# The Time of the Culture in the Game of Metaleptic Translation

**Evgenia Yu. Kunitsyna\***
*Irkutsk State Linguistic University*
*8 Lenin st., Irkutsk, 664025 Russia [1]*

*The article addresses the problem of strategy in literary translation from the viewpoint of the time of the culture and compatibility of cultural signs. Foreignizing and domesticating translation strategies are considered in their relation to ostranenie (defamilarization). The analysis is based on the theoretical premise that literary translation is Play. Examples come from W. Shakespeare's drama translations, including those of the late XX and early XXI centuries.*

*Keywords: the time of the culture, cultural signs, game, play, metalepsis, compatibility, excess, domesticating, foreignizing, ostranenie.*

The concept of the time of the culture is first and foremost associated with the concept of episteme introduced by M. Foucault to define «the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly, formalized systems.» (Foucault, 1972, p. 191) The philosopher distinguished three epistemes significant for Western culture: Renaissance, classical and modern epistemes spanning, correspondingly, the entire XVI century, the XVII – XVIII century (the age of rationalism), and, finally, the beginning of the XIX century through the present day. The basic ordering principle within each episteme is the conditions of the discourse, or otherwise, the correlation of «words and things» (Foucault, 1994). This correlation, now in terms of interaction of two languages and two cultures, appears ever more relevant for the translational episteme (G.D. Voskoboinik's term, see Voskoboinik, 2004).

The translator of a work that is distanced from him or her by decades let alone centuries faces the choice determined by what M. Heidegger would call the «concern with time» (Heidegger, 2001). The translator's concern with time is embodied in one of the famous six juxtapositions formulated by T. Savory: «A translation should read as a contemporary of the original» vs. «A translation should read as a contemporary of the translation.» (Savory, 1968) The time-concernedness is at the core of metaleptic translation. «Metalepsis» is a confusing term. D. Robinson, the author of the dialogical theory of translation, borrowed it from H. Bloom and introduced as a name for one of the forms of the translator's dialogue with the author. The term becomes clear if one compares the metaleptic method with an athletic

\*    Corresponding author E-mail address: kunitsynae@yandex.ru

relay race, a «handing on», or refers to the relation between an antecedent and a consequent, between «what goes before, and immediately follows.» (Robinson, 1991, p. 181). «To translate metaleptically is to engage the paradoxes of time that are built into the act of translation», writes D. Robinson, distinguishing between two metaleptic approaches: «projective» (archaizing) and «introjective» (modernizing) (Robinson, 1991, pp. 184 – 185).

As is known, it was Hegel who tried «to define the connection between 'time' and 'spirit' in such a way as to make intelligible why the spirit, as history, 'falls into time'» (Heidegger, 2001, p. 457). A concern with the time and spirit connection is articulated in Shakespeare Russian translators' forewords to their translations. N. Rossov, for instance, made it his priority to «guess the thoughts and passions and epoch of the other language» (Rossov, 1907, p. III). The point, however, is that the thoughts and emotions and the epoch of one language 'guessed' by the translator are to be re-expressed in the language of translation. It is of interest and value to see how the spirit of the Shakespeare time reincarnates in the language of this or that translation as well as how the spirit of the translator's time (epoch) is reflected in the translation of the classic.

In the XIX century the Russian language saw rapid changes. The existing translations became soon outdated and the need for new ones arose (Zagulyaev, 1877; Sokolovsky, 1883). Forty-nine years divide the translation of *Hamlet* done by M. Zagulyaev from the very first one done by M. Vronchenko (1828) and forty years – from N. Polevoy's translation (1837) that won outstanding popularity with the Russian spectatorship. It is a long time provided that «the average life span of a translated theatre text is 25 years at the most.» (Bassnett, 1991, p. 111) Remarkably, B. Pasternak's *Hamlet* has been enjoying popularity among the Russian stage directors for almost seventy years

now despite the fact that new translations have come into being. The XXI century translations of the world-renowned play done by V. Poplavsky (2001) and A. Chernov (2001(2003)) are only going to get the «citizenship rights».

