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Cultural Memory and Levels of Remediation (on the Example of the Novel *Dead Souls* by N.V. Gogol)

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In the article the process of remediation, which is the reproduction of the contents of the cultural memory by means of other media, sign systems, genres or artistic devices, is regarded as a translation process, according to the views of R.O. Jakobson on its aspects. This makes it possible to present remediation as a three-level phenomenon responsible for the creation of secondary texts, in an invariant form embodying the concept of the original work. The material of this study was the novel in verse "Dead Souls" by N.V. Gogol. This novel is seen as a bearer of cultural memory, which thanks to remediation has received a large number of new incarnations.

Keywords: cultural memory, the bearer of cultural memory, remediation, translation, Dead Souls.

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As a person remembers the most important events of his/her life, so does culture retain the most significant moments of its existence in the memory. These remembrances make up a cultural memory reflecting "the past common for a certain people, a nation or even for the majority of humanity" (Razumovskaya, 2012).

The bearers of cultural memory can be highly diverse, since they are able to function in all sorts of sign systems. Religious texts, fiction, paintings, photographs, dramatic and documentary films, theatre productions, souvenirs, monuments and memorial ceremonies, comic strips and toys can all act as the bearers of cultural memory, reflecting key events in cultural history. But, what is especially

interesting, the bearers of cultural memory are not only represented in such an astonishing variety, but also they all are connected with each other through the process of remediation, which can be imagined as a set of different levels of translation, understood in this case as the creation of secondary texts – "invariant forms of the same idea" (Vinogradov, 1963), made with the help of linguistic and extralinguistic means. In the article it is proposed to observe this process on the example of one of the most important bearers of the national cultural memory – the novel *Dead Souls* by N.V. Gogol.

But first of all, I shall clarify the definitions of the concepts needed to grapple with the problem.

Studies of cultural memory date back to the works of P. Nor, M. Halbwachs, A. Warburg. But the study of cultural memory took a significant place on the academic agenda only in the 1980s, when J. and A. Assman wrote the works where the notion of “cultural memory” was examined.

The notion of “cultural memory” implies “what and how the culture remembers” (Plate, Smelik, 2009). It is “one of the external dimensions of human memory” (Assmann, 2011), which goes beyond the cultural experience of an individual, and therefore is not inherited individually, but rather transmitted through cultural and scientific traditions, as well as through educational institutions (Razumovskaya, 2012). Yu.M. Lotman defines cultural memory as a supra-individual mechanism for storing messages (texts), getting them across and developing new ones. In this sense, he sees the space of culture as a space of common memory, within which culturally significant texts are stored and updated (Lotman, 1992).

The content of cultural memory is by no means contingent, rather it is the result of careful selection, enabling remembrance of such facts that reflect the most noteworthy past events only. However, the reflections of this past are highly variable: they can be robust or modest, tragic or life-affirming. The exodus of the Jews from Egypt and the hoisting of the flag over Iwo Jima – these and other memories are of paramount importance and therefore find their way to settling down in cultural memory. They are like the melody that made Natasha Rostova dance in such a way that everyone was amazed: “Where, how and when had this young Countess, educated by an émigré French governess, imbibed from the Russian air she breathed that spirit, and obtained that manner which that *pas de châte* would, one would have supposed, long ago have effaced? But the spirit and the movements were inimitable, unteachable

Russian ones that Uncle had expected of her” (Tolstoy).

The content of cultural memory is recorded on a certain medium, through which it is stored, demonstrated and spread. The simplest (traditional) medium is oral speech, stories “about the affairs of bygone days”. More complex forms, such as literature, extend the temporal and spatial range of cultural memory bearers (Erl, 2008). I shall note that for some cultures written (literary, fiction) texts are the main means of archiving cultural information and realizing cultural memory. A striking example of such literary-centric (text-centric according to Yu.M. Lotman) culture is Russian one, since fiction has always dominated in the process of preserving Russia’s cultural identity and maintaining intercultural interaction (Razumovskaya, 2012).

