Poetry Translation in the Cross-cultural Context (Russian – English Perspective)

A tradução poética em um contexto comparativo (perspectiva russo-inglesa)

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Abstract: The article explores matters of poetry translation from a cross-cultural perspective. Translation of poetry has traditionally been viewed predominantly from the point of view of the translated text fidelity to the original. However, a much more fascinating question is what kind of cultural transfigurations take place when a poetic text is translated from one language to another. This article shows that most significant changes can be found at the levels of themes, key words, genre, stylistic devices, grammar, punctuation, intonation, prosody (rhythm and rhyme) and phonosemantics. The theoretical points are illustrated with contrastive analyses of Russian poems by Marina Tsvetaeva, Anna Akhmatova, Mikhail Lermontov, Gavriil Derzhavin and their English versions.

Key words: translation of poetry, translation of Russian poetry into English, theme, genre, intonation, prosody, phonosemantics.

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Resumo: O artigo explora aspectos da tradução poética em uma perspectiva comparada. A tradução de poesia tem sido vista tradicionalmente, na maioria dos casos, de um ponto de vista da fidelidade do texto traduzido em relação ao original. No entanto, uma questão muito mais fascinante é pensar em quais transfigurações culturais se dão quando um texto poético é traduzido de uma língua para outra. Este artigo mostra que as mudanças mais significativas podem ser notadas nos temas, nas palavras-chave, no gênero, nos recursos estilísticos, na gramática, na pontuação, na entonação, na prosódia (ritmo e rima) e na fonossemântica. Estes aspectos são ilustrados por análises contrastivas de poemas russos de Marina Tsvetaeva, Anna Akhmatova, Mikhail Lermontov, Gavriil Derzhavin e suas versões em inglês.

Palavras-chave: tradução poética; tradução de poesia russa para o inglês; tema; gênero; entonação; prosódia; fonossemântica.

1. Poetic Text in the Context of *Weltliteratur*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe introduced the concept of *Weltliteratur* as far back as 1827 to describe the growing availability of literary texts from different cultures all over the world. Today this idea has become of paramount importance for comparative studies as we experience the globalization process.

Each writer when translated into other languages acquires new "faces" that resemble the original one no more than portraits resemble their model. But in terms of *Weltliteratur* it is the whole range of these "faces" that constitutes the image of the writer. The scrupulous examination of these new "faces" in comparison with the original one not only helps us see how versatile the interpretation of the writer's work can be from various national perspectives, but also enables us to pin-point cultural differences that manifest themselves at different levels.

I have previously discussed these levels at length in my book *Рецепция поэзии Марины Цветаевой в Великобритании* (TSVETKOVA 2011), exploring among other things what happens to a translated text at the levels of themes,

key words, genre, stylistic devices, grammar, punctuation, intonation, prosody and phonosemantics. This whole investigation was based on Marina Tsveteva's poetry translations into English. However, since that book was finished my concept of the hierarchy of the levels has changed; so in this article I would like to introduce my new concept for the first time, as well as to broaden the range of the authors for illustration.

2. The Level of Themes and Key Words

The most striking changes when a text is transferred from one culture to another can be detected on the level of themes and key words. In Russian literary criticism it is assumed that in Russian poetry *родина/motherland* is traditionally one of the most popular topics and titles for poems. You can hardly think of a prominent poet in this country whose work doesn't contain a poem entitled "*Родина*". One can mention Eugeny Baratynsky, Michail Lermontov, Nikolay Nekrasov, Marina Tsvetaeva, Andrey Bely, Ivan Bunin, Sergey Esenin and many others in this respect. Interestingly, British poets have hardly ever used such titles as "Motherland" or "Homeland". Even if we extend the search and include possible synonyms such as *Fatherland, native land, mother country, England, Great Britain, Britannia,* we will be able to find only a few poems. This difference can be explained by the discrepancy between the Russian and the British mentality. As I discussed in my article "*Английские лики Марины Цетаевой*" (TSVETKOVA 2003: 100-35), these two mentalities in many respects are diametrically opposed to each other.

The Russian mentality is essentially very romantic. When I say romantic I use the word as a literary term with all its implications: a tendency to contrast the spiritual and material life, with the stress on the Spirit; a perception of the world as divided into two realms, which provokes a constant longing for something that cannot be achieved; a passion for extremities; and other things of this kind. Naturally it makes the Russian national character fairly open, and this openness manifests itself in a wide range of phenomena, including the manner in which the theme of the Motherland is treated in poetry.