The Russian tradition of Shakespeare translation is marked by the evolution of metalepsis from archaizing by M. Vronchenko to intensive modernizing by V. Poplavsky. The polarity of metaleptics of translation is conditioned by the so called «spatial stretches» in which time is determined (Heidegger's term (Heidegger, 2001, p. 470)). Here we can again refer to Hegel for whom space «'is' time; that is, time is the 'truth' of space.» (Ibid., p. 481)

Each culture regarded as the time in its 'spatial stretches' is characterized by specific 'signs' such as events, myths, symbols, concepts, metaphors, words and expressions. Here, the sign of the culture will be understood as any verbal sign (word, word-combination or metaphor) indicative of a certain hallmark of the time of the culture in a non-contradictory way. It is only natural to refer now to the notion of compatibility of cultural signs[1]. The term 'compatibility of cultural signs' in this paper is used to denote the capability of a sign of the translation culture to function in a translated text in such a way as to not undermine the spirit of the time of the original and totally distort the picture of the source culture by neutralizing the signs of the latter.

Let us get back to metalepsis per se. The archaizing of Shakespeare in the Russian translations of the past has been thoroughly described in Yu. D. Levin's works (see Levin, 1985, 1988). The translator of the late XX century who apparently professed archaization and eo ipso russification of Shakespeare is O. Soroka

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[1]    The problem of cultural compatibility and cultural filter is addressed by J. House (House, 2009). From the vantage point of compatibility of cultural signs the problem of rendering tenor in drama translation is discussed in Kunitsyna, 2008.

whose translations will be briefly commented on below.

O. Soroka is an extraordinary translator, the fact to which, in particular, his *zaum*[1] testifies (see Kunitsyna, 2009). His Shakespeare translations are a quaint combination of the olden time and modernity. According to A. Bartoshevich, O. Soroka «saw his task in the deepest and most thorough insight into the sense of the original and honest and faithful rendering of this sense in translation. A versed reader will see how much textological research lies behind the lines of the translations. Doing his job with an outstanding zeal, the translator, however, could not fail to be a man of our time. Far from being a proponent of any forcible modernizing, he became advertently or inadvertently a contemporary interpreter» (Bartoshevich, 2001, p. 3).

O. Soroka's Shakespeare is more of a provincial than a capital 'Bohemian'. «To render the British 'earthness', to make intelligible the folk (vulgar) element behind the Renaissance exquisiteness of Shakespearian poetry, the translator resorts to the language of our own olden time» (Ibid.). Cf.: Лоренцо: Но сон *златой* / Баюкает нетронутую *младость* (*Ромео и Джульетта* (Romeo and Juliet), I, 3); Ромео: А ко *врагине* в сердце нету злобы (Ibid., I, 3); Няня: Хотя лицом он лучше всех других, но еще лучше у него нога, а уж рука и *тулово* вне всякого сравненья <…> Он не сказать чтоб разлюбезен, но кроток, как *ягня* (Ibid., I, 4); Тезей: Я тем пленил тебя, что взял тебя в *полон* (*Сон в шалую ночь* (A Midsummer Night's Dream), I, 1), Елена: И ты бы заразить меня могла / Музыкой речи, прелестью *чела* (Ibid.), Мотовило: Но *чу*! Какой-то голос

призывает (Ibid., III, 1); Лир: Ты лжешь, стервятница. Моя *дружина* – / Отборнейший и редкостный народ (*Король Лир* (King Lear), I, 3); Антоний: Ну что же, *други*! (*Антоний и Клеопатра* (Antony and Cleopatra), IV, 2), etc. It is not merely an archaic Russian language that one hears in Soroka's translations but the motifs of the Russian history and culture, Russian revolt and prophesies of Russian 'God's fools' (Bartoshevich, 2001).

An archaic folksy Russian form of pronunciation of 'ф' as 'хв' uses Soroka's Bottom the Weaver from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: *Хвисба, хвинал* instead of *Фисба* и *финал* for *Thisbe* and *end* (cf. *final)*. Another instance of russification employed by O. Soroka is the usage of Russian hypocorisms with diminutive suffixes, e. g. *Хвисбуня, Хвисбуся, Хвисбочка.* O. Soroka's archaisms go along with the modern slang. Cf.: Рыло: Ну, стену нам *слабо́* воздвигнуть (*Сон в летнюю ночь*, III, 1) where *слабо́* stands for being unable to do something or to have no guts for this. A graphic example of incompatibility of cultural signs in the translation is Juliet's words: Джульетта: Нет, ночь прошла. Иди, беги, родной. / То жаворонок./ *У него не трель, а* **дрель**, она вонзается мне в уши (*Ромео и Джульетта*, III, 5). Shakespeare's lark's singing «so out of tune» turns into making a piercing sound similar to the one produced by a drill, in the translation.