As A. Erl writes in one of her articles that the bearers of cultural memory can be divided into two groups:

1. Time-oriented storage facilities that allow cultural memories to travel through the centuries and even become memorial objects themselves;
2. Spatially-oriented dissemination facilities, which can almost instantly reach a huge audience, but whose addressees may forget tomorrow about the cultural memories of today (Erl, 2008).

It is interesting that artworks (in particular, literary texts) combine the traits of both groups of bearers of cultural memory, characterized by a special ability to form a collective image of the past. Yu.M. Lotman wrote about the significance of artworks as the bearers of cultural memory, “In fact, texts that have reached the level of art in terms of their complexity, cannot be passive storages of constant information only, since they are not warehouses, but generators. Senses in the cultural memory are not stored, but grow” (Lotman, 1992).

However, what actually turns an artwork into a bearer of cultural memory? In accordance with the assumption made in A. Rigney's article "The dynamics of remembrance: Texts between monumentality and morphing", in order to get an answer it is necessary to go "further than analyzing individual works to study their perception and their interaction with other acts of memory in all the diversity of means and genres" (Rigney, 2008). This context allows the researcher to distinguish five roles that an artwork must perform as a bearer of cultural memory in relation to this memory:

1. Relay station.
2. Stabilizer.
3. Catalyst.
4. Object of recollection.
5. Calibrator (Rigney, 2008).

Let us look into these roles one by one on the example of the novel *Dead Souls* by N.V. Gogol to determine whether this literary work is really a bearer of cultural memory.

1. Relay station. Each work of art, without exception, is based on earlier forms of memories that they process; in this sense they can be represented as relay stations in the circulation of memories. Gogol's novel *Dead Souls* also retains the traces of earlier literary works, among which one can first of all refer to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, after which the author intended to lead his hero, Pavel Ivanovich Chichikov, through all the circles of hell and purgatory to paradise. Also, given that the images of the way and the road are key ones for the novel, it is impossible not to recall *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* by Byron or even earlier epic poem, *The Odyssey* by Homer.

2. Stabilizer. An artwork has a high "restraining force", providing a narrative with the place in memory for a long time. Thus, it is such artworks as the novel *Dead Souls* by N.V. Gogol that keep in our memory the image of the Russian Empire in the times of Nicholas I with its endless

roads, chief towns in uyezds, landownership and officialdom.

3. Catalyst. Artworks play a special role in drawing attention to topics which are new to cultural memory. This is also true of the text considered – at the time *Dead Souls* became a description of the original adventurous idea (but it was only a superficial point of view), which nevertheless concealed the eternal theme of the fear about human earthliness.

4. Object of recollection. Fiction does not work just as memories, but it becomes an object of memories on its own in other media and forms of expression. So, *Dead Souls* by N.V. Gogol after the novel's publication in 1842 arouse critical discussions and inspired many great artists who decided to create illustrations for this work, and later it gave occasion for works of composers, theatre and film directors.

5. Calibrator. Artworks also have the potential for critical rewriting and creating new works worthy of entering the space of the bearers of cultural memory. Thus, the influence of Gogol's *Dead Souls* was reflected in Russian literature, becoming the object of memoirs in later works (e.g., in A.F. Pisemsky's novel *One Thousand Souls*).

The indicated performance of all the roles by the novel *Dead Souls* (to a greater or lesser extent) leads to the conclusion that this work is indeed a bearer of cultural memory through which recollection of culture is not only sharable among contemporaries but can also be transferred to the next generations.

As a bearer of cultural memory, the novel *Dead Souls* by N.V. Gogol is to be characterized by the process of remediation, the revealing of which is the aim of our study.

The concept of "remediation" first appeared in the works of foreign researchers such as A. Erll, A. Rigney, R. Grusin, J.D. Bolter, E. Hoskins. They used it to characterize the intermedial

relations involved in the process of transforming an artwork into a bearer of cultural memory.

By the term “remediation” the Swedish researcher A. Erll understands “the reproduction over and over again, for decades and centuries, of memorable events in various media: newspaper articles, photographs, diary entries, historiography, novels, films, etc.” She suggests that “memorable events are transmedial phenomena, that is, their existence is not tied to any particular means of perception, storage or dissemination. Therefore, they can be represented by the whole range of available carriers” (Erll, 2008).

