Ukrainian history as the National Revival period. Between 1917 and 1927, Ukrainian publishing houses – state-owned, cooperative and private – produced an unprecedented volume of translated literature. The translation surge reached its peak in the late 1920s and early 1930s, resulting in hundreds of translations from various languages, both living and dead.

In general, it was a period of growing theoretical understanding of translation as a scholarly and educational discipline, involving the history, theory, criticism and didactics of translation. Ukraine witnessed numerous publications on translation, along with reviews in various journals, including the first monograph on translation, Oleksandr Finkel's 1929 work *Teoriia i praktyka perekladu* (Theory and Practice of Translation), which extended translation theory beyond literature. While Finkel was the first in Eastern Europe to publish a monograph on translation, there were many other individuals who made significant contributions to the elaboration of translation theory. Among them were Volodymyr Derzhavyn (1899–1964) and Mykola Zerov (1890–1937), whose essays 'The problem of verse translation' and 'On the matter of verse translation' are presented here in English for the first time.

However, this promising age of translation studies in Ukraine was tragically cut short. The year 1930 marked a significant turning point in Soviet policy towards Ukrainian intellectuals. The orchestrated trial of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine (SVU), coupled with the forced decline of the private translation market and the absorption of cooperative and independent publishing houses into the State Publishing House of Ukraine (DVU), led to the formation of a state commission that imposed strict censorship and standardised publishing practices on the selection and translation of foreign works (for more detail about censorship practices see [Kolomiyets and Kalnychenko 2024](#)). Most Ukrainian journals featuring avant-garde discussions on translation and the aesthetics of creative writing were discontinued. The culmination of these repressive measures was the targeted elimination of a generation of Ukrainian intellectuals, including Mykola Zerov and numerous other prominent Ukrainian translators and academics, a tragedy later dubbed the 'Executed Renaissance' by Jerzy Giedroyc during his Paris-based initiative to compile an anthology of Ukrainian literature from 1917 to 1933.

Mykola Zerov was shot on 3 November 1937, one of nearly three hundred members of the Ukrainian renaissance executed at Sandarmokh, a mass killing site in Karelia, northwest Russia. Volodymyr Derzhavyn escaped the killings, but redirected his focus to research on ancient history, stopped writing on translation and mainly concentrated on translation and editorial work. As a displaced person in Munich post-Second World War, he lectured on literature and history at the Ukrainian Free University and contributed to the publication of the exile collection of Mykola Zerov's preserved writings, which had been banned in the Soviet Union. In one of his postwar articles, Derzhavyn articulated Zerov's quintessence of literary translation culture: 'classical style with its balance and

acmeism, vivid epithets and a rigorous flow of thought – the most fundamental characteristic of *grand art*' (Derzhavyn 1948, 11). While living in Germany for a decade before his death, Derzhavyn did not return to his earlier theorising on translation.

Nowadays we can say that Zerov and Derzhavyn were subjected to a twofold erasure during the twentieth century. The Soviet regime's suppression in the 1930s marginalised their work, and the Cold War's information barriers further limited their visibility in the West. This devalued their translation concepts and hindered our ability to fully appreciate their significance, leaving us to draw parallels to contemporary translation theories such as Reiss's correlation of text types and translation methods, Toury's initial norm and Venuti's domesticating and foreignising approaches, while cautiously acknowledging the shortcomings of such comparisons.

Nevertheless, in the last two decades, significant work has been done to bring this erased period of Ukrainian translation history to the attention of today's translation studies scholars, both in and beyond Ukraine. In the early 2000s, Kharkiv University's Mykola Lukash Department of Translation Studies initiated three milestone Ukrainian publications of collective theoretical works: Volodymyr Derzhavyn's *Pro Mystetstvo Perekladu: Statti ta Retsenzii, 1927–1931* (On the Art of Translation: Articles and reviews, 1927–1931) in 2015, Oleksandr Finkel's under the title *Oleksandr Finkel – zabutyi teoretyk ukrainskoho perekladoznavstva* (Oleksandr Finkel: A forgotten theorist of Ukrainian translation studies) in 2007 and an anthology of Ukrainian translation thinking of the 1920s–early 1930s, compiled by Kalnychenko and Poliakova in 2011. Zerov's oeuvre was also brought to light in numerous authoritative editions, among them the 2015 Smoloskyp publication of his selected works (Zerov 2015). The new collections restored the Ukrainian mainstream's access to these foundational texts and paved the way for numerous subsequent studies that offered a pointed perspective on Derzhavyn's, Zerov's and Finkel's translation conceptualisations, as well as on the translation thought of other important scholars of the time (Pavlo Fylypovych, Oleksandr Biletsky, Hryhorii Maifet and many others) (Shmiher 2009, 2024; Bryska 2017; Odrekhivska 2021). Under the 2022 EST Translation Prize, Brian Baer, in partnership with Oleksandr Kalnychenko, is currently translating Finkel's 1929 Ukrainian-language monograph *Teoriia i praktyka perekladu* into English. In 2021, an abbreviated version of Finkel's 1929 Ukrainian article 'H. F. Kvitka as the translator of his own works' was published in English translation by Mercedes Bullock in *Translation and Interpreting Studies*, using a Russian-language

