Transmesis in Slavic Literary Postmodernism:

Understanding Translation through Fiction

by

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the phenomenon of transmesis — the mimesis or portrayal of translation in fiction — in three postmodernist novels in Ukrainian and Russian and their English translations: Yuri Andrukhovych's *Perverziia* (translated by Michael Naydan), Serhiy Zhadan's *Depesh Mod* (translated by Myroslav Shkandrij), and Viktor Pelevin's *Generation "П"* (translated by Andrew Bromfield). My objective is to explore the use and identify the purposes of transmesis in fiction, to investigate issues of untranslatability to which it gives rise, and to identify the implications of transmesis for translation theory and practice.

Transmesis, a term coined by Thomas Beebee, stands for the representation in fiction of translation, both as a process and a product, as well as for the portrayal of the figure of the translator in a fictional text. In a larger historico-theoretical framework, the concept of transmesis stands at the juncture of the so-called cultural and fictional turns in translation studies. While the former has been pivotal in expanding our understanding of translation as a cultural rather than merely a linguistic act, the latter has unraveled the potential of fictional portrayals of translation, not just as metaphors for the construction of identity and truth, but also as a source for advancing theoretical knowledge about translation.

My research has been driven by two overarching questions: How do translators render transmetic episodes in novels into English while operating from the position of "retranslating," or translating what allegedly already is a translation? How can transmesis complement other sources of knowledge about translation in order to reinvigorate translation theory and contribute to a translation philosophy?

Analysis of the three novels, selected because they are viewed as postmodernist, have stylistic similarities, and prominently feature a theme of translation, is carried out from both practical and theoretical perspectives. The discussion of how the transmetic episodes in the novels are translated into English suggests that translators have struggled with capturing the nuances of transmesis, at times resorting to footnotes or even to omitting entire passages. It is primarily by distancing themselves from the original text, taking poetic license, and assuming the role of author that Naydan, Shkandrij, and Bromfield have managed to find creative solutions to some of the formidable transmetic challenges. The resulting discussion of the theoretical implications of transmesis reopens issues and subjects that are central to translation from a new perspective. These range from the problematic notion of equivalence and the often parodied image of translator's (in)fidelity, to the translator's often underappreciated work and "(in)visibility," and from the various translation dichotomies (e.g. source language/target language, original/translation, author/translator, domesticate/foreignize, etc) and their problems, to more philosophical questions of sameness and difference and the role of intertextuality in translation.

A close reading of the transmetic episodes in the three novels leads me to contend that translation should be primarily conceived as a playful and creative act rather than a merely reproductive one, and that solutions to the problem of untranslatability will be more plausible if translators, rather than striving for illusory sameness or similarity and being governed by adequacy and fidelity, approach their task as an intertextual and interpretative language game predicated on creative transformation.

Dedication

Мамі і Татові / To Mom and Dad

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Finally, I thank my Mother and my Grandmother whose love and faith have kept me going and, most of all, my Dad, who would have been very happy for me. "Dad, I dedicate this is to you!"

Note on Transliteration

The transliteration from Cyrillic in this dissertation follows a modified Library of Congress (LC) system. The apostrophe ('), indicating the soft sign in Ukrainian and Russian, and the quotation mark ("), indicating the hard sign in Russian, will not be used to avoid confusion because they serve different functions in English. The diacritics (except in proper names and titles) and ligatures will also be omitted. In some cases, exceptions will also be made to reflect more accurately the phonetic spelling or to follow a different but widely accepted spelling of proper names (e.g. Fyodor Dostoevsky) as well as the spelling used in published translations. For example, Andrukhovych's first name, which according to the LC system should be spelled *Iurii*, will be transliterated as *Yuri* because it is the spelling used in Naydan's translation. Similarly, the LC transliteration of Zhadan's first name is *Serhii*, but I follow Shkandrij's spelling *Serhiy*.

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Introduction: Translation, Fiction, and Mimesis

The Research Problem and Objective

Knowledge about translation has traditionally been generated by literary scholars, translation theorists, critics, reviewers, editors, readers, and, perhaps, above all, by translators. Until recently, however, it has been largely overlooked that useful insights into translation may also derive from fiction, which can raise questions and cast doubt about existing knowledge. Fiction, in the words of the German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, "is the source from which the cognition of 'eternal truths' is fed" (*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology* 160).[1] As co-editor Karlheinz Spitzl succinctly puts it in his introductory overview of the articles comprising the 2014 collection *Transfiction: Research into the Realities of Translation Fiction*, "[a]s there are multiple ways of knowing, why not take fiction as one of them?" ("A Hitchhiker's Guide to…" 27).

In addition to shaping and transforming us intellectually and emotionally, broadening our horizons, providing aesthetic pleasure, and taking us to far-away or non-existent places, fiction, most importantly, makes us think critically.[2] Despite the connotation of being "untrue" or invented, fiction offers a thought-provoking conflation

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[1] In a different translation, *Ideas. General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* by William Gibson, this sentence reads, "… fiction is the source whence the knowledge of external truths draws its sustenance" (qtd. in Kearney 19).

[2] This idea was emphasized in Marjorie Garber's talks when she visited UofA as Distinguished Visitor of the Dimic Institute for Comparative and Cross-Cultural Studies in 2009. Others have also expressed this idea. For example, in *The Opposite of Fate: Memories of a Writing Life,* American writer Amy Tan writes, "Fiction makes you think; propaganda tells you how to think" (n. p.). Additionally, as drawn to my attention by Canadian writer Erín Moure, scientific studies in the last decade have noted increased capacities for empathy and for critical thinking that can be directly correlated to exposure to fiction. See "Exploring the link between reading fiction and empathy: Ruling out individual differences and examining outcomes" by Raymond Mar, Keith Oatley, and Jordan B. Peterson, in *Communications* 34 (2009), 407-428. To my mind, it is thus not unusual that fiction offers opportunities as yet untapped for the critical analysis, and retheorization, of translation.

of the imaginary and the real, an intersection that becomes a locus for the fermentation of new, counterintuitive ideas that evolve from juxtaposing the empirical observations about "what is" with the assumptions and speculations about "what could or should be."

Turning to fiction as one of the possible sources of knowledge about translation and a tool of thinking about translation, this dissertation examines the phenomenon of transmesis — the mimesis or portrayal of translation in fiction — in three postmodernist novels in Ukrainian and Russian and their English translations: Yuri Andrukhovych's *Perverziia* (translated by Michael Naydan), Serhiy Zhadan's *Depesh Mod* (translated by Myroslav Shkandrij), and Viktor Pelevin's *Generation "П"* (translated by Andrew Bromfield). Transmesis (i.e. translation and mimesis) stands for the representation in fiction of translation, both as a process and a product, as well as for the portrayal of the figure of translator in a fictional text as a way of moving between cultures or indicating cultural breaches or gaps unseen by a non-native of that culture. My objective is to explore the use and identify the purposes of transmesis, to investigate issues of untranslatibility to which it gives rise, and to identify the implications of transmesis for translation theory and practice.

The Origin and Evolution of Transmesis and Its Theoretical Application

The depiction of translator-characters and the act of translation itself is not necessarily a new invention in literature, but the word *transmesis* is certainly a new term in translation studies. Coined by Thomas Beebee, transmesis can be explained in simple terms as "the metaphorical conjunction of mimesis and translation" ("Attempt at a Self-Critique," par. 7, hyperlink to "transmesis"). A more extended definition can be found in Beebee's

recent groundbreaking study, titled *Transmesis: Inside Translation's Black Box* (2013)*,* which, building on both Plato and Aristotle, defines it as "the mimesis of the interrelated phenomena of translation, multilingualism, and code-switching" (6). While Beebee was the first to employ and elaborate the term *transmesis* as a portmanteau word, it was evidently Meir Sternberg, a scholar from Tel Aviv, who in an article titled "Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis," published in *Poetics Today* in 1981, first theorized the fictional portrayal of translation from the narratological perspective.

Beebee gives credit to Sternberg in his earlier articles on the topic and, most recently, in *Transmesis: Inside Translation's Black Box*. For example, exploring translation as mimesis in the work of the Moroccan writer Khatibi, Beebee argues that his novel *Amour bilingue,* featuring the French and Arabic languages, "becomes a translation of itself" ("The Fiction of Translation" 67). He begins the discussion of Khatibi's novel by quoting Sternberg's thought-provoking question: "how to present the reality of polylingual discourse through a communicative medium which is normally unilingual?" (64). In order to resolve this "formidable mimetic challenge" ("Polylingualism as Reality" 222), Sternberg first outlines several techniques that authors employ to avoid the representation of hetero- or polylingualism and/or translation in a literary text.[3] Then he

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[3] Sternberg discusses in detail "1. referential restriction; 2. vehicular matching; 3. homogenizing convention" and further, also "vehicular promiscuity," which is a technique drastically opposite to "homogenizing convention." While in referential restriction any differences in characters' speech, including dialectal varieties, tend to be presented through the language used by the narrator and understood by the audience, vehicular matching singles these differences out. "The recourse to homogenizing convention, finally, retains the freedom of reference while dismissing the resultant variations in the language presumably spoken by the characters…" Lastly, vehicular promiscuity, showcased in James Joyce, employs "polylingual means … to represent a unilingual reality of discourse" ("Polylingualism as Reality" 223-224).

proceeds to develop a specific classification, consisting of "four distinct types or procedures of translational mimesis, lying between the polar extremes of vehicular matching and homogenizing convention" ("Polylingualism as Reality" 225). They are, according to Sternberg, selective reproduction, verbal transposition, conceptual reflection, and explicit attribution (225-232). Without going into too much detail, the difference between the four lies in the degree of how explicitly the instances of heterolingualism and translation are incorporated in the text.[4] Sternberg stresses the functional variability of translational mimesis, claiming that "[a]s textual component … [it] stands to the text and particularly the text's overall referential strategy not only as microcosm to macrocosm but also as part to whole or as means to end" (236). In addition, he considers the role of translational mimesis in shaping "the relationship between poetics and translation" (237). One of the conclusions Sternberg reaches is that "any monistic conception of translation adequacy and translational competence is simply unacceptable" (238). Judging from his structural approach, Sternberg clearly envisioned his task in working out the metalanguage, developing typologies, and analyzing the functionality of translational mimesis, especially in relation to the problem of representation of reality in fiction. But whereas Sternberg has laid the structural foundation for theorizing transmesis, especially in light of narrative construction, Beebee has both narrowed the discussion down by sharpening the focus on transmesis per se (as distinct from other related concepts such as hetero-, poly- or multilingualism)[5] and,

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[4] Sternberg warns that the distinction is in fact not so straightforward and that in reality these approaches are often mixed.

[5] There are several terms in linguistics and literary studies that are related to transmesis: for example, multilingualism (such as, for example, the French in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*) or Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia (see Bakhtin's essay titled "Discourse in the Novel" in his *The Dialogic Imagination*. In many cases, there is a significant overlap between transmesis and other cognate notions. One example is the term pseudotranslation, also known as "fictitious" translation, which Anton Popovič defined as a

simultaneously, opened it up by exploring not just the linguistic or narratological but also the ideological, social, and cultural implications of transmesis. As he aptly puts it, "[w]hether for or against translators, fiction that takes translation and translators as its mimetic object (re)embeds the linguistic act within its political, social, and ethical contexts" (*Transmesis* 218).

It is, in fact, Beebee's suggestion that transmesis is of particular theoretical relevance and can provide a fresh insight into the very process of translation, as much that is involved in the transfer/transformation of text from one language to another remains an enigma. To use his own metaphor, transmesis can allow us to penetrate "the black box[6] of translation" ("Inside the Black Box of Literary Translation: Transmesis" 26), which, Beebee claims, "encloses the actual process of creating or recognizing equivalent messages in two or more languages" ("Milorad Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars* as Translation Fiction" 341). "The equivalence itself," he stresses, "provides no clues as to the process by which it is achieved, just as a single message within any one language provides no clues as to how it achieves meaning" (ibid.). Beebee argues that it is the "authors of fiction" who "have opened up translation's black box by depicting the act of translation, the translator and his or her social context" ("Inside the Black Box…"

"quasi-metatext, i.e. a text that is to be accepted as a metatext" (*Dictionary for the Analysis of Literary Translation* 20). The concept was popularized by Gideon Toury, who wrote about a German text, titled *Papa Hamlet,* which was presented as a German translation from Norwegian, but was in fact a mystification, created by the authors. According to Toury, "pseudotranslations are in a position to give us a fairly good idea as to the notions shared by the members of the target-language community as to the most conspicuous characteristics of genuine translations, which makes them legitimate objects of translation studies" ("Translation, Literary Translation and Pseudotranslation" 84). An insightful discussion of heterolingualism in translation can be found in Reine Meylaerts's article on this subject.

[6] Beebee might have borrowed this metaphor from Gideon Toury, who in his 1995 *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* discusses the two kinds of approaches to studying translators' decisions, based on analyzing respectively the product and the process. Toury laments the impossibility of "[glimpsing] into the 'black box' itself, where translational considerations take place and decisions are made" (182).

26). "Transmesis, then, can be seen as antirepresentation, an attempt to reverse the process that replaces translation with its representation," Beebee concludes (*Transmesis* 10).

As can be inferred from the wide-ranging corpus of texts[7] discussed by Beebee, encompassing different traditions and time periods, it is not just translation equivalence that the fictional tool of transmesis helps to elucidate (or challenge). Instances of transmesis in fictional works demonstrate, in ways that cannot be demonstrated by a theoretical text alone, that translation transcends a mere language-transfer act and opens new vistas for exchanging, and, even more importantly, creating meaning in a broader socio-cultural context. In other words, a closer look at transmesis in fiction may help to promote a more nuanced understanding of translation, which even in the humanities is often reduced to a mere tool that facilitates communication and eliminates language barriers.

Contextualizing Transmesis: The Fictional Turn in Translation Studies

Echoing and extending George Steiner's argument that "inside or between languages, human communication equals translation" (*After Babel* 49), Bella Brodzki illuminates the ubiquity of translation in the present-day world in the following way:

> As subjects in a multicultural, polyglot, transnational, and intertextual
>
> universe, all of us 'live in translation,' but we also occupy that space
>
> differently, depending on our linguistic capital and the status of our

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[7] Among the authors whose works Beebee discusses are the Serbian writer Milorad Pavić, the Israeli writer Amos Oz, the Australian writer B. Wongar (alias Sreten Božić), and the Japanese writer Ryūnosuke Akutagawa.

> language(s) in rapidly changing historical, political, and geographic
>
> contexts.
>
> (*Can These Bones Live?* 11)

In his entry on "Fictional Representations" in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies,* Dirk Delabastita expresses a similar view regarding the role of translation in contemporary society. He claims that along with the theme of travel,[8] translation "has become a kind of master metaphor in fiction, epitomizing our present *condition humaine* in a globalized and centreless context, evoking the human search for a sense of self and belonging in a puzzling world full of change and difference" (111). Expanding a list of specific issues raised through transmesis in fictional representations, Delabastita mentions trust, loyalty, invisibility and personal ambition, untranslatability, trauma, and identity (111).

Moreover, Delabastita adds another dimension to Sternberg's original question of how to convey instances of translation (and/or multilingualism) in a work of fiction, by inviting us to ruminate not only over the "how?" but also over the "why?" "[T]he data," Delabastita writes, "always need to be interpreted in terms of why the fictional text renders (or significantly fails to render) assumed multilingualism or translation in a certain way" (110). Delabastita concludes by pointing out that the fictional turn in translation studies "signals a postmodern and counter-cultural critique of rational science" as "narrated singular experience is trusted more than the lifeless generalities of empirical research" (112). Since works of fiction inevitably deal with personal and

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[8] Michael Cronin investigates this topos in great detail in his *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation*.

collective identities and reflect, through the writer's imaginative lens, the socio-cultural conditions of a given period, they may prove useful in unveiling new productive modes of thinking about translation by debunking popular misconceptions about it; by disspelling (or, in some cases, reinforcing) some of its common stereotypes; and, of course, by simply inviting us to examine both its pitfalls and potentialities.

Transmesis can therefore be situated at the juncture of the so-called fictional and cultural turns in translation studies.[9] The latter has found an exhaustive treatment in Mary Snell-Hornby's *The Turns of Translation Studies: New Paradigms or Shifting Viewpoints?* Following the linguistic turn, a stage that was premised primarily on the comparison of various linguistic aspects of the source and target texts in search of equivalence, the cultural turn(s) was more wide-ranging. Its investigations examined how translation functions in the target culture, looked at how translation serves as a driving force of intercultural communication, and included Derrida-inspired deconstructionist understanding of translation as "transformation" (Snell-Hornby).

The fictional turn,[10] which, as the name suggests, originated under the influence of literary studies, is a more recent phenomenon in translation studies. Edwin Gentzler attributes the invention of the term to the Brazilian scholar Else Vieira, who coined it in her essay, titled (in English translation) "(In)visibilities in Translation: Exchanging

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[9] A similar identification of research trends or directions is not a characteristic typical only of translation studies. In fact, the same labels are common across the humanities. In her *Academic Instincts,* Marjorie Garber writes: "A decade or so ago historians, or at least some of them, were talking about 'the linguistic turn,' history's attraction to poststructuralist theory; or 'the cultural turn,' history's attraction to cultural anthropology" (66).

[10] The chapter titled "The Fictional Turn in Latin America" in Gentzler's monograph *Translation and Identity in the Americas* is perhaps one of the most comprehensive summaries of the fictional turn in translation studies. Another important source is an anthology titled *Translation and Power*, which Gentzler co-edited with Maria Tymoczko. It features a selection of essays dealing with translation in fiction by Arrojo, Pagano, and Larkosh.

Theoretical and Fictional Perspectives" (*Translation and Identity in the Americas* 108).

According to Gentzler, Vieira "develops a theory of translation that challenges mimetic

theories that emphasize fidelity to the source text" (109). She underscores "a reciprocal

play between invisibility/visibility, covering/discovering present in every fictional work

as well as every translation, which Vieira sees as empowering for the translator"

(Gentzler 109). For his part, Gentzler, who in addition to reviewing the current

scholarship on the fictional representation of translation also offers his own insightful

(re)readings of Borges, Vargas Llosa, and Garcia Márquez, contends that the fictional

portrayal of translation may further inform theoretical and critical inquiries not only in

translation studies but also other fields. For Gentzler, "[t]ranslation blends together with

fiction and theory to offer a new perspective on history, memory, and identity formation"

(141).

Adriana Pagano develops these claims further by stressing the reciprocal nature of

the connection between translation, fiction, and theory. According to her, the fictional

turn is "characterized by a two-fold movement concerning the triad fiction-theory-

translation" (Pagano 81). "On the one hand," she writes, quoting Simon,[11] "there is the

fictionalization of translation by theorists and novelists who use translation as a 'theme

for expressing new configurations of cultural space' (Simon 1992:173)" (81). "On the

other hand," Pagano continues, "there is a movement of critics and theorists who

approach fiction as a source of translation theorization [and,] [d]rawing on novels and

short stories that thematize translation and translators … examine the articulation of

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[11] Sherry Simon's essay "The Language of Cultural Difference: Figures of Alterity in Canadian
Translation" is published in *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology*, edited by Lawrence
Venuti.

translation, memory, and history as captured by the fictional piece" (81). Brodzki expresses a similar view when she claims that transmetic "narratives foreground reading and writing as issues of reception, transmission, and circulation, while also employing translation as a metaphor for extraliterary shifts in the international cultural, political, and economic spheres" (17).

An example of the latter part of Pagano's distinction – using fiction as a possible source for exploring new theoretical avenues – can be found in the scholarship of Rosemary Arrojo. She shrewdly identifies the value of transmesis in challenging the idea of "textual reproduction that is part and parcel of a culture that would like to count on the possibility of forever-stable meanings" by casting doubt on "the valorization of originals as a privileged form of text production" ("Fictional Texts as Pedagogical Tools" 61). Engaging with the transmetic texts of Kafka, Borges, and Kosztolányi and drawing on Nietzsche's theorizing on the will to power (interpreted in this case as the will to construct) as well as his revolutionary (at that time) ideas on the constructed nature of truths, Arrojo discovers that the author-translator relationship often transcends collaboration and turns into the power struggle for control over meaning ("Writing, Interpreting and the Power Struggle for the Control of Meaning" 64). Consequently, she believes that "… if, in the world as text, the search for authorial mastery also drives readers and translators, what one is never able to achieve is precisely the definite stability of meaning or the neutralization of difference" (78). Not only does this idea closely correlate with the popular postmodernist notions of "undecidability" and "indetermanence" (Hassan's neologism that conflates indeterminacy and immanence (21), but it also undermines the fundamental tenet of those older translation theories that

are predicated on the belief in sameness and on the act of conveying meaning as "determined" by the original text/author.

Through her insightful readings, Arrojo also highlights the usefulness of what Delabastita has described as "narrated singular experience" (112) in shedding light on the aporias involved in common perceptions of the translator's responsibilities:

> In contrast to the conventionally sober discourse of theory and scholarly texts, works of fiction tend to make more explicit the darker side of translation and the responses that it seems to trigger, which, precisely because they involve desire and feelings, usually complicate the relationships that are normally acceptable between originals and their interpretations, and between authors and interpreters. Fictional texts that explore representations of translation introduce readers to characters who have to deal with the ethical dilemmas associated with the relationship usually established between originals and their reproductions; as such they constitute excellent material for the discussion of fundamental issues directly related to translation and interpretation. ("Fictional Texts as Pedagogical Tools" 54)

By "the darker side," Arrojo intimates that in fiction (and perhaps in real life too) translators/interpreters do not always live up to an idealized image of professional, ethical, and impartial transmitters of information and, after all, may not only be prone to mistakes but may also have their own (possibly even evil) agendas. In other words, until recently, the translator's behaviors, emotions, and views and beliefs have rarely been an

object of serious investigation because attention has mostly been focused on the addresser and the addressee, rather than the medium or the mediator.

Mistranslations are commonly attributed to incompetence or other reasons but rarely to translator's deliberate intent, which, if it be the case, warrants an explanation. Rita Wilson's reading of Francesca Duranti's novels, for example, as well as her cursory analyses of transmetic episodes in writers such as John Crowley, Ward Just, and Javier Marías have led her to conclude that "contemporary authors associate the translator's presence with a mental state of angst; a state ascribed to the instability of the translator's position between languages (in contrast to the theoretical ideal of the translator as a self-confident and unbiased bridge builder between cultures)" (393). Obviously, images of liminality and "in-betweenness"[12] complicate, and even contest, the conventional role of translators as linguistic and cultural mediators who are supposed to mitigate rather than foment conflict.

Finally, the current decade (2010-2014) has witnessed a rapidly growing interest among translation scholars in the fictional turn in translation studies. In 2011, the Center for Translation Studies of the University of Vienna held a conference titled "[The] First International Conference on Fictional Translators in Literature and Film." Featuring Rosemary Arrojo as a keynote speaker, it gathered scholars from different countries and disciplines to discuss the representation of translation in fictional literature, theater, and

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[12] In his 2010 article "Shoot the Transtraitor! the Translator as Homo Sacer in Fiction and Reality," Beebee applies Giorgio Agamben's concept of "homo sacer" to argue that translators in times of political conflicts often find themselves in a precarious position of "in-betweenness" as "they do not belong fully to any of the languages they are translating into or out of; to the bilinguals who hired them they seem to be speaking with a forked tongue and in cipher, abandoning logos in favour of mere phone (voice) and hence moving outside the law of the polis" (295).

film. In 2014, the conference organizers, Klaus Kaindl and Karlheinz Spitzl of the University of Vienna, published a collection of articles titled *Transfiction: Research into the Realities of Translation Fiction*, which offers a rich variety of approaches to (re)envisioning translation through the lens of fiction by encompassing different national literatures and different methods of investigation. Elaborating on the metaphor of translation as movement/motion, co-editor Klaus Kaindl in his introduction "Going fictional! Translators and interpreters in literature and film" frames the discussion by outlining major themes and directions of research. He concludes by saying that "[w]hen translation studies accepts fiction as a source of and authority on translation issues, it transposes the general post-modern understanding that the boundaries between fiction and reality are fluid to a very concrete level: The boundaries between science and fiction are not impermeable or fixed. Both reference the world and both create and explain the world with their own means" (19-20).

Examples of Transmesis in Western Literature and Film

The most famous and intellectually stimulating examples of transmesis in the Western literary tradition come from such authors as James Joyce, with his penchant for polyglot punning; Italo Calvino, with his "translator-the-manipulator" protagonist Ermes Marana in *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*; and indeed, Jorge Luis Borges, whose entire oeuvre is to a large extent predicated on the theme of translation.[13] Borges's famous character Pierre Menard, in the widely anthologized story "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*," for example, intends (apparently disregarding Horace's famous "nec verbum

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[13] In addition to the literature discussed in this chapter, Borges and translation are also discussed in Sergio Gabriel Waisman's *Borges and Translation: The Irreverence of the Periphery* and Efraín Kristal's *Invisible Work: Borges and Translation.*

verbo"[14] reservation, if of course he happened to be familiar with it) "to produce a few pages which would coincide – word for word and line for line – with those of Miguel de Cervantes" (*Ficciones* 66), while Borges's "The Library of Babel," in addition to "the minutely detailed history of the future," contains "the translation of every book in all languages" (81-82).[15] Another ingenious exemplification of transmesis can be found in Borges's "Tlön, Uqbar and Orbis Tertius." Here he depicts, with great concinnity, a case of untranslatability by claiming that Tlön's "Ursprache" lacks a corresponding noun for "moon" and hence only allows a translator to render a seemingly simple sentence "the moon rose above the river" as, verbatim in English, "upward behind the onstreaming it mooned" (33). In Borges's stories transmesis has found its most insightful articulation.

Recent decades have witnessed a proliferation of translation themes not only across wider bodies of literature in non-Western languages, but also across different genres and media. For example, Sofia Coppola's film *Lost in Translation* (2003), starring Bob Murray, presents an American actor who comes to Tokyo to shoot a series of

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[14]According to André Lefevere, this expression comes from Horace's *Epistula ad Pisones* ("Letter to the Pisones"). The full sentence in English reads "Do not worry about rendering word for word, faithful translator, but render sense for sense" (*Translation, History, Culture: A Sourcebook,* 15). It is important to keep in mind Doug Robinson's reservation regarding Lefevere's translation of Horace's phrase into English, though. Robinson writes: "Hence it seems perfectly natural, for example, for André Lefevere to translate Horace's 'Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere, fidus / Interpres' as 'Do not worry about rendering word for word, faithful interpreter, but translate sense for sense' (15). Horace had never heard of sense-for-sense translation, would not have been at all interested in it, or, for that matter, in translation of any sort — his remark was an attempt to warn writers against translating — but hey, if he tells us not to translate word for word, he *must* mean we should translate sense for sense, right?" ("Translation and the Repayment of Debt," par. 7).