One can find a convincing justification for O. Soroka's risky combination of the archaic and modern in the fact that the translator did his best to imitate (or re-create, in H.-G. Gadamer's terms, see below) a comparable phenomenon – anachronisms and anatopisms – in Shakespeare. That is how the translator saw, heard and *felt* (see *idiosomatics* of translation in Robinson, 1991) Shakespeare's poetry, that is how he experienced the original in the internal time of the EGO and responded with the 'spirit' of his nation to «an

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[1]  Zaum (Russ. заумь or заумный язык) is a word used to describe the linguistic experiments in sound symbolism and language creation of Russian futurist poets such as Velimir Khlebnikov and Aleksei Kruchenykh (Wikipedia). Zaum is defined as experimental poetic language characterized by indeterminacy in meaning (G. Janecek) (Ibid.).

ideal theme objectified by the other nation» (Florensky, 2000, c. 232), involving the reader in his game and making them marvel.

It is time to attend now to what Russian *Hamlet* is like as far as compatibility of cultural signs is concerned. Major attention will be given to the 'play of modernity' in the translations of the tragedy, to the «luminous details» (E. Pound's term, see Gentzler, 1993) which the signs of the translation culture «imported» into the Shakespearian text appear to be. Before turning to the translations of the XXI century I find it relevant to comment on an example from the above-mentioned translation by N. Rossov. Following the intention to «guess thoughts, passions and epoch of the language» of the original, N. Rossov specified, as if in passing, the thoughts and 'passions' of the time of his own culture. Three signs only have been traced in the translation that can be referred to as the signs of the culture of the time of the first Russian Revolution (1905 – 1907).

Episode 1. Hamlet and his friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are talking of Denmark which is prison to the protagonist. Гамлет: Дания – тюрьма. Розенкранц: Тогда и целый мир тюрьма. Гамлет: Великолепная, – где столько камер, *застенков*, всевозможных тайников. И Дания одна из худших тюрем (II, 2). Episode 2. Hamlet has just learned about the actors that have come to Elsinore and the friends are telling him the news of the city theatre and mention controversy between poets and players, often resulting in fights. Гильденштерн: Да, и *проломленных голов* не мало (II, 2). Episode 3. Claudius and Polonius are going to spy on Hamlet who is to meet Ophelia sent to him by her father. Король: Ея отец и я – *законный сыск* (III, 1); Король: Людей, отмеченных высоким саном, / Оставить без надзора невозможно (III, 1).

*Сыск, застенки* and *проломленные головы* (sleuthhounding, torture chambers and fractured

skulls) are the hallmarks of the revolutionary Russia of the early XX century, indicative of the methods czarism used to suppress revolutionary minds. *Застенок, застенки* is a place where people were tortured[1] when interrogated (Dal, 2002). The original reads: *Lawful espials; confines, wards, and dungeons* and *throwing about of brains*. The concepts of espionage, jails and street fights are known and lexicalized in many cultures and languages. The above Russian names can hardly be termed as culture specific. Taken together and within quite a short stretch of the discourse, however, these signs – *сыск, застенки* and *проломленные головы* – claim in the translation the status of the signs or, rather *the sign* of the time of the culture.

The fact that the three episodes quoted present three different fields of discourse only proves the translator's presence in the text, despite all his 'invisibility'. Ironically, the translator's light stroke or touch with the sign (-s) of the translation language (target language, TL) corresponding to an object of reality of the TL and replacing an analogous correspondence in the source language (SL) (see Voskoboinik, 2004), which implies domestication, comes to *deautomatize* the reader / spectator's perception, 'awaken' them ensuring a conscious look at the reality played before them on the page or on the stage. The question arises then, whether *ostranenie*[2] which is otherwise defamiliarization or estrangement has to do with foreignization only.

To answer this question we need to consider the translations done quite recently, one hundred years after the one by N. Rossov.

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[1] The image of gruesome torture implied by *застенки* in N. Rossov's translation determines the implicature shift (Denmark is not only the embodiment of unfreedom for Hamlet, it is a place of torments, which are in fact awaiting him) that hermeneutically develops and complements the original image.

[2] The term of literary analysis coined by the Russian Formalist V. Shklovsky to denote a poetic device of making the familiar and commonplace strange and alien (see Shklovsky, 1983).

New times bring new things and new words. Let us now see how the two epistemes, the (Upper) Renaissance of the original and the modern, or to be precise, postmodern of the translation, interact in the process of translation, how deeply the spirit (and the letter) of the contemporary Russian time and culture has saturated the Shakespeare text. Paraphrasing Hegel, we shall try to trace how deeply the spirit of the Shakespeare epoch has 'fallen' into the time of the translation.