Svetlana Ter-Minasova, an outstanding Russian psycholinguist and expert on cross-cultural interactions, claims that "open patriotism, verbalised love for the native land" (TER-MINASOVA 2000: 176-7) is a distinctive feature of the Russian character. As for the British, she points out that they tend to be much more reserved when speaking about their mother country, and attributes this to their general aptitude for understatement. My investigation of British verse from the Old-Saxon period to the beginning of this century has shown that British poets prefer to avoid proclaiming love for their country, except during the period of Empire from which verses like "Rule, Britannia!" by James Thomson, "England, My England" by William Henley, and "England's Answer" by Rudyard Kipling immediately come to mind; however, even from that time the examples are far less numerous than in the Russian tradition. When British poets touch upon this topic, they tend to tackle it in a less explicit way.

It is evident that when you deal with such a wide gap between two traditions, you have to expect significant metamorphoses in translation. One of the best examples of how a translator deals with a Russian poem entitled "*Родина*" is Jo Shapcott's version of Marina Tsvetaeva's poem. Jo Shapcott's translation was published in *Poetry Review* in 1993 (POETRY REVIEW 1993: 7) among thirteen of Tsvetaeva's verses translated by British and American women poets to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the Russian poet's birth. The translators were invited to choose a poem that most appealed to each of them, so the very choice of the poem "*Родина*" strikes the eye as an extraordinary one. Shapcott conveys the title as closely as may be: "Motherland" (in Russian the word *родина* is semantically closely connected with the image of mother in the set expression *Родина-мать*). However, the content of the original poem is completely changed in translation. Tsvetaeva writes about her painful love for her native country which she (being an exile at that time) had no hope to see again, while Shapcott dwells upon a postmodern idea of the impossibility of verbalizing her love for the homeland:

> Language is impossible
> in a country like this. Even
> the dictionary laughs when I look up
> "England", "Motherland", "Home" (POETRY REVIEW 1993: 7).

As one can see the translator does not even pretend her translation is close to the original, and changes *Russia* into *England*. The reason why Jo Shapcott doesn't translate Tsvetaeva's poem as it is, but prefers to suggest a loose paraphrase, seems to be deeply rooted in the English tradition of handling the theme of love for the native land indirectly and tentatively.

"*Родина*" is not only a popular title in Russian verse but also an important key word of poetic discourse. That fact causes a lot of trouble for translators of Russian poetry into English. *Родина* is etymologically connected with *род* – family, *kin* – and with the verb *родиться* – to be born; so in Russian terms, *родина* is where your family are and where you were born. The English equivalent *homeland* suggests a totally different idea – your native land is where your home is. Evidently the words *родина* and *homeland*, although presented in dictionaries as semantic equivalents, are not equivalent at all, and, when substituted for one another in translation, set a totally different perspective.

The situation with key words in translation becomes even more complicated if we take into account that, apart from the key words specific to each national mentality, each poet also has their own individual key words significant for their poetic universe, which can be fully perceived only in the context of their whole work.

3. The Level of Genre

Another level that undergoes significant transformation is the level of genre. The most obvious discrepancies can be found when we deal with folklore genres unique to this or that culture. A poem by Anna Akhmatova written in a very peculiar genre of Russian folklore called *chastushka* is a good

example. C*hastushka* is a song of a facetious character that consists of one or two trochaic quatrains, usually rhymed. The genre originated from folk dance tunes performed at fairs and weddings. Originally they were sung, or rather "shouted out", accompanied only by a dance; but with the introduction of the *garmonica* (a Russian type of accordion) to the villages in the 1830s to 1850s, *chastushka* began to be 'shouted out' not only to the accompaniment of dance but of the accordion as well. Akhmatova's love poem "*Я окошка не завесила*", written in this genre, conveys to native speakers a sharp sensation of drama through the very discrepancy of the form, connected in their mind predominantly with comic verse supposed to be "shouted out", and also through the lyrical content:

Я окошка не завесила, –x| –x| –x| –xx
Прямо в горницу гляди. –x| –x| –x| –
Оттого мне нынче весело, –x| –x| –x| –xx
Что не можешь ты уйти ...–x| –x| –x| –xx
(AKHMATOVA 1990: 448)