A. Rigney reasoned about remediation in a similar vein, using it to describe the dynamics of cultural memory. According to her, any bearer of cultural memory inevitably generates “comments, counter-narratives, translations into other languages, adaptation to other media, adaptation to other discursive genres, and even encourages concrete actions on the part of individuals and groups” (Rigney, 2008). Thanks to remediation this results in an art work, which is the bearer of cultural memory and can be conceived not only as an artefact, but also as some force acting (Gell, 1998).

An interesting addition to the definition of the “remediation” concept can be found in the observations made by the above mentioned researchers about the effect that remediation has on the memories about culture. On the one hand, “remediation tends to strengthen cultural memory, creating and stabilizing certain narratives and images of the past” (Erll, 2008). But on the other hand, frequent repetition of images provides a narrative with publicity and longevity, though it may account for a decrease in its significance due to the reproduction in increasingly reduced forms (Rigney, 2008).

As for the English language studies, R. Grusin and J.D. Bolter use the term “remediation” to present the process of updating

the media forms and models that are familiar to us for the current media needs (Bolter, Grusin, 2000). A. Hoskins, in contrast to them, focuses more on the content component of the media; he also takes remediation for a way of repeating images of the past in the present through the use of newer and more perfect carriers of cultural memory (Hoskins, 2004).

Taking into account all of the above, I can conclude that remediation is a repetition, reproduction, updating of the content of the bearer of cultural memory with the help of other media, sign systems, genres, artistic devices, etc. In this connection, it seems appropriate to compare the results of foreign studies to the work on the aspects of translation done by R.O. Jakobson back the late 1970s.

As R.O. Jakobson writes, one can distinguish three ways of translating a verbal sign: it can be translated into other signs of the same language, into another language, or into another, non-verbal system of symbols. These three types of translation can be given the following names:

1. Intralinguistic translation, or renaming, i.e. interpretation of verbal signs with the help of other signs of the same language.
2. Interlinguistic translation, or the translation proper as the interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.
3. Intersemiotic translation, or transmutation, i.e. interpretation of verbal signs through nonverbal sign systems (Jacobson, 1978).

Thus, the types of translation proposed by R.O. Jacobson can be correlated with the phenomenon of remediation described in foreign studies. So remediation may be presented as a three-level phenomenon:

1. Remediation as a repetition of the content of the bearer of cultural memory within the same media and the same sign system.
2. Remediation as a repetition of the content of the bearer of cultural memory within

the same media and a similar sign system, which belongs, however, to a different culture.

3. Remediation as a repetition of the content of the bearer of cultural memory within the another media and another sign system.

Let us consider the specified levels of remediation on the example of one of the greatest works of Russian fiction – the novel in verse *Dead Souls* by N.V. Gogol.

The novel *Dead Souls* by N.V. Gogol was first published in 1842, becoming, like another great work of Russian literature, the novel *Eugene Onegin* by Alexander Pushkin, a real “encyclopaedia of Russian life”. Even during the author’s life, it elicited a response in the Russian culture environment, becoming the subject of critical discussions, as well as a source of inspiration for writers, artists, composers, and later – theatre and film directors.

At the first level of remediation, one can trace the embodiment of the image of the novel itself that has become an object of memory in other Russian literature works. So, for example, there is a kind of dialogue between the novel *Dead Souls* by N.V. Gogol with the novel *One Thousand Souls* by A.F. Pisemsky. Developing his own idea and giving a picture of his contemporaries and the society, A.F. Pisemsky, a fervent admirer and follower of N.V. Gogol, turned to the work of the “great maestro” (Gogol) at the level of the plot and the character system through reminiscences that allowed him to broaden the boundaries of his work and fill it with a deep meaning (Zviagina, 2014). Intertextuality of the works by M.A. Bulgakov, B.L. Pasternak, I.A. Ilf and E.P. Petrov, V.T. Shalamov, and others also makes it possible to trace them to Gogol’s novel as the bearer of cultural memory. Bulgakov’s works have long been noted for various forms of “Gogol’s presence” in the writer’s worldview finding its reflection in his works (Spesivtseva, 2006);