[15]A more contemporary (and, perhaps, more technology-oriented) spin-off of this can be found in Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy,* featuring a universal translation device, called the Babel fish. This device "*is small, yellow, leech-like, and probably the oddest thing in the Universe. It feeds on brainwave energy received not from its own carrier but from those around. It absorbs all unconscious mental frequencies from this brainwave energy to nourish itself with. It then excretes into the mind of its carrier a telepathic matrix formed by combining the conscious thought frequencies with nerve signals picked up from the speech centres of the brain which has supplied them. The practical upshot of all this is that if you stick a Babel fish in your ear you can instantly understand anything said to you in any form of language*" (55).

commercials but gets confused and overwhelmed by the foreign culture. Sydney

Pollack's *The Interpreter* (2005)*,* starring Nicole Kidman, tells a story of the UN

interpreter, who after overhearing a death threat in a rare language becomes entangled in

an escalating political scandal and plays a much more important role than just that of an

invisible language mediator. The translation motif in Mario Vargas Llosa's *The Bad Girl*

*(*translated by Edith Grossman; *Travesuras de la niña mala* in Spanish*),* an account of

unrequited love, is interwoven throughout the story as the protagonist, a UN interpreter,

not only admires Russian literature but is also a translator of Chekhov and Bunin into

Spanish. Whether purposefully or not, in this story Vargas Llosa creates an interesting

interplay between the two sets of binaries – translation, art, and love versus interpreting,

craft, and duty – thus reminding us of (and perhaps also inviting us to question) the

traditional translation dichotomies. Another love story, this time between an exiled

Russian poet who is a professor in the US and his student who undertakes a translation of

his poetry, unfolds in John Crowley's *The Translator*. The novel tantalizes the reader

with an almost erotic description of the translation process and, once again, resonating

with Robert Frost's (in)famous dictum that "poetry is what's lost in translation" (qtd. in

Moffet 88),[16] calls for a reconsideration of the purpose of literary translation.

Transmesis in Slavic Literatures

In Slavic literatures, on the other hand, transmesis has been explored only

episodically to date, both by writers of fiction and by translation scholars. Two notable

exceptions are the Serbian writer Milorad Pavić's *Hazarski rečnik,* translated by Christina

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[16] Although this quotation is often attributed to Frost, I have been unable to locate the original source
verifying that Frost indeed said this.

Pribicevic-Zoric as *Dictionary of the Khazars: A Lexicon Novel* (discussed by Beebee and Pankova) and the Russian writer Ludmila Ulitskaya's novel *Daneil Shtain, Perevodchik (Daniel Stein, Interpreter),* recently translated into English by Arch Tait and discussed by Margarita Levantovskaya. Echoing the religious conversion theme in Pavić, *Daniel Stein, Interpreter* features the eponymous protagonist, who manages to survive the Holocaust by serving as an interpreter for the Nazis and eventually becomes a Catholic priest. According to Levantovskaya, Ulitskaya "uses her protagonist in order to address and re-imagine the narrative of twentieth-century Russian-Jewish conversion to Christian religions, which continues to trouble Jewish communities transnationally, as a utopian gesture of translation" (conference paper).[17]

Two other studies in the Eastern European realm that deserve mention are Brian James Baer's "Translating the Transition: the Translator-Detective in Post-Soviet Fiction" and Jan Rubes's "Translation as Condition and Theme in Milan Kundera's Novels," which appeared in the 2011 collection *Contexts, Subtexts, and Pretexts: Literary Translation in Eastern Europe and Russia,* edited by Baer. In his article, Baer revisits Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment,* in which translation epitomizes (not in a very positive light) a foreign influence on the formation of Russian identity, manifested in the "westernizers vs slavophiles" debate. Noting the continuity of translation and the national / cultural identity motif in Dostoevsky and in contemporary authors, Baer then turns to novels by Boris Akunin, Polina Dashkova, Darya Dontsova, and Aleksandra Marinina, whose translator-detective protagonists, Baer argues, oppose the blatantly senseless transplantation of western ideas as it is practiced by the Russian nouveau riche today.

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[17] In 2013, Levantovskaya's article based on this paper appeared in *Slavic Review*.

Although it does not deal directly with transmesis, Rubes's piece offers a fascinating historical account of how Milan Kundera's works were translated into French, and how the conditions of translation and displacement affected not only his writing style but also his attitude to translation, writing, and language in general. As becomes clear from the above overview, the exploration of the theme of translation in Slavic literatures has been at best sporadic. Notwithstanding Baer's claim that "translation as a literary motif has a long history in Russian literature" (244), examples are not many, and scholarship on this topic remains marginal.

Novelty and Contribution

This dissertation seeks to fill the existing gap by offering a Slavic perspective on transmesis through an in-depth discussion of its role in contemporary Ukrainian and Russian novels. Although these novels have been translated into English and won critical acclaim both domestically and internationally, the theme of transmesis has (to the best of my knowledge) never before been considered. In addition to addressing the practical challenges of rendering the transmetic episodes into English, the novelty of my project lies in its engagement with fiction and with examples of transmesis in Slavic novels in order to begin to open up new vistas for theorizing and philosophizing translation, regardless of language of origin – an approach that has only recently begun to gain currency.

Beebee's groundbreaking *Transmesis: Inside Translation's Black Box* appeared in 2013 while Kaindl's and Spitzl's collection on transfiction was being prepared for publication. It is perhaps for this reason that the concept of transmesis – which in fact is the object of transfiction – is notoriously missing in *Transfiction*. My dissertation,

therefore, draws on the findings of these two seminal studies by joining the nascent international discussion of "transfiction." Overall, my research contributes to the fields of Translation Studies, Slavic Studies, and Comparative Literature because it addresses a practical problem, deals with a topic of major theoretical significance, and offers a new comparative perspective promoting understanding between cultures.

Research Questions, Design, and Chapter Outline

Driven by two overarching questions – how do translators render transmetic episodes in the novels in question into English? and how can transmesis complement other sources of knowledge about translation in order to reinvigorate translation theory and contribute to a translation philosophy? – this thesis is structured inductively: I first discuss specific instances of transmesis in the three (two Ukrainian and one Russian) novels, drawing attention in each chapter as well to the notions of version and per-version, of parody, and of heterotopia and intertext that emerge, before proceeding to explore, in my final chapter, its theoretical and philosophical implications for translation and translation studies.

The novels under consideration are Yuri Andrukhovych's *Perverziia* (translated from Ukrainian by Michael Naydan as *Perverzion*), Serhiy Zhadan's *Depesh Mod* (translated from Ukrainian by Myroslav Shkandrij as *Depeche Mode*), and Viktor Pelevin's *Generation "П"* (translated from Russian by Andrew Bromfield as *Homo Zapiens*). They have been selected because they feature prominently the theme of translation and the figure of translator. Moreover, the three writers (Andrukhovych and Zhadan in Ukraine, and Pelevin in Russia) are arguably the most widely read and well known in their countries. Although some disagreement as to the classification of their

work exists, these three novels can be viewed as postmodern and share some stylistic similarities. One important similarity, directly related to my project, lies in the prominent role that postmodern literary playfulness acquires in the three novels, specifically in the treatment of the theme of translation. No less important is also the fact that the works of Andrukhovych, Pelevin, and Zhadan – the ones discussed in this thesis as well as others – have been translated into English and other languages, which allows for a more wide-ranging, comparative discussion.

Methodologically, in the first three chapters I rely on close, deconstructive readings of transmetic episodes in the novels in question as well as on the contrastive analysis technique employed in translation studies to compare the original work and its translation.

By *close reading* I mean the approach to textual analysis attributed to I. A. Richards and William Empson that focusses on "the complex interrelations and ambiguities of the form *and* the content" ("New Criticism"). Close reading was practiced and promoted by the adherents of the literary school of New Criticism and has retained its currency and validity in literary studies ever since. By *deconstructive reading* I refer to a mode of reading that to a large extent was informed by close reading. Developed and practiced by Jacques Derrida (along with other post-structuralist thinkers), deconstructive reading aims at "track[ing] down within a text the aporia or internal contradiction that undermines its claims to coherent meaning" ("Deconstruction") or, in Barbara Johnson's famous words, at "the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text" (5). While the combination of these two approaches appears natural inasmuch as they complement each other, it is important to bear in mind Donald Childs' caveat

regarding one underlying philosophical divergence between new criticism and deconstruction. Childs writes:

> New Criticism shares with deconstruction in particular and poststructuralism in general a determination to expose the falseness of the calm often presented by the textual surface of a text. Each is antipositivistic, happy to acknowledge the death of the author and alert to the play in literary language. Yet there is a great gulf fixed between New Criticism's logocentric claim that there is nothing outside the text (which functions as a repository of meaning) and deconstruction's non-logocentric claim that there is nothing outside the text (which functions as a deferrer of meaning). (123)

In translation studies, however, these two reading approaches can be effectively combined because translators, in their attempt to bridge gulfs between languages and cultures, never in fact "go outside the text," simultaneously trying to draw meaning from the original and ultimately to defer, supplement, and disseminate it in the translation.

Contrastive analysis, often used interchangeably with another similar term *comparative analysis*, comes from a somewhat contested territory in translation studies. Giuseppe Palumbo's *Key Terms in Translation Studies* defines it as "the study of a pair of languages aimed at observing differences and similarities between them at the phonological, syntactic, and semantic levels" ("Contrastive Analysis," 24-25). The controversy surrounding contrastive analysis arises because this method, as Palumbo explains, "is bound to resort to ideas of translation equivalence" (ibid.). It is primarily in the context of equivalence, for example, that Gideon Toury, in his famous *Descriptive*

Translation Studies and Beyond, employs a related term, *comparative analysis*, whereby the translation and the original are juxtaposed[18] "in an attempt to reconstruct both translation decisions and the constraints under which they were made" (116). In my dissertation, I employ this method of analysis solely as a means of contrasting originals and translations, especially in cases of untranslatability, in order to discuss translators' solutions or to suggest alternative possibilities.

Finally, my last chapter, in which I address the implications of transmesis for translation theory and philosophy, is informed both by traditional (i.e. equivalence-based) theories of translation and by the broader philosophical approaches to play in culture. Discussing translation in light of Johan Huizinga's and Hans Georg Gadamer's investigations of play, offered respectively in *Homo Ludens* and in *Truth and Method,* as well as by referring to Jacques Derrida's poststructuralist understanding of *freeplay*, I will apply Ludwig Wittgenstein's idea of *language game,* put forward in *Philosophical Investigations*, to conceptualize the process of translation as a language game.

As this dissertation is not only intended for scholars of Slavic and comparative literatures and translation but also for a broader academic audience that may not necessarily be familiar with Andrukhovych, Zhadan, and Pelevin and may require background information, the first three chapters offer extensive overviews of the authors and their novels.

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[18] The original wording Toury uses is "(contextualized) segments of an assumed translation" "would normally be mapped onto" "(contextualized) segments of the text assumed to be its source" (116).

Chapter 1 True Versions, False Versions, and Perversions:

Yuri Andrukhovych's *Perverziia / Perverzion*

Yuri Andrukhovych's Novel *Perverziia*: Background

Since its publication in 1996 in the first and second issues of the journal *Suchasnist,*[19] and as a separate book a year later, Andrukovych's *Перверзія* (*Perverziia*) has become one of the most well known novels in post-Soviet Ukrainian literature. Most scholars and critics follow Nila Zborovska's approach,[20] and view *Perverziia* in conjunction with Andrukhovych's two earlier works *Рекреації* (*Recreations*) and *Московіада* (*The Moscoviad*), which appeared in 1992 and 1993. This approach is useful not only because all three novels are partially autobiographical and feature a protagonist who closely resembles Andrukhovych himself,[21] but also because the books are united thematically through, among other things, recurrent motifs of travel and carnival.

Like Andrukhovych's earlier works, *Perverziia*, thanks to its numerous novelties and intentionally irreverent and iconoclastic attitudes, was initially received with some skepticism.[22] As Andrukhovych began to win popularity among Ukrainian readers, his novels garnered increasing critical acclaim as well. Consequently, translations of his works began to appear in many languages, gaining him an international audience.

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[19] The title can be roughly translated into English as *Contemporaneity* or *Modernity.*

[20] See, for example, Nila Zborovska's "Завершення карнавалу 'перверзії' Юрія Андруховича" ["Zavershennia karnavalu 'perverzii' Yuriya Andrukhovycha"], or chapters 9 and 10 in her *Feministychni rozdumy ta karnavali mertvykh Potsilunkiv,* both excellent accounts in which she traces thematic and other continuities between the three novels.

[21] The implied author Andrukhovych – to borrow Wayne C. Booth's term – is also present in the story.

[22] A notable example is an early review, titled in Ukrainian "Го-Гай-Го" ["Ho-Hai-Ho"], standing for "Hoffmann-Heine-Hohol/Gogol") by George Y. Shevelov (aka Sherekh), one of the most authoritative Ukrainian critics.

Perverziia: Reception and Criticism

One of the most comprehensive overviews of *Perverziia* is Lesia Kalynska's 1998 *Poetyka postmodernistskoho romanu: Yuri Andrukhovych, Perverziia*, in which she investigates Andrukhovych's use of collage and intertextuality, and his conflation of the low and the elitist, along with his stylistic eclecticism. More recently, Tamara Hundorova in her *Pisliachornobylska Biblioteka* interprets the novel in light of Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque and considers *Perverzion* to be "an anthology of postmodernist heteroglossia" (214).[23] Vitaly Chernetsky, for his part, offers a postcolonial reading, claiming that in this work Andrukhovych "explores the place of the Ukrainian intellectual in the larger, global cultural order through an encounter with the Western (not the Russian) Other" ("The Trope of Displacement and Identity Construction" 225).[24]

Mark Andryczyk, in his monograph *The Intellectual As Hero in 1990s Ukrainian Fiction,* echoes Hundorova's and Chernetsky's readings when he argues that "*Perverziia* is an exercise in postmodernism and the carnivalesque in the form of a whodunit" (21) in which Andrukhovych "most directly materializes the idea of poet as performer, and, more specifically, as a modern manifestation of Orpheus…" (21). Other readings of *Perverziia* focus on a variety of aspects, ranging from narrative technique[25] and exploration of urban

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[23] My translation.

[24] For a similar and broader discussion in the post-Soviet context, also see chapter 7 of Chernetsky's *Mapping Postcommunist Cultures: Russia and Ukraine in the Context of Globalization.*

[25] See, for example, Kateryna Kucheriava's Bachelor's paper on the narrative techniques in Andrukhovych's *Perverziia* available from http://eprints.zu.edu.ua/7068/1/Катерина Кучерява.pdf.

space in the novel[26] to identification of neobaroque motifs[27]; as well, other readings enact

further (and by now somewhat rehashed) overviews of the novel's postmodernist

qualities.[28]

Surprisingly, however, none of these studies has addressed the theme of

translation in the novel, which not only features prominently in the storyline and serves

as a rhetorical device – used by Andrukhovych to tease the reader with the nuances of a

multilingual (European) setting – but is also essential to at least one possible

interpretation of the novel's open ending and underlying philosophical tenet. It is my

contention that *Perverziia* is a transmetic work that superbly represents an impossible

quest to rediscover and reconstruct the "original" – the truth of what "really" happened –

that is inevitably lost in the multiplicity of translated versions (and perversions, i.e.

mistranslations) but is ultimately incarnated and reincarnated via both fictional and real-

life translations.

Perverziia in English

Michael Naydan's English translation of *Perverziia* (titled *Perverzion*) appeared

in 2005; however, some exemplary excerpts from the novel had been previously

published in literary journals, including *AGNI, Absinthe*, and *Exquisite Corpse,* among

others. Additionally, Naydan authored an insightful article about *Perverziia*, titled

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[26] See, for example, Oleksii Sevruk's "Urbanistychnyi prostir u romanakh Yuriia Andrukhovycha" or Uilleam Blacker's '"Representations of the Urban Environment in Ukrainian Postmodernist Literature." For the exploration of the chronotope of Venice in Andrukhovych, see Chernysh's "Venetsiikyi tekst v romani Yuriia Andrukhovycha *Perverziia*" in *Aktualni Problemy Slovyanskoi Filolohii* 3 (2009): 167-173.

[27] See Iurchuk's dissertation (in Ukrainian) on the neobaroque tendencies in Ukrainian literature of the 20th century.

[28] See, for example, Roksana Kharchuk's 2008 textbook on contemporary Ukrainian prose (chapter 5, pp. 126 – 155), which also contains a good bibliography, or Mariia Iakubovska's *U dzerkali slova: esei pro suchasnu ukrainsku literaturu* [In the Mirror of Word: Essays on Contemporary Ukrainian Literature], pp. 308-318.

"Translating the Novel's Novelty: Yuri Andrukhovych's *Perverzion* in English," in which he describes the novel as a "pastiche of different genres" (455), a philosophical mystery novel, and a "parody of hagiography" (455). More importantly, he reflects on his own translation process (specifically, the challenges with which he was confronted and some of the solutions he found). However, even in Naydan's close and informative analysis, the theme of translation is not discussed.

Perverziia in Naydan's translation has received at least five reviews in English to date, two of which, it is important to mention, were written by the translators of the other two novels, *Rekreatsii* (translated by Marko Pavlyshyn in 1998 as *Recreations)* and *Moscoviada* (translated by Vitaly Chernetsky in 2008 as *The Moscoviad).* Pavlyshyn, who had already experienced first-hand the daunting task of trying to translate Andrukhovych's prose, states in his review that "Naydan succeeds in producing an English text that is engaging and readable" (216). Chernetsky's review, which appeared in 2006, on the other hand, was much more critical. Whereas both Pavlyshyn and Chernetsky spend time comparing original and translated versions, Sharon Bailey[29] discusses *Perverzion* primarily from the perspective of its intended (i.e. English-speaking rather than bilingual) target audience. One interesting point on which both Bailey and Pavlyshyn comment concerns the translator's endnotes, which, it should be clarified, accompany the author's notes. According to Bailey,

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[29] It is only an unsubstantiated assumption, but I suspect that Bailey did not master Ukrainian well enough to engage in a similar comparative exercise, which, however, did not prevent her from producing a perspicacious review and offering extremely useful comments on intertextuality, genre, and footnotes. Bailey's close reading and her ability to notice things that only a very close reading can reveal may be attributed not only to her personal expertise, but also, perhaps, to the quality of the translation as a work in English.

Perverzion's endnotes offer a textbook example of this erasure [of the line between author and critic], which wrests control of the text away from the author and grants it to the reader. About half of the endnotes are attributed to the author (presumably Yu. A.), and the other half are the contribution of the translator Michael Naydan. … Beyond the issues of translation, however, an eager editor could conceivably quadruple the length of the novel with citations and elaborations, given the liberty that Andrukhovych takes with (mis)quoting or alluding to other cultural and literary icons. (525)

Pavlyshyn also observes that "[l]ike any book from a culture likely to be unfamiliar to the target audience, *Perverziia* tempts its translator to become an annotator" (216). "Wisely," Pavlyshyn continues, "Naydan has kept the notes – a mixture of factual clarifications, remarks about translation problems, and translations of Andrukhovych's own annotations, to a not unreasonable eleven pages" (217).[30] Once again, none of the reviewers had time or space to point out the theme of translation and identify the potential problems it might have created for Naydan, who nonetheless did cope with the tremendous demand that the novel makes on its translator.

Transmesis in *Perverziia*

How is *Perverziia* a transmetic work and what are the implications of transmesis for its interpretation and for its translation into English? The events in the novel are framed as an attempt to present all possible kinds of evidence in order to investigate the

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[30] Translator's footnotes as a possible strategy to deal with untranslatability merit special attention and will be addressed below in greater detail.

disappearance (possibly by suicide or murder) of Stanislav Perfetsky, a Ukrainian

intellectual and bohemian, who travels through Europe to participate in an international

conference in Venice titled "The Postcarnival Absurdity of the World: What Is on the

Horizon?" Compositionally *Perverziia* is thus a kinetic pastiche of different genres and

writing formats, including—to mention but a few— letters, reports, interviews,

narratives, conference papers, newspaper articles, poems, plays, conversations,

notebooks, video tapes, sound recordings, prefaces, and afterwords. All of them are

intricately interwoven so as to track down Perfetsky's complicated itinerary, which leads

the protagonist from his western Ukrainian hometown[31] of Lviv via Poland, Slovakia, the

Czech Republic, Austria, and Germany to his destination in Italy. Naturally, the theme of

travel, which involves crossing geographical and linguistic borders, and the multilingual

setting, create an ideal ground for Andrukhovych to "tease" the reader by interlarding the

story with phrases (both accurately rendered and deliberately distorted) from different

European languages. In addition to capturing an aura of foreignness and creating (or

rather playing with) a sense of verisimilitude, the author (or implied author) resorts to

footnotes which, on the one hand, seem to assist the reader and, on the other, allow

Andrukhovych to make simultaneously facetious and serious comments about translation.

Consequently, translation plays not only a role as a mimetic device in the novel but also

is the novel's conceptual foundation.

A typical example of such comments on translation can be found early in the story

when after a drunken orgy and some mysterious (possibly, satanic) ritual Perfetsky ends

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[31] At some point it is revealed that Perfetsky was actually born in Chortopil (Demonopolis, in English), also featured in his previous novel *Recreations* and a city that also hosts a carnival.

up at a police station. Fortunately for him though, as the reader learns a few pages later, a couple of complete strangers, the female protagonist Ada Zitrone, Perfetsky's future lover and travelling companion, and her husband, Dr. Janus Maria Riesenbock, bail him out and give him a ride to Venice. Here is how these two characters are introduced by Perfetsky at the beginning of chapter one:[32]

| Її звати Ада Цитрина, а його Янус Марія Різенбокк. Я сиджу в їхньому «альфа ромео», **припустимо, що це «альфа ромео»**,[33] і ми мчимо автобаном з Мюнхена у Венецію. З Мюнхена. У Венецію. (*Perverziia* 23) | HER NAME IS ADA ZITRONE[1] AND HIS JANUS MARIA RIESENBOCK. I'm sitting in their Alfa Romeo, and we're speeding along the autobahn from Munich to Venice. From Munich. To Venice. (*Perverzion* 21) |

During the trip, Perfetsky, gradually sobering up, addresses Riesenbock in German, saying:

| Гей, Achtung, Achtung, mein lieber, Riesenbock, bitte, auf ein Moment stoppen!.. Ich habe manche Problemen…[1] (27)

[1] Увага, увага, любий Різенбокк, прошу, зупиніть на хвилинку! Я маю деякі проблеми… **(нім., ламане).**[34] (27) | Hey, Achtung, Achtung, mein lieber Riesenbock, bitte auf ein Moment stoppen!... Ich habe manche Problemen. … [8] (25)

[8] Attention, attention my dear Riesenbock, please stop for a minute!... I have some problems… [author's note]. The correct German of this passage should read: "Hei, Achtung, Achtung, mein lieber Riesenbock, bitte, auf einen Moment stoppen!... Ich habe manche Probleme. …" My gratitude to Adrian Wanner for pointing this out. (317) |

It is interesting that Andrukhovych translates the phrase into Ukrainian in a footnote and then specifies, in parentheses (highlighted above), that Perfetsky's comment was actually in broken German. In the translation, however, Naydan chooses to omit the remark in Andrukhovych's endnote and, instead, after consulting a native speaker, offers the grammatically correct German in his own endnote. The differences between the

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[32] Here and below, whenever a side-by-side comparison of original and translation is important for discussion, I offer parallel citations from the original Ukrainian and its English translation by Naydan.

[33] For some reason, the highlighted part "припустимо, що це «альфа ромео»" has been omitted.

[34] My emphasis.

grammatically incorrect and correct versions are quite subtle, involving the accusative case ending of the indefinite masculine article and plural endings. It is unlikely that an average reader would be able to catch these nuances unless they had a solid command of German. A seemingly inconsequential detail, Andrukhovych's "broken German" footnote comment will later contradict the claim that Perfetsky spoke perfect English and German, hinting at the unreliability of that particular narrator's version.

The theme of translation continues to be present during the first encounter between the three main characters when, in the same episode, they cross the border into Italy:

Янус Марія розігнав свій «порше», чи що там у нього, майже до двохсот на годину, ми увірвалися в край, де не стало снігу, де були зелені трави, це така земля, «wo die Zitronen blühn»[1] (а ти, Цитрино, квітла в цім краю? — що за прізвище ідіотське, я закохався по вуха вже в саме ваше прізвище, пані Різенбокк [2])… (30)	Janus Maria gassed his Porsche, or whatever it was he had, nearly to two hundred kilometers an hour, we tore into a region where there was no more snow, where there was green grass, this is the kind of earth: *Wo die Zitronen bluhn"* [15] (and you, Zitrone, have you bloomed in this land? – what an idiotic name, I've fallen in love with your very name Mrs. Riesenbock), [16]… (28)
[1] «Де цитрини квітнуть» (нім.). — рядок із хрестоматійного віршика Ґьоте «Міньйона». (30)	[15] "Where the lemons bloom" – a line from Goethe's widely anthologized poem *Mignon* [author's note]. For an English translation see Michael Hamburger, trans. *Goethe: Poems and Epigrams.* Anvil Press Poetry, 1983, 29. (317)
[2] Німецьке прізвище Різенбокк можемо перекласти як Цапище. (30)	[16] The name Riesenbock can be translated as a "large male goat." [author's note] (318)

In this case, the narrator points out a witty interplay between the intertextual reference to Goethe and Ada's last name, thereby creating the impression that Perfetsky is well-versed in world literature. More significantly, a footnote is added that specifies the literal meaning of Ada's husband's last name, a translation detail that foreshadows events later in the story when Ada cheats on her husband with Perfetsky. In many cultures, including Ukrainian, the "goat" (and, more specifically, its twin horns) is associated with a cuckold.

Alternatively, as Tkachyk observes, Riesenbock's character can be compared with Mephistopheles, as both he and his wife work for a secret society, named "*La morte di Venezia*" and report to a character referred to as Monsignore, supposedly the epitome of Satan (298). Depictions of the devil with goat-like features are quite common in many cultures. Without the footnote that clarifies what the German word means in English, it would be difficult for readers who do not speak German to draw these essential connections. In this case, translation allows both creation of a playful witticism and adds layers of meaning that enrich the reading experience through intertextual and intercultural references.