version ‘On autotranslation’ (1962) as the source text (with scholarly introduction by [Kalnychenko 2021](#)).

The authors of this chapter have also published extensively in the Ukrainian and international academic press to situate Finkel’s, Zerov’s and Derzhavyn’s conceptualisations within the broader geopolitical space of knowledge-making on translation, in addition to reconsidering their approaches through a pedagogical lens ([Kalnychenko 2011, 2017, 2021, 2025](#); [Kalnychenko and Zarubina 2016](#); [Kolomiyets 2020](#)). We have also seen the publication of the English-language open-access volume *Translation Studies in Ukraine as an Integral Part of the European Context* ([Djovčoš et al. 2023](#)), which includes chapters on both Derzhavyn and Zerov. We refer our readers to that volume for detailed commentary on the essays presented here, as well as an overview of other relevant contributions by these and other scholars from this period. Below, we provide concise outlines of Derzhavyn and Zerov’s work prior to introducing their theoretical articles in English translation to our readers.

Setting stricter requirements for translation: Volodymyr Derzhavyn on homologous and analogous translation

By Oleksandr Kalnychenko

Volodymyr Derzhavyn (1899–1964) was a Ukrainian literary scholar, linguist, reviewer, historian, translator, editor and translation theorist. He was born in St Petersburg on 30 January 1899, but his social background is unknown (for details of Derzhavyn’s biography see the following works: [Yendyk 1966](#); [Dotsenko and Lysenko 1990](#); [Astafiev 2007](#); [Kachurovskiy 2008](#)). Possibly to evade Bolshevik persecution, he invented a story claiming he was the son of a sexton. Derzhavyn identified himself as ‘a Ukrainian by conviction’, exemplifying a person from a dominant culture who embraced an oppressed culture, creating works influenced by its spiritual, aesthetic and linguistic elements.

Derzhavyn attended a German classical gymnasium in St Petersburg (1909–17), studied Classical Philology at Petrograd University (from 1917), and History and Philology at Kharkiv University (1918–21). In March 1922, he became a postgraduate student in ancient culture at the Kharkiv Institute of Public Education and was appointed as a research fellow there by April 1925. According to Ihor [Kachurovskiy \(2008, 233\)](#), in 1927, Derzhavyn joined a new Research Department of Literary Studies after writing and presenting the work ‘The problems of literary

translation'. To date, no traces of this work have been found. However, the article 'The problem of verse translation', which we present in this chapter, probably contained the main provisions of this work.

After 1931, when the 'new Soviet reader'-oriented approach began to triumph and when the ideologisation of norms began, Derzhavyn ceased writing articles and reviews on translation, as noted above. He then served as an associate professor of German (1935–8), Latin and later Latin literature. In September 1940, he became an associate professor of ancient Oriental history. In 1941, he defended his Candidate of Sciences thesis on the 'Athenaion Politeia of Xenophon' (*Constitution of the Athenians* [Pseudo-Xenophon]) and became an Extraordinary Professor of Ancient History at the University of Kharkiv. In 1944, he emigrated and became a professor at the Ukrainian Free University (Ukrainskyi vilnyi universytet) in Munich from 1946. Between 1945 and 1960 Derzhavyn authored about 1,500 different works, including monographs, papers, critical essays, political articles and translations from several languages. Sadly, by 1960, he was paralysed due to alcohol abuse and passed away in 1964.