Lynn Coffin, an American poet who translated this verse into English, manages to preserve only the general character of a folksong. She transforms Akhmatova's sequence of cross-rhymed trochaic pentameter and trochaic tetrameter into a sequence of trochaic and iambic lines with occasional anapestic feet following the same rhyme pattern, which evokes some vague folkloric associations but doesn't refer to any genre in particular. Consequently the effect on which the emotional atmosphere of the original poem was built is lost:

You can look straight into my room –
I didn't hang a single drape.
The reason today is free from gloom,
Is that I know you can't escape. (AKHMATOVA 2008: 32)

The translation of this poem by Richard McKane is even further from Akhmatova's verse in terms of its genre. McKane ignores the rhythm and rhyme pattern of the original, so *chastushka* is transformed into a lyrical monologue:

> I didn't draw the curtains,
> You can look straight into the drawing room.
> The reason I am happy
> Is that you cannot get away. (AKHMATOVA 2006: 85)

It is interesting to note that both translators "overlooked" the word *горница* – an obsolete Russian word for *room* that means the tidy part of a peasant house and has distinctive folklore connotations in contemporary language. Coffin conveyed it with the help of the stylistically neutral *room*, while McKane turned it into a *parlour*, which is also old-fashioned but refers rather to Victorian tradition than to the folklore one.

Such losses in translation on the genre level are inevitable when we deal with genres that are unique to a national tradition; however they continue to happen even if the genre of a poem to be translated is universal but has a different significance in the national hierarchy of genres. A clear cut example is the tendency to translate Russian poetry written in the genre of lyrical monologue as mask-lyric – a genre much more popular in English than in Russian verse. One can find only a very few examples of mask-lyric written by Russian poets, like "*Нравственный человек*" (Moral Man), "*Огородник*" (Gardener) by Nikolay Nekrasov and "*Песня пахаря*" (Song of a Plowman) by Alexey Koltzov, written as far back as the nineteenth century. In English poetry mask-lyric has a long and still living tradition, which embraces such outstanding authors of the past and present as William Wordsworth, Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Ted Hughes and the poet-laureate Carol Ann Duffy. This gap in two genre paradigms can be explained by discrepancy of the two poetic traditions.

Russian poetry in general is highly subjective, and essentially suggests an outpouring of feelings by a speaker who is very close to the poet in his/her

attitudes. In English poetry, especially after T.S. Eliot with his notion of the objective correlative, an opposite tendency has prevailed – the tendency to objectivity that has encouraged poets to try on various masks and act the parts of different people to experience sensations that are far from their own. The roots of these two opposite tendencies in their turn refer us to the difference of the national mentalities: obsession with soul and its unique subjective experience typical of the Russian culture, versus empiricism which Anthony Easthope (EASTHOPE 1991: 410-26) argued to be the key feature of English culture.

In my book cited earlier (TSVETKOVA 2011: 410-26), I give a close analysis of Marina Tsvetaeva's poem "*Офелия – в защиту королевы*" (Ophelia – in Defense of the Queen), and its two translations into English by the American poet Sujata Bhatt and the British poet and translator Elaine Feinstein. That analysis showed that both translators (apparently subconsciously) change the syntax, the punctuation marks and the intonation of the original to transform Tsvetaeva's lyrical monologue (in which she uses the mask of Ophelia to speak her own voice) into a dramatic monologue – a modification of mask-lyric – with its recognizable rhetorical devices and omnipresent irony.

Matters of genre, as can be seen in the example of *chastushka*, are usually closely connected with prosody (i.e. meter, rhyme and stanza). In terms of poetry translation prosody is one of the most troublesome yet crucial points, as it is highly semantically charged and this charge is different for each culture.