As the plot develops, the ubiquity of translation in *Perverziia* becomes even more evident: transmetic issues continuously surface in different episodes and attract the reader's attention. However, translation is almost always presented in somewhat contradictory terms, disclosing its problematic nature and suggesting that it is rarely unambiguous. For example, Perfetsky is described, with a touch of impish irony, as a person who "knew countless languages marvelously well – both English and German" (8). This idea is reiterated several pages further when we learn that he possessed a "perfect knowledge of German and all of the tense forms of the verb in English" (15). Even so, in her secret report on Perfetsky, Ada records that on the way to Verona, Perfetsky "took to quoting Shakespeare in not entirely precise English, and also in Ukrainian, Polish, and Russian" (44). "He asked for a comparison of the quality of the translation," the report continues, and "Doctor [Riesenbock] (as a result of this?) nearly struck an oncoming Opel Kadett" (44). On a different occasion, Perfetsky gives an interview, conducted "in a somewhat strange language, in which two-thirds of the words

are German, and the rest English" (239). When asked how many languages he knows, Perfetsky responds: "Not a single one. I know a lot of words in different languages" (241). Just prior to the interview, in his conference talk, Perfetsky makes a similar self-reflexive observation about languages. Tracing the etymology of Ukraine's four major rivers (the Dnipro, the Don, the Dniester, and the Danube) back to the Sanskrit root "dana" standing for water, he comments:

> One wise guy, somehow having heard this from me, cunningly frowned and asked whether I really know Sanskrit. I answered him that, unfortunately, no, but when he uses the word "clitoris," not for a second do I suspect him of a knowledge of Latin. Having dealings with separate words, we almost never know a language as we should. (224)

As a writer, Perfetsky demonstrates a keen interest in translation. While spying on Perfetsky, Riesenbock happens on Perfetsky's notebook, in which he spots an idea to produce "a complete translation of *The Book of Images* and *New Poems*" by Rilke (159) as well as a reminder "to check if it's true that 'carnavale' in Italian means 'farewell, flesh'" (161). In the Venetian press, Perfetsky is described as the "Ukrainian poet S. Parafinsky, the author of five collections **not translated into a single other language**[35] and three or four doubtful concepts that will be declared in his lecture, the title of which is being refined" (40). The description subtly implies a connection between the absence of translations into other languages and the general lack of knowledge about Ukraine in Europe. This gulf becomes even more evident when conference organizers and attendees

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[35] My emphasis.

not only continuously distort Perfetsky's name (e.g. Parafinsky, Perfemsky, etc) but are also confused about his country of origin, associating it with Russia, and don't even have a title for his presentation. Here is how Perfetsky is presented in the seminar program:

Доповідь: Станіслао Перфемський, Росія (закреслено в останній момент) Украйя, автор. Тема доповіді уточнюється. (41)	Paper: Stanislao Perfemsky, Russia (crossed out at the last moment) Ukrainia, author. The topic of the paper TBA. (40)

When Ada introduces Perfetsky to Tsutsu Mavropule, another demonic character, who will eventually succeed Dr. Leonardo di Casallegra as head of *La morte di Venezia* and who arrives late at the conference, Mavropule makes the same mistake:

— Познайомся, Цуцу, — відповіла Ада. — Пан Перфецький з України.	"Get acquainted, Tsutsu," Ada answered. "Mr. Perfetsky from Ukraine."
— Го-го-го-го! — прокотився вулканно Мавропуле, трясучи Стахову правицю. — Це і є він? Це і є твій Перфецький?! Вельми радий, вельми радий! Очень рад! — чомусь переклав російською, … (196)	"Ho-ho-ho-ho!" Mavropule pealed volcanically, shaking Stakh's right hand. "Is this him? This is your Perfetsky?! I'm very happy, very happy! *Ochen rad*!" For some reason he translated the last words into Russian, … (211)

Similarly, in the conference invitation letter, Perfetsky is given an option "to inform us about Dostoevsky, Gorkee, Bulgakov, Sakharov[2] and other of Your writers" (36), all of whom are, of course, Russian / Soviet writers.[36] Such a confusion suggests that the conference organizers are unable to differentiate between the independent states of the former Soviet Union and, in a hopeless state of European ignorance, simply identify Ukraine with Russia.

This invitation letter, which together with the enclosure for participants and the conference program comprises chapter two of the novel, is a transmetic masterpiece in its

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[36] Mikhail Bulgakov was born in Kyiv and died in Moscow but is traditionally considered a Soviet Russian writer. Maxim Gorky, whose name is also misspelled (or spelled phonetically) is a founder of the so-called Socialist Realism literary style in Soviet literature. Andrei Sakharov was a Soviet nuclear physicist and dissident. He received the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1975.

own right. Written and signed by the foundation's president Dr. Leonardo di Casallegra

and secretary Amerigo Dappertutto, it initially resembles a parody of what might be

referred to as "diasporic Ukrainian," and abounds in stylistic and grammatical infelicities.

However, later, when Ada introduces Perfetsky to di Casallegra and the two engage in a

conversation, we learn, in a hilarious exchange, that the letter was in fact translated by di

Casallegra himself:

— Я, на жаль, не знаю вашої чудовної [[37]] мови. Але запрошення для вас перекладав сам, користуючись при цьому сорока чотирма словниками. Чи багатьох помилок я припустився? — Дрібниці. Навіть не в кожному слові, — зоставався чесним Перфецький. — Зовсім не було помилок, — переклала Ада. (66)	"I, unfortunately, do not know your wonderful language. But I translated the invitation for you myself, using forty-four dictionaries. Did I make a lot of mistakes?" "Trifles. Not even in every word," Perfetsky remained honest. "There weren't any mistakes," Ada translated. (67)

At a key point in this "translated discussion of translation" or "the discussion of

translation in translation," Ada deliberately and outrageously mistranslates Perfetsky's

responses for her boss, whose letter was indeed replete with all sorts of errors in

Ukrainian: spelling[38] (e.g. "вижче" and "нище" (36), "інтернацйональному" (36),

"безглуздья" and further also "безглуздця" and "безглузд'я" (36), "ґварантуємо"

(37)); vocabulary[39] ("культурально-духових" (36), "комерціяльними" (36);

"об'ємність" (36); grammar[40] (the pre-1928 use of the Genitive case ending in feminine

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[37] This is another mistake because di Casallegra means *чудової* (*wonderful*), not "чудов**Н**ої," which is not quite reflected in the translation.

[38] The correct contemporary spellings are "вище," "нижче," "інтернаціональному," "безглуздя," "гарантуємо."

[39] The correct current usage should be "культурно-духовних," "комерційних," "об'єм" or, even better stylistically, "обсяг."

[40] The contemporary endings are "любов**і**" and "світов**і**".

nouns: "тема любов**и**" or the Dative case ending in masculine nouns: "світов**и**"[41]), to mention just a few.

In terms of translation, one of the most interesting examples of the solecisms and malapropisms in di Casallegra's letter is a mistake in the Ukrainian expression "в українйському гарному митецьтві" (37). It might have resulted from the literal rendition of the English phrase "in Ukrainian fine art."[42] An acceptable Ukrainian phrase would instead be "в українському образотворчому мистецтві." Aside from the misspelling and other infelicities of usage in the words "українйському" and "митецьтві," in this particular expression the word "гарний" ("fine") is a so-called "false friend" that can mislead an inexperienced translator to seek a word-for-word equivalent for "fine" in an expression that in fact calls for an idiomatic translation with a different word.

While it is apparently a hilarious parody of crippled or outdated Ukrainian partially resulting from (mis)translation, from the political point of view, the letter raises several controversial issues. First, although according to contemporary Ukrainian usage, di Casallegra's letter abounds in grammatical and stylistic errors, many instances of what today appears outdated were actually considered proper usage by the so-called "Харківський правопис" ("The Kharkiv Usage Guide") (1928/1929), edited by Holoskevych. Contemporary Ukrainian norms came later, as a result of the Stalin-imposed language reform (1933), which branded the 1929 version as "nationalistic" and completely revised it to make Ukrainian closer to Russian. Those speakers of Ukrainian

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[41] Both emphases mine.

[42] This, however, may raise the question of why di Casallegra, whose native language should be Italian, makes a mistake that beginner English-Ukrainian translators may actually be prone to making.

who emigrated before 1933 naturally preserved the Kharkiv or Holoskevych version.

Whether one should return to this "original" – though also imperfect and by now outdated

– usage remains very debatable, and is also a political issue.[43] Second, this letter, despite

being a parody, does testify to an attempt to address Perfetsky, a Ukrainian author, in his

native tongue rather than in Russian. Considering the popularity of Russian in Ukraine's

capital city Kyiv[44] and in the southeastern provinces of the country, as well as the

troubling situation with Ukraine's "unofficial" bilingualism, a letter translated into

Ukrainian – despite other textual cues regarding the confusion between Ukraine and

Russia – may also be viewed as a sign of gradual, albeit very slow, sociopolitical change.

Surprisingly, accompanying di Casallegra's letter of invitation in "butchered"

Ukrainian are two documents: "An Enclosure for Participants" (36) and the tentative

seminar program, which appear to be written in perfect Ukrainian, even though a footnote

indicates that they were "translated from Italian" (318). This is yet another example of

translation's inherently ambiguous nature, which seems to work just fine on one occasion

but fails completely on another.

The curious conflation of translation's coincidental necessity and its unreliability

in *Perverziia* is vividly reflected in the depiction of the simultaneous interpretation

provided for conference participants, which Andrukhovych describes in great detail. On

the one hand, Perfetsky depends on simultaneous interpreting (since his English, after all,

is not as flawless as the reader is initially led to believe). However, on the other hand,

Perfetsky demonstrates an absolute lack of interest in interpreting, at times even gravely

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[43] Cf. Nimchuk's and Puriaieva's 2004 *Istoriia ukrainksoho pravopysu.*
[44] The linguistic landscape may be changing in view of the recent (fall 2013-winter2014) events in Ukraine.

(or flippantly) suggesting its redundancy. When, for example, French participant Gaston Dejavu takes the floor, Perfetsky comments, "I attached the headphones for synchronous (sic)[45] translation and submerged into my own thing" (89). When Dejavu moves to the main part of his talk, "something intolerable began to crackle in [Perfetsky's] headphones and [he], **fortunately**,[46] stopped understanding him" (92). At some point during the conference, Perfetsky also realizes that the simultaneous interpretation "was delivered back to front – perhaps intentionally, and perhaps through Dappertutto's oversight" (93), whereas Tsutsu Mavropule's lecture – also quite paradoxically – "was translated into the Italian, French, Arabic, Albanian, Japanese, Sorbian, and Bengali languages. However, you could not understand it in any language" (213).

The Portrayal of the Translator

While all these transmeses throughout *Perverziia* deal with translation only episodically, one of the most significant instances of transmesis in the novel involves the figure of the translator herself. Initially introduced as translator and co-organizer of the conference, the female protagonist Ada Zitrone appears to play many different roles, ranging from Monsignore's (the devil's) secret agent who spies and reports on Perfetsky and who uses the code name "Cerina" (evocative of "tsarina"[47]), to Stakh's personal interpreter, tourist guide and lover. It is thus not coincidental that the central female character's marital infidelity is metaphorically juxtaposed with what might be viewed as her "(in)fidelity" as a translator. Though far from powerless, Ada occupies a perilous

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[45] A more natural term in English is *simultaneous* interpreting.
[46] My emphasis.
[47] This inference is justified in view of the fact that Ada serves as "the queen-hostess" at the final conference reception, which eventually turns into a wild party and enthronization ceremony of Mavropule as successor of di Casallegra, who dies.

position in the novel because even in relation to Perfetsky her roles (i.e. interpreter-spy and lover) are in apparent conflict. Beebee's use of Giorgio Agamben's concept of "homo sacer," which Beebee aptly reworks into a "transtraitor" ("Shoot the Transtraitor," *Transmesis,* 49) in order to describe the precariousness of the translator's position, is also applicable to Ada's character.

In the story, Ada appears to have total control over the process and, quite counterintuitively,[48] is empowered to make conscious decisions about what should be translated, omitted, or mistranslated. Ada's apparent mistranslation of Perfetsky's ironic remark about multiple mistakes in di Casallegra's letter can be justified as her way of not only pleasing her boss but also wanting to present Perfetsky in a good light. Her personal romantic involvement with the protagonist, however, leads Ada to cross the line when instead of interpreting the conference talks she uses simultaneous interpreting as an opportunity to discuss their relationship.

The episode begins with Perfetsky's difficulty in understanding English – "I can't comprehend the direction of this big oaf's thoughts in any way" (217) – and his putting on the headphones in which "he heard Ada's voice, and that voice, unequivocally, was directed just at him, at Stas Perfetsky, for who else among those present could understand her…" (217). Perfetsky tunes in somewhere in the middle of Ada's harangue and hears the following: "I'm cheating on my husband, I'm sinning for you, and you just smile, you haven't even said a nice word to me, just quotations and word play at every step, word play and quotations …" (217-218).

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[48] In real life, translators and interpreters are known to have very little power, if any at all.

Although Perfetsky never complains about Ada's reliability as a translator because he senses that she is in love with him and acts in his interest, other characters treat Ada's interpreting service with suspicion. For example, during his long conversation with Perfetsky, even di Casallegra (Ada's boss who depends on her skills in order to communicate his supposedly prophetic message about the destruction of Venice to Perfetsky) makes the following comment imbued with incredulity: "Ada, translate precisely, I want him to know" (64). This raises doubts about whether the rest of what he said had been translated "precisely."

For his part, Perfetsky demonstrates a similar mistrust of translation at the end of the conversation, when di Casallegra addresses Ada in Italian (textually presented as Ukrainian in the original and as English in the translation), asking her to "warn our dear guest [Perfetsky] to be especially cautious with you, kitten. You're a femme fatale" (67). Ada translates this to Perfetsky as "He said your talk is planned for Tuesday" (67), to which a bemused Perfetsky retorts, "It seemed to me that he said I might fall in love with you" (67). In addition, when di Casallegra gets overly excited – "the most honorable elder began to laugh dryly and then, each time exhaling more impetuously, continued his speech" (65) – Perfetsky notices that "poor Ada wasn't able to keep up with her translation" (65).

One character in *Perverziia* who is particularly skeptical about Ada's translations is the writer and feminist Liza Sheila Shalizer (aka Lilith Zuckerkandel) (280) "from the Incorporated Countries of America"[49] (58). Shalizer's skepticism and mistrust of Ada

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[49] This is yet another play on one translational possibility for rendering "the United States of America," which in the original is "З'єднані Стейти Америки" (57). The result in English, of course, is absurd.

stem from jealousy, as she rightly suspects more than a professional relationship between Perfetsky and his interpreter. Immediately after they are introduced, Shalizer is smitten by Perfetsky:

> '*Dear friend,* would you like us to do a two-hour tête-à-tête? A long and passionate one. I don't know if you know about me. I write nonfiction. I do bestsellers, blockbusters, brainbreakers. I want to write about your reforms. I want to invite you over to my hotel. I want a tête-à-tête. I want to. I want to do you.' …
>
> 'I have really good tapes. I have drinks with ice. I have my own publishing house. I have a suitcase of condoms. Please translate.' She flashed an eye toward Ada. (59-60)

In response, Perfetsky slaps Shalizer on the back, while Ada's sole remark is a whispered "The old whore" (60); and nothing else in the text suggests that she actually translated Shalizer's blatant advances to Perfetsky.

Ada realizes that Perfetsky, whom she calls "my Orpheus," is not only a womanizer (e.g. at one point, Ada accuses Perfetsky of "boff[ing] … that slut from the newspaper" (247), referring to the woman who had interviewed him in his hotel room) but is also, and above all, a Narcissus in love with his own self.[50] In other words, she senses that, despite his assurances, Perfetsky will never fully reciprocate or commit to

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[50] Although Ada warns Perfetsky not to lose her to anyone at the party, he fails to keep an eye on her as she disappears while dancing. When the party reaches its culmination, Ada reads passages from a magic book that is supposed to grant immortality to the conference participants. Looking for Ada and unable to find her, Perfetsky becomes delusional. He hears his reflection in the mirror tell him that "She [Ada] doesn't want to have anything to do with us, old man… They're all whores! … They betray always and everywhere. You just have to screw them screw them and forget them, and go on" (259).

their relationship. As she puts it, "We'll go our separate ways, and my ass is grass!" (247).[51] At the same time, Ada's integrity in the secret demonic society has also been compromised and, ultimately, she resigns: "I'm leaving the Pyramid from under Monsignore's guardianship, and – beyond this – this all my heart I renounce Monsignore. With respect – Non-Cerina" (277).

Ada's loyalty and "fidelity" (both as interpreter and as Perfetsky's lover) are further problematized in one of the final episodes of the novel. It takes place in a Venetian café on the last day of the conference, which coincides with Stakh's birthday and is also his last encounter with Ada. Andrukhovych incorporates this event into the storyline as a "videocassette, a retelling" (281), leaving the reader to wonder who the transcriber – this omniscient but also, strangely, first-person plural narrator – is. The video transcript, which can be viewed as an intersemiotic translation by someone with a command of Italian, is prefaced with the following remark:

> In the center of the frame, closer to the mirror is a table at which two
> people are sitting – we recognize Stas Perfetsky immediately… The
> conversation doesn't always sound clear, but after three or four listenings
> it yields to a nearly complete deciphering. An unknown camera, obviously
> hidden, works in a static position, there is not a single edit over the course
> of all the taped material." (281)

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[51] A rather strange slang idiom Andrukhovych uses in the original text is "дупа в квіти." Its meaning is ambiguous and perhaps close to the English expression "and that's that." Here Naydan attempts not only to retain the bizarreness of the expression but also plays with its sound.

The transcript reveals that, while out for a drink with Perfetsky on his birthday, Ada flirts in Italian with a young waiter. In the original, the Ukrainian translation of the waiter's Italian is provided as a footnote. After confirming that Perfetsky doesn't understand ("Il suo amico non capisce l'Italiano?" *Perverziia* 269) and while changing the candle on their table, the waiter invites Ada to come by again, adding in Italian that he has "a much better candle than this one" (*Perverzion,* endnote 9, 325). Sensing something suspicious, Perfetsky retorts "Well, buddy, bug off till I run into your macaroni mill" (291). To the waiter's "Scusi? Cosa sta dicendo il suo amico?" (291) or "Excuse me? What's your friend saying?" (*Perverzion,* endnote 10, 325), Ada responds in Italian: "he really likes the service" (ibid.). Still, when they are about to leave, Ada calls the waiter a "нахаба" (269) (*nakhaba,* an insolent person), translated more idiomatically by Naydan as "Cocky guy!" (291). However, during the conversation, Ada had enthusiastically responded to the waiter's prurient remarks, eliciting irritation from Perfetsky as Ada and the waiter both laugh at his lewd double entendres. Perhaps (as in the episode with di Casallegra's letter) Ada's mistranslation was merely aimed at preventing a potential conflict, or a brawl between Perfetsky and the waiter. Ada continues to make similar decisions. Rather than being "a faithful, reliable" translator, an invisible transmitter of information, she appears to be almost "too visible," always channeling her interpreting through her interests and feelings.

While Ada's character reveals some of the intricacies of the rarely unproblematic process of translation and, primarily, draws attention to the translator's personality, on a larger scale *Perverziia* is also a transmetic novel because it epitomizes George Steiner's reconceptualization of translation as human communication (*After Babel* 49). In other

words, translation in *Perverziia* not only serves as a compositional framework but also offers a philosophical key to a possible interpretation of the novel.

The Role of Translation in the Novel

In the opening chapter, titled "Publisher's Foreword" and signed by Yu. A. (the real author's initials), the publisher – and purported author Andrukhovych – explains the origin of his material for Perfetsky's story. An artist friend who was an intern in Venice was asked by a stranger to deliver a package to Ukraine. The stranger, who "barely spoke broken Ukrainian" and had a "severely insufficient store of vocabulary" (*Perverzion* 18), repeatedly mentioned Andrukhovych's name. The novel is thus a collection of materials that the purported author received in a package from Italy, delivered under mysterious circumstances amid communication difficulties. As this author proceeds to classify the materials, the reader learns that some (e.g. notebooks or audiocassettes) belonged to Perfetsky and others were "completely officially published" (19) in Venice in Italian or in English (e.g. Perfetsky's interview). Among the documents are Ada's and Dr. Riesenbock's reports on Perfetsky, "partly in Italian, partly in German, partly in English" (19) as well as "depictions of several other people about episodes that they experienced while accompanying Stakh Perfetsky" (19). At this point, an important detail is added: "They [these documents] had to be translated, too" (19), suggesting that the novel, essentially constructed from a mishmash of different bits of writing, actually consists solely of translations (and, by extension, of mistranslations).

To provide yet another transmetic clue – this time in an apparently tongue-in-cheek manner – Andrukhovych concludes his foreword with acknowledgements: "I want to thank the most respected Ms. Mariana Prokopovych (for translations from Italian), and

Mr. Yurko Pr. (for translations from German), and Oleh Mokhnaty (for translations from English) - their assistance was unpaid, but not fruitless" (20). Oleh Mokhnaty, it seems, is not a translator at all but an acquaintance of Andrukhovych's and manager of the Ukrainian band "Perkalaba,"[52] while Yurko Pr. (the abbreviated last name, most likely standing for Prokhasko) is a literary scholar and translator from German, who comes from Andrukhovych's hometown. For her part, Mariana Prokopovych is a noted translator from Italian and other languages, who has translated, among others, Italo Calvino, Umberto Eco, Luigi Pirandello, and James Joyce.

In a typically postmodernist self-reflexive play with narrative perspective,[53] Andrukhovych's words in the foreword foreshadow what might both clarify the title *Perverziia* later on in the novel, and also underpin a possible reading of the book. He says, "I set out two versions immediately. And then, each of You, esteemed readers, has the right to his or her own. Or for several of his or her own versions. Let's not rush with them" (19). While the immediate implication, of course, is freedom of interpretation, my contention is that this statement also captures the dichotomy of the original and translated versions as well as the possible multiplicity of translated versions.

The title "Перверзія" (*Perverziia*) in Ukrainian is a neologism which through phonetic similarity both evokes the word *version* and betrays its Latin etymology. In English, Naydan captures both the duality of meaning and the tinge of defamiliarization

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[52] Andrukhovych, Yuri and Botanova, Kateryna. Interview by Tetiana Riabokin. *Telekrytyka.* 25 June, 2004. Web. 18 May 2013. < http://www.telekritika.ua/lyudi/2004-06-25/689>.

[53] Among other sources, the author of the foreword also mentions [b]its and pieces (also in various languages), but it is unknown who made them. It's as though they have been noted by that conventional 'teller', or rather 'observer' or perhaps 'narrator,' who knows everything about everyone, who simultaneously is everywhere and who is nowhere other than in literature. Who is the author of these bits and pieces? (19)

(i.e. the word's peculiar sound) when he opts for "z" (i.e. *Perverzion*) instead of "s,"
which would simplify the title's playfulness and restrict its meaning by conjuring up only
the image of sexual behavior. In fact, the English title suggests a double meaning of
"perversion," which in addition to the meaning of "unnatural sexual behavior" can also
be read as "per version" or, in other words, "depending on which or whose version one
decides to trust."

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word *perversion* is indeed of
Latin origin. But whereas in Classical Latin it meant "reversal of order[54] (of words in a
sentence), inversion," in post-classical Latin it acquired a meaning of "falsification of a
text (early 3rd cent.), turning round, depravity (late 4th cent.)." One of the more
contemporary, albeit rare meanings offered by the OED is "[t]he formation of the mirror
image of a figure or object; the image itself." The evolution in the word's etymology over
time acts to highlight the concept of distortion or falsification, and all the successive
meanings can be thus linked to translation itself: an act commonly perceived as a
distortion or falsification of the original. But even if etymology is set aside, the word
"perversion" – in the general sense of changing, corrupting, or converting – is
metaphorically linked to translation, and this is made clear in two major scenes in the
novel.

The first scene is Perfetsky's lecture at the conference, in which he introduces his
home country of Ukraine in order "to correct a few of the distortions and mutilations, and

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[54] In "Publisher's Foreword," the narrator claims "The numeration of each of the published documents, made by me in the upper right corner, belongs, clearly, to me, in as much as the sequence of publication of the documents is proposed by me. It would be interesting, how much different could this sequence be?" (19).

for those who till now know 'nothing,' to give luster (sic)[55] in the form of 'something'"

(220). Perfetsky opens his talk with a reference to "a lost manuscript" intriguingly titled

"*The Eclipse of the World*" (222) and authored by Yaropolk-Nepomuk Kunshtyk, a

fictional character whom Perfetsky, as he himself admits later, concocts and to whom he

attributes "one of [his] favorite assertions" (223). This assertion sheds even more light on

the link between the novel's title and translation:

> Truly no reality exists. There exists just the boundless quantity of our
>
> versions about it, each one of which is erroneous, but all of them, taken
>
> together, are mutually contradictory. For the sake of our salvation it
>
> remains for us to accept that each of the countless versions is the true one.
>
> We would do this if we were not sure of the fact that the truth must be and
>
> is a single one, and its name is – reality. (223)

On the one hand, the assertion is evidently facetious as it is founded on a bit of self-

contradictory circular reasoning whereby reality is initially denied only to be later

equated with truth. Additionally, however, the assertion serves both as a reminder that the

story is comprised of multiple versions that need to be accepted, and as a hint that these

multiple versions involve both fictional and real translations. The latter is especially true

when one recalls that, in addition to English, *Perverziia* has been translated into many

other languages.

    As Perfetsky points out:

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[55] The Ukrainian word *проблиск* (*problysk)* is translated as "luster," whereas contextually it is closer to "to shed light on" or "elucidate." Andrukhovych's use of this word is facetious, which may explain why Naydan chooses *luster.*

[t]he manuscript had been written by one and the same hand, but in different languages: the most numerous were fragments in Ukrainian, but sometimes when the author lacked a particular term or something else there, for example, certain idiomatic possibilities, then he shifted to Polish, German, Yiddish, several ample passages had been written in Armenian, there is also a fragment each in gymnasium Greek, Gypsy, Turkish-Tartar, Old Church Slavic, Karaite, and Genovan. (222)

Later, as he recounts, the manuscript was burnt,[56] but prior to that accident Perfetsky managed to take extensive notes[57] from it, which leads the reader to infer that the parts written in foreign languages had to be translated. In short, the lecture Perfetsky delivers about the history of his home country as well as the account of what happened (or might have happened) to him in Venice has been obfuscated, preserved, and transmitted primarily through translation.

The second episode involves Ada Tsytryna, whose role as an interpreter has already been discussed in detail, but who in addition to her multiple functions also performs a special duty at the conference's final reception, which is curiously named "Comical Battles with Drowsiness in the Wildest Circle of Friends" (253).[58] This carnivalesque celebration, described by the narrator as a "great guzzling" (254), culminates in a mock religious ceremony. Ada, who had been separated from Perfetsky

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[56] Here Andrukhovych may be humorously alluding to the famous "manuscripts don't burn" maxim from Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*.

[57] The Ukrainian word *законспектований* (*zakonspektovanyi)* is somewhat imprecisely translated as "summarized" (222).

[58] This title is explained in a footnote as "[a] free translation of the Greek title 'Hypnerotomachia Poliphili [author's note]" (endnote 2, 324).

amid all the dancing and frolicking, later reappears, reading "something softly and monotonically, in a viscid, completely unknown language, perhaps *koine* Greek" (262) from "a thick open folio volume" (ibid.). As the ailing di Casallegra relinquishes power to Mavropule, who deliberately distorts[59] the charm he repeats after his predecessor, Dappertutto announces "the moment of the final reward" (265). This reward turns out to be immortality, and in order to achieve it, Dappertutto instructs the audience that they have to become themselves: "I wish you to become yourselves! The real you! Different! Incomparable!" (266). According to Dappertutto:

> The procedure will be simple. Each one of you who agrees to immortality … goes up to the book in turn and utters just two numbers… and Ada will read the spot you've mentioned out loud. And then, if you are worthy of it, you will be re-created for a new life, for an immortality in accord with what is written and read!" (267)

After this announcement everyone rushes to Ada and the magic book to gain immortality, and only Perfetsky "somber in his glasses … didn't dash anywhere" (267). At dawn, however, when the ceremony was over, Perfetsky somehow – likely in a dream – "ended up in the book, no in the Book, in its garden, among the bushes and flowers of old woodcuts, among the birds and bees of Greek writing, among the *koine,* among enchanting stories, among scents – of old paper, wine, type fonts, water-colors, golden embossing" (268).

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[59] Here the reader once again witnesses how the narrator plays with the difference between the two versions almost reminiscent of the children's Chinese whispers game.

Although this passage can be approached from different perspectives, I propose to interpret the magic book in analogy to Borges's library of Babel as some kind of Borgesian universal translation dictionary that would contain all words in all languages. Immortality then can be achieved by consulting the magic dictionary or, in other words, through translation, which, as Walter Benjamin put it, grants a work of art its "continued life"[60] (Benjamin 71). Notably, an important condition for achieving immortality in the book's transformative ritual, which is conducted through the acts of writing and reading, is to keep one's own identity or, in Dappertutto's words, to become different and incomparable. In the context of translation, this could mean that the translated version must gain a unique status and almost become independent from the original, an idea that we, both as readers and translators, subconsciously resist by constantly juxtaposing and reinforcing the link between the two.

