

Title: From *Ground Up* to *Kofemolka*: Michael Idov's Self-Translation
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Michael Idov (b. 1976 in Riga and living in the US since 1992) looks at first like another typical representative of the currently fashionable generation of Anglophone Russian-American immigrant writers. However, he differs from the other members of this group in at least two respects: in his fiction, Idov downplays rather than emphasizes his ethnic background, and, while the other Russian-American authors have been met with indifference in their country of birth, Idov is more widely known in Russia than he is in the US. His debut novel *Ground Up* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), which he translated into Russian together with his wife and published under the title *Kofemolka* (Moscow: Astrel' CORPUS, 2010), became a popular and critical success in Russia.

Idov has the distinction of being the first immigrant writer since Vladimir Nabokov who self-translated a novel from English into Russian. The success of the Russian edition of *Ground Up* is all the more remarkable as the book presents some formidable obstacles to translation. Relating the attempt of a New York yuppie couple to run a Viennese-style café in a gentrifying section of Manhattan's Lower East Side, the text is replete with references to specific New York realia. In addition, the author frequently engages in puns, verbal parodies, and literary allusions. This paper will analyze the challenges that *Ground Up* presents to a translator and survey the various solutions adopted by Idov and his wife, which include a range of techniques such as substitution, omission, literalism, Russian anglicisms, explanatory footnotes, and creative rewriting. While it is debatable whether the translation really provides an adequate rendering of the source text, I will argue that it was precisely the book's "Americanness" that accounted for its appeal to a Russian target audience.

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