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Mr. Sidney Gluck
1020 Park Avenue
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Dear Sidney,

Enclosed please find my ratings of the Stempenyu translations. A few general remarks: I didn't think any of them was outstanding, but there are several that are on the right track. My main interests were a lively narrative voice and an idiomatic rendering of speech. On the whole I found them to be overly literal, sometimes making no sense to an English reader who doesn't know Yiddish to begin with. For example, almost every translator gave a literal translation of the expression, running around "vi farsamte mayz" (like poisoned mice). This is a Yiddish idiom for running around in a dither, and the more literal image is meaningless (or rather, provides an inappropriately disturbing meaning) for the English-language reader. The same goes for the widespread retention of Yiddish terms that are easily rendered into English: Nu, shtetl, klezmer, etc. (On the other hand, some terms ought to be kept, because they do not translate well, and should be glossed: e.g., badkhn--wedding jester is meaningless to the English reader who doesn't already know what a badkhn is.)

In making my ratings, I was less concerned about particular accuracies--these can be checked in the editing process--or the rendering of the klezmer slang. On the latter: for my money, no one has found a satisfactory solution, whether it be using jive, made-up words, or retaining the original Yiddish terms in transcription. Frankly, I don't think the slang plays all that important a role in the novel as a whole; it provides interesting local color for the Yiddish-speaker, but it doesn't shape the reading experience as profoundly as other examples of language play in Sholem Aleichem's works (e.g., the mis-quotations of scripture in Tevye). My suggestion is that the translation simply indicate that Stempenyu says something in the musician's

jargon, that it be rendered in idiomatic English (lively, but not distractingly slangy), and that a footnote or endnote give a detailed explanation of what happens in the original.

I hope that this will help with the contest and the translation project as a whole. Thanks once again for involving me in this exciting venture.

With best regards,

Jeffrey Shandler