Perfetsky is the only character who does not participate in the ritual of immortality. He disappears, leaving behind a symbolic will because there is nothing of material value to bequeath. But that's not the end; in *Perverzion*'s last chapter, titled "Publisher's Afterword," the purported author indicates that Perfetsky might indeed still be alive because he has been seen on different occasions on German and Italian television. Andrukhovych, author and purported author, publisher and collector of translations and bits of language, prophesies Perfetsky's immortality by saying that "Stakh Perfetsky continues to be among us. He is alive, and I'll say more, he will return. First, just as a book, cunningly lain at my door by him" (314). To elaborate this prophesy further, I would add that Perfetsky has already "returned" to us — through Naydan's

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[60] In different translations, Benjamin's *Fortleben* is rendered as "continued" or "continuing" life.

translation into English and through many other existing translations as well as those yet to come.

Translating *Perverziia* into English: Responding to the Challenges

In order to make "Perfetsky's return" possible in English, Naydan had to overcome, among other challenges, the daunting task of rendering the novel's numerous transmeses. The three basic strategies he employs are endnotes (explicating the transmetic situation or its untranslatability), italics (indicating that the corresponding part of the original text has already been written in the target language) and, finally, keeping the foreign text as it is in the original.[61] For example, here is a description of Perfetsky's encounter with a prostitute in Munich, showcasing all the three strategies:[62]

…за п'ять кроків до неї я почув «hallo, kommst du mit?»[1], ще два кроки я мовчав нарешті видихнув просто у неї «ja, ich komme mit, Liebling, wieviel?»[2], вона не відповіла «wieviel», крутнулася на своїх садомазопідборах, узяла мене за руку і підвела до брами. Отже, була все-таки місцевою, зі Швабінга, браму відчинила ключем, задля special effect'у видобутим із того запаморочливого декольте,… [1] Привіт, підеш зі мною? (*нім.*) [2] Так, я піду з тобою, кохана, скільки? (24)	... five steps away from her I heard: "***Hallo, kommst du mit?***" Two more steps I kept silent and blurted out right at her: "***Ja, ich komme mit, Liebling, wieviel?***" She didn't answer "*Wieviel*," she whirled on her sadomasochistic heels, took me by the hand and led me to the gate. But she turned out to be a local, she opened the gate with a key, procured from her stunning décolleté dress for the sake of ***special effect*** *[4]*... (22) [4] **"Special effect" is in English in the original. (317)**

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[61] Initially, I considered using the term "zero translation" here, in the sense of omission. But, technically speaking, there is no omission in this case because the original text is kept intact. In contemporary usage, "zero translation" often implies censorial practice (cf. Cronin's *Translation and Globalization*) or silencing power (cf. Tymoczko's and Gentzler's collection *Translation and Power*).

[62] All emphases in bold are mine.

In the Ukrainian original, the sentences written in German are translated in the footnote whereas in the English translation the endnotes are omitted and the German is instead italicized.

Another salient example of the italics and endnotes strategies combined can be found in chapter 11, which features the interview with Liza Sheila Shalizer of the USA, interspersed with obscenities. Introducing Shalizer, the reporter says:

Ми провадимо нашу передачу live[1] у Міжнародному центрі культури та цивілізації на Сан Джорджо Маджоре. Нині вже третій день, як тут відбувається суперсемінар для інтелектуалів і знаменитостей, присвячений проблемам Венеції. **[1] Цей і дальші неперекладні американізми залишаємо без пояснень.**[63]	We are doing our broadcast live[1] from the International Center of Culture and Civilization on San Giorgio Maggiore. Today it's already the third day of the superseminar for intellectuals and notables, dedicated to the problems of Venice. **[1] We leave this and further untranslatable Americanisms without explanation [author's note]. The words and phrases given in the original text in English are given here as italicized.**

The interview then continues in the following manner:

Пані Шалайзер, моє перше запитання: ваша думка про це екстра-зібрання? — Oh, fucking shit! [*Тріскучий сміх*]. Моя думка! Моя думка не хоче висловлюватися! Це дуже гостра думка і неприємна. Спитай що-небудь прийнятніше, baby! (118)	Mrs. Shalizer, my first questions is: what is your opinion on this extraordinary assemblage? *"Oh fucking shit!"* [*Bursting laughter.*] My opinion! My opinion doesn't want to be expressed! It's a really harsh opinion and unpleasant. Ask me something more pleasant, *baby*!" (123)

Before analyzing these two passages more closely in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the translator's endnotes and italics strategies and determine whether alternative approaches are possible, the broader context merits consideration. By embedding foreign words and expressions into his text, Andrukhovych may have several goals, ranging from creating a sense of verisimilitude by capturing (or imitating) the

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[63] My emphasis both in the original Ukrainian and English translation.

multilingual milieu, to deliberately complicating the storyline by playing with different languages and daring the reader to infer meanings or consult footnotes, which are often misleading as well. His goals may even go as far as ostentatiously displaying the author's fluency in several languages (particularly, German, Polish, and English) or problematizing the inevitability of linguistic borrowings, especially in the light of a hardly equal relationship between major European languages vis-à-vis Ukrainian. Further goals are possible too.

The main difficulty for the translator, then, lies not so much in the impossibility of identifying and prioritizing these putative authorial goals – which after all may change and overlap – but first and foremost in the unfeasibility of measuring the reader's perception of or reaction to the foreign insertions. The question of audience, both original and target, becomes quite murky. As Benjamin suggests, "In the appreciation of a work of art or an art form, consideration of the receiver never proves fruitful" (69).[64] But because in *Perverziia* Andrukhovych plays a complex multifaceted intertextual game whose success largely depends on how much the reader is willing to engage with the text, the audience must nonetheless remain in the picture.

Certain English, German, or Italian expressions may, of course, look recognizable to many Ukrainian readers, while others may appear less familiar. The expression "special effect" from the first example may be understandable to most Ukrainians.[65] But

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[64] Although I generally share Benjamin's view, to discard the concept of audience/readership in translation altogether is impractical because it is an important part of the metalanguage and without it any theoretical discussion of translation would be impossible. By making references to "readers," researchers and critics make educated generalizations, often based on their own experiences as readers.

[65] Both words have close Ukrainian equivalents, even though the word "special" in this case can be translated as either *особливий, osoblyvyi,* or *спеціальний, spetsialnyi*. As a portmanteau noun, though, there also exists a word *спецефект, spetsefekt,* frequently used in the film industry.

in the translated passage, both the English expression "special effect" and the exchange in German between Perfetsky and the prostitute are italicized. The only difference between the translation and the original is that the endnotes that provide the translation from what was in German in the original are omitted in Naydan's *Perverzion*. While it is unclear why the translator opted for this tactic, the omission can be partially justified. Despite taking the risk that many English-language readers may have to rely on context to infer what the German means, the italicized German text stands out in the translation and draws attention to its "foreignness."

The italicization of "special effect" and footnote to the effect that in the original, the term was used in English turns into a metatextual remark, which brings us back to Pavlyshyn's astute observation: "*Perverziia* tempts its translator to become an annotator" (216). As Naydan demonstrates, it is impossible for the translator not to yield to this temptation, unless in addition to being a reader, interpreter, annotator, researcher, cultural commentator, and even proofreader,[66] the translator also becomes a player and creator.

What exactly does the translational strategy of "play" imply? First of all, it requires that the primary focus should be on the text and language, not on author, audience, function, effect, or equivalent meaning, all of which (significant as they may be) inevitably lead the translator to impasses. Playfulness in an act of translation entails disseminating rather than transferring meaning; multiplying rather than capturing textual ambiguities; creating surplus rather than acknowledging and bemoaning loss; and, finally,

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[66] It was quite interesting to discover that on several occasions Naydan corrects Andrukhovych's typos. For example, Andrykhovych writes "shity" (*Perverziia* 121) instead of "shitty" which is corrected in the translation (*Perverzion* 126). Also, Andrukhovych's "животатими mumbles" (*Perverziia* 119) is replaced with "big-gutted dorks" (*Perverzion* 124).

producing rather than reproducing. To borrow Benjamin's words, playfulness implies

"liberat[ing] the language imprisoned in a work" ("The Task of the Translator" 80).

For example, instead of footnoting, or italicizing the foreign phrase, a translator

could use the German word "Spezialeffekt," not an unreasonable option in view of the

fact that the events in this episode take place in Germany and part of the conversation is

left in German. This way, instead of having to consult an endnote, the English-language

reader is alerted to a word that stands out as foreign, yet is still recognizable. Another

possibility is to consider the expression "special FX" or simply "SFX" (abbreviations of

special effects) and rework the sentence "… she opened the gate with a key, procured

from her stunning décolleté dress for the sake of *special effect* [4]" (22) into "… she

opened the gate with a key, procured from her stunning décolleté dress as if by SFX …"

Given more thought, and creative risk and refinement (for play involves both), such an

approach can lead to a phonetic and interplay between "SFX" and the intercourse that

must have been on Perfetsky's mind at that moment.

In the second example involving Shalizer's profanities, the endnote and the

translator's metatextual remark become even more problematic. The reason for this is

that Andrukhovych himself plays with metatextual[67] comments that are transmetic in

nature. His narrator ironically remarks in the footnote to the word "live" that "Цей і

дальші неперекладні американізми залишаємо без пояснень" (footnote 1, 118).

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[67] As Ryan argues, "While metatexts reflects upon a text from the outside, the metatextual function can also be fulfilled by internal elements: storyteller interventions, addresses to the reader, comments on the truth of the facts, evaluative statements, or "signature" of the text through the self-identification of the speaker … A metatextual comment may or may not acknowledge the fictional status of the text; if it does, it may or may not be caught in the fictional game" (*Possible Worlds* 94). In Andrukhovych's case, the comment, of course, is part and parcel of the fictional game, which only adds to the difficulty of translation.

Following the italics / endnotes strategy, Naydan has no other option than to italicize the word *live* and combine the narrator's ironic remark with his translator's comment in the endnote: "[1] We leave this and further untranslatable Americanisms without explanation [author's note]. The words and phrases given in the original text in English are given here as italicized" (endnote 1, 321). Of course, *неперекладні*, (*neperekladni*, untranslatable) is both irony and euphemism. Not only are these expletives perfectly translatable, most of them are also widely known throughout the world and do not need to be explained in Ukrainian (or, for that matter, in any other language). But in the Ukrainian original, the expletives remain implicit, as they are playfully camouflaged in the orthography of another language. In the English translation, however, they become explicit and while they are "faithful" to the original – after all, they are exactly the same as in the original – they may also sound significantly harsher to native readers of English. The same line of reasoning about explicit/implicit expletives can be illustrated by the use of profanity by foreign-language learners, who are often quite enthusiastic about swearing in a foreign language without actually realizing all of the connotative and emotional meanings to which a native ear would be more attuned.

There is no easy solution to this problem, and any suggestion will undoubtedly be debatable. But the translator may still step back from equivalence, and play more successfully with a number of possibilities: a) translating the English expletives into Italian, pretending that Shalizer has picked up some foul expressions in Venice; b) coming up with obscenities in Yiddish (considering Shalizer's Jewishness), thereby teasing the English-language reader just as Andrukhovych repeatedly teases his Ukrainian audience; c) using only initial letters and ellipses (e.g. "oh f…g s..t); d) playing

with the typographical possibilities of how curse words are bleeped on television by striking through them or shuffling the letters (e.g. "~~Oh fucking shit~~" or "Oh fcukgin siht"). The latter options may be similar to italics, but they highlight transmesis in a more obvious manner, and also tone down the overly racy effect of just using English text.

The strategy of combining Andrukhovych's authorial footnotes (endnotes in Naydan's translation) with the translator's own commentary has a further downside. Naydan often provides useful information for the reader by explaining cultural concepts, elucidating allusions, or commenting on translation difficulties. But by undertaking the annotator's task he is also confronted with the need to prioritize what will or will not be addressed in the endnotes, which raises the question of consistency. "I was amused at the choices made by the translator concerning what to gloss and what to let pass," claims Bailey in her review of *Perverzion* and adds that she "found [her]self writing in additional endnotes, and even footnoting the endnotes" (525). In other words, by choosing to gloss one concept, the translator should really commit to glossing anything that may need an explanation, which might lead to consistency but is an unattainable goal.

For example, in describing a place in the Alps where Perfetsky was offered a bursary as a writer in residence, Andrukhovych invokes one of his favorite techniques of creating inexhaustible lists of items that, despite a lack of meaning or coherence, snowball into a "symphony" of sound effects. Here is the impish enumeration of what Perfetsky would be free to enjoy, should he accept the invitation:

... рідкісні породи дерев, паркові скульптури, господиня в очіпку й гетрах, неосяжні копиці, пташине молоко, свіжі	... rare species of trees, park sculptures, the lady of the house in head wrap and gaiters, immense stacks of hay, bird's milk, fresh eggs,

яйця, білі сідниці пагорбів, Kirche, Kinder, Küche, все золото світу, порцеляна, майоліка, токати і фуги, сонети й октави, музеї, музеї, музеї, музеї, ja-ja, eine gute Idee, jo-jo, eine Starnberger See, und eine feine Blechmusik, und meine kleine Nachtbumsik, und Hofbräuhaus, und Nazis-raus, und besser ist, dass es München gibt — mit Franzl und Platzl und Kindl und Rudl — willkommen am Stachus, Herr Stach, lieber Strudl!..[3] [3] Не надто змістовний, але ритмізований і заримований набір німецьких висловів, запозичений Видавцем із поштової картки, написаної Перфецьким дорогою з Берліна до Мюнхена. (20)	white rumps of hills, *Kirche, Kinder, Küche*, all the gold of the world, porcelain, majolica, toccatas and fugues, sonnets and octaves, museums, museums, museums, museums, *ja-ja, eine gute Idee, jo-jo, eine Starnberger See, und eine feine Blechmusik, und meine kleine Nachtbumsik, und Hofbräuhaus, und Nazis-raus, und besser ist, dass es München gibt — mit Franzl und Platzl und Kindi und Rudl — willkommen am Stachus, Herr Stach, lieber Strudl!..*[19] (17-18) [19] Not particularly filled with content, but a rhythmical and rhymed selection of German words and expressions, borrowed by the publisher from a postcard written by Perfetsky on the road from Berlin to Munich [author's note]. *Nachtbumsik* means "night screw," from the German verb *bumsen* (to screw). My gratitude to Adrian Wanner for illuminating me on this. (316)

In endnote 19, Naydan translates the author's note and also adds his own, explaining the meaning of *Nachtbumsik,* which once again underscores Perfetsky's obsession with women. But there is, of course, more to it than just lust. To be able to appreciate the play of meanings one must know that *Blechmusik* means *brass-band music* or *music for brass instruments* and that the phrase Andrukhovych wittily turns into "meine kleine Nachtbumsik" is perhaps a pun stemming from Mozart's famous "Eine kleine Nachtmusik," less commonly known as "Serenade No. 13 for strings in G major." In addition, Andrukhovych plays on similar-sounding names, suggesting that by virtue of his first name, it is only fitting that Perfestky should visit Munich: Stakh is "Stach" in German, while Stachus, also known as Karlplatz, is a square in downtown Munich.

Once Naydan takes the "glossing" path, the researcher in him begins to prevail and the urge to (over)interpret and explain the original becomes irresistible. For example, whereas no footnote is provided in the original for the language in which the prostitute hums a song, described by the narrator as tropical, possibly Amharic, the endnote in the

English translation informs the reader that Amharic is "the official language of Ethiopia" (chapter 1, endnote 6, 317). Similarly, when concupiscent Perfetsky cannot tear his eyes from the prostitute's skimpy red silk skirt – in Ukrainian, "куца спідничка" – Naydan translates it as "short-tailed" and specifies in the endnote that "The appellation *kutsyi* is commonly used to denote the devil in Ukrainian" (chapter 1, endnote 5, 317). Indeed, according to the 1973 eleven-volume *Slovnyk Ukrainskoyi Movy* (*The Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language*), one of the meanings of this adjective's nominalized form is *devil*. But it can also stand for *hare*, a meaning that must have evolved as a metonymy based on the initial meaning of *short* (used primarily to describe clothes and animal's tails). The word's other meanings include *insufficient,* as well as *fleeting* or *brief*, to mention but a few. Naydan's attempt to link the Ukrainian modifier *куций* (*kutsyi)* with *the devil* is quite justified because throughout the novel Perfetsky is repeatedly tested and tempted. The choice of *short-tailed* instead of *skimpy* is debatable, however. On the one hand, *short-tailed* may (or may not, depending on whether it will conjure up the association with the devil in English) create an interesting metaphorical link with seduction. On the other hand, the word *skimpy* not only collocates well with clothes but also produces an interesting alliterative effect in the expression "skimpy silk skirt."

Endnotes in *Perverzion* are used on several other occasions, almost as if the translator tries to assist the reader in deciphering the complex web of allusions, even when they are not explicit in the original. When Ada and Dr. Riesenbock give Perfetsky a ride from Munich to Venice, Ada is listening to classical music and singing along:

Але вона напакувала з собою повну торбу італійських опер і від самого Мюнхена сидить у слухавках, часом підсилюючи невидимих примадонн своїм хрипкуватим	But she packed a bag for herself filled with Italian operas and all the way from Munich has been sitting with her headphones on, sometimes amplifying the prima donnas with her raspy

голосом. О don Fatale[1]. По-італійськи. Вона знає італійську. Вона жила в Римі й Равенні, в Пізі та Ассізі. [1] Здається, арія принцеси Еволі з опери Дж. Верді «Дон Карлос». (28)	voice. "O don Fatale."[9] In Italian. She knows Italian. She's lived in Roma and Ravenna, in Pisa and Assisi. (26) [9] It seems to be the aria of Princess Eboli from Giuseppi Verdi's opera *Don Carlos* [author's note]. She wears a patch over one eye because of a riding accident and is the mistress of King Philip, but she really is in love with his son Don Carlos. This aria occurs in act 3. The English translation of the relevant lines would be "Oh, fatal gift, oh, cruel gift, / Which Heaven bestowed on me in its rage!" (317)

From the above English passage, the reader is left with the impression that the translator almost tries to compete (apparently on the reader's side) with the polysemy of the original by replacing its uncertainty of meaning (note that the Ukrainian footnote starts with "it seems") with an interpretative clarity and certainty of meaning in the English version. The translated version adds a long analogy linking Ada and Princess Eboli, both of whom seem to be in love with a different man.[68]

The final instances of transmesis to be discussed are complex and merit special attention as they deal with the translation of already translated poetry (i.e. how a poem already translated from a different language or presented as such can be translated into English). The first example is in chapter 20, featuring Tsutsu Mavropule and the paper he delivers at the conference. To relieve his boredom during Marvropule's abstruse talk, Perfetsky investigates some scribbling on an ancient library table. In the scribble, he discerns a stanza in Latin, dating — according to his estimate — to the late 13th or early

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[68] Although this example is not related to transmesis, Naydan employs a similar "fact-checking" approach when in chapter 24, in his conference paper, Perfetsky supposedly quotes the poet Viktor Neborak, Andrukhovych's close friend and a member (together with Andrukhovych and Irvanets) of the literary group Bu-Ba-Bu. In a footnote to the quote, the narrator claims that "We haven't succeeded in determining the sources of this latter quote" (*Perverzion,* endnote 4, 324). However, Naydan researches the quote and specifies in the endnote that "[a]ctually, the quote comes from a poem by Viktor Neborak entitled "Den' narodzhennia" (Birthday Party).

14th century. He immediately translates the poem into Ukrainian, producing a silly, prurient doggerel:

| …бо які ж тортури й гіркі напасти

коби знав що немарне то було б не жаль би

з головою пропасти головою накласти

але вкрасти доторк до лона Розальби… (200) | … for which tortures and bitter vexation

if I knew it wasn't in vain and there'd be no regret

to be madly in love to lay down my head

but to steal a touch of Rosalba's bosom… (215) |

Curiously, although no Latin original is given, the omniscient narrator's comment on Perfetsky's translation informs us that it was "approximate" (215).

This stanza is one of the many instances of verse (or rather, a parody thereof) that Andrukhovych intersperses in his novel, thereby implicitly poking fun at the persistence of rhyme and syllabo-tonic tradition in Ukrainian poetry. A discussion of this farcical stanza in the context of translation can be elucidated by Perfetsky's response in his interview to the question "What are your poems about?" He said:

> About the silence that arises at the moment after a nuclear explosion. Don't look at me with those eyes, it was a joke. Definitely, the best of them [poems] are the ones you cannot recount, but how much they lose from that! Ideal poems, which don't exist, had to be the kind you could simply recount with the least amount of loss. Recount in your own words." (242)

This interview was conducted in "a somewhat strange language, in which two-thirds of the words are German, and the rest English" (239). As such, Perfetsky is asked to recount his poems in a different language (i.e. in translation), which, he claims, is impossible. In this context, an analogy can be drawn between *to recount* and *to translate*; recounting, in

a way, is what we may call, in Jakobsonian terms, "intralingual" translation. According to Perfetsky, only "ideal" poems (that don't exist, or that perhaps can only be written in a Benjaminian divine *Ursprache* or "pure language") can be recounted without loss.

In the light of the narrator's claim that Perfetsky's translation is but approximate, which is a facetious remark given the absence of an original to which the translation can actually be compared,[69] the English-language translation is striking for its almost verbatim similarity to the Ukrainian version and for its concomitant lack of mischievous playfulness, so pronounced in Perfetsky's ditty. The focus in the Ukrainian is on how rhyming patterns (typical of traditional Ukrainian verse) have long been exhausted and can now only be created artificially, by a redundant reshuffling of words (for example, the infinitive endings *mu (ty)* in verbs or the subjunctive particle *би (by)*, producing a funny rhyme "було **б** не жаль **би**" with "лона Розаль**би**"). Further, in a gesture of postmodernist ambiguity, the same poem, which could also be a parody of medieval love poetry, can be read from a different perspective. In terms of prosody, it is actually well crafted.[70] The translation into English, in seeking lexical equivalence, fails to reflect the poem's ludic and parodic nature by being almost too precise. As such, the irony of the transmetic comment is dulled.

In contemporary English-language poetry, free verse has long taken precedence over regular rhyme and meter patterns. Therefore, a funny-sounding stanza playing with easily identifiable, cheesy rhyme schemes may be a more effective way to render

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[69] Unless of course the omniscient narrator knows the original.

[70] Consider, for example, a witty interplay between the verbs "накласти," "пропасти," "вкрасти" and the emphatic "и" plural noun "напасти," which also creates an ambiguity with the homonymous verb "нападати" or, in another instance, a playful alliteration "не **жаль би**" and "Ро**зальби**."

Perfetsky's translation. For example, "I'd accept any torture without regret, / If I could lay down my heavy head / On bashful Rosalba's bare breasts / And take a sweet little rest." A more playful approach may help the translator to make other connections between the original and the translation that would otherwise remain untapped. For example, "**ba**shful Rosal**ba**'s **ba**re **b**reasts" felicitously creates a "b" alliteration, comparable to "**б**уло **б** не жаль **би**" and "лона Розаль**би.**" If, however, this alliteration had been identified by the translator as a crucial element that at all costs had to be preserved– rather than emerging out of playfulness – it would become yet another insurmountable barrier, inevitably leading to sacrifice and loss.

Two other examples of transmesis involving poetry, for which Naydan finds new solutions, come from Perfetsky's diary, secretly copied by Dr. Riesenbock while Perfetsky was away from his hotel room. Among other things, the diary contained ideas for rhymes, vocabulary notes, and several poems, two of which are attributed to Rilke. As is indicated in a brief footnote in the original text, the first poem, "Ранок у Венеції" ("Venetian Morning"), had been translated into Ukrainian by Perfetsky.[71] Naydan's endnote in the English version, however, is once again substantially more extensive:

> Rilke's poem from part 2 of *New Poems* in the translation of S.
> Perfetsky [author's note]. "Venezianische Morgen" in the original. I have
> opted to use Stephen Cohn's translation here from Rainer Maria Rilke,
> *Neue Gedichte/New Poems,* trans. Stephen Cohn (Evanston, Illinois:

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[71] Andrukhovych, who has translated from many languages, including English, German, Polish, and Russian, published his translations of Rilke in the journal *Vsesvit* (1, 1991).

Northwestern University Press, 1998), 224-25. The line in bold is

Perfetsky's variation of the line. (endnote 5, 322)

The second poem "Сан Марко [1] *Венеція*" is accompanied in the original Ukrainian

with a footnote that defines it as "Підрядковий (дослівний) переклад сонета Рільке з

"Нових поезій частини другої"" (150). The corresponding English endnote reads: "A

line by line (literal) translation of Rilke's sonnet from *New Poems,* part II [author's note].

"San Marco" in the original. For a bilingual translation see Rainer Maria Rilke, *Neue*

Gedichte/New Poems, trans. Stephen Cohn (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University

Press, 1998), 227-28" (endnote 10, 322).

A meticulous researcher, Naydan does much more than translate. In the case of

both poems, he offers a reference to a particular published English translation of Rilke's

poetry, which at first sight may seem like further academic fastidiousness, but which also

can serve to highlight the fine line between reality and fiction, as well as between

translation and transmesis. In other words, Cohn's English translation of Rilke now

becomes part of a work of fiction, and is featured as a possible English rendition of the

fictional Ukrainian translation attributed to Perfetsky, which in turn was actually

completed by the real author, Andrukhovych.

Another noteworthy aspect of Naydan's decision to locate and use the real

translation is that the emphasis in *Perverzion* is thus placed on the end product, i.e. on a

completed translation, while *Perverziia* offers a penetrating and self-reflexive look into

the actual process of translation. The latter is achieved by juxtaposing "Venetian

Morning," a final translated version, with "San Marco," which the author's footnote

describes as an interlinear version. In particular, this interlinear (or literal, word-for word)

version reveals the initial stage in the translator's decision-making process. On a larger scale, it also speaks to the aesthetic tension between content and form that ultimately makes poetry. In parentheses, Perfetsky jots down synonyms, explanations, and even the corresponding German words whose sounds are as important to convey as are their denotative meanings. For example, Perfetsky writes: "… і ти впізнаєш блаженне (heile) світіння (Helle)…" (150), highlighting in parentheses an instance of alliteration in German.

Notably, even in what is presented as a completed translation, Andrukhovych plays with an alternative line («сяйне, як німфа Зевсові увіч» as opposed to "!приб'єсь, як німфа Зевсові до пліч!" (146), not only foregrounding the concept of translation multiplicity – which is already intertwined with the novel's premise of numerous versions – but also ridiculing the very idea of singularity and sameness of meaning. To those who cannot read Rilke in German[72] but still expect to find what "the real Rilke really said" in his poem by relying on Perfetsky's (i.e. Andrukhovych's or Cohn's or, for that matter, anybody else's) translation, this parody of the two possible lines lays bare a simple fact: the original and the translation are rarely, if ever, the same.[73]

It would be interesting to conduct a further examination of this absence of sameness by performing an interlingual back translation, a concept Newmark defines as "the retranslation of the translation into the original" (124), using Perfetsky's and Cohn's translations as a starting point. It is perhaps safe to assume that the German result will be

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[72] Even reading Rilke in German may produce various interpretations, of course!