4. The Level of Prosody

Correlation of rhythm and sense in national poetic traditions has become a special field of interest for such scholars as Kirill Taranovsky (2000: 373-403), Mikhail Gasparov (1999) and Marina Tarlinskaya (1993), but they have only outlined this vast domain for investigation. The studies were initiated by Kirill Taranovsky in his article "*О взаимоотношении*

стихотворного ритма и тематики", first published in 1963. In *American Contributions to the Fifth International Congress of Slavists* (TARANOVSKY 1963: 287-322) he described and illustrated from a vast range of material how the trochaic pentameter in Russian poetic tradition is historically associated with the idea of walking along the road and following or considering one's way in a broader philosophical and religious sense. Taranovsky argues that it was Mikhail Lermontov (better known to the Western audience as the author of a novel, *The Hero of our Time,* than as a poet) in the 1840s who introduced these semantic overtones into Russian poetry. Lermontov used the trochaic pentameter (which was not popular with poets of the previous generation) widely in his verse in general, as well as in one of his best known poems which has enjoyed tremendous popularity in this country, "*Выхожу один я на дорогу*" (*Lone I walk at night along the highway*). The poem presents a persona meditating about life, death, and the purpose of life, while walking along the road. This poem has had a great impact on Russian poetry. According to the examples given by Taranovsky, as soon as later poets like Alexander Blok, Andrey Bely, Sergey Esenin and others approached a similar theme, they tended to use the same meter.

Since a poetic text is much more rigidly designed than a prosaic one, and each of its formal levels of text organization is highly informative in its support of the subject matter, it is only natural that when a poem is translated into another language its translators should try to preserve as many of the semantic overtones which support the theme development at formal levels as they can, including meter. When speaking about Russian poetry translation into English and vice versa, one has to keep in mind that in terms of prosody the two traditions have diverged far apart from the early twentieth century onwards. Contemporary English poetry is more often unrhymed than rhymed (at least in the classical understanding of rhyme), as well as deprived of rigid metrical schemes, whereas most contemporary Russian poets still regard verse as metrical and rhymed writing.

In the case of the nineteenth century poem, however, if the translator's ambition is to convey the flavour of the time and culture rather

than to modernize the poetic text by adapting it to the current expectations of poetry readers, it would be good to look for a meter that performs a semantic function similar to that of the trochaic pentameter in the history of Russian verse in the national tradition. In my talk presented in 2005 at the XVII Purishevskiye Chtenya in Moscow (TSVETKOVA 2005: 262) I reported the results of my research which showed that the iambic tetrameter acquired a semantic charge in the English tradition (triggered by the Wordsworthian "I wandered lonely as a cloud") close to that of the Russian trochaic pentameter, and can be a good metric equivalent in translation.

The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation refers to the few existing translations of Lermontov's verse into English as "generally disappointing" (FRANCE 2001: 582). The version suggested by Eugene M. Kayden (a Russian who came to the United States at the age of sixteen) maintains the rhythm and rhyme pattern of the original as closely as the English language allows:

> *Выхожу один я на дорогу;* *xx*| – *x*| *xx*| – *x*
> *Сквозь туман кремнистый путь блестит;* *xx*| – *x*| – *x*| – *x*
> *Ночь тиха. Пустыня внемлет богу,* – *x*| – *x*| – *x*| – *x*|– *x*
> *И звезда с звездою говорит* *xx*| – *x*| – *x*| *x x*| –
> (LERMONTOV 1989: 83)

> Lone I walk at night along the highway; – x| – x| – x| – x| – x
> In a mist the stony road gleams far. xx| – x| – x| – –| –
> Still the night; to God the barren listens, – x| – x| – x| – x| – x
> And each star speaks softly to each star. xx| – –| – x| x x| –
> (KAYDEN 1965: 103)

It is evident that Kayden, whose perception of Lermontov's poetry is that of the native, treasures the inner music of the poem and does his best to preserve it as it is. However, he doesn't take into account the semantics of

the trochaic pentameter in Russian verse. Interestingly, a more recent translation one can find on the internet – by a Russian translator Yevgeny Bonver has an iambic tetrameter in the opening line and rhythmically copies the famous "I wandered lonely as a cloud": –x | –x | –x| –x: "I come out to the path alone" (BONVER 2013). Later the translator diverts from the metrical scheme, but the reference to the associations valid in the English poetic tradition is clear.