Of the two most recent translations of *Hamlet* done by V. Poplavsky (2001) and A. Chernov (2003) the former deserves special attention as dramatically different not only from all earlier translations, but from the contemporary one, that of A. Chernov, as well. V. Poplavsky's translation is a spectacular manifestation of the *Zeitgeist*. And if art is to «hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure» (Shakespeare, Hamlet, III, 1), V. Poplavsky's *Hamlet* as no other shows our age its unvarnished image, deficient 'form and pressure'.

The following examples are illustrative of how drastically dissimilar with the previous ones the translation in question is and how distant it is from the original: *массовый гипноз, конструктивный диалог, подъем в оружейном производстве, чистка кадров в воинских частях, сплошных авралов, трехсменных вахт, потогонная система, кодекс единоборств, упрежденье социальных взрывов, курс алкоголизма, в предстоящем триллере ночном, а этот Призрак – стоящий мужик, похмельного синдрома, давать подписку о неразглашенье, социальный статус, культурную программу, работа на стационаре, эпатируют публику, делают на них свой бизнес, кардиограмма внутреннего мира, микроинсульт чувств, психотерапия не*

*пройдет, таможенный контроль* – all in all about 100 units of the kind.

The signs of the late XX century Russian culture used to re-present the Shakespeare work demonstrate the unfolding of the hermeneutic law of the refraction of the artwork in the act of interpretation, the re-creation «of the created work, which has to be brought to representation in accord with the meaning the interpreter finds in it» (Gadamer, 1984). Otherwise, why would authors bother to write at all, addressing their works to time and space, asks N. Zhuravlev, the publisher of V. Poplavsky's *Hamlet*. Definitely, not for the reader or spectator to fall asleep, with a sophisticated countenance, reading or watching these works (Zhuravlev, 2003). This view is consonant with the idea of D. Robinson that the translator seeking to reach his or her TL reader, seeking to be heard must become the instrument of reawakening and rebirth. Thus, «there has to be something striking in the translation, something to catch the reader's attention» (Robinson, 1991, p. 225).

The above examples of the translator's lexical preferences, however, pose a question whether V. Poplavsky's *Hamlet* is a translation proper or a remake. There seems to be sufficient ground to qualify it as a postmodernistic translation with the pervasive postmodernistic play implied. E. Salnikova, a theatre scholar and critic, is against such labeling for, she writes, this is not the modernizing of the classic but an adequate response to the Shakespeare timeless dramatism (Salnikova, 2003).

Both N. Zhuravlev and E. Salnikova, the publisher and the critic, find V. Poplavsky's language relevant, performable[1], vital and striking home. The new *Hamlet* appears indeed *Ganz Unser*. But here a paradox lies: the contemporary, concordant and transparent text of «*our*»

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[1]    On Shakespeare translation performability see Mathjissen, 2007; Kunitsyna, 2009.

Shakespeare that emerged as a result of total domesticating and the concomitant modernizing (cf. Hegel's «space as time» and «time as the truth of space») in the process of translation, at a certain moment comes to read / sound *strange*, *unfamiliar* or, in other words, *alien, foreign*. The massive neutralization of the signs of the source culture with the signs of the target culture, their overall incompatibility (cf. G. Deleuse's «an abyss of dissimilitude») produces an effect of 'undermining', subverting, which in fact makes a specific type of translation, a version[1] termed *subversion* (Robinson, 1991). It should be added also that subversion here apparently verges on another 'version' – diversion, which derives its name from *diversity* and *divert* (on translation as *transversion* see Kunitsyna, 2009).

In his intent to make Shakespeare readily intelligible to the contemporary audience, the translator 'plays' before it the unexpected 'parties' that really shake it subverting its «fore-having, and fore-sight, and fore-conception» (M. Heidegger's terms, Heidegger, 2001, p. 191) Thus, this game of translation may be described as «disorienting the senses, especially balance» which is akin to the effect in gambling and other hazardous activities. R. Caillois named these games with the term 'ilinx' which is otherwise 'vertigo or thrill-seeking games' (jeux de vertige) (see Caillois, 1976, 2001). Proceeding from the propinquity of the terms *version / sub-vert* and *vertigo*, one can come to view subverting (diverting, and in fact, any other -verting in D. Robinson's «vertical ethics» (Robinson, 1991)) as either caused by 'vertigo' or bringing it about. Hence, subversion as a form of the translator's dialogue with the reader may well be considered

in terms of gambling (for details of translation as oscillation of play, game and gamble see Kunitsyna, 2009).