[73] Unless, of course, the English-language reader bothers to look up the bilingual edition cited by Naydan, in which the abstract claims that "In this collection, Rilke forced his language to extremes of subtlety and refinement that only now, in Stephen Cohn's translations, is being captured **properly** in English" (online). My emphasis.

neither the same as the translation, nor a poem anywhere close to Rilke's original. In the case of "San Marco," Naydan's decision to render Perfetsky's interlinear translation verbatim, even though he had access to the bilingual German original/English translation, can also be viewed from different perspectives. Naydan chooses a fidelity-driven approach, but another possibility would have been to start with Cohn's translation into English, and try to imagine from there what Cohn's first interlinear draft might have been.

Apart from the endnotes, where the translator takes some liberties and acts as well as a researcher and annotator, Naydan's strategies for rendering transmeses can be described as rather conservative, for they are based on equivalence. It is my contention, however, that whenever Naydan does distance himself from being too faithful to the original and takes a more playful approach, he manages to come up with creative solutions that not only make the English text of *Perverzion* more engaging and enjoyable to read but also, unwittingly or deliberately, establish translation's very identity, which derives from the original but ultimately becomes independent of it.

As one example, it is worth looking at the episode where Perfetsky, seduced by the prostitute, ends up in an apartment that was:

> filled with people, with smoke and incense and all kinds of equatorial aromas, illuminated by green and red lamps, where everyone without exception was singing… nonstop songs in broken German, something like psalms or hymns, the grammatical clumsiness struck even my ear, but the melody was nice enough, an insanely nice melody, exquisite, a mixture of

Celtic and Coptic with additions of Brazilian, Armenian, Maghrebi, and

Romanian. (23-24)

Mesmerized, Perfetsky, who claims he "went wacko from that music" (24), tries to sing

along and, meandering through different rooms, sees "all kinds of Malaysians, Persians,

Ethiopians, [who] continued to sing" (26). Perfetsky cannot make out the meaning of the

song as he is able to catch only some "individual, mutilated phrases" (24). What follows

then in the Ukrainian original is a chant, at times ungrammatical, resembling a prayer and

filled with curses and appellations to the father-deity. From a translator's point of view,

this passage, a disparate combination of sense and nonsense as well as of form and

fluidity, is an unparalleled example of untranslatability. It would not be surprising at all if

the translation had merely offered a footnote, explaining that the original is an asyndetic

and unpunctuated passage, intended to exemplify the jumbled polyphony of a

multilingual crowd's singing, translated into Ukrainian by Perfetsky. However,

something different takes place. Here is an excerpt of the passage in both languages:

"і піїдемо в сяєва брами германійської з юним синою з великим рибою пловуючою аки цар на кров наше зерно пересипнуте шляк би його трафив шляк би її трафив дай нам саду германійської брами де хліба і пива і яблука золотого повня слався Отче так посоловіємо в шахта срібла підземности ясної нашої темности масла дай нам масла і пива і духу великого риби слався Отче кушай нас і кушма кушем розкусь шляк би його трафив…" (28)	"An wi go to di radiance a di Joiman gate wid a young son wid a greaaat floaaating fish til di king scatta wi grain pan blood mek di lightning strike dem an it gi we a gyadin a di Joiman gate whe dem have bread and beer an apple a di golden cockerel glory to di Fada so wi wooda get loaded in di celestiality a di silva wine a wi ignarance butta gi wi some butta an beer an di spirit a di great fish glory to di Fada tase wi an oshun doshun boshunu[10] mek di lightning strike dem…" (26)

As if to justify his creative decision, Naydan again resorts to the endnote strategy. In the

first endnote he writes: "'*Kushma kushem rozkus*' in the original. The magical charm is

meaningless in Ukrainian … I've chosen to create my own charm here based on the

voodoo goddess of love's name, which is Oshun" (chapter 1, endnote 10, 317). The

second footnote (further in the text) sheds more light on the translator's inventive

approach:

> The original text comprises the corrupt German of the multicultural ethnic
>
> mix at the scene as heard and as translated into Ukrainian by Perfetsky for
>
> his diary. I have chosen to translate this and the additional passage below
>
> into Jamaican English to give a bit of the effect that a Ukrainian reader
>
> gets from the text. My gratitude to Dr. Michael Haughton, a native of
>
> Jamaica, for assisting me with the translation.
>
> (chapter 1, endnote 11, 317)

According to Bobrova, in the passage quoted above, Andrukhovych "realistically

captured"[74] "the sincerity of feelings and burning desire to immigrate to the country [i.e.

to Germany]" expressed by the multi-ethnic singing crowd "by resorting to the rhythm

that echoes the Lord's Prayer" (144). Following the equivalence-based logic, Bobrova

concludes that "to reveal the pragmatic effect of the passage, the translator needs to

recreate intertextual links, such as the rhythm of prayer, allusions, and also to address the

problem of contaminated speech" (144). However, what exactly is this pragmatic effect?

Is it "to realistically recapture" the immigrant's prayer and its rhythm, as Bobrova's

analysis may lead one to assume? Or is it meant to convey "the torrent (sic)[75] of

consciousness of the people who are in a state of shock" (ibid.), an equivocal inference

made by Bobrova to explain the absence of punctuation? Is it, after all, intended to

preserve the sum total of all the tropes, explicit allusions, and stylistic play – Bobrova

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[74] "Realistically captured" strikes one as quite an unusual description for a postmodernist text.
[75] *Stream* is a more common collocation.

calls them intertextual links – that Andrukhovych employs in this passage? If so, how is the translator to calculate this sum total? Rhythm, allusions, punctuation, and myriad other factors may be part of the translator's concerns in preserving the pragmatic effect – if one still insists on employing this unproductive term in translation studies. But the effect, in this case, is encapsulated in a parody, created by Andrukhovych when he plays with elements of literariness. Can the translator recreate such a parody by following a specific formula or by preserving its individual components, one by one? This is a more complicated question, and its answer is not going to be affirmative.

Bobrova continues to argue her case, insisting that "[t]he pragmatic effect that is created by the corrupt German in the original, translated into corrupt Ukrainian, as Naydan remarks, can be revealed by Jamaican English that, on the one hand, domesticates this text, i.e., it makes it clear for the English readers but, on the other hand, simultaneously functions to foreignize it" (145). Curiously, Bobrova's attempt to explicate Naydan's creative solution by resorting to the framework of the comparability of effects, or by viewing it through the dichotomous prism of "foreignize vs domesticate" only leads to a paradox. The link between the corrupt German (transmetically presented through Ukrainian) and Jamaican English is rather tenuous, which does qualify Naydan's approach as a clear case of domestication. By imitating or parodying a Jamaican pronunciation of English words through the use of distorted spelling, Naydan creates a passage that English speakers can perhaps more easily relate to and appreciate. To foreignize this transmetic episode, on the other hand, would have meant a return to the actual corrupt German, or to the mixture of different dialects of the ethnicities

represented in it, which would consequently have made the text incomprehensible in English.

One interesting preliminary conclusion arises here, which indicates that many principles employed commonly in translation studies may, however useful they are, stand on a shaky foundation. A discussion of solutions for difficult translation problems — such as transmesis, or poetry, or a combination of the two, among others — that is premised on binary oppositions (i.e. preserve/lose or domesticate/foreignize) leads to paradoxical conclusions, as in the case of the simultaneous claims regarding domesticating and foreignizing made by Bobrova. Her words in fact reinforce that there is a divide between translation theory and translation practice. Perhaps unwittingly, when she uses binaries common in translation theory, she is actually unable to account in a straightforward way for the tactics used by Naydan.

Looking at translation through the lens of equivalence is bound to cast doubt on the validity of almost any translation solution, because the ways in which a translation is different from (i.e. non-equivalent to) the original will certainly always outnumber the similarities. To return to the mixed multilingual chant in *Perverzion*, a captious critic – using the logic of equivalence or of equivalent effects – may ask why the chant is conveyed with one particular dialect of English rather than with a variety of Englishes (e.g. Spanglish, Chinglish, etc)? And may ask further how the western-Ukrainian curse "шляк би його трафив," which Andrukhovych incorporates in a scintillating manner by playing on its German etymology[76] – an example notoriously missing in Bobrova's

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[76] The Ukrainian expression originated from the German words *der Schlag (blow* or *stroke)* and the verb *to treffen* (*to hit, strike or to hit upon, encounter)* as, for example, in the expression, *der Schlaghat ihn getroffen.*

analysis – corresponds with "mek di lightning strike dem," beyond its similarity on a denotative level? Legitimate as these questions are, they are useful for the translator only if they stimulate, rather than stifle, creativity. Coming from a critic seeking equivalence, however, such considerations tend to focus on loss even in those instances where the translator coped well with the seemingly untranslatable.

What if translation were conceived instead as a playful act? Its main objective would no longer focus on preservation of the pragmatic effect of the original, but would shift to celebrate the gain in the target language and culture, irrespective of whether it is a result of domesticating or foreignizing. For example, chapter 12 of *Perverzion* presents the conference paper given by John Paul Oshchyrko, a native of Jamaica with a suspiciously Ukrainian-sounding last name. Preceded by the narrator's note advising that "[r]eaders not inclined to linguo-cabalistic expressions (sic)[77] can painlessly omit this section" (128), it is essentially a stylized version of reggae music with repetitive rhythmical variations of infinitive sentence fragments and bold experimentation with collocations: "Слухати реґґей, вмирати під небом, вдихати запах трави. Слухати небо, вмирати під реґґей, вдихати листя трави[78]. Вдихати реґґей, слухати в небі, вмирати під запах трави" (123). While Naydan generally stays close to the original wording, not straying far from literality, he adds a little creative "touch" in the translation by punctuating the sentences with the interjection *mon,* a phonetic spelling of "man," evocative of Jamaican English: "To listen to reggae, to die beneath the sky, to breathe in the scent of the grass, mon" (128). Not found in the original Ukrainian, this insertion can

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[77] In the original, Andrukhovych uses the word "екзерсиси" (122), which Naydan decides to render as "expressions."

[78] Quite possibly, an allusion to Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass.*

hardly be justified in terms of equivalence or fidelity. Naydan may have had several reasons for embellishing the translation: to make the English text fun to read; to syncopate even more the already pulsating reggae rhythm, or to create the verbal image of Oshchyrko's character not just by describing his appearance (e.g. "a thousand thinly woven dreads," "headphones on his ears," "oversized baggy clothes" (128) but also by capturing the idiosyncracy of his speech. Ultimately, though, adding *mon* in the English version not only reflects the translator's flair for language but also manifests his courageous drive to "make the text better," which comes with the concomitant responsibility for taking liberties when he felt it was the appropriate thing to do. In the endnote about Jamaican English, Naydan does note that his objective was "to give a bit of the effect that a Ukrainian reader gets" (endnote 11, 317). This comment has apparently been made in hindsight as an attempt to explain the solution. The idea to insert *mon* in the translation must have been a spontaneous "eureka" moment, rather than a premeditated decision to create an equivalent effect. While reproducing the perceived pragmatic effect of the original may partially determine the translator's vision of the completed translation as an end product, the nebulous nature and immeasurability of any pragmatic effect means that it has a far less significant role in shaping or informing the process of translation. With Andrukhovych's passage in Ukrainian, a reader can't help but marvel at how the author vigorously experiments with rhythm and sound in addition to playing with imagery (especially, the images of nature, such as sky, grass, sea, etc). To a reader who subsequently reads the English version, it comes as an unexpected but pleasant surprise that the translation can offer something more, and even comes close to surpassing the original.

Similarly, in dealing with the passage involving di Casallegra's letter, a parody of diasporic Ukrainian and full of malapropisms and grammatical infelicities, the English translator must rely solely on creative solutions that are intuitive, spontaneous and that generally defy equivalence-related analysis or classification. If Naydan's strategy is simply to produce an English text fraught with errors, it can't capture the subtlety of Andrukhovych's play, which lies not only in the parody of distortions possibly resulting from mistranslation, but even more so in the hardly unambiguous tension between diasporic and contemporary styles of Ukrainian. In other words, this particular instance of play, in *Perverziia,* is an intricate conflation of what in Jakobsonian terms can be described as poetic and metalingual functions. Especially because of the latter, any effect that can be obtained in English will be drastically different.

This does not prevent Naydan from offering several successful solutions and experimenting with English, even in places where play is not explicit in the original. For example, words such as *аналіза* (*analiza)* (a feminine noun, while the correct contemporary Ukrainian is the masculine noun *аналіз* (*analiz, analysis*); *клюби* (*kliuby)* (with "ю" indicating softer pronunciation, instead of the contemporary *клуби* (*kluby*); *національзм* (*natsyonalizm)* (instead of *націоналізм* (*natsionalizm*) are rendered by Naydan, respectively, as "analysus," "klubs," and "nashunalism." The latter is particularly interesting because it inadvertently extends the connotative meaning of the word *nationalism: nash* (*наш* in Ukrainian) is the first-person possessive pronoun *our* or *ours*. Di Casallegra concludes the letter with the capitalized welcoming expression "Як кажуть у Вашій вітчизні – ДОБРОМ ПОЖАЛУЙСТА!" (37), yet another hilarious blunder for two reasons. First, the expression "добро пожаловать" (*welcome)* is Russian,

not Ukrainian. Second, di Casallegra apparently confuses the way of saying *welcome* with two individual words добро (*dobro, good*) and пожалуйста (*pozhaluista*) – the latter is used both as *please* and the expression "you are welcome." Naydan comes up with a solution that reflects the mix-up very well: "As they say in your homeland – COMEWELL PLEASE!" (36), followed by an endnote that explains the confusion. And for the farewell expression "Ваші до безконечности" (verbatim "yours to eternity" with the diasporic genitive "и" ending instead of the currently acceptable "і"), Naydan aptly plays with the possessive pronoun *yours* and the possessive case of nouns, thus creating a witty "Yourses to eternity" (36).

Significance of Transmesis in *Perverziia*

To summarize, transmesis is crucial in *Perverziia*; it has a two-fold function, serving first of all as the novel's conceptual and narrative framework, and secondly, it plays an important performative role. Translation in *Perverziia,* as the discussion in this chapter illustrates, offers a key to interpreting the novel's title, helps to explain the compositional structure, and suggests at least one possible reading of the novel's open ending. Andrukhovych's meticulous attention to the theme of translation and his detailed (even if at times parodied) portrayal of the process of translation in his novel raise questions that problematize any understanding of translation solely as a means of interlingual communication. The novel invites us to envision translation as a much more nuanced and often ambiguous transformation, rather than as a straightforward transfer of meaning into another language. Paradoxically, despite repeated emphases on its unreliability, translation proves to be inescapably necessary in the novel's multilingual European setting. It is shown as a complex, often confused and confusing, amalgam of

linguistic, cultural, and sociopolitical contexts and intertexts. By virtue of its mediating

role, translation is presented as a permanent state in which the novel's multilingual

characters live, think, and interact. Due to the pervasiveness of translation, the central

female character, the translator Ada Tsytryna, is not at all invisible. Not only is Ada's

character portrayed as an erudite, emancipated, and powerful woman, her ostentatious

visibility (manifested, among other things, by her crucial role in the ceremony of

conversion into eternity) and her infidelity (both literally as a wife and metaphorically as

a translator) call for a critical interrogation of the idealized image of translator as

impartial conduit and communication mediator.

At first glance, the incidents of transmesis in *Perverzion* seem to leave a translator

with very few options. Yet whenever Naydan transcends the constraints of equivalence,

his creative solutions inevitably prove to be more successful than the technically

accurate, direct (i.e. faithful to the original) ones. Although his strategies of italicizing

transmetic insertions or explaining them in an endnote are sometimes debatable,

Naydan's innovative approach to endnotes is commendable. The endnotes in *Perverzion*

convey the surplus of meaning. In undertaking the role of an annotator, the translator

enters Andrukhovych's complex fictional game and by doing so becomes a player.

Whereas Andrukhovych's purported author (i.e. Andrukhovych himself) and the

omniscient narrator often try "to trump" readers, the translator not only assists them in

navigating through *Perverzion's* web of meanings, but also, as Bailey's review testifies,

encourages them to explore the much broader contexts and intertexts, in a "detective

game" that makes the process of reading so much more enjoyable.

As has been noted, analysis of the transmetic examples in *Perverzion* suggests that equivalence hardly serves as the rationale behind Naydan's best solutions. Neither does equivalence inform my own suggestions of possible ways of translating transmeses. What makes adequate and even felicitous solutions possible in the translation is the act of inventive play with the potentialities of the English text, rather than a fixation on how to transfer the untranslatable from one language to another. To overcome untranslatability and deal effectively with transmesis, the translator must throw off the bounds of equivalence and be inspired by and open to the endless possibilities of play, which in turn depends upon an open-minded interpretation of the original, an exploration of the resourcefulness of the target language, and the unleashing of the translator's own creative energies.

Chapter 2 Parody and Translation in Serhiy Zhadan's *Depesh Mod / Depeche Mode*

Serhiy Zhadan's 2004 novel *Depesh Mod* (*Depeche Mode* in Myroslav Shkandrij's English translation) contains two episodes that feature translation both as process and as product, and that present the figure of the translator. They warrant special consideration as translation occupies an important place in this novel, which can also be viewed as a text that has been conceived and produced in translation. After contextualizing the author and the novel and explaining Zhadan's interest in translation and multilingualism, the discussion of *Depesh Mod* in this chapter will outline the plot and review the novel's reception and criticism; focus on the two transmetic episodes; analyze the challenges of translating transmesis; examine the relationship between translation and parody; and explore the overall significance of translation in interpreting the novel. Finally, the chapter will step back and, in the light of the previous explorations, will consider the implications of transmesis for translation theory and philosophy.

The "Enfant Terrible" of Ukrainian Literature 2.0

Analogies as well as periodizations in literary studies are often speculative, if not spurious. But in the case of the contemporary Ukrainian writer Serhiy Zhadan, the following one is perhaps not altogether groundless: in Ukrainian literature, Zhadan is to the 1990s in poetry and to the 2000s in prose what Andrukhovych is to the 1980s and 1990s in poetry and prose, respectively. In other words, in terms of popularity, significance, and international recognition, Zhadan and Andrukhovych are landmark figures in their respective literary generations.

Born in 1974 in the eastern-Ukrainian town of Starobilsk, Luhansk region,

Zhadan is currently considered by many critics to be the most notable representative of

the so-called "generation of the 90s"[79] of Ukrainian postmodernist[80] writers. Like

Andrukhovych, Zhadan started his literary career by writing poetry, and one of his early

collections, titled *Heneral Iuda* (*General Judas*), immediately won critical acclaim. In the

preface, Ihor Rymaruk, already at that time an acknowledged poet and thus representing

the previous generation of writers, recognized Zhadan's "true talent, sensitive soul, and

unyielding observing eye"[81] (4). In the final poem in that collection, Zhadan's lyrical

protagonist reincarnates into Mykhail Semenko, a futurist poet known for his radical

experimentation, innovation, and iconoclastic attitudes, especially in relation to the

literary canon. In Oleh Ilnytzkyj's words, in the early 20th century Semenko "became the

universally acknowledged *enfant terrible* of Ukrainian literature" (472). Slightly less than

a century later, Zhadan has assumed a similar role: in a review of Zhadan's *Anarchy in*

the UKR, Tetiana Dihai describes him as "the most typical enfant terrible of

contemporary Ukrainian literature" (par. 1), while Tamara Hundorova maintains that

"Zhadan conjures up an image of a punk, sad clown, homeless youth, and the last

Ukrainian futurist" (*Pisliachornobylska biblioteka* 167).

In the 2000s, while continuing to write poetry, Zhadan also ventured into prose.

His first novels, much like Andrukhovych's, were initially met with a great deal of

skepticism and doubt. For example, Bohdan Boychuk, a Ukrainian modernist émigré

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[79] See, for example, Hundorova's *Pisliachornobylska biblioteka* (pp. 159-176).
[80] In a podcast at Kabi.net (https://kabinet.podfm.ru/my/41/), Zhadan denies his belonging to postmodernist writers.
[81] My translation.

writer and formerly a member of the New York Group of Ukrainian poets, concedes that Zhadan is gifted and possesses an idiosyncratic style. However, reacting to Zhadan's frequent use of racy language, Boychuk quips that "треба культивувати культ, як нема культури" ('one has to cultivate a cult, as there's no culture,' 199). Through this tautological pun, he suggests that Zhadan tends to produce novels that are popular in the sense of mass appeal but are not necessarily of high quality.[82]

In her 2008 textbook on Ukrainian postmodernist prose, Roksana Kharchuk offers an even more scathing criticism. She claims (in an uncharacteristically personal, non-academic tone) that Zhadan has low writing standards, and that his prose boils down to *публіцистика (publitsystyka)*, or (low-level) journalism.*[83]* Kharchuk believes that with his abundant use of obscenities, Zhadan only strives for *епатаж* (*epatazh*), shock effects, or what the French call *épatage* as in the expression "épater les bourgeois" (209). Despite such criticism, with more than five thousand followers (as of November 2013) on Facebook, a high number by Ukrainian standards, Zhadan, a two-time winner (2006 and 2010) of the independent, prestigious "BBC Ukrainian Book of the Year" award and a recipient of the 2012 "Golden Writers of Ukraine"[84] award, undoubtedly remains one of the most popular contemporary writers.

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[82] Earlier Boychuk spoke much more favorably of Zhadan's poetry: see, for example, his review of Zhadan's collection *Istoriia kultury pochatku stolittia (History of Culture of the Beginning of the Century)* in *Kuryer Kryvbasu,* vol. 170, 2004.

[83] A Ukrainian term that can be roughly translated as "sociopolitical, opinion-based journalism" and has an apparently negative connotation when applied in this context to describe fiction.

[84] Awarded to best-selling writers who have had more than 100,000 copies of their works in print.

Zhadan's Interest in Multilingualism and Translation

Zhadan's interest in languages and translation has been manifested in a number of different ways. According to Kharchuk (209), he graduated from the National Pedagogical University in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv with a degree in German, defended a dissertation on Ukrainian futurism, and for some time taught Ukrainian and world literatures as an assistant professor. He has translated works from several European languages, including German, Russian, Polish, Byelorussian, and English. Zhadan's translations of poetry, for example, feature the Nobel-prize winning Polish writer Czesław Miłosz, the German-speaking Bukovynian Jewish poet Paul Celan[85] and the somewhat less famous German poet Walter Zahorka, whose collection *Romeos Briefchen* was published together with Zhadan's own collection *Pepsi*. In addition, Zhadan's translations of Russian author Yaroslav Mogutin's poetry were published in the journal *Chetver* (later reprinted in the 2009 anthology of gay, lesbian and queer poetry titled *120 storinok sodomu* [120 Pages of Sodom]), while Zhadan's 2007 poetry collection *Maradona* contained translations of the German-born American writer Charles Bukowski.

Moreover, Zhadan's interest in translation and multilingualism is also reflected in his literary works, many of which have conspicuously non-Ukrainian titles that may require translation or, at the very least, draw attention to their foreignness or otherness. For example, *Anarchy in the UKR,* originally titled in English, is a playful allusion to the English band *Sex Pistols'* song "Anarchy in the UK." A collection of short stories, titled

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[85] This information is available from http://www.chytomo.com/news/vydano-audioknyhu-pualya-tselana. Accessed on 21 Jul 2013.

Біг Мак (*Big Mak*), is a pun, which may, for the English-speaking reader, conjure up an image of junk food, but is in fact an allusion to "The Roar of 74" album by the Buddy Rich band on which there is a track entitled "Big Mac" – something that in itself may require a "cultural" translation.

This collection also contains a short story entitled "Порно" (Porno), which features an autobiographical narrator and his best friend, and develops into a rather gruesome story about incest and insanity. It opens with the account of the narrator's first translation experience, which is not quite meshed into the main storyline but partially explains the title and offers an interesting view of translation. The narrator tells an anecdote about pirated videotapes of German pornography that his older friends at school made him translate because he was a straight-A student. These friends believed without any substantial reason, as the autobiographical narrator himself points out, that his German was good enough to cope with this task. Here is how this experience is described:

Перекладав я он-лайн, ясна річ, щоправда там і перекладати особливо не було чого, текстовий корпус головно складали лаконічні рубані фрази на зразок: Як ти хочеш, щоби я це зробив?, я все ускладнював, перекладаючи: Він питає її, як вона хоче, щоби він це з нею зробив, друзі із зрозумінням кивали головами, мовляв, нормально, малий, нормально, так і має бути. Не дивно, що з того часу німецька мова асоціюється в мене з оральним сексом. Найбільшою нагородою за перекладацький труд була, звісно, сама можливість побачити справжнє жорстке німецьке порно, це тоді, як всі твої однолітки про секс знали хіба що з анекдотів, а презерватива не бачили навіть у рекламі, бо тоді й реклами такої не було.	I translated online, obviously. But to be honest, there was not much to translate in the first place. The textual corpus mainly consisted in abrupt laconic phrases such as "how do you want me to do it?" I tried to complicate everything and translated "he asks her how she wants him to do it," and my friends nodded in approval, "good job, kid, that makes sense." It's not surprising that since then German has been associated in my mind with oral sex. The reward for my translation labor was, of course, the very opportunity to be able to watch the real hardcore German porn, and do so when all your peers knew about sex only from jokes and hadn't seen a condom yet, not even in a commercial because at that time they didn't have commercials like this.[86]

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[86] My translation.

(115)	

This brief passage foreshadows some important translation themes that would be elaborated in Zhadan's next novel *Depesh Mod*, published a year later. They include the problem of the translator's competence and the rarely unproblematic assessment of translation quality; the paradoxical simultaneous need for and uselessness of translation; the absence of proper remuneration for translation services but the rewarding experience of obtaining access to "cultural capital" (to borrow Bourdieu's term), among others.

Depesh Mod: Background and Plot

Depesh Mod was published in 2004, first appearing in the journal *Berezil* and then as a separate book from the Kharkiv-based publisher "Folio." Its English translation by Myroslav Shkandrij, a literary scholar and professor of Slavic Studies at the University of Manitoba, was originally published (as a fragment) in *Ukrainian Literature: A Journal of Translation* in volume 3, 2011 and then as a book in April 2013 by Glagoslav Publications, based in the UK and the Netherlands.

The plot of *Depesh Mod* may be described as a contemporary Ukrainian odyssey, which, as it falls short of covering a decade of travel, perhaps bears a closer resemblance to Joyce's *Ulysses*, as it is confined to one city and province, and takes place over a single weekend. The protagonist, purportedly Zhadan himself,[87] narrates the events (frequently in slangy and very coarse language) as an adult by chronicling them in the form of a diary. Although the book's structure may at first glance appear to be

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[87] The last name "Zhadan" is mentioned in the text only once when the character named Cocoa addresses the narrator in one of the dialogues. But even without this clue, the first person narration and other autobiographical details lead to this conclusion.

complicated, consisting of several introductions, two parts, several epilogues (each linked

with the corresponding introduction), and a jocular afterword, attributed to Pavlo

Zahrebelnyi,[88] the storyline itself may strike the reader as fairly basic, even to some

extent banal. Together with his friends, the protagonist-narrator sets out to look for

another friend to inform him of his stepfather's suicide and, at his uncle's request, to

persuade him to attend the funeral. This purpose, which ultimately turns out to be

inconsequential, drives the action only nominally and has little connection with what the

protagonists encounter on the way.[89] It appears at the end of the story that the friend they

go to such great pains to find is actually enjoying himself in some remote summer camp

in the middle of nowhere and could not care less about his stepfather's funeral. Realizing

the absurdity of the situation and, perhaps, trying to be true to his understanding of what a

good friend should be, the autobiographical protagonist (the only one of the three friends

to reach the final destination) decides not to break the bad news, thereby emphasizing the

futility of the whole journey.[90] In describing the friends' meandering through the city of

Kharkiv and its vicinity, as well as their often-preposterous adventures, Zhadan's novel

exposes the reality of youth living in the mismanaged post-Soviet Ukraine of the early

1990s. Confronted with personal struggles to find meaning in their existence amidst the

general atmosphere of decay and hopelessness, the main characters, including the

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[88] A Ukrainian historical novelist, one of the oldest and most respected writers in Ukraine who was alive when *Depesh Mod* was originally published but passed away in 2009. By attributing the afterword to Zahrebelnyi (using his real signature) and by writing it in a rather scintillating manner, Zhadan may have ridiculed the popular distinctions between different generations of writers as well as the fact that older writers tend to look down at their successors.