Stanza, which was an important element of prosody in earlier periods, also bears a nationally coloured "expressive aureole" (VINOGRADOV 1959: 28). A good example is a poem by Gavriil Derzhavin, an eminent Russian poet of the eighteenth century: "*Бог*" (God), translated by John Bowring and published in 1821 in the first ever anthology of Russian poetry in English translation, *Specimens of Russian Poetry* (BOWRING 1822: 3). Derzhavin uses iambic pentameters accompanied by a ten-line stanza, which was typical of 'spiritual' and "ceremonial" genres in Russian poetry of the period (GASPAROV 1989: 55-56), so the meditative tone is set in the poem from its very first stanza – the tone of a philosophical meditation peculiar to the genre labeled in Russian literary criticism a "spiritual ode" (*dukhovnaja oda*):

О ты, пространством бесконечный
Живый в движеньи вещества,
Теченьем времени превечный,
Без лиц, в трех лицах божества!
Дух всюду сущий и единый,
Кому нет места и причины,
Кого никто постичь не мог,
Кто все собою наполняет,
Объемлет, зиждет, сохраняет
Кого никто постичь не мог,
Кого мы называем: Бог. (DERZHAVIN 1957, 116)

John Bowring in his translation substitutes the stanza used by Derzhavin with a nine-line stanza written in iambic pentameter (this meter is as popular in English poetry as the iambic tetrameter in the Russian, so in terms of

function the change of the meter is very well grounded), and substitutes the rhyme pattern typical of Russian ode, ababccdeed, with ababcdcdd:

> O Thou eternal One! whose presence bright
> All space doth occupy, all motion guide;
> Unchanged through time's all-devastating flight
> Thou only God! There is no God beside!
> Being above all beings! Mighty One!
> Whom none can comprehend and none explore ;
> Who fill'st existence with Thyself alone :
> Embracing all, — supporting, — ruling o'er, —
> Being whom we call God — and know no more! (BOWRING 1822, 3-4)

The reason for such transformation seems rather mysterious and might be explained by the fact that a ten-line stanza had hardly ever been used in English poetry up to that time. One can see it in "Ode to Himself " by Ben Jonson or "The Sun Rising" by John Donne – both of which have a meter and rhyme pattern different from the one used by Bowring. But these verses are of a playful character and don't resemble the solemn meditative tone of Derzhavin's poem. The strophic pattern suggested by Bowring most of all resembles the famous Spenserian stanza of "The Faerie Queene": nine lines rhymed ababbcbcc. Perhaps the translator was subconsciously looking for a kind of stanza in his national tradition associated with the ideas of glorification and celebration. The allegorical poem by Edmund Spenser, glorifying the Tudors as well as England itself, might have seemed to him a proper model.

Another innovation introduced by Bowring in his translation concerns the intonation of the text. He makes it more rhetorical than the one by Derzhavin, whose persona meditates rather than discusses the subject with his readers. The translator divides lines into hemistiches with the help of phrase partitioning, and sometimes inserts exclamation marks in the middle of lines, which hardly ever happens in the original:

> O Thou eternal One! Whose presence bright
> All space doth occupy, all motion guide; (Bowring 1822, 3-4)

The intonation pattern used by Bowring is borrowed (apparently subconsciously again) from the English philosophical poetry of the early eighteenth century. A well-known philosophical poem, "An Essay on Man" by Alexander Pope, has exactly the same pattern:

> Awake, my St.John! Leave all meaner things
> To low ambition, and the pride of kings. (Pope 1993, 2263)

"An Essay on Man", as one can see, creates the atmosphere of chatting wittily with the reader rather than solitary meditation, and by following it Bowring adapts his translation to the expectations of the national reader.

5. The Level of Grammar

As for the matters of grammar in general and syntax in particular, the idea of their importance for the understanding of poetic text was put forward by Roman Jacobson (1971) and Victor Vinogradov (1963). The nature of poetry presupposes unparalleled unity of the words in a verse line which increases the expressivity of every element of poetic text in comparison to prose. Grammatical categories are not an exception. They are no less semantically charged than any other element of poetry. The main problem for a translator in this respect might be the lack of an equivalent grammatical form or syntactic device in the target language. In the case of Marina Tsvetaeva's poetry, for example, it is the abundance of ellipsis, when she omits verbs or pronouns or quite often both, creating "jagged abrupt sentences, full of dashes and breaks" (FRANCE 1982: 135). This technique is not easily conveyed into English, which does not regard ellipses with favour; however it cannot be totally neglected as it is one of the "visiting cards" of Tsvetaeva's verse. Ellipsis for her is a tool in a very elaborate system of techniques to create semantic gaps (especially numerous in her mature poetry), which are to be completed by her readers, whom the poet treats as her co-creators. In this respect Tsvetaeva's style has very much in common with that of James Joyce

(who was her contemporary) and other modernist writers. Translators – who first act as readers – have to interpret the vague places for themselves, and only then can convey them to their audience. If there is no opportunity to leave the gaps as they are, they inevitably insert their own highly subjective interpretation of the original text.