'The problem of verse translation' was first published in 1927 in *Pluzhanyn*, the monthly journal of literature and art of the Pluh (Plough) Writers' Association. In this article, Derzhavyn theorises the philologically accurate approach that he and others had begun to explore. The article launched a vivid discussion, centred around the essence of translation: should translation be an analogy of the original ('nativeness'-oriented or 'analogous' translation) or should it represent its stylisation ('foreignness'-oriented translation or 'homologous'/'stylising translation' [*pereklad-stylizatsiya*]?)

As I explain in [Kalnychenko \(2023\)](#), Derzhavyn views artistic translation as a method that aims to convey the artistic essence of the original work, rather than its ideological or psychological content, and reflects the literary era of the original. He calls this approach 'stylisation-translation' ([Kalnychenko and Poliakova 2015](#), 58). Derzhavyn emphasises that literary translation should strive to be as literal as possible – not by translating each word individually, but by capturing the artistic value of each sentence, word and structure in the translation. In his later works, Derzhavyn referred to translations focused on maintaining the foreignness of the original text as 'homologous' or 'stylising'. Conversely, he described translations aimed at adapting the text to the native language as 'analogous' (see, for example, [Derzhavyn 1930](#)). In his own translations, Derzhavyn consistently used the homological method. He contributed to a Ukrainian anthology of ancient literature ([Biletsky 1938](#)), translating

works from Homer, Pindar, Sophocles and others. His translations covered multiple languages, including Latin (Pseudo-Seneca, Horace), ancient Greek (Longus), German (Hölderlin, Hofmannsthal), English (*On the Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin), French (Maupassant's *Bel-Ami*, Parnassians) and Georgian classical poetry.

In the 1920s, translation theory was significantly shaped by the concept of adequate translation (*adekvatnyi pereklad*), and Derzhavyn starts his essay with the remark that 'literary translation is normally required to be "adequate" [*adekvatnyi*] to the original', explaining that this means matching the key stylistic features of the original and embodying them in one way or another. At the end of the essay, he adds that an adequate translation of a text considered 'exotic' – meaning anything generally foreign to our cultural awareness – inevitably retains some stylistic exoticism. In relation to translation theory, the term 'adequacy' (*adekvatnost*) was probably first used by Fedor Batiushkov in the 1920 edition of *Principles of Literary Translation* featured in [Chapter 12](#) of this volume. Batiushkov posited that when the target culture views itself as superior to the source culture, translations tend to emphasise content over form, as seen in the '*belles infidèles*' of seventeenth- to eighteenth-century France. Conversely, when the target culture feels inferior, translations focus more on form, often leading to the unsystematic borrowing of vocabulary and structures, as observed in eighteenth-century Russian translations from Western European languages. Batiushkov argued that only when the source and target cultures are at a similar level of 'spiritual development' can a truly adequate translation be achieved, balancing both form and content. Although all the facts presented by Batiushkov are true, his scheme is easy to dismantle, as it is simple to find many examples that do not fit it. Moreover, Batiushkov failed to explain why different translation methods occur. However, according to [Finkel \(1929: 61\)](#), it should be acknowledged that Batiushkov took the right approach in solving this problem as he considered translations not only from a technical perspective but also from a cultural and social viewpoint. Acknowledging the value of such a perspective, Derzhavyn emphasises the relevance of language functions, distinguishing three types of translation: 'account-translation (*pereklad-vyklad*), transcription-translation (*pereklad-transkriptsiya*) [applied to foreign proper names and terms] and stylisation-translation (*pereklad-stylizatsiya*), with only the latter being artistic to one degree or another, although it almost never exists in a pure form' (quoted in [Kalnychenko and Poliakova 2015: 53](#)).

As his sources, Derzhavyn directly refers to the linguistic views of Oleksander Potebnia, who shared with Wilhelm von Humboldt the view

that some texts should retain a foreign flavour to transform the target culture. Aligning with Potebnia's ideas on the relationship between language and cognition and with the concept of the 'inner form' of the word, which refers to the underlying image or idea that a word evokes, Derzhavyn believed that the artistic function of words lies in their external and inner forms. According to Potebnia, the external form is the sound form of a sign; the internal form is a fragment of meaning immediately represented in the external form (Potebnia [1862] 1993). Derzhavyn argued that aesthetic perception requires sensory receptiveness, which is absent in practical messages or scientific terminology. Derzhavyn stated that the artistic function of language is evident in its sound structure, morphology, syntax and lexis, historically understood through etymology. Literary translation is artistic if it recreates these aspects. Another source of ideas for Derzhavyn was the stylistics of Bally, from which Derzhavyn derived the idea of the functions of language (see Pym 2016).

