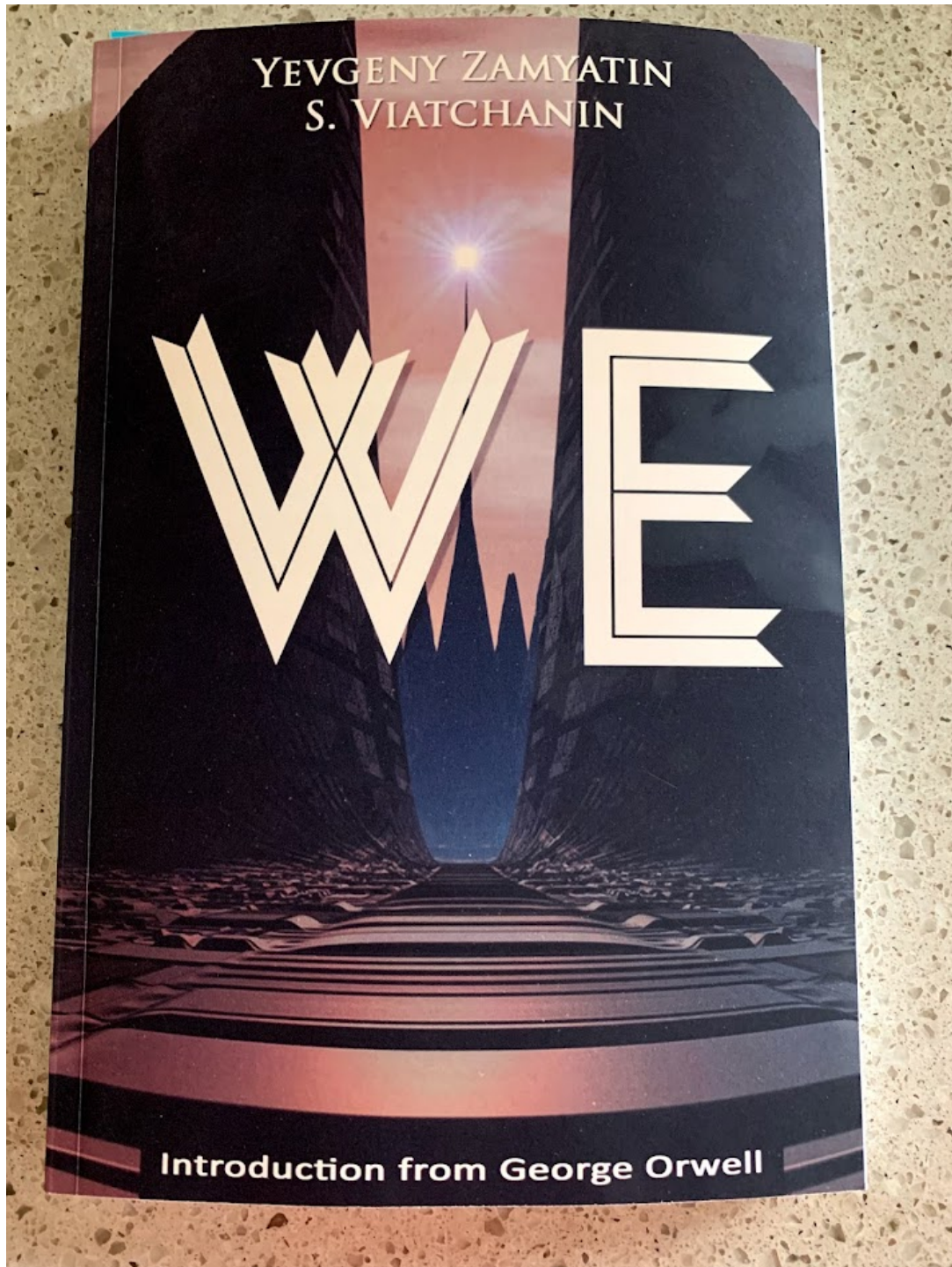




BORDERLESS DEFINED

Newsletter of Borderless Interpreting & Translation, LLC



Translation, Literature and Politics

Here is an interesting fact that I only learned recently—Yevgeny Zamyatin's (1884–1937) dystopian novel, *We*, was originally written in Russian but was published first as an English translation in 1924, followed by the publication of the original Russian text in 1954.

I think it is also worth noting that both publications took place in New York.

My husband told me this after he read *We*'s introduction written by George Orwell (which is dated 1946), in which Orwell claims that the work "was refused publication [in Russia] on the ground that it was ideologically undesirable" (Orwell i).

The novel appears in a number of other countries in various languages in subsequent years and it was only in 1988 that the book finally appeared in Russia.

The dissonance between Zamyatin's central theme in *We* ("[growing disobedience under a totalitarian surveillance society](#)") and the political landscape in the Soviet Union reminded me of the brief research I did on the relationship between post-colonialism and translation in graduate school.

I learned through this project that not all languages are equal in power and that the act of translation has, in some cases, perpetuated colonial expansion.

For this reason, those who support the post-colonial translation studies often argue against excessive translation into Western languages (or domestication in the target language even if the act of translation itself is unavoidable).

I think this concept is quite counterintuitive for most of us as practicing linguists since we are trained in school and through practice to deliver target-friendly translations. And chances are, we will continue to do so in most commercial contexts.

Even so, it is probably worth keeping in mind that what we do is directly or indirectly tied to this intersection of translation and politics, as in the case of Zamyatin's *We*.

The next Borderless Defined will be in your inbox in the week of October 11th.

Thanks for reading!

Noriko Rogers

Borderless Interpreting & Translation, LLC

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