“Gogol’s trace” is found in *Zoyka’s Apartment*, *The White Guard*, *Heart of a Dog*, *Master and Margarita*, *A Theatrical Novel*, *Diaboliad* (Bakhtin, 1988). In the notes of V.T. Shalamov one can read: Gogol’s “world on the road” is sketched by B.L. Pasternak in the novel *Doctor Zhivago*; there is also such a record: “Ostap Bender is the Soviet Chichikov” (Sirotinskaia, 1994). The same writer in his *Kolyma Tales* makes the issue of the distinction between the living and the dead the essential one in revealing the spiritual and moral meaning, the same is true as for *Dead Souls* by N.V. Gogol (Zharavina, 2007).

On the second level of remediation, the novel *Dead Souls* by N.V. Gogol is getting into foreign cultures through interlinguistic translations proper. The first translations of the work by N.V. Gogol appeared even during the writer’s life. To date, there are translations of this text in many languages, including German, English, French and even Esperanto. The relevance of this text as the bearer of cultural memory is confirmed by new modern translations of the poem in the west, in Germany, for example, the 19th German version of *Dead Souls* was published to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the writer (Nikanorova, 2011).

As for the third level of remediation, here one deals with the reproduction of images originally contained in the literary text in other bearers of cultural memory. The first to turn to the work of N.V. Gogol were graphic artists, buoyed by the work to create original book illustrations. Among them, you must first of all refer to A.A. Agin and E.E. Bernardsky, since they were the first who undertook the intersemiotic translation of Gogol’s novel when creating a series of 100 drawings; they were followed by P.M. Boklevsky and V.E. Makovsky, the Kukryniksy artists, etc. I would also like to mention M.Z. Chagall who created a range of unique engravings evoked

by the novel's motifs and even painted himself shoulder to shoulder with N.V. Gogol on one of them.

Dead Souls was repeatedly staged by the theatre directors often turning to the play-dramatization of Gogol's work made by M.A. Bulgakov (1932). The latter also became the author of the script for the film "An Extraordinary Incident, or Government Inspector". Moreover, the novel in verse got several screen versions: from mute black and white films (directed by P. Chardynin, 1909) and filmed performances (directed by L. Trauberg, 1960, directed by A. Belinsky, 1969) to cartoons (Soyuzmultfilm, 1974) and actually narrative films, either following Gogol's work to the letter (directed by M. Schweitzer, 1984), or creating their own story on the basis of a well-known plot (directed by P. Lungin, 2005).

Finally, it is necessary to say about the musical incarnations of the novel *Dead Souls* by N.V. Gogol. In 1976 composer R.K. Shchedrin wrote the opera *Dead Souls*, which was staged at the Bolshoi Theatre. Also the work of N.V. Gogol inspired symphonic works, e.g. the suites of A.G. Schnittke (1984) and S. Kolmanovsky (2008).

So, in this article I have analysed the fiction text, the novel in verse *Dead Souls* by N.V. Gogol, as the bearer of cultural memory, which thanks to remediation has been realised in new incarnations whose number is increasing. The reconstruction of Gogol's images takes place at all the remediation levels identified, which were specified on the basis of both foreign studies in the field of cultural memory and Russian sources aimed at studying various aspects of translation, which indeed are a type of remediation.

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Культурная память и уровни ремедиации (на примере поэмы «Мертвые души» Н.В. Гоголя)

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В статье процесс ремедиации, представляющий собой воспроизведение содержания носителя культурной памяти при помощи иных медиа, знаковых систем, жанров или художественных средств, рассматривается как процесс перевода, согласно его аспектам, предложенным Р.О. Якобсоном. Это позволяет представить ремедиацию как трехуровневое явление, отвечающее за создание вторичных текстов, в инвариантной форме воплощающих замысел оригинального произведения. Материалом настоящего исследования послужила поэма Н.В. Гоголя «Мертвые души» – носитель культурной памяти, благодаря ремедиации получивший и продолжающий получать все новые и новые воплощения.

Ключевые слова: культурная память, носитель культурной памяти, ремедиация, перевод, «Мертвые души».

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