The discussion was joined by Hryhorii Maifet, Mykola Zerov,² Oleksander Finkel and Ivan Kulyk (see Kalnychenko 2023 for further details). Finkel's 1929 book *Teoriya y praktyka perekladu* was also a response to Derzhavyn, his friend and colleague from the department. Finkel, however, took the opposite stance, advocating for analogous translation. The Ukrainian discussion also sparked responses from Russian scholars Andrei Fedorov and Dmitrii Usov and, as Anthony Pym (2023: 20) notes, was international in scope, involving not just Russians and Ukrainians but also incorporating sources from various European languages.

Away from cultural provincialism: Mykola Zerov's theory of balanced translation

By Lada Kolomiyets

Ukrainian poet, translator, literary historian and polemicist Mykola Zerov (26 April 1890–3 November 1937) is best known as a master of the sonnet form and a translator of ancient poetry from Latin. Having graduated from the History and Philology Department of Saint Volodymyr Kyiv University (now Taras Shevchenko National University), he taught Ukrainian studies and Latin from 1918–20 and until early 1920 worked as an editor of the bibliography journal *Knyhar* (Bookseller). That year two notable anthologies, prepared by Zerov, were published in Kyiv: *The Anthology of Roman Poetry* (Drukar Publishing House, 63 pp.), which

included 22 translations by Zerov of poems by Catullus, Virgil, Horace, Propertius, Ovid and Martial; and *The New Ukrainian Poetry* anthology (State Publishing House of Ukraine, abbreviated as DVU). The latter was published with a cover design by Heorhiy Narbut (1886–1920), a prominent Ukrainian graphic artist.

In 1920, Zerov moved from Kyiv, which was starving at the time, to a town in the Kyiv region, Baryshivka, to teach at the local socio-economic school. It was in Baryshivka that a circle of poets began to form, first including Zerov and his close friends Oswald Burghardt and Pavlo Fylypovych. Inspired by classical literature, in 1923 the poets declared themselves a literary group of Neoclassicists. Zerov, who wrote sonnets according to a strict classical model (following the poetic values of the Parnassians)³ and masterfully conveyed the ‘forged stanzas’ of Ancient Roman poets to his readers, was considered the leader of the group. The central theme of the Neoclassicists, especially Zerov, was culture (Skurativskiy 1988, 6). When Zerov returned to Kyiv in 1923, the circle expanded to include Maksym Rylsky and Mykhailo Drai-Khmara.⁴

In Baryshivka, Zerov wrote his first collection of poetry, *Kamena*, which appeared in 1924 in the Kyiv publishing house Slovo and included in its 80 pages translations of works by José María Heredia, Ivan Bunin and the ancient masters of verse – Horace, Tibullus, Ovid and Martial. Oleksandr Biletsky,⁵ a specialist in ancient literature, wrote in his review of this collection that it was a perfect example of the skilful language which could be achieved by following the school of the ancient masters, and that from a technical point of view *Kamena* contained the best Ukrainian poems that had appeared by 1924.⁶

On 1 October 1923, Mykola Zerov was appointed a professor of Ukrainian literature at the Kyiv Institute of Public Education (now Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv). Zerov’s oratorical skills, scholarly erudition and phenomenal memory contributed to his immense popularity among students and Kyiv residents interested in literary topics. His audiences were always overflowing, and his lectures were copied and retold. The Neoclassicists sought to develop a common artistic platform with talented representatives of various literary groups and stylistic trends and organised literary meetings to discuss issues of professionalism and the state and prospects of Ukrainian literature.

The year 1925 represented the pinnacle of Zerov’s literary and critical output. In the course of the year, 17 articles written by Zerov were published in the monthly journal *Zhyttia i revoliutsiia* (Life and Revolution). In addition, he contributed to other periodicals, delivered lectures and made public speeches. Furthermore, he provided translations of

14 poems for the anthology of Valerii Brusov's works, published by the State Publishing House in Kyiv in 1925. In this same year, the Literary Discussion of 1925–8 commenced, spearheaded by the polemicist writer and publicist Mykola Khvylovy (1893–1933). Khvylovy's ideological struggle for the project of a Soviet Ukrainian literature independent from Russian patterns set the stage for the ensuing discourse on the ways for its autonomous development.