The matters of Tsvetaeva's syntax in terms of translation are discussed in minute details in P. M. Sollner's thesis *The Role of the Reader and Translator of Marina Tsvetaeva's Lyrics, with Translation of 'Versty II'*.(SOLLNER 1985) Writing about ellipsis as a peculiarity of Tsvetaeva's style that should not be neglected, Sollner gives numerous illustrations of the poet's syntax that become a matter of difficulty when translated into English: like the construction "*Каждый стих – дитя любви, / Нищий незаконнорожденный*", which seems quite natural to a Russian ear, but sounds coarse to an English-speaking person if the verb *to be* is omitted: "Every verse – **is** a child of love, / An illegitimate beggar" (SOLLNER 1985: 123). Sollner points out as well that Tsvetaeva's highly-condensed style is additionally watered down when translated into English by articles and extra prepositions (absence of inflections in Russian makes the text look much more concise). One cannot but agree with that, looking again at the example quoted. The scholar adds to this the absence from the English language of such a grammatical category as the short form of adjective, which Tsvetaeva uses fairly often to impart to her verse a colloquial quality and sometimes folksy manner: for example the phrase, rather expressive in the original, "*Проста моя осанка, / Нищ мой домашний кров,…*" turns into the colourless "Simple is my manner, / Humble is my roof" (SOLLNER1985: 121-2).

Tsvetaeva's poetry is also a good illustration when we consider punctuation. In contrast to Akhmatova, who was indifferent to punctuation marks in her poetry and relied upon her publisher in that matter, Tsvetaeva used punctuation as an additional means of making her texts highly semantically charged. Her favourites were dashes put in grammatically unjustified places, exclamation marks, and three dots. Tsvetaeva believed that a poem should be performed as a musical composition (music was an

important part of her life: her mother, a very good pianist herself, encouraged Tsvetaeva to play the piano from a very early age), and she treated punctuation marks like musical notation.

The major cross-cultural collision caused by the abundance of exclamation marks in Tsvetaeva's texts is connected again with the famous British "understatement", which makes the overuse of exclamation marks to feel like "falsity and naïve self-indulgence" (FRANCE1998: 135). It is worth mentioning that Tsvetaeva's poetry looks 'overemotional' even to some Russian readers, so one can see why British translators tend mostly to remove as many exclamation marks as they can from the poet's texts, so as to bring down the "fever pitch" of her poetry. For example Elaine Feinstein, in her translation of "*Попытка ревности*" / "An Attempt at Jealousy" (TSVETAYEVA1999: 92), leaves only one of Tsvetaeva's nine exclamation marks in twelve quatrains; in "Ophelia: in Defence of the Queen" (TSVETAYEVA1999: 44) – one of the seven exclamation marks in four quatrains; in "You loved me" (TSVETAYEVA 1999: 55) – one of the three in two quatrains; in "Homesickness" (TSVETAYEVA 1999: 103) – one of seven in ten quatrains. Interestingly enough American translators sometimes demonstrate an opposite tendency: Tsvetaeva's poem "*Вскрыла жилы…*", which contains only one exclamation mark in two quatrains, loses even this one when translated by a British author, David McDuff, as "I've Opened my Veins"; while in translation by an American poet, Ann Stevenson – "I have Opened my Veins" (TSVETAYEVA 1991: 9) – it acquires an extra one. Sujata Bhatt's translation of "Ophelia in Defence of the Queen" (TSVETAYEVA1991: 6-7) preserves six of Tsvetaeva's seven exclamations; and so on.