[89] Iaroslav Holoborodko claims that the plot may have been different or may even have been eliminated because it is redundant (65).

[90] An insightful postcolonial interpretation of this episode can be found in Chernenko, who claims that the failure (or refusal) to notify his friend of his stepfather's death means that the collapse of the empire is not fully perceived and comprehended, thereby leaving Karburator in an infantile state of blissful illusion of a communist summer camp (77).

narrator, often seek solace in excessive alcohol consumption, experimentation with drugs, and sporadic sex. Nonetheless, behind their seemingly nihilistic facades, they demonstrate a strong spirit of camaraderie and a quiet internal rebellion against the lingering Soviet cultural legacy, manifested primarily through attitudes of non-conformism and their so-called *pofigism (пофігізм)*, a state of utter indifference almost belligerent in its apathy,[91] as well as their interest in Western European music, a detail elaborated in one of the transmetic episodes and reflected in the novel's title.

Depesh Mod: Reception and Criticism

Zhadan's novel initially received mixed reviews in Ukraine but certainly did not go unnoticed.[92] This section offers an overview of the most important readings and responses to *Depesh Mod*, while outlining the major themes and problems the novel addresses.

Based on the shared theme of travel, Boychuk draws an analogy between *Depesh Mod* and Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. He wittily concludes that Zhadan "is on the road" but "strays from the course" because in the face of Kerouac's classic, any similar attempts are doomed to pale into insignificance ("Troisti Muzykanty" 199). While also pointing out the "road" motif and identifying similarities with the hippie and beat movements, Hundorova has a slightly different emphasis, drawing a parallel between the

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[91] This is a slang word that may be translated as an attitude "screw-it-all" or "who-cares."

[92] Recently, more readings of *Depesh Mod* have appeared. For example, Guzii sees *Depesh Mod* as a postcolonial work, while Chernenko focuses on the problem of gender and argues that the characters' behavior in the story manifests feminization and victimization, which she then extrapolates to the postcolonial image of the entire country of Ukraine as a woman. Proidakov, on the other hand, traces existentialist motifs in *Depesh Mod*, whereas Niegodiaieva discusses the concept of the city by explaining the significance of the urban setting and symbolism.

Ukrainian dissident writers of the 1960s and the early postmodern writers of the 1990s.[93]

She identifies the two central underlying topoi of *Depesh Mod* (as well as of Zhadan's

other works) as "homelessness" (both in the more general and metaphorical sense of the

lack of belonging and in the literal sense of not having a place to live) and

"fatherlessness" (i.e. the lack of authority and the absence of a father figure). According

to Hundorova, both of these lead to what she interprets as a bohemian protest on the part

of the youthful protagonists (154), targeted at "the official authorities and mass culture"

(174). Homelessness, she claims, is manifested through "endless travels and the loss of

trust in the world of adults for whom perestroika also revealed their own uprootedness

from being" (167). The idea of fatherlessness, on the other hand, is supported by many

textual examples (some of which Hundorova analyzes).[94] In Hundorova's view, while the

former betrays a general crisis of trust in the inherited sociocultural legacy, the latter

captures the preference of Ukrainian postmodernist writers for the idea of being on the

road over the idea of finally arriving home, which was crucial for the earlier dissident

writers (165).

Elaborating on the theme of travel, Bondar-Tereshchenko considers *Depesh Mod*

in a broader post-Soviet context and makes insightful observations about the intertextual

links the novel shares with other works, primarily from Russian literature. Most notably,

Bondar-Tereshchenko mentions the Russian postmodernist writer Venedikt Yerofeev's

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[93] In her seminal *Pisliachornobylska biblioteka*, Hundorova has an entire chapter dedicated to Zhadan. It is titled "Postmoderna bezdomnist [Postmodern Homelessness]."

[94] Some examples include the deceased step-father who allegedly (according to the uncle's story) commits suicide; the bust of the Bolshevik politician Molotov, stolen from a dilapidated factory which is later presented to Marusia to symbolically replace her father, who in his turn is a general in the military; the possessive police captain who is sympathetic to the protagonists and even tries to help them but has problems with his own son, to mention but a few.

famous *Moskva-Petushki* (titled in English translation *Moscow Circles*) and the Russian

writer Viktor Pelevin, whose work will be discussed in a later chapter here as well. In

addition to pointing out that Zhadan's writing is very personal, and drawing (as Boychuk

also does) an analogy with Kerouac, he identifies the permanent mobility of *Depesh*

Mod's characters as an important characteristic of the novel. Indeed, the story is almost

entirely predicated on "having to go somewhere," but – despite their objective of locating

a friend (supposedly their goal) – movement in the story is often haphazard and aimless.

In this respect, Bondar-Tereshchenko finds a similarity between *Depesh Mod* and

Pelevin's collection titled (in Russian) *Диалектика Переходного Периода из*

*Ниоткуда в Никуда (*The Dialectics of a Transition Stage from Nowhence to Nowhere*).*

Here is how he puts it:

> … from the annotation to *Depesh Mod* we also learn that it is only at first
>
> glance that the novel seems to be a hallucination of some starving student,
>
> whereas in fact it is a multi-faceted portrait of a transition era and a
>
> generation that got stuck in the tough interim period of the 90s. Be that as
>
> it may, the novel is about personal things too, even if it also captures some
>
> specifically Pelevinesque "transition from nowhence to nowhere."

(187)

While positive overall, Bondar-Tereshchenko's review contains certain

reservations. He argues (not without some ambivalence) that in *Depesh Mod* "Zhadan is

not quite a great writer" (191). In contrast, Ostap Karmodi calls *Depesh Mod* a

masterpiece that offers a "precise portrait of the 1990s, a portrait that is rough and subtle,

cruel and poetic, sad and extremely funny at the same time – just like the decade itself"

(2). Despite admitting that *Depesh Mod* is one of Zhadan's most successful works,

Kharchuk contends that it is primarily about freedom, though in a more negative sense. It

is, she writes, the freedom "from responsibilities (that plunge one into gloom); from

education (the level of which is hopelessly in decline); from parental care (because

parents themselves need to be taken care of); from paternal authority (because it is

absent); and from family relations (because the family has become a burden)" (212).[95]

Unlike Kharchuk, whose critique, in light of the novel's autobiographical

framework, tends to connect it with the author's personal social and political views, and

thus borders on the *ad hominem*, Holoborodko describes *Depesh Mod* as "a psychedelic,

psycho-mental, and at times psychological piece" (*Artegraund: ukrainskyi literaturnyi

isteblishment* 62).[96] He would perhaps agree with Karmodi, because he too sees the novel

as a snapshot of the decade, a montage of sketches on the life of Ukrainian non-

conformist or hipster[97] youth in the 1990s (66). The novel is, according to Holoborodko,

an attempt to find a new aesthetic dimension, hitherto unexplored in Ukrainian (68), "to

unveil scenes of 'non-formal' … 'subcultural' and 'subreal' (sic) life and being, to

present them in such a way (i.e. with the uttermost, 'naked' clarity and accentuated

unattractiveness) so as to ensure that even those accustomed to 'aesthetic' literature may

feel and experience something greater than surprise, confusion, and shock, all combined"

(65). Unlike Kharchuk, Holoborodko views Zhadan's attempt to shock the reader as a

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[95] Here and below, translations of Kharchuk are mine.
[96] Here and below, translations of Holoborodko are mine.
[97] In the original Ukrainian, Holoborodko uses the word *неформали (neformaly)*, which can be roughly translated as "hipsters" or representatives of youth subcultures.

positive development. Among other things, he believes that the use of foul language "legitimizes a new, alternative aesthetics which is contiguous to and borders on underground – a cognitive phenomenon epitomizing the fullness, the conceptual completeness of any national culture…" (67-68).

Whereas for Hundorova, Bondar-Tereshchenko, and Boychuk the themes of (aimless) travels and the problems of belonging, trust, and authority in the novel are central to what they as well as Holoborodko and Karmodi believe to be a portrait of the 1990s generation of Ukrainian youth, Maxim Tarnawsky adds an important piece to the interpretative puzzle. In a chapter dedicated to contemporary Ukrainian prose, he analyzes Zhadan and another young Ukrainian writer, Dnistrovy, producing the only (as of 2013) critical study in English that examines Zhadan's novel in reasonable detail. Tarnawsky emphasizes that one mark of a profound difference between the older and younger generations of contemporary writers is the latter's "retreat from individualism" (265). Indeed, the distinguished writers of the 1990s such as Andrukhovych, Izdryk, and Zabuzhko portray protagonists who are individualists and act alone out of self-interest, while for Zhadan, the concepts of friendship and companionship play a much more prominent role. This leads Tarnawsky to argue that the characters' search for the friend to notify him of his step-father's death "emphasizes not only their own sense of camaraderie but a general appreciation for kinship, even if only schematic" (267). In fact, the friendship established by the protagonists supplants family, which is almost entirely absent in the story as none of the characters seems to belong to one. Even so, since, in Tarnawsky's view, "malice, aggression, injury and violence accompany the boys wherever they go" (268), friendship is probably their only means of facing social

rejection. Surprisingly, of all the critical studies and reviews discussed here, only Tarnawsky brings up the problem of translation and failure of communication in the story.

The Portrayal of Consecutive Interpreting

The episode featuring consecutive interpreting in *Depesh Mod* occurs early in the novel, in one of the so-called "introductions," or preludes to the main story which follow the author's foreword. In these introductions, Zhadan presents the four protagonists, all of whom are the narrator's friends, by giving a snapshot of a particular event in their lives. The second introduction portrays a fellow with the exotic name "Какао" (Kakao), which may be interpreted as an allusion to cocaine and which Shkandrij translates literally as "Cocoa."[98] Cocoa is in the company of other friends who drink coffee from the same mug, smoke the same cigarette, pass around bread (in what almost resembles the ritual of communion), and take turns telling exaggerated stories about their drunken adventures with women. Although he likes the company and is not rejected despite his weirdness, Cocoa feels that he does not quite belong, that he is not one of them, and he is especially uncomfortable about the prospect of having to tell a story himself.

It soon turns out that the rest of the group are members of a music band. They are about to play a gig at a religious function in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv which has drawn more than two thousand people. The event is organized by an American preacher, whose name, Johnson-and-Johnson, sounds suspiciously similar – in fact, almost identical – to the company "Johnson & Johnson" that manufactures a wide range

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[98] Cocoa is the odd-one-out type who is not much liked or accepted in the circle.

of pharmaceutical, healthcare, and medical products. In the early 1990s, the brand

became popular in Ukraine due to the ubiquitous commercials for personal hygiene

products. Many found such advertising campaigns annoying not only because the concept

of marketing had been absent from Soviet life, but also because the commercial

frequently interrupted TV soap operas and other shows. The butt of many jokes[99], this

brand name came to connote what was largely perceived as "brainwashing" advertising

techniques, and reflected a somewhat skeptical attitude to the spread of western culture.

This skepticism included Protestant religious practices, which were seen as proselytizing

and frowned upon in a conservative, predominantly Orthodox Ukrainian society. This is

how Zhadan's narrator describes the minister:[100]

> His reverence Johnson-and-Johnson, sun on the beclouded horizon of
> American evangelism, star of the biggest mass euphorias (sic) on the West
> coast, leader of the Church of Jesus (United), the pop-star who works the
> minds of all who desire it and who have come to him on this rainy summer
> morning in mid-week, his reverence Johnson-and-Johnson doesn't give a
> damn about these silly conventions, he's not some Old Believer who only
> holds services on weekends, what crap, he says, what old-style crap, and
> everyone agrees with him. (28)

The transmetic nature of the episode reveals itself early, even before the description of

the actual process of interpretation begins. In a "foreshadowing" attempt, imbued with a

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[99] For example, "В Москве появился новый маньяк — Джонсон и Джонсон. Он ходит по ночам и щиплет детям глазки" in Russian, which reads "A new maniac appeared in Moscow. His name is Johnson and Johnson. He walks around the city at night and stings children's eyes." Or "Генеральный Джонсон программы - Спонсор и Спонсор." Or http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y0KexxEKT-U.
[100] Unless otherwise indicated, English quotations are from Myroslav Shkandrij's translation.

tinge of dramatic irony, the narrator questions the credibility of Johnson-and-Johnson's interpreter:

> … he [Johnson-and-Johnson] already has his fans here who react devotedly to his reverence's every runny-nosed sob, translated for them by some dame in a gray business suit who works as his reverence's interpreter and apparently doesn't understand him, in any case she translates haphazardly, and his reverence himself obviously can't be bothered to correct her, God's revelations obviously affect his mind, he simply gets high during the sermon… (29)

As the episode continues, Johnson-and-Johnson, wearing a gold Rolex watch, becomes increasingly excited at his impending appearance, while the interpreter seems hardly as enthused:

> His reverence gets himself psyched-up in the dressing room, swallows some kind of pills, drinks a lot of decaf coffee, and loudly recites something from De Holy Bible, telling the interpreter to repeat after him, the interpreter stays darkly silent, which winds up his reverence even more, he begins to show the first signs of God's revelation, which with him is like diarrhea, he just bursts and it's all there. One of the organizers comes in, it's time, time to go on, the crowd is waiting, his reverence sips his low octane coffee from a big plastic mug, spills some on his snow-white shirt, shit, he says, fucking shit, the interpreter attempts to translate this for the doofus organizer, but he just waves her off. (30)

When the Reverend finally addresses the crowd, and as he continues to preach his sermon, the narrator's initial speculation regarding the interpreter's incompetence proves to be true after all. It quickly becomes obvious – to the reader, but not to the Reverend's audience in the novel – that the only thing the interpreter translates "correctly" is the reverend's greeting "Дорогі брати і сестри!" (31) ("My dear brothers and sisters" (31)). The rest of the talk is progressively distorted (embellished?) to the extent that the "dame in a gray business suit" (29) ends up concocting her own story and adding details not even remotely relevant to what readers may believe Johnson-and-Johnson had "actually"[101] said. The original sentences followed by inaccurate renditions cannot but create a comical effect, as Zhadan generously spices up the mistranslations (clearly recognizable as such by the reader) with hilarious puns and provocative double entendres. Consequently, Johnson-and-Johnson's illuminating, didactic story about a girl from southern Connecticut who endured hardships and lost her faith but eventually found Jesus turns, in translation, into an absurd and grotesque account of a prostitute and her "squeeze." According to the interpreter's version, the story is interspersed with vicious tirades against this woman and her lover from the neighbors, whom the interpreter apparently invents to create a dramatic Soviet-style conflict between an alleged anti-hero and the community.

At some point, when Johnson-and-Johnsons picks up a recognizable word in the interpretation, he realizes that it does not fit. This leads him to assume that the interpretation may be inaccurate, and he thinks to himself: "Що ця факін сучка перекладає?" (33). Shkandrij translates this verbatim as "what is this fucking bitch

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[101] This word is in quotation marks because in the discussion to follow it will be problematized.

translating?" (34) After a brief pause, the Reverend resumes preaching, and the interpreter catches up, trying to stick closer to the original. However, this time Johnson-and-Johnson gets lost in his own convoluted analogy between God's revelation and the brain of an octopus, at which point the interpreter loses the thread completely and decides to keep silent. Surprisingly, when Johnson-and-Johnson poses a rhetorical question to the audience, someone quickly replies, even though no interpretation was provided. Baffled by the unexpected response, the Reverend "pauses for a moment, nonplussed, but he doesn't miss the wave," adds the narrator, "and once more dives into the colorful purple sermonizing shit…" (35).

Paradoxically, notwithstanding all sorts of possible misunderstandings, instances of miscommunication, and mistranslations (which, it should be emphasized again, are only evident to the reader but not to the Reverend, his interpreter or the audience), Johnson-and-Johnson's sermon proves to be quite successful in translation, at least from the audience's point of view and, especially, in his own opinion. The Reverend is confident that his preaching has produced the desired effect on the crowd. In a brief discussion with one of the administrators, who "looks at him with the eyes of a man in love," (35) he triumphantly exclaims: "Ах, як я їх зробив…як я їх зробив" (35), a repetition Shkandrij translates as "I certainly put on a show… I certainly showed them." (35).

The comical effect of this transmetic situation is partially achieved due to the contrast between the preacher's original story, presented in a solemn evangelical style, and the interpreter's rendition, which transforms the story into a vulgar narrative full of obscenities. The technique employed by Zhadan to construct the episode is in fact a

prankish imitation of the process of translation, here predicated on the deliberately inaccurate paraphrasing (or rewording) of the source text using the same language as the source text. In other words, Johnson-and-Johnson's sermon – which one imagines would have been delivered in English – is presented in Ukrainian, and its translation, accompanied by the narrator's commentaries and reported speech, is given in parentheses and is also in Ukrainian. In a way, it is reminiscent of what Roman Jakobson described, in his famous tripartite distinction of the three kinds of translation, as intralingual translation or rewording (114), except, of course, that instead of trying to restate or approximate the original meaning by employing different language, Zhadan playfully reverses the objective. He uses similar language (i.e. words and structure) but conveys drastically different meanings. In other words, the interpreter's speech in parentheses is designed to create an illusion of similarity to the Reverend's sermon, but instead contains minor or major deviations and digressions that manifest misunderstanding and mistranslation. For example, Johnson-and-Johnson opens his talk by saying:

Господь маніпуляціями своїх божественних рук зібрав нас тут до купи! (Господь проробив певні маніпуляції, — перекладає вона. — Купу.)	Through the manipulation of his divine hands the Lord has gathered us here together! (The Lord has made certain manipulations, she translates. A whole pile of them.)
(31)	(31)

Here the interpreter tries to paraphrase and condense the original message but (perhaps unwittingly) distorts the meaning by shifting the emphasis from the two key points (i.e. "the Lord" and "getting together") to some inconsequential ones (such as "manipulations" and "pile"). To produce these mistranslations Zhadan relies, among other things, on paronomasia (as in the above example, which will be discussed in greater detail later), on the flexibility of Ukrainian word order (particularly, its inverted

constructions), on minor omissions or additions (technically permissible when paraphrasing, they may also completely change meaning) and, finally, on obvious distortions in which the interpreter captures keywords from the original but essentially makes up her own story, quite different from that of Johnson-and-Johnson. In a nutshell, Zhadan creates a cruel, even grotesque parody, mocking the process of translation and the figure of the translator. But, apart from its humor, can this parody shed any new light on translation and inform our understanding of it as a process, a product, a communicative act and a socio-linguistic phenomenon that is too often taken for granted?

Translation and Parody

The Relationship Between Translation and Parody

The relationship between translation and parody is one of complexity and theoretical controversy. Vladimir Nabokov has thrown his hat into the ring: in his famous essay "Problems of Translation: *Onegin* in English," in which he first asserts that "[t]he clumsiest literal translation is a thousand times more useful than the prettiest paraphrase" (127), Nabokov, an ardent proponent of the literal translation, also claims that "anything but [that] is not truly a translation but an imitation, an adaptation or a parody" (134). Apparently, parody, along with imitation and adaptation, is viewed as an inferior form, something fake, distant from the original; as such, Nabokov's views are consistent with the common perception of parody as low and comedic.

Nevertheless, a closer investigation of the contiguities of translation and parody may prove worthwhile. Taking as a starting point Dryden's tripartite division of translation into literal translation (metaphrase), paraphrase, and imitation, Reuben

Brower, for example, sets out to trace "a common direction between the 'makings' of the translator and the parodist" (*Mirror on Mirror: Translation, Imitation, Parody* 1). For him, one significant similarity between the two lies in the "impurities of the motive" (5), as well as, more importantly, in playfulness, or as he says it, "in the play with and against the original" (5). While Brower treads a careful line in his argument, and does not equate translation with parody, Jorge Luis Borges, in his fiction, problematizes their relationship by blurring any obvious distinction between the two. Suzanne Jill Levine captures the complexity of this Borgesian deconstructive move succinctly:

> "Pierre Menard" [one of Borges's stories dealing with translation], is a stylized parody of the laborious bibliographic homage an obscure French provincial writer pays to his mentor Pierre Menard, an obscure French symbolist whose most fantastic project is his attempt to rewrite word-for-word, in the language of Cervantes, *Don Quixote.* Our vertigo upon reading this *ficcion* is infinite. To begin with, *Don Quixote* ... was born both as a parody (of the chivalresque novel) and a "translation." The narrator suggests in an aside that the "original" is a found manuscript written by an Arab named Cide Hamete Benengeli. That a French writer of the late nineteenth century would attempt to re-create (without plagiarizing) a seventeenth-century Spanish classic, and that an Argentine writer – Borges – would attempt to write Menard's disciple's homage, produces a *mise en abîme.* Menard's faithful rendition of a sentence from the *Quixote* turns out as different as a parody, that is, an imitation with a critical difference… (5-6)

Levine concludes that by bringing parody and translation together, Borges underscores an important similarity in their function: "to repeat the discourse of the original" (6). Moreover, in "Pierre Menard" (as well as in other stories),[102] Borges goes further; he calls into question the privileged status of the original in relation to translation, by suggesting that the original itself may be both a parody and already a translation.

Conceptualizing Translation as Parody

The conceptualization of translation as parody has been addressed in at least three other recent studies. They are Chetana Nagavajara's "Parody as Translation: The Case of Phaibun Wongthed," Annie Brisset's "Translation & Parody: Quebec Theatre in the Making," and Jonathan Evans's "At the Borders Between Translation and Parody: Lydia Davis's Story about Marie Curie." Strictly speaking, Nagavajara, who encloses the term translation in quotation marks, employs it metaphorically to denote a parodic rewording in the same language. Her focus is not so much on translation but on the sociopolitical and cultural function of parody. Brisset, on the other hand, offers a scintillating discussion of translation and parody by explaining how the identity of Québécois theater, as distinct from the French-Canadian or Anglo-Canadian, and in contrast as well to the French legacy, has been forged through translation. She analyzes a complex intersection of parody and translation, which not only allows the playwright[103] to poke fun at what she calls "the perverse effects of institutionalized bilingualism" (92) but also results in "translative entropy" (94). Although the concept of entropy in translation is not quite

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[102] For a more detailed discussion, see Waisman, *Borges and Translation: The Irreverence of the Periphery* (42).

[103] Specifically, Brisset discusses Jean-Claude Germain and his play *A Canadian Play / Une plaie canadienne.*

explained or developed, its mention not only suggests that the conflation of parody/translation has the potential to unsettle the system of perceived one-to-one correspondences, but also implies, rather counterintuitively, that communication is not always facilitated by translation. Finally, in discussing Lydia Davis's "Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman," a story presented as a translation by the translator/author who in fact did translate a biography of Marie Curie, Evans demonstrates how translation is closely intertwined with other forms of writing such as original writing, abridgement, adaptation, and parody, which complicates the seemingly fundamental dichotomies of author/translator and original/translation and thus problematizes literary representation on several levels. As well, by noting what happens when creative writing enters into the equation (i.e. Davis the translator becomes Davis the writer, and the two personas merge to create an original piece that stems from translation), Evans again raises the idea found in Brower, to wit, that the relation between translation, parody, and original writing involves playfulness.

Translation as an Object of Parody

While all three of these examples deal with the issues of translation as parody, considerably less research is available on the reverse perspective, namely, on how translation becomes an object of parody. One notable exception is Tomoko Aoyama and Judy Wakabayashi's study "Where parody meets translation." Drawing a parallel between parodies of translation, which the authors believe "constitute a mimetic sub-category within parodies" (217), and pseudo-translations, Gideon Toury's term for the texts "pretending" to be translations, Aoyama and Wakabayashi discuss various examples from Japanese literature of what they propose to call "mock translations." As the name

suggests, the main objective of these translations, which result from mistakes and

misunderstandings blamed on incompetent translators or student-translators, is

predominantly to ridicule social and cultural practices, the figure of translator and the

process of translation, and, more generally, to cast a humorous light on other problems

with understanding and conveying meaning. Their examples include instances of

"creative misunderstanding" (whereby the translator's errors are exaggerated), pedagogic

translation (i.e. translation as it is taught to students or done by students) and back-

translation (a translation of a work that has already been translated from a certain

language back into the original language). As Aoyama and Wakabayashi sum up,

"[c]ontemporary parody in the guise of translation tends to focus on the comic

possibilities of linguistic and cultural misunderstanding" (217). They suggest that "a

study of such parodies [of translation] might contribute further to our understanding of

translation in terms of the relationship between the source and target texts" (217). The

ramifications of their research, however, could be more extensive than they suggest, and

not just because parodies, as the authors point out, can both debunk and perpetuate

misconceptions (217).

Revisiting the Theory of Parody

Before studying parody's relationship with translation further, it can be useful to

look briefly at parody on its own. Proposing what he describes as "a deliberately widely

drawn definition" (37), Dentith believes that parody can be viewed as "any cultural

practice which makes relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural

production or practice" (37). He goes on to clarify that such a general definition captures

the most universal function of parody – which bears a strong resemblance to that of

translation – in "the continuance of human discourse" (ibid.), adding, however, that "the functions which parody serves can vary widely so that it is impossible to specify any single social or cultural direction for the mode" (ibid.). In her historical overview of the evolution of parody from ancient to contemporary times, Margaret A. Rose gives a useful account of how theorists in different literary schools and traditions have continued to view the comic, ridiculing aspect of parody as its defining function. For example, she quotes the Russian Formalist Boris Tomashevsky as saying that "[t]he functions of parody are many, but its usual function is to ridicule an opposing literary group, destroying its aesthetic system and exposing it" (115). In his later work, according to Rose, Tomashevsky extends his characterization of parody by including "'grotesque comic distortion" (115). On the other hand, another Russian Formalist, Viktor Shklovsky, already "lay[s] a basis for the 'late-modern' separation of parody from its more ancient comic function and structure and the reduction of it to yet another metafictional and intertextual form" (Rose 113). The idea that parody does not always necessarily equal ridicule is most effectively argued by Linda Hutcheon, who points out that the tendency to focus solely on parody's ridiculing function is rooted in the prevalence of the first meaning of the prefix *para,* which is *counter* or *against*, while its second meaning of *beside* is frequently overlooked. Hutcheon writes:

> There is nothing in *parodia* that necessitates the inclusion of the concept
> of ridicule, as there is, for instance, in the joke or *burla* of burlesque.
> Parody, then, in its ironic "trans-contextualization" and inversion, is
> repetition with difference. A critical distance is implied between the
> backgrounded text being parodied and the new incorporating work, a

distance usually signaled by irony. But this irony can be playful as well as belittling; it can be critically constructive as well as destructive. (*A History of Parody* 32)

In other words, Hutcheon, who defines parody as "another formulation, repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity" (6), states that its functions are not limited to and, in fact, go beyond ridicule. For example, she argues that parody's doubleness of "*both* form and pragmatic effect or ethos … makes it an important mode of modern self-reflexivity in literature" (34), an idea reiterated by Brian McHale, who views parody as "a form of self-reflection and self-critique, a genre's way of thinking critically about itself" (*Postmodernist Fiction* 145).[104]

Interpreting the Transmetic Episodes in *Depesh Mod* in Light of Parody

This broader conceptualization of parody can be usefully applied to Zhadan's *Depesh Mod,* allowing not only a more nuanced understanding of parody's functions and potential targets in Zhadan's novel, but also fueling a more probing theoretical exploration of the implications in general of parody for translation. To proceed, I will focus on one episode of transmesis in *Depesh Mod*.