From 1926, Zerov devoted himself primarily to translations and historical-literary research. Key publications included his translation with introduction of Juliusz Słowacki's tragedy *Mazepa*, a lengthy article, 'Our literary critics and polemicists', published by the magazine *Chervonyi shliakh* (Red Path), and a collection of articles with the telling title *Do Dzherel* (To the Sources). This latter volume offered a response to Khvylovy's question, 'Quo vadis?' (Where are you going?), posed as the title of a series of polemical pamphlets in which Khvylovy criticised the provincialism of the Ukrainianisation programme. Zerov's response was 'ad fontes', to the original sources, to the roots: 'We must get to know the sources of European culture, and we must make them our own. We must know them, or else we shall always be provincials' (1926, 72).⁷ In this, Zerov echoed Khvylovy's orientation towards the heights of classical European art, and in his own voice urged Ukrainian artists to study the beginnings and foundations of the European classics, such as examples of classical Greco-Roman art, the work of French Parnassian poets and other milestones of European art of past centuries. These were the sources that, according to Zerov, could contribute to the artistic flowering of Ukraine, which Khvylovy saw as the centre of the 'Asiatic Renaissance' in the new Europe.

Zerov would go on to develop this response in the essay that is the focus of this chapter, 'On the matter of verse translation', first published in the journal *Life and Revolution* in 1928. In this programmatic article, Zerov summarises the experience of Ukrainian translation in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and formulates his requirements for verse translation (Zerov 1928), responding in particular to the debate over 'homologous' vs 'analogous' translation as elaborated by Volodymyr Derzhavyn (1927). Zerov is broadly supportive of Derzhavyn's source-text-oriented theory of verse translation, a theory of homologous translation that prioritises rendering the source-text style over other translational goals and justifies stylistic accuracy in translation as opposed to its adaptation to stylistic patterns of the target poetic language. However, Zerov also presents a number of objections, arguing for a middle ground between homologous and analogous

(target-culture-oriented) translation rather than fully taking the side of Derzhavyn's categorical prioritisation of the source-text stylistic features. The overall naturalness and organicity of the target language was something that, in Zerov's view, could not be compromised. Reassuring his readers that translations must be made into 'our natural language', the language of 'our feelings', Zerov wants the target text to flow easily and smoothly, and the language to sound modern. While agreeing with Derzhavyn that translation should reflect the stylistic features of the original, Zerov argues for a selective approach that should be limited by the translator's sense of proportion and moderation.

For Ukrainian translators who were seeking to develop the Ukrainian literary language, Zerov puts forward his recommendations as a list of five desiderata: (1) careful lexical choice between the words of different (high and low) styles, preventing them from becoming a disorderly hodgepodge; (2) fullest attention to the tropes and figures of the original work; (3) preservation of the metrical features of the original work, but not at any cost, keeping in mind that the choice of the verse meter should 'reckon with our rhythmic sense and at the same time try to expand its limits'; (4) the euphony of the original work should not be neglected; and (5) 'the beauty (and thus the naturalness, the ease) of the mother tongue should not be sacrificed for anything, because only under this condition will verse translation become a ladder to the higher stages of our literary and linguistic development'.

In his argument, Zerov appeals to the requirement by I. Annensky – a leading poet-translator of the early Silver Age – of perfect understanding of the source text as a planned artistic structure and its stylistic tendencies in the harmony of all elements.⁸ Developing the idea of interaction between the external plot and the undercurrent (emotional) movements in a literary work, Zerov quotes Annensky's apprentice N. Gumilev,⁹ a precarious move given that Gumilev had been shot by the Soviet authorities in 1921. The idea of the stylistic functionality of translation in the development of the target literature connects Zerov with the perceptual theory, a current of thinking that was emerging in the late 1920s and was associated notably with the works of Michail Alekseev (*A Problem of Artistic Translation*, Irkutsk, 1931) and the socio-psychological approach developed by Ivan Kulyk, among others.

In the years that followed, Zerov would go on to elaborate on his theoretical position in the lecture course 'Metodyka perekladu' (Methods of Translation),¹⁰ designed as an extension of Mykhailo Kalynovych's course 'Methodology of Translation'.¹¹ Developing Finkel's ideas about the relationship of translation to the general poetic philosophy of a certain

literary school,¹² the lecture course analyses the history of Ukrainian literary translation in the context of advancements of Ukrainian-language literature under different socio-political systems. Along with Kalynovych, Zerov was the first to introduce the history of Ukrainian literary translation – an integral segment of national literature – into the structure of translation studies as an academic discipline. Together, they introduced the term *perekladoznavstvo* (translation studies) and laid down the theory of translation studies as a ramified field of research dealing with the study of translation at large.