V. Poplavsky's publisher and critic believe that the reader / spectator is unlikely to let go the above 'contemporaneousities'[2] unnoticed. Instead, the reader / spectator is sure to stop to reflect on what is going on and correlate it with their own time. The obvious 'strangeness' of the translation per se, on the one hand, and the judgments of it based on the ideas of 'shaking' and 'reflecting on' that which is «at-homely» (see below), on the other hand, lead one to see *ostranenie* in domestication. What should a domesticating translation be like to read *foreign, strange*? Can domestication be measured somehow?

Within the general framework of the research resting on the foundational premise that *literary translation is Play*, talking of cultural compatibility may prove more fruitful if we refer to the game theory of J. von Neumann and O. Morgenstern. For the purposes of further argumentation it is relevant to introduce the concept of *excess* commonly defined as «the state or an instance of surpassing usual, proper, or specified limits» (Webster) and which, according to J. von Neumann, presents either a contribution or a withdrawal in a game and which should be neither too big nor too small (von Neumann et al., 1970).

Domestication is inevitable in translation, as a matter of fact, «Translation is an inevitable domestication» (Venuti, s. a., p. 9). It is here that the concept of excess appears extremely valuable. What I mean is an excess of 'appropriation' (cf. *bring home* and *at-homeness* in Steiner, 1998) of the original work. In V. Poplavsky's translation the excess is too big. To continue, I shall refer to a military-tactic interpretation of the game

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[1]    Whereas 'tropes', one of which is metalepsis, are viewed as forms of the translator's dialogue with the author, 'versions' stand for the translator's dialogue with the reader. «If the translator's best guide to success is his or her dialogue with the SL writer / speaker, the only forum in which success can be judged is his or her dialogue with the TL receptor.» (Robinson, 1991, p.193).

[2]    My translation coinage for N. Zhuravlev's jocular term *kontemporan'ki* (derived from the English *contemporaneous*) which he uses to name the above cited phrases from V. Poplavsky's *Hamlet*.

as it is presented by the founding fathers of the game theory. There is a class of games, where strategies are their functions. The player choosing a function is called a gunner, or bomber. The function chosen by him is interpreted as the density of the fire that he delivers at every moment of time. The opponent picking a moment of time from an interval is called a sniper, or fighter (von Neumann et al., 1970).

With this in mind and getting back to the Shakespeare translations, the excess of domestication and modernization (or archaization) can be interpreted in terms of the fire density strategy. V. Poplavsky can be referred to as a bomber (gunner). Separate 'shots' with the signs of the translation culture 'fired with pinpoint accuracy' by A. Chernov (*картотека памяти, светский раут* and a couple of modern Russian bawdy words) allow one to see a fighter (sniper) about him. As far as O. Soroka is concerned, he appears to play both as a bomber or a fighter, depending on the text. Such amazing game-theoretical features the Shakespeare translations

and translation discourse develop in terms of playing with time.

To sum up, the argument of this paper can be reduced to a number of propositions. Metaleptic translation presents a form of dialogue between the translator and the author. Metalepsis is a manifestation of the translator's concern with time. The translator as an EGO experiencing, EGO playing and eo ipso EGO risking[1] makes a decision which can be interpreted as «the time for» or «the wrong time for» certain signs. Incompatibility of cultural signs in a translation where the signs of the translation culture tend to neutralize the signs of the source culture brings about an excess of 'appropriation' which subverts the reader's fore-having and turns domestication into ostranenie (defamiliarization). This makes it possible to dissociate ostranenie from the foreignizing strategy and, more importantly, to recognize it as a specific, autonomous translation strategy.

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[1]    For details see Kunitsyna, 2009.

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# Время культуры в игре металептики художественного перевода

**Е.Ю. Куницына**
*Иркутский государственный
лингвистический университет
Россия 664025, Иркутск, ул. Ленина, 8*

*Статья посвящена проблеме стратегии в переводе, исследуемой с точки зрения времени культуры и совместимости знаков культуры. Форенизация и доместикация рассматриваются в их отношении к остранению. В основе подхода лежит утверждение, что художественный перевод есть игра. Материалом исследования послужили переводы драматических произведений Шекспира, включая новейшие.*

*Ключевые слова: время культуры; знак культуры; игра; металепсис; совместимость; эксцесс; доместикация; форенизация; остранение.*