Without a doubt, the episode featuring Johnson-and-Johnson and his interpreter, like several other episodes in Zhadan's novel, cannot but evoke laughter because the burlesque, exaggerated way in which the interpreting event is presented makes it border on absurdity. As Tarnawsky points out,

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[104] This quotation has been originally found in Rose's *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Postmodern* (240).

Zhadan accentuates the theme of false encounter with a merciless

caricature of the preacher and his translator. While the preacher offers a

familiar evangelical story of Christian hope about an accident victim who

finds salvation and physical recovery in her devotion to Christ, the

incompetent but inventive translator turns the story into one about an

unredeemed alcoholic prostitute. (269)

In addition to being a caricature, a parody of translation that blatantly exposes the

interpreter's incompetence and her misunderstanding of the speaker, the transmetic

episode in *Depesh Mod* is significant for other reasons. For example, it highlights the

problem of communication around which the entire novel, as Tarnawsky has observed, is

framed; it allows Zhadan to play with language and, in the spirit of postmodern

playfulness, to maintain the ludic tone of narration; and it invites us to question how the

newly independent Ukraine struggles to reconcile with its Soviet legacy by transplanting

western values without regard for cultural commensurability.

However, it is my contention that although this parody primarily targets the

characters of the translator-interpreter and the public speaker (i.e. Johnson-and-Johnson),

a closer examination that goes beyond the translator's incompetence may help to uncover

some deep-seated stereotypes and prejudices that shape our understanding of and attitude

towards translation. Revealing these *as* prejudices may serve to unseat them and create

openings to examine translation in a new light.

Even before the actual interpreting event begins in the novel, the stage is set for

failure when the narrator foreshadows a possible communication problem by explicitly

suggesting that the interpreter is incompetent and will hardly produce a reliable translation. The immediate and deliberate disclosure of the interpreter's alleged incompetence, despite eventually proving true, betrays a common bias towards translation as inherently fallible. It perpetuates a stereotype of mistrust towards translation, implying that, in translation, the original message is inevitably at least partially distorted. In some cases, such a mistrust is justified, as for various (objective and subjective) reasons such as qualifications, training, certification, and the logistics of the translation business, not all translators and interpreters are always prepared and qualified to offer the highest quality service. Even so, the popular preconception about translation is still grounded on the notions of loss and unreliability.

Translators or interpreters, as Harry Obst writes in his memoir *The White House Interpreter: The Art of Interpretation,* "do not only serve as scapegoats while they interpret. They sometimes are handy lightning rods" (168). Indeed, interpreters regularly find themselves in situations where ambiguity or lack of clarity on the part of the speaker are blamed on them. Daniel Gile, a translator, scholar, and former president of the European Society for Translation Studies, voices a similar concern, stating that at times interpreters "have a useful albeit painful role as scapegoats in diplomatic negotiations, allowing participants to withdraw or change positions without admitting it, by claiming they have been mistranslated" (*Basic Concepts and Models for Interpreter and Translator Training* 37).[105]

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[105] A famous case of what Obst and Gile describe occurred in 2002 at the summit of EU leaders in Brussels, when Russian president Vladimir Putin was asked by a French journalist about the killings in Chechnya. Putin responded with an angry outburst, recommending that the reporter be circumcised. While the astonished interpreter hesitated for a second, Putin continued with his tirade. A fellow interpreter picked up and finished the sentence, omitting the most infuriating comment but still mentioning the key word

A general attitude of skepticism towards translators themselves, as well as a lack of appreciation for their work, are reflected in the translator's status of "invisibility," a term famously proposed and theorized by Lawrence Venuti in his *Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. Anthony Pym, discussing "invisibility" in a later YouTube talk in which he generally concedes Venuti's point (but also tries to polemicize by trivializing the problem), observes that invisibility is a symptom of how the notion of agency in translation (someone *does*, or *performs* the translation, and this someone deserves observation, attention, research) has regularly been underestimated. Not without a note of irony (indicative of his overall skepticism about theory), Pym echoes this general attitude when he says that "[g]enerally, translation is one of those things that is considered invisible, and good to be invisible; it becomes visible when it goes wrong" (1:43-1:53). Zhadan's novel *Depesh Mod* engages this attitude as well, not in order to perpetrate it, but to say something about society and human communication. In the novel, the interpreter becomes visible (especially to the Reverend himself when he exclaims, "what is this fucking bitch translating?" 34) only when it becomes clear that something has gone wrong in the interpretation. Until then the interpreter does not even have a name: the narrator refers to her as "some dame in a gray business suit" (29).

The passage that introduces the nameless interpreter also suggests that, despite possibly broken communication, the American pastor is very well received by the audience, basks in popularity, and appears impervious to likely mistranslations. That "his

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circumcision. A YouTube video of this incident can be found at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryqrqeeTJek. Thomas Fuller's report about the incident in *The New York Times* started with the following sentence: "European Union officials struggled Tuesday to explain an embarrassing and bizarre interpreting error during the visit of President Vladimir Putin that included the omission of parts of an outburst during which the Russian leader apparently threatened to castrate those wanting to become "Islamic radicals" (par. 1).

reverence can't be bothered to correct her [because] God's revelations obviously affect his mind [and] he simply gets high during the sermon" (29) implies as well, curiously, that the Reverend could have corrected the interpreter, a possibility that has two explanations. An earlier episode reveals that the Reverend speaks "the state language" on TV and acknowledges that he is of local (Ukrainian?) descent. Even if this passes unnoticed from the perspective of narrative verisimilitude, it raises two questions from the perspective of translation: why would the speaker not correct the interpreter if he suspects that the message is distorted; and, if he can speak "the state language" (another controversial point because Zhadan takes a satiric poke at Ukraine's unofficial bilingualism by not explicitly stating that it is Ukrainian), why rely on the interpreter's service in the first place?

The fact that the Reverend does not correct his interpreter might be discarded as mere coincidence, especially because the story offers an explanation, albeit a rather unconvincing one: the Reverend was affected by God's revelation. However, there are other indicators in the text that also point to a possible redundancy of translation, suggesting that translation may in fact be utterly unnecessary or, more precisely, that its quality has little effect on the communication outcome. Strangely, the interpreter never seems to know when and what to translate. Zhadan's use of synecdoche in this context is quite purposeful and symbolic: it is not words, phrases, or sentences that the Reverend's interpreter translates, rather, it is his "every runny-nosed sob" (29), which shifts the emphasis to the realm of nonverbal (empathetic, emotional) communication. For some unknown reason, the interpreter keeps quiet when the Reverend recites from the Bible and asks her to repeat after him. One may argue that she is intimidated by the pastor or

demonstrates a negligent attitude. But when the Reverend begins to swear after spilling coffee on his white shirt, she unexpectedly "wakes up," showing attention to "detail" and trying to convey the Reverend's words to the event organizer, who unceremoniously waves her off. Unless the organizer knew that the words (a vituperative interjection) the interpreter wished to translate were inconsequential, his lack of interest only intensifies an uneasy sense that translation in this case is redundant and, quite counterintuitively, hardly facilitates communication. To return to Gile's textbook on interpretation, "interpreters sometimes serve mainly the purpose of adding prestige to the conferences where linguistic mediation is not really necessary" (37). Whether Johnson-and-Johnson's interpreter added any prestige to the event is debatable, if not unlikely. But that her work had little or no impact on the result is almost certainly true. Gile's assertion that "the correlation between satisfactory quality as perceived by a given communication actor and the level of fidelity, linguistic acceptability, clarity, or terminological accuracy of the Translator's output can be weak" (37) may help to explain the following paradox: even though Zhadan's readers and critics notice what they construe as an evidently mistranslated message, the Reverend's sermon nonetheless turns out to be fairly successful and is by no means lost in translation. The "weeping of invalids" (*Depeche Mode* 34) during the sermon, the "doofus [administrator who] looks at him [Johnson-and-Johnson] with the eyes of a man in love" (35), Johnson-and-Johnson's numerous fans, and, finally, his complete and utter satisfaction with his performance all indicate that everything went as planned and the sermon was successful. One may therefore infer that there is something more than a mere transfer of (semantic) meaning, conventionally

believed to be the foundation of translation, that defines translation's essence, shapes its so-called norms, and guarantees its success.

Other Targets of Zhadan's Parody

In addition to the interpreter, the second apparent target of Zhadan's parody is the speaker, "his reverence" Johnson-and-Johnson, whose character is satirized in several ways. For example, his deliberately evocative name, along with such descriptors as "sun on the beclouded horizon of American evangelism" (26) and "the pop-star who works the minds of all who desire it" (ibid.) paints a comical portrait of an American minister who brings a strong evangelical message that thinly veils materialistic consumerism. Johnson-and-Johnson's business-like attitude to religion (e.g. an advertising campaign), his outright rejection of tradition (e.g. "he is not some Old Believer who only holds services on weekends" 28) and an entertainment-oriented approach to worship (e.g. he hires a band to perform after his sermons), contrast sharply with the local Ukrainian cultural context, defined both by traditional Orthodox values and the Soviet repudiation of religion as "the opium of the people." More broadly, in light of the socioeconomic decay and post-Soviet depression in which the novel is set, Johnson-and-Johnson (with his gold-plated Rolex watch that Cocoa ends up stealing) epitomizes ubiquitous commercialization and commodification, the onset not of redemption but of yet another hoodwinking by capitalist sleaze.

On top of this, Johnson-and-Johnson is ridiculed for his preaching. While the narrator exposes the interpreter's incompetence immediately, he postpones judgment on the Reverend almost until the end of his sermon. Johnson-and-Johnson begins to tell a

long story about a girl from southern Connecticut who led a difficult life until she met a clergyman who advised her to open her heart to Jesus. She paid little heed to his words and continued mindlessly with her life until sustaining heavy injuries in a car accident and losing her memory. Up to this point, the plot of the Reverend's story is clear, and whereas the interpreter is already losing the thread, the Reverend seems to produce a coherent account. As the message becomes more abstract and the Reverend tries to make his main point about the Lord's revelation, however, ambiguity sets in and the preacher tergiversates as well. First, he makes a tautological statement, saying that "this was the Lord's revelation, a revelation that revealed itself to her" (34), and then he attempts, preposterously, to draw an analogy between the Lord's revelation and seafood: "the main thing is not just knowing how to catch [it], the main thing is knowing how to prepare [it]" (34). Johnson-and-Johnson further elaborates this bizarre analogy by equating the Lord's revelation with the brain of an octopus and launches into a comparison between a human being and an octopus. The outlandish analogy reaches its culmination when Johnson-and-Johnson asks the audience "And who are you?" (35) and, expecting one response, hears instead: "An octopus" (ibid.). At this point, Johnson-and-Johnson is perhaps as discombobulated as his interpreter, until he leaps to his conclusion:

> "What octopus?" Johnson-and-Johnson is confused, why an octopus? he pauses for a moment, nonplussed, but he doesn't miss the wave and **once more dives into the colorful purple sermonizing shit**:[106] correct, you are a child of God! (35)

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[106] My emphasis.

In a later self-reflective moment, Johnson-and-Johnson will question his penchant for discussing octopuses. But the absurd logic of his sermon, along with the narrator's comment, indicate to the reader of the transmetic episode that a poor translation may not only be the translator's fault, and that the original is not always a superior text whose clarity and rigor are then lost in translation.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, apart from the obvious targets discussed above, Zhadan's parodic episode is also directed – almost counterintuitively – at the reader and, by extension, at Zhadan's future translator. The parody not only helps to expose the human proclivity towards certainty of meaning, and our subconscious resistance to ambiguity, but also calls into question the widespread conceptual assumption that translation is exclusively predicated on the idea of similarity rather than on difference.

Insights from Zhadan's Transmetic Parody into Translation

The parodic translation episode in Zhadan allows for a more nuanced interrogation of the notion of creation of meaning in translation, in part because of the way it complicates the interpretive roles of the reader(s) and the problem of audience by introducing a fictional audience, those who have gathered to listen Johnson-and-Johnson, in addition to the real-world audiences who are the reader of Zhadan's novel, the critic or reviewer, the translator and the future audience for the translated novel. In any communicative act, the audience, being the recipient of information, is one of the crucial variables that affects the outcome. Nelson goes so far as to claim that writers are aware of this as they write, when she says: "[W]riters can be said to 'read' their readers – to

consider readers and the ways in which those readers may understand, misunderstand or even refute their texts" (538). In the case of a translation, the problem of audience, and more specifically the relationship between sender and recipient, become even more complicated, not just because of differences in code and channel which have to be mediated by the translator, but also due to a fundamental duality at work, particularly in the case of a novel: the original source text and the target text have different audiences. Often neglecting that the translator is in fact a member, albeit bilingual, of the target audience (given that translation is most often into one's native language) and thus subject to sharing the target audience's blind spots, many people view the translator's task as *objectively* assessing the relationship between source text and source audience – in and of itself already problematic, if not impossible – and then extrapolating this relationship to the target text and audience. Linguistic theories of translation, for example, tend to give much attention to the effect the original text produces on its audience, reasoning that, ideally, the same or similar effect on the target audience should be reproduced in the translation.[107] The cultural position of the translator had not been recognized often enough as a factor that both facilitates and blocks this reproduction.

The transmetic event of consecutive interpreting in Zhadan's novel creates an additional layer of dramatic irony, in that the reader of the novel, at least in the original Ukrainian, seems to know what Johnson-and-Johnson's audience does not: that the Reverend's message is mistranslated by his interpreter. In other words, Zhadan's monolingual mimesis of what is normally a bilingual act (i.e. his representation of

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[107] An example of a detailed step-by-step description of audience analysis can be found in Christiane Nord's *Text Analysis in Translation: Theory, Methodology, and Didactic Application of a Model For Translation-Oriented Text Analysis* (pp. 57-62).

translation by using just one language) helps to emphasize the difference between what "more than two thousand … students, pensioners, military, invalids … and businessmen" (27-28) hear from Johnson-and-Johnson's interpreter and believe to be an accurate rendition of the minister's words, and what the preacher allegedly says. This is readily evident from the comparison of Johnson-and-Johnson's and the interpreter's versions and also supported by the omniscient narrator's comments about the inaccuracy of translation and the interpreter's incompetence. Of course, the deviations and distortions – initially insignificant, almost indiscernible, but progressively more blatant and absurd – are deliberate on Zhadan's part. It would be naïve to think that Zhadan meant to create a realistic representation of the translation process, for the event is written as a biting parody. However, the exaggerated portrayal may also delude the reader into being falsely confident in the certainty of meaning. Because both original message and translation are in the same language, and are so different, the novel reader is led to believe that Johnson-and-Johnson's message is clearly mistranslated. But is a reader justified in being so confident? Let's step back a bit and look at this certainty more closely.

In many speech acts, meaning and its pragmatic aspects can be indeed identified with a good degree of certainty; if it were otherwise, communication, even between speakers of the same language, never mind communication in translation, would simply be impossible. Yet in many other speech acts, certainty of meaning is forever slipping just out of reach. Fiction provides many good examples of the challenges of grasping complete and precise meaning, which is especially true in cases of ambiguity.[108] Nonetheless, the majority of readers, and even some translators and critics, demonstrate

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[108] An excellent study of this topic is William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity*.

complacent confidence in meaning, buttressed by a very human discomfort with undecidability. This overconfidence is sometimes reflected in critical approaches to hermeneutic analysis. For example, discussing another related transmetic episode in Zhadan's novel, Tarnawsky writes: "… Kharkiv teens … , like the translator for Johnson & Johnson, hear something completely different from **what has actually been said**"[109] (270). Although, in this case Tarnawsky's assessment is correct, pretensions to knowing "what has **actually** been said" are all too typical of many translators, critics, and particularly reviewers and readers of translations, including myself, who, based on their conviction about meaning, may then agree or disagree that a certain part in the original corresponds to its respective part in the translation. In literary studies, which deals primarily with monolingual acts of reading, writing and interpretation, a belief in the full presence and certainty of meaning has been largely rejected since post-structuralist thinkers, most notably Derrida, Barthes, and Foucault, effectively debunked the idea of a fixed connection between the signifier and the signified and, concomitantly, unseated the concept of the stability of meaning. However, in translation studies, "what has actually been said" has continued to retain validity because many theoreticians and practitioners still cling to the belief that "what has been said" is exactly what must then be reproduced in the translation. In fact, given the purpose and nature of translation, and even the etymology of the word *translation*, the inability to clearly identify the root of this act of "carrying across/over," in other words, to put one's finger on the signified, threatens the entire discipline by ultimately suggesting untranslatability. To bring the very "truth" of meaning into question would shake the usual foundation of the discipline of translation.

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[109] My emphasis.

Or, at least, it would subject the generally accepted tenets of translation to renewed investigation that would not allow such blissful certainty to function unquestioned.

If that were not enough, further difficulties are in the works for the discipline. The parody of translation by means of distorted paraphrasing in the same language, as in Zhadan's transmetic episode, commands attention to an even more philosophical and controversial question in translation studies: that of sameness and difference. According to Aoyama and Wakabayashi, "… it is clear that, unless there is a certain degree of (distorted) resemblance between a parody and the text genre or textual practice being parodied, the parody is doomed to failure" (218). However, they also stress that parody's real motivation lies precisely in emphasizing difference (219), which is also paramount in Hutcheon's definition of parody, quoted earlier. In Zhadan's novel, the parody is successful and thought-provoking not only because of the "distorted resemblance" that can be easily recognized, but also because the text creates an interesting dynamic between parody and translation through its paradoxical juxtaposition of and an interplay between two incompatible and opposite concepts of sameness and difference.

Quoting Brisset's article on Québec theater (discussed earlier), Aoyama and Wakabayashi partially misconstrue Brissset's argument when they conclude that she believes in translation and parody being "mutually exclusive" (218). Brisset actually writes:

> Indeed, translation basically aims at a perfect coincidence between the
> original and the translated text, and thus excludes any palimpsestic effect.
> Parody, on the other hand, demands that the hypotext be recognizable in

the hypertext, that is to say it demands that that which is parodied be

present in the parody itself. (94)

Underscoring the different agendas of parody and translation, Brisset apparently sees

potential in cases of unusual fusion of the two, similar to the one found in Zhadan. She

proceeds to analyze *A Canadian Play / Une plaie canadienne* by Jean-Claude Germain

and suggests that it presents a case of "entropy in the translation operation" (94), a

concept that may also be applied to *Depesh Mod.*

In the novel, the interpretation of Johnson-and-Johnson's sermon gets out of

control and becomes progressively more disordered, following an unusual trajectory from

being seemingly similar to the original (i.e. at first, the interpreter at least tries to create

an illusion of sameness) to being blatantly different from it (i.e. at the end, the sermon

and the interpreter's version are two distinctly different stories). In Jean-Claude Germain,

in Brisset's analysis, the increased disorder that characterized entropy ensues from an

attempted "semantic" translation (i.e. the translation of "what is actually said") from

English into French of the first part of the play's title, which surprisingly results in a

"radical semantic opposition" (94). In Zhadan's case, the parodic entropy leads to an

even more "radical" situation and begs the question whether sameness can ever be

achieved in the same language,[110] not to mention two different languages. The phrase

"perfect coincidence" in Brisset's quotation also reminds us of an alarming preconception

of translation: despite all the contextual, temporal, cultural, and linguistic differences, the

expectation of sameness nonetheless continues to persist both among practitioners and

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[110] In other words, can a paraphrase ever be completely precise?

readers. Gill Paul, for example, in her introduction to an otherwise insightful collection *Translation in Practice: A Symposium*[111] falls into this aporia when she writes, "A translation should have **the same**[112] virtues as the original, and inspire **the same** response in its readers. It must reflect cultural differences, while drawing parallels that make it accessible, and it must achieve a fine balance between the literal and the suggestive, the story and its melody" ("Introduction: The Aim of a Good Translation" 1). In fact, eliciting the same response in a new audience is neither possible *nor desirable*. I believe that there is something else at stake here that cannot be approached through the lens of sameness.

In juxtaposing sameness and difference and pushing their opposition to the extreme by exaggerating the latter, Zhadan's parody of translation reveals the inadequacy of the notion of sameness. It not only rules out the possibility of "a perfect coincidence" in translation but also helps to subvert the expectation of sameness. Others have probed this as well. Understanding that sameness as an absolute concept would be problematic (even if it were declared only as an ideal, though realistically unattainable, objective of translation), Tymoczko tries to qualify the problem by drawing a distinction between sameness (for which she uses the synonymous term *identity*) and similarity, the latter being, in her view, a more appropriate term due to its plurality and variability. Tymoczko explains that "translation equivalence is a form of similarity rather than identity. Like similarity in any domain … , the range of possible similarities that can be perceived and constructed in the process of translating is large and the possible ways of constructing

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[111] Paul's collection is not a scholarly work per se but is rather a "collection of summaries, suggestions, and instructions from leading literary translators and publishers" (back cover).
[112] Both emphases mine.

similarity in the translation of any text are highly variable" ("Translation Theory" 3).

Nevertheless, given the semantic contiguity between such concepts as sameness,

similarity, resemblance, likeliness, and affinity – for example, the OED defines the word

similar as "of the **same** substance or structure throughout; homogeneous"[113] as well as

"having a marked resemblance or likeness; of a like nature or kind" – Tymoczko's

readers risk being stuck with her in the very paradigm she is struggling to break out of. It

is Serhiy Zhadan, in bringing to the fore the complexities of the dichotomy of sameness

and difference via the parody of translation in his transmetic episode in *Depesh Mod*,

who invites a serious epistemological reconsideration of the relationship between the

original and the translation.

The Challenges of Translating Transmesis: How *Depesh Mod* Becomes *Depeche Mode*

The English translator of *Depesh Mod* Myroslav Shkandrij, professor of Slavic

Studies at the University of Manitoba, must have faced numerous challenges of

untranslatability, ranging from cultural notions and youth slang to profanity and the so-

called *surzhyk* (or pidgin Ukrainian, an ungrammatical variety of Ukrainian based on a

mixture of Ukrainian syntax and pronunciation with Russian vocabulary). But perhaps

one of the most daunting tasks has been the translation of the transmetic episodes in

which Zhadan plays with the process of translation (from Ukrainian into English), uses

various English borrowings in Ukrainian, and has the translator make mistakes, among

other things.

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[113] My emphasis.

Unlike Yuri Andrukhovych, who uses English words (rather than just transliterations or transcriptions) in his novel *Perverziia,* thereby leaving the English translator with the limited options of italicizing the words or providing footnotes to indicate that they were originally in English, Zhadan does not incorporate any English in his novel (except for "Depeche Mode's" single, titled "I feel you," which is quoted in English). Instead, he uses a different technique of imprecise paraphrasing and deliberate distortions. One explanation for this difference between the two writers may be that the events in *Perverziia* take place primarily abroad and Andrukhovych purposely plays both with foreignness and various multilingual settings, while Zhadan's novel is set in Ukraine, and his linguistic depiction of "otherness" emerges in the Ukrainian context. In the sermon episode, however, Zhadan uses a different method of creating an air of foreignness, by inserting into the Ukrainian text what might be called "domesticated English borrowings": English words transliterated in the Cyrillic alphabet and used as if they were really Ukrainian lexemes, following the declension and conjugation patterns of Ukrainian.

For example, upon arrival in Kharkiv, Johnson-and-Johnson makes a TV appearance:

…він дав інтерв'ю на найпопулярнішому міському **тіві**[114]… (28)	… he was interviewed on the most popular **TV station** … (28-29)

Further, Johnson-and-Johnson is described as a WASP, a transliterated acronym for *White Anglo-Saxon Protestant,* a concept unfamiliar to an average Ukrainian reader:

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[114] Here and below, all emphases in bold are mine.

| …але загалом є **васпом**, себто стовідсотковим білим з Техасу, … | … but in general [he] was a **WASP**, meaning a hundred-percent white from Texas … |
| (28) | (29) |

Preparing for his appearance in the dressing room, Johnson-and-Johnson

| …голосно рецитує щось із **голі байбла** | … loudly recited something from **De Holy Bible** |
| (29) | (30) |

And when Johnson-and-Johnson spills coffee on his shirt, he exclaims:

| … **шіт**, говорить, **факін шіт**… | … shit, he says, **fucking shit**… |
| (29) | (30) |

Although these words and expressions in themselves do not constitute any translation difficulty in terms of semantics, the translator chooses to transfer them directly from the Ukrainian into the English-speaking context; as a result, the words blend in morphologically, which alters the role they perform in the English-language text. In the Ukrainian original, they stand out and draw attention to themselves by signaling an element of foreignness associated with the American pastor's visit. In the translation, however, they vanish amid other words in the sentence, and are undetectable. Much like the pastor himself, who comes to a Christian country about which he knows little, and then tries to impose new values and a new style of worship, these lexemes in the Ukrainian text metaphorically mark an intrusion of Englishness into the Ukrainian language. In a sense, they also reflect a popular linguistic tendency, a corollary of globalization, whereby English vocabulary infiltrates other languages, replacing original words even in those concepts for which native words exist. For example, Zhadan might have used the word *телебачення* (*telebachennia*, meaning "television"), but he chooses to transliterate the English word *TV* in Ukrainian (e.g. *тіві*), which not only looks

unusual (as this form, unlike many English words, has not quite caught on yet in Ukraine) but also creates an interesting tension with the modifiers that describe it. On the one hand, *TV* works well with the word *найпопулярніший* (*naipopuliarnishyi*, meaning "the most popular), but on the other one, adding a slight ironic twist to the global/local binary, it contrasts with *міському* (*miskomu,* which in this context can be translated as *local*, or verbatim, *city TV*). The latter word, *міському* (*miskomu*) is for some reason missing in the translated phrase "on the most popular TV station" (28-29), which technically should read "on the most popular local TV." While this omission is only a minor technicality, the possibilities and difficulties of capturing the transmetic details of language mixing in the English translation do warrant a closer look.