In his lectures, Zerov addressed a range of issues, such as the problem of accurate and adequate translation, terms that were understood as synonyms in the late 1920s but that by the mid 1930s had come to be interpreted as opposites by Soviet theoreticians. Zerov classified translations into six major types: foreignised translation (literally, ‘close to a foreign text colouring’), translation-analogue, translation-compromise, free translation, translation-stylisation and translation-montage. The stylistic colouring and expressive role of lexical units – each in its place – were central to Zerov’s hierarchy of priorities, both as a practising translator and translation theorist. In his lecture course, he introduced into translation studies the terminology of stylistic techniques (*variation, explication, gradation*), as well as terms and concepts from literary, cultural and art studies, such as *social dialect, cultural relief* of the word and its *associative saturation*. Zerov’s conceptual opposition between a native-language-centred strategy (his term: *svoiemovnist*’) and a foreign-language-centred strategy (his term: *chuzhomovnist*’) correlates with the opposition between domesticating (target-oriented) and foreignising (source-oriented) strategies in later Western theories of translation. For further discussion of Kalynovych’s and Zerov’s syllabi and Zerov’s contribution to translation pedagogies, see [Kolomiyets 2023](#).

As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, Zerov’s career came to an abrupt end in the early 1930s. In October 1933, Zerov was dismissed from his post as Head of the Department of Theory and History of Translation at the Kyiv Institute of Linguistic Education. Accused of ‘detachment from life’, Zerov was stripped of his teaching position on 1 September 1934 and dismissed from the Kyiv State University as a researcher on 1 November. After the assassination of the Bolshevik leader Sergei Kirov on 1 December 1934, a new wave of repression against the Ukrainian intelligentsia began. In January 1935, Zerov left for Moscow to escape arrest, but on the night of 27 April 1935 he was arrested. Accused of leading a counterrevolutionary terrorist nationalist organisation, he was sent to Karelia, in the Solovets Islands, at the end of winter 1936.

In letters to his wife, the last of which is dated 19 September 1937, he wrote that he managed to complete the Ukrainian translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* in the Solovets prison. However, the manuscript of this translation was lost or deliberately destroyed.¹³ On 9 October 1937, the 'Zerov case' was reviewed by the special troika of the NKVD. Along with many other prominent representatives of Ukrainian culture, Zerov was sentenced to death as an 'enemy of the people'. He was executed on 3 November 1937 in the Sandarmokh tract (Karelia) by NKVD captain Mikhail Matveev (for more detail see [Ukraine History 2023](#)).

In general, Zerov's ideas about translation and his own translations demonstrate a trajectory towards the five objectives (*desiderata*) he outlines in 'On the matter of verse translation' (Kolomiyets 2015, 2025). This trajectory reaches its zenith in a balance between the author and the reader, which can be described as a kind of golden mean. Furthermore, his lecture course on translation methods demonstrates the evolving nature of the concepts presented in the article, particularly with regard to the perspective of Ukrainian translations as an integral and significant aspect of national literary history. Nevertheless, the most valuable facet of Zerov's intellectual legacy can be argued to be his distinctive and highly artistic poetic translations. As Vadym [Dzhuvaha \(2012\)](#), historian and journalist, put it recently, 'The name of this man has become one of the symbols of the heights that the Ukrainian word can reach.'


Literature and Translation

Translation Studies before 'Translation Studies' challenges the established historical narratives of 'translation studies' by showcasing some of the rich traditions of debate, research and theorising that happened around the world in the centuries prior to the supposed beginnings of the discipline. The volume includes selected extracts by scholars and translators from the 'nothing happened' period. Beginning in Ancient Rome, the volume moves through Medieval China and India, Early Modern Europe, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe, Africa, the Arab World and South America, before concluding with twentieth-century extracts from China, Brazil, Russia, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Ukraine and Poland.

The extracts are accompanied by essays that explore the ideas in the context of their time and link to the concepts of post-1972 translation studies. All of the extracts were originally written in languages other than English and most make their debut here in English translation, amplifying the accessibility and significance of these previously overlooked contributions.

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