6. The Phonological Level

The last, but not least, level which is highly semantically charged, and might be troublesome for poetry translators, is the phonological level. A special term was coined for this phenomenon: phonosemantics. All scholars dealing with phonosemantics agree on the fact that sound appeals predominantly to people's subconsciousness, and in this respect is crucial for our perception of works of art; however, some of them believe that the associations connected with certain sounds are universal (Viktor Levitzky, Vladimir Veidle, Ivan Fonagy), while others insist on their national specificity (Alexander Zhuravlyov). In Russian linguistics it was Zhuravlyov (ZHURAVLYOV 1974) and Levitsky (LEVITSKY1973) who initiated serious investigation in this field. The most exciting outcome of Zhuravlyov's research was a table of correspondence of the Russian sounds and emotions they provoke in native speakers, compiled with the help of computational linguistics techniques. Zhuravlyov's goal was to measure the "phonetic meaning" of verse and compare it with the general emotional content of poems (ZHURAVLYOV 1974: 99). The result was an extraordinary one: his analysis of texts by Pushkin, Mayakovsky, Esenin and Nekrasov showed that in the vast majority of cases the meaning transmitted by the sound pattern was in harmony with the content of the poem; however, in the case of Nekrasov (famous for the bitterness of his tone), Zhuravlyov detected a tendency to use sounds with "negative" meaning (creating the atmosphere of gloom, sadness and melancholy) even in poems tackling cheerful subject matters (like in "*Коробейники*" / "*Pedlar*" written in a folksy style). Unfortunately no similar study has been done on the English language, so at this stage it is impossible to make a comparison of a Russian poem and its English version that would be fairly reliable. However, even a brief survey of the phonological levels of original and translations could give us an idea about the losses one has to face.

Marina Tsvetaeva, for instance, literally constructs some of her poems around the letter *r* (which is pronounced in Russian like in Scottish or

Spanish), and with good reason. The poem "*Родина*" / "Motherland" *(*mentioned earlier), written in exile, dwells upon the feeling of disconnection from her native land; the poem "*Борису Пастернаку*" / "To Boris Pasternak" is devoted to the same feeling of dissociation, this time from a man and a poet Tsvetaeva worshipped; hence the abundant use of the sound *r* which is, according to Zhuravlyov, associated with the idea of disconnection, dissociation. In "*Родина*" the *r* sounds are highlighted by being concentrated into alliterating rows (TSVETAEVA1997: 32): "***Р**оссия – **р**одина моя!*", /"*Даль, п**р**ирожденнаяб как боль, / Настолько **р**одина …*" ***Р**аспрь моих земля – / Го**р**дыня, **р**одина моя!*" etc. One finds exactly the same device, with even denser concentration of the *r* sound, in "*Борису Пастернаку*" (TSVETAEVA 1997: 258): "***Р**ас – стояние : ве**р**сты, мили…/ Нас **р**ас – ставили, **р**ас – садили,*" "***Р**ас – стояние : ве**р**сты, дали…/ Нас **р**асклеили, **р**аспаяли, /В две руки **р**азвели, **р**аспяв*", "*Не **р**ассо**р**или – **р**ассо**р**или, / **Р**асслоили…/ Стена да **р**ов. / **Р**асселили нас как о**р**лов – / Загово**р**щиков: ве**р**сты, дали…/ Не **р**асст**р**оили – растеряли./ По т**р**ущобам земных ши**р**от / **Р**ассовали нас как си**р**от.*" etc. One can easily see that the very nature of standard English pronunciation, with its omission of the *r* sound, makes it impossible to convey this key phonosemantic feature of the poems in question.

7. Conclusion

The metamorphoses of poetic text when crossing cultural boundaries that we have examined in this article confirm the words of an outstanding Russian poet of the second half of the nineteenth century, Afonasy Fet (a devout translator of poetry himself, however not a very successful one), who once said (FET1867: 57):

> A poem is sung in some certain language and the words inspired by the Muse bring into it, so to say, all the peculiarities of the climate. Planting his flower garden a poet involuntarily carries in its root and on it the fragments of its native land. Except for the root, every word has an odour typical to the land it comes from, its form and its influence on the spheres of thought ambient to it, exactly like a plant feeding certain insects, which in their turn feed certain birds and so on.

Fet's witty summary is that to translate is "to replace a palm with a pine tree, an almond tree with a hazel and a cactus with a burdock" (FET 1867: 58). Fet himself became a staunch supporter of the idea of untranslatability. The aim of this article is however not to show that poetry translation is impossible or next to it, but to draw attention to the fact that the whole range of versions of a poetic text transformed by its translators (consciously, subconsciously, or because of the language difference) constitute a constantly changing image of its author in the domain of *Weltliteratur*. That means that, on the one hand, all these texts should be treated as a unity in the context of world literature; and on the other hand, one has to be alert when reading a poem in translation, and aware of the world of difference existing between the original and its translated version.

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