That Shkandrij recognizes the existence of the problem of transmesis is evident from his creative attempt to capture Zhadan's performative gesture in his translation. Zhadan writes:

Преподобний накручує себе в гримерці, ковтає якісь пігулки, п'є багато кави без кофеїну, і голосно рецитує щось **із голі байбла**, примушуючи перекладачку повторювати, перекладачка понуро мовчить… (29)	His reverence gets himself psyched up in the dressing room, swallows some kind of pills, drinks a lot of decaf coffee, loudly recited something **from De Holy Bible**, telling the interpreter to repeat after him, the interpreter stays darkly silent… (30)

Here the narrator is almost trying to "help" the interpreter, who refuses to do her job, by borrowing the word combination *the Holy Bible* and not only transliterating it in Ukrainian but also declining it as if it were a Ukrainian noun. Moreover, in addition to cleverly imitating the process of linguistic borrowing, underscoring how unnatural these words sound "without translation," Zhadan might be also ridiculing the shift in gender: the Ukrainian word for bible, *біблія* (*bibliia)* is a feminine noun, but as a result of

transliteration it becomes masculine: *голі байбл (holi baibl).* To capture these nuances, Shkandrij plays with the pronunciation of the definite article and comes up with "De Holy Bible." What this translation may indicate to the English reader, and whether the effect or function of Zhadan's English insertions in Ukrainian can be captured or preserved when the text is rendered into English, however, are perhaps not the right questions to ask; there can be no definitive answers. Yet Shkandrij's solution may not be the best; it appears to an English reader to resemble a southern American Black underclass vernacular, not a foreignizing element that disrupts the language of the text. As such, there is clearly room for a translator to be more creative and to further explore and play with the potential of English in order to contribute something new to the language of the translated text, and offer something that is noticeable by the English-language reader. One possible approach is to assume that Zhadan's insertions are not transliterated English words, but are translated by an interpreter with a strong Slavic accent, which may very likely be the case in the novel. For example, *TV* might thus become, in the English translation, "tee-vee" or "teliveezhn," while *the Holy Bible* could be rendered as "ze Wholly Bible."

The easiest target for further experimentation is Johnson-and-Johnson's foul language, which Zhadan also presents transmetically. A closer study of the Ukrainian transliteration of English phonemes in the Ukrainian original suggests that Slavs generally find it difficult to distinguish between the long /iː/ (as in *deed*) and short /ɪ/ (as in *did)* sounds, which creates another opportunity for a translator to render the transliterated words by playing with the interpreter's pronunciation. Whereas what Johnson-and-Johnson would say in reality is "shit, fucking shit" – and this is precisely

what Shkandrij's English translation conveys – in the Ukrainian text, the way the interpreter translates it is closer to "sheet, fuckin sheet," which is amusing in and of itself as well as in the context of the language of the paragraph.

Another place ripe for further intervention by the translator can be found in the passage that introduces Johnson-and-Johnson:

… сонце на затуманеному небосхилі нового американського проповідництва, **зірка** найбільш масових приходів на всьому Західному побережжі, лідер Церкви Ісуса (об'єднаної), **поп-стар**, який вправляє мізки всім, хто цього прагне… (27)	… sun on the beclouded horizon of American evangelism, **star** of the biggest mass euphorias (sic) on the West coast, leader of the Church of Jesus (United), **the pop-star** who works the minds of all who desire it… (28)

Here, Zhadan also imitates translation by actually performing it when his narrator first uses the Ukrainian word for *star*: "зірка найбільш масових приходів"[115] (star of the best-attended parishes) and then extends the celestial imagery by transliterating the word *pop-star* in Ukrainian alphabet. While it would be difficult to feature the performative aspect of transliteration in the English translation as prominently as it is in Ukrainian, a translator might produce a sense of play that disturbs the English by including a parenthetical joke, for example, "the pop-star (or as the dame kept pronouncing it, 'poop-star') who work the minds…" Although this suggestion may be viewed as an attempt to hyper-translate, it both fits contextually (e.g. later the narrator will comment that Johnson-and-Johnson "dives into the colorful purple sermonizing shit" (35) and is in line with the jocular and bumbling tone of the entire passage.

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[115] Shkandrij misunderstands the word *прихід* (*prykhid*), which means *parish,* and translates it as *euphoria*. This mistranslation, however, can be justified because Zhadan himself translates this word from the Russian *приход* (*prikhod*)*,* for which the correct Ukrainian is *парафія* (*parafia*) or *парохія* (*parokhia*)*,* both derived from the Greek *παροικία* (*parokia*).

Johnson-and-Johnson's proclivity for spicing his speech with expletives is reflected in the original Ukrainian through the repetition of the word *факін* (*fakin*), a transliterated and truncated version of the English swear word. Thanks to Hollywood movies and the Internet, today it needs no translation in any language and should be recognizable to most Ukrainian readers. But while the pastor uses it emphatically, discussing the octopus, for example, or when he "suddenly thinks, what is this fucking bitch translating?" (34), the expletive acquires a much harsher, more explicit sound in the English translation. In Ukrainian, it is, figuratively speaking, "masked" by appearing in Cyrillic letters but without translation, as if it were a euphemism.

Johnson-and-Johnson is not the only character in the novel prone to swearing. In fact, Zhadan has been criticized for his abundant use of profanity. The obscene language that permeates *Depesh Mod* is instrumental in constructing its uniqueness, by imbuing Zhadan's writing with a certain kind of freedom of expression, typical primarily of youth culture. Profanity in *Depesh Mod* does not only reflect intimacy between friends. By eliminating the barrier of linguistic taboo, it also serves to strike an emotional chord with the reader and, concomitantly, allows Zhadan to displace the novel from the social background of the recent era of censorship.[116] The ubiquitous swearing of Zhadan's protagonists creates numerous translation problems for Shkandrij, not only due to the rather complex and nuanced system of Ukrainian swear words, which are often derived

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[116] During Soviet times, for example, Zhadan's novel would have had little chance of being published. Compared to Andrukhovych's mild use of profanity in his bold and scandalous 1992 *Recreatsii,* which led to a heated debate regarding the language that should be used in belles lettres, Zhadan's novel can be called an "encyclopedia of scurrilousness."

from Russian, but also because more idiomatic (less literal, more domesticated) ways of rendering swear words often tone them down or, conversely, juice them up.

Another significant translational challenge in rendering the ways that Johnson-and-Johnson's interpreter (mis)translates his sermon in Ukrainian is worthy of exploration. It lies in the need to not only expose the interpreter's mistakes by making the interpretation different from Johnson-and-Johnson's original sermon – a rather straightforward task – but also to capture the subtle (often humorous) nuances, originating from the multiple ambiguities, puns, and double entendres. For example, the Reverend says, "Господь маніпуляціями своїх божественних рук зібрав нас тут до купи!" (31), which Shkandrij translates thus: "Through the manipulation of his divine hands, the Lord has gathered us here together" (31). Evidently, the interpreter offers a rather "free" rendition of this message when she restructures the sentence with omissions: "(Господь проробив певні маніпуляції, – перекладає вона. – Купу)" (31). The verbatim translation of her sentence into English is "(The Lord has completed certain manipulations, she translates, [which resulted in] a pile." In Shkandrij's translation it reads, "(The Lord has made certain manipulations, she translates. A whole pile of them" (31). In addition to meaning "a great amount of something," the Ukrainian word *купа* (*kupa*, literally, "pile" or "heap") in this context conjures up the collocation "a pile of manure" (or "a heap of shit"), thereby creating a witty ambivalence. But this translation is amusing not only because of Zhadan's punning on the Ukrainian words *докупи* (*dokupy*, "together") and *купа* (*kupa*, "pile"), which share the same stem, but also because it subtly

implies that the manipulations result in nothing worthwhile, and, by extension, that the Reverend may be treating his audience accordingly.[117]

If the translator chooses to remain "faithful" to the original by simply rendering the word *купа* (*kupa*) in English, which is what Shkandrij does as "pile," the jocosity and the subtle echoes of the original passage will not be fully reflected in the English text; on the lexical level the words *together* and *pile* do not create a witty interplay in English, as they do in Ukrainian. In order to ensure that the translation is coherent and have *the pile* clearly refer to *the manipulations*, (this is not so explicit in the original), Shkandrij specifies that it is "**a whole** pile **of them**" (31).**[118]** Although the figurative meanings of "large amount" do overlap in both languages, connotations of the word "pile" in English and in Ukrainian are different. Whereas in English the noun "pile" carries multiple meanings and can additionally serve both as a transitive and intransitive verb, in Ukrainian it is strictly a noun, from which the adverbial form *докупи* (*dokupy*, "together") derives. Zhadan exploits this grammatical property to create a play on words. The English idiom "to make a pile," in the sense of "to make a fortune," which emerges from Shkandrij's phrasing, is not present at all in the Ukrainian text, which is doing something quite different. A better solution, perhaps, would be just to use an English idiom for a whole lot of valueless matter, and then allow the ambiguity to stand: "The Lord has made certain manipulations to gather us together, she translates, a shitpile."

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[117] "Accordingly" in this context suggests that the pastor may treat his audience badly (i.e. "like shit") or that he doesn't care ("doesn't give a shit"), which, judging from his frequent use of the word "shit," is very likely.

[118] The emphasis indicates that these words are absent in the original.

Here the reader could (comically) not be sure if she's calling the crowd a "shitpile" or merely referring to the quantity of manipulations.

Adopting a more playful approach to this sentence in order to explores links between the words *manipulations, together,* and *pile* may be more effective in terms of possibilities. One idea is to explore the phonetic similarity between the final syllables of the words *manipulation* and *copulation* or *manipulation* and *masturbation*, which would not only create a realistic impression of the interpreter's confusing of words but at the same time convey some ironic and irreverent undertones in the grandiloquent speech of the Reverend and the bumbling abbreviations of the interpreter.[119] A possible translation may read as follows: "In an act of divine manipulation, the hands of the Lord have brought us here together. (In gathering us in his act of divine masturbation, the Lord has pulled it off, she translates.)" Such a translation produces in English the slightly obscene and comic effect of interpreter's confusion, the redundancy in the Reverend's speech, and the slightly stilted ambiguity present in the Ukrainian version of the interpreter's work. Or the translator could play on an English word related to *manipulations*, such as *maneuvers*, and create slightly obscene echoes, as in "In an act of divine maneuvers, the Lord has gathered us, a pile of manu…." or "In compliance with his divine manipulations, we are gathered here together in a pile."

In a second example highlighting ambiguity and double meaning, the Reverend proclaims, "Господи, кажу я! … Подивись на цих людей, котрі тут зібрались цього

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[119] Johnson-and-Johnson's sentence about the Lord gathering people through the manipulation of his divine hands is not only redundant (i.g. *manipulation* implies *hands*) but also deliberately pretentious and grandiloquent.

ранку!” (31), which literally translates as “Oh Lord, I say! Look at these people who have gathered here this morning.” According to the interpreter's version, the sentence is not only condensed but it also sounds rather dubious: “(Він каже – ‘Господи’. … Зранку вже зібрались)” (31). The verbatim translation into English of the interpreter's words is “(He says, ‘Oh Lord’ … They already joined together in the morning).” In Shkandrij's translation, which is very close to verbatim, this sentence reads, “He says, ‘Lord’ … They gathered early this morning” (31-32). In his almost literal, though technically accurate, version the playful ambivalence of the Ukrainian sentence, resulting from impishly different interpretations of the main verb “зібрались” (*zibralys*, “gathered” or “joined” or “got ready”) disappears.

Throughout his sermon, Johnson-and-Johnson tries to maintain a devout and inspirational tone, while the interpreter's tone, conversely, becomes gradually more condescending and vulgar. This pejorative attitude on the interpreter's part is reflected not so much through semantics but through syntax. Whereas the original subordinate clause “котрі тут зібрались цього ранку” ‘[people] who have gathered here this morning’ used by Johnson-and-Johnson has direct word order, the interpreter's “Зранку вже зібрались” ‘In the morning already [have they] gathered’ is not only an inversion but also an elliptical construction with the subject left unstated and merely implied. Although the pragmatic function played by this inversion is open to interpretation, the interpreter's translation adds a somewhat negative connotation to the verb, implying that the attendees have gathered for freebies or to see a show or maybe even (which might be an exaggeration) that they are up rather early to get drunk.

Besides the difference in tone, two common tendencies in consecutive interpreting are also held up for ridicule in the above sentence. The first one is the proclivity of novice interpreters to use indirect speech where the first person is used by the speaker, which happens as a result of trying to "distance" the messenger (i.e. the interpreter now uttering the words) from the speaker's message. For example, when Johnson-and-Johnson says "Lord, I say" (31), the interpreter phrases it inaccurately, using indirect speech, e.g. "He says 'Lord'" (31-32). The second tendency is a common propensity among interpreters for omitting information that they either fail to comprehend or believe to be inconsequential, in part to help keep pace with the speaker. Whereas these metalinguistic details may have been incorporated unwittingly by Zhadan, the resulting sentence evokes laughter primarily because the interpreter's use of reverse word order may imply the infeasibility of gathering such a large crowd on a weekday morning when people are supposed to be at work (suggesting, perhaps, that these people are always idle and just awaiting a chance to make merry) as well as betraying her condescending attitude toward the audience.[120]

Translation of this seemingly short and simple sentence into English is problematic for a number of reasons. While seeking equivalences on either semantic or syntactic levels is a priori ineffective, interpreting the sentence explicitly in a certain way (i.e. making the joke obvious) is also a debatable strategy. Even if it allows the translator to capture some humor, it eliminates the ambiguity of the original in favor of a specific reading. In other words, even if one were to use poetic license to justify modification of

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[120] There are other textual clues in the passage to support this conclusion. For example, after the sermon she says, "(… Don't forget your things, she adds, and get those fucking invalids out of here)" (35).

both the Reverend's and the interpreter's sentences, solely making the interpreter's mistranslation funny would not be sufficient; ideally, it also needs to be ambiguous in order to allow the English reader to keep the interpretative options open. One option a translator might consider is to rework the entire exchange, substituting wordplay that is easier to work with in English, i.e.: "Look at these thirsty people, oh Lord. They are here to get a drink of your living water. (Look at these rusty people, oh Lord. They are here to get a drink and won't be leaving without it.)" A downside of such an approach, however well it may produce a humorous effect, is that it hypertranslates in alluding to the concept of "living water" from a passage in the Gospel (*New International Version*, John 4.10-11) and in playing with phonetic similarities between "rusty" and "thirsty" as well as with a feasible (and appropriately Slavic) confusion of the pronunciation of the English words "living" and "leaving." The result is that such a translation would explicitly have the crux of the joke rest on drinking. In the original Ukrainian, however, the joke is far less straightforward.

When Johnson-and-Johnson later tries to make a strong point about the love of Jesus by telling an inspirational real-life story, he says: "Я хочу розповісти вам одну історію, я хочу вам показати на конкретному прикладі, щоб ви зрозуміли, що я маю на увазі" (31), which literally means "I'd like to tell you a story and I'd like to show/illustrate with a specific example so that you can understand what I mean." While in itself this opening sentence does not say much (except that a story will follow) and serves primarily as a transition to the main point, in the interpreter's condensed and confused translation it acquires a new, unexpected tinge of meaning. She says, "Я хочу вам, наприклад, показати, ви розумієте що я маю на увазі" (31), which reads

verbatim as "I'd like to show you, for example. You understand what I mean." In Shkandrij's translation, the full passage reads as follows: "I want to tell you a story, I want to show you a concrete example, so that you might understand what I have in mind. (For example, I want to show you – you understand what I have in mind)" (32). From this translation, which seems to capture the meaning accurately, it appears as though the only omission the interpreter makes is the phrase "a concrete example." But what at first glance may be considered a translation that semantically and syntactically approximates the original, does not succeed in conveying a witty ambiguity, for the Reverend's interpreter's slight omission actually changes the meaning of his message. As in the two previous examples, here Zhadan relies on use of ambiguity and any definitive readerly interpretation of his phrasing is not possible. Implications of the interpreter's emphasis on the verb *показати* (*pokazaty*, "to show") range from a hint of exhibitionism, of machismo, to other elliptical sexualized gestures of power that exist in a whole plethora of idiomatic expressions in Slavic languages. Examples in Ukrainian include *показати, де раки зимують* and *показати, на чому горіхи ростуть*.[121] Based on metaphorical images that are generally untranslatable directly, both idioms carry the sense of "show them who the boss is," "show them who wears the pants here." Perhaps, one of the most notable idioms with the verb *to show* in Russian is attributed to Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev who, during the 1960 UN General Assembly, pounded his shoe on the table and threatened the US and other western governments to "показать кузькину мать."[122] It

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[121] Literally, "to show [a place] where crawfish spend winters" and "to show [a tree] on which nuts grow," respectively.

[122] Verbatim, "to show someone Kuzka's mother," Kuzka being a diminutive form of a male proper name Kuzma.

roughly translates into English as "we'll show you where to get off" (Ivanov 12).[123] What the Reverend intended to "show" by giving an example or emphasizing to his devotees who the boss is remains unclear. Once again, the problem for the English translator is one of recreating ambiguity and preserving the transmetic mode of possible confusion on the interpreter's part. One solution, however imperfect, may be found in the English homonym *mean*, which as a verb stands for "denoting" or "signifying" and as an adjective for the quality of being "nasty" or "obnoxious." Moreover, on the denotative level the verb *to mean* is also contextually fitting because it is precisely the word the Reverend uses in the sentence. Based on this ambiguity, a translation into English may then be the following: "I'd like to tell you a story and draw a specific example so that you can understand better what I mean. (I'd like to tell you a story and draw a specific example. And you'd better watch out because I'm mean.)" In contrast, Shkandrij's translation weakens the ambiguity and the seeming threat, and loses the humor.

The analysis of the various translation challenges to be found in just this one short episode of consecutive interpreting in *Depesh Mod* suggests that the reliance on the usual translational strategies of "staying close to the original," attempting to find semantic or syntactic correlates, and various techniques of compensation (replacing a meaning, form, or function of the original that cannot be produced in the translation with a "similar" or "equivalent" element in the target language) tends to strip the translation of the rich

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[123] This translation is a euphemism for a more emotional Russian expression. According to William J. Tompson, "Khruschev himself began to beat the tabletop with his shoe. The Assembly's presiding officer broke his gavel attempting to restore order, but the unflappable Macmillan simply requested a translation" (230). One may only wonder what the English interpreter came up with in this situation and, even more importantly, what the English-speaking audience inferred from whatever the translation was. According to one explanation, "During his impassioned speech, Khrushchev repeated the phrase, but this time the interpreters translated it differently, borrowing another phrase that Khrushchev was famous for using, 'We will bury you'" (Muskin, section "Kuzka's mother in the Cold War," par. 2).

nuances of meaning present in the original, and risks reducing the zany complexity of Zhadan's parody to mere pinpointing of the interpreter's constant errors. I believe, however, that the novel is ill served by such an approach, though it fulfills all the conventional expectations of a translator. To deal fully and amply with the complexity of instances of transmesis in fiction, rather, requires that a translator engage and learn from all the above techniques and then, additionally, take distance from the original to risk playing with meanings in the target language. The element of play here is crucial and transmesis points us there: as a novelist plays, and so must the translator play as well.

Depesh Mod as a "Novel in/of Translation"

The transmetic episode with Johnson-and-Johnson and the interpreter of his sermon is not the only representation of translation in Serhiy Zhadan's novel *Depesh Mod*. Zhadan mines translation again in the second part of the book entitled "The River That Flows Against Its Own Current," in an episode that not only sheds light on the novel's title but also offers clues as to how the transmetic episodes may guide us in interpretation of the novel as a whole. After examining that episode, a closer study of Zhadan's use of the Ukrainian language in the book helps support the surprising conclusion that the entire novel *Depesh Mod,* even in the original, exists in translation.

In this second part of the book, the narrator and his friends Vasia and Dogg Pavlov,[124] still trying to find Karbiurator, follow up on a lead from their acquaintance

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[124] The character's nickname *Собака* (*Sobaka*, literally "dog") – translated by Shkandrij as "Dogg" – alludes to the Nobel-winning Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov, whose experiments on dogs and food are well known. Dogg's real name is Vitaly Pavlov. Zhadan's narrator plays with this nickname when he says that "старого-доброго Собаку-Павлова … тут знає кожен собака, тобто кожен сержант **з рацією**…" (16), which Shkandrij translates, omitting the word radio, as ("good-old Dogg Palvov … whom even all the dogs here know, which is to say every sergeant." (17)

Marusia and end up in the apartment of Gosha, a local newspaper editor. At Gosha's,

they find Cocoa,[125] who informs them that Karbiurator has gone to a Soviet-style summer

camp, a godforsaken place in the outskirts of the province, and advises them to take a

night train there. Having nowhere to go until the train leaves, the friends wait in the

apartment and send Dogg to fetch some vodka. After smoking pot, they discover an old

radio-record player and begin listening to a youth radio program with the bizarre, in fact

ridiculous, title "Музична Толока" ("Muzychna Toloka"),[126] which Shkandrij translates

as "Musical Partners," (150) even though the word *толока* (*toloka*) in Ukrainian has two

specific meanings: *pasture field* or *communal work*. According to the host of the

broadcast, the program will be dedicated to the famed "Irish" band (actually English,

though the name of the lead singer, likewise English, is of Irish Gaelic origin,

transliterated into English) Depeche Mode*,* but – to the astonishment of the friends – no

Depeche Mode music is played. Instead, the host presents a purported biography of the

group's lead singer, Dave Gahan, interspersed with songs about mother by the Ukrainian

singer-songwriter Stepan Haliabarda.[127] Here is an excerpt from the Shkandrij translation,

illustrating the host's introduction:

> And our program today, I remind you, is dedicated to the work of the well-
>
> known Irish group Depeche Mode. The program is based on the research
>
> in David Bascombe's documentary *God as Heroin*, published this year in

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[125] The character who steals Johnson-and-Johnson's Rolex, and who, as the friends suspect, is in a homosexual relationship with Gosha.

[126] This was a real radio show, produced by the Lviv Radio Company. A sample broadcast going back to the 1990 can be accessed at this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qK20kshfQ8

[127] Stepan Haliarbarda, whose name is not capitalized in the novel, is a real person, poet, singer and songwriter in a traditional crooner style, often heard on the radio. More on Haliabarda can be found in a YouTube interview here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6E-orNnc1A. His work is somewhat comparable to that of Englebert Humperdinck in English, but not to new wave electronic rock music!

the British Isles and **lovingly**[128] translated and sent to us by our London

editors. And so, Depeche Mode (a musical insert can be heard, I suspect

by the same stepan haliabarda, because we turn into zombies again).[129]

The work of these lads from Ulster[130] has long been popular with our

youth. So what is the secret of the success enjoyed by these completely

unknown boys, who grew up in the very centre of Ireland's cesspool?

Together with you, dear listeners, we will try to find an answer. (151)

The story that follows bears a suspiciously uncanny resemblance to the interpreter's

translation of Johnson-and-Johnson's sermon. What begins as a typical bio piece soon

becomes an account not only full of obscene detail but one that is less and less credible.

Initially, an illusion of verisimilitude is created by the reference to the fictitious

biographer David Bascombe,[131] to whom a made-up documentary with a hardly

believable title (*God as Heroin)* is also attributed.

As the story continues, however, numerous deviations, digressions, and especially

instances of vulgarity[132] betray that this biography can't possibly be real (or at least that it

fails to meet anybody's expectation of what an account of a life should be). Although

technically about music, the biography appears to be written from a postcolonial

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[128] My emphasis. Despite sharing the same root with the word *love,* here the Ukrainian word *люб'язно* should be translated as *kindly,* not *lovingly.*

[129] The parenthetical insertion is the narrator's speech.

[130] They are actually from Essex, in England.

[131] Bascombe, in fact, was a producer of Depeche Mode's 1980s album *Music for the Masses*, not a biographer, a detail that most readers, especially those in Ukraine, would only be able to discover on the Internet.

[132] For example, claiming that Dave was named in honor of St. Dave, the biography brings up the struggle between Irish loyalists and "British colonialists" in Ulster, adding that "[e]ven to this day Irish football fanatics, when going to the stadium to support their beloved team collectively sing 'Saint Dave, fuck the Catholic devils today'" (152).

perspective and centers upon Northern Ireland's struggle for independence. Though the group was popular in Ireland (and throughout Europe, and even travelled in Eastern Europe), it was in fact English, so this already is a major confabulation. The host goes on to claim that Dave was named in honor of St. Dave, "who, as is well-known, is the patron of Irish partisans and a symbol of this small – as compared to us[133] – people in its struggle with British colonialists" (152). St. David is actually the patron saint of Wales, another early Celtic nation colonized by the British. Further, the radio host adds another piquant aside: "[e]ven to this day Irish football fanatics, when going to the stadium to support their beloved team collectively sing 'Saint Dave, fuck the Catholic devils today'" (152). The host, discomfited by having to recite these startling, embarrassing, and defamiliarizing (to use a formalist term) passages in the text, shuns responsibility and repeatedly blames the translation. In the following passage he even tries to fix what he believes to be a mistranslation:

> The future performing artist's first emotional impressions were associated with an event during the forcible dispersal throughout the Catholic areas of a First of May demonstration – traditional for Irish separatists[134] – mounted British police raped Dave's dad … no the host suddenly stumbles – not his dad. His Mom. Yes – Dave's mom. Excuse me, dear radio listeners, this information was translated for us by our colleagues in the London editorial office, so some stylistic inaccuracies are possible. (153)

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[133] This aside is not in the original. The comparison most likely refers to Ukrainians.

[134] In fact, there is no such Irish celebration. May 1 in Ireland is May Day, a traditional spring feast across Europe. March 1, however, is St. David's Day in Wales! Again Zhadan hilariously concocts a mythology that is a mishmash of postcolonial history and a pastiche of misapprehensions, which is another kind of translation, this time of history.

Coincidentally, the host's correction (e.g. mom, not dad) also gives him an opportunity to play not a piece by Depeche Mode but yet another syrupy song by Stepan Haliabarda, entitled "My Mom."[135]

In another instance, explaining how, after his father's death, Dave took interest in music, the host reads:[136]

Тоді ж він уперше знайомиться із наркокультурою, і це — за словами співака — стає одним із найбільш приємних відкриттів у його житті… Ні, — раптом поправляється ведучий, — мабуть, усе-таки не наркокультурою. Просто — культурою. А, мать його так, — врешті обламується він правити своїх колег із лондонської редакції, і далі вже читає з аркуша, що там є. (160)	At that time he first encountered narcoculture, and this, according to the singer, was one of the most pleasant discoveries in his life… No – the host suddenly corrects himself – perhaps not narcoculture after all. Just culture. Ah, goddamn it, the host gives up freakin correcting his colleagues from the editorial office in London and just keeps reading from his script whatever what it says.

The (alleged) distortions and mistranslations become even more conspicuous when the host arrives at a point in the text when Martin Gore, one of Depeche Mode's founding members, is introduced as a "cute blondie" with whom Dave Gahan conceives a child.[137] The word *child* is used figuratively, in the sense of creation of an album, but becomes ambiguous as it could also be understood literally. As this comedy of on-air translation errors continues, Vasia becomes increasingly confused, and his exchange with the narrator resembles a hilarious game of broken telephone. Vasia's hallucinations

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[135] Zhadan pokes fun at the refrain's repetition "твою маму" ("tvoiu mamu") which can be read literally as "your mother" but also as an elliptical swear word with the implied four-letter word. Listening to the song, Vasia experiences a bout of hallucinations, during which he imagines that the song is performed by a Mongolian police choir and that "haliabarda" is not a last name, but the Mongolian word for *police.*

[136] This part of the story is omitted in the translation, therefore I provide the Ukrainian original and my own translation side by side.

[137] In Ukrainian, Zhadan puns on the words *дитина* (*dytyna*) and *дітище* (*dityshche*), sharing a similar root but standing, respectively, for *child* and *creation*.

worsen, induced both by smoking cannabis and, perhaps even more so, by the lyrics of yet another song from Haliabarda's "mother" series.

When the host returns to Depeche Mode, he introduces their album "I Feel You," and for the first time in the novel, Zhadan presents English words in Roman script. This is followed with what cannot be called a translation (or, for that matter, adaptation or imitation) by any stretch of the imagination, but is nonetheless referred to as such:

В лютому цього року вийшов новий сингл колективу, «I feel you», в якому, зокрема, говориться:	In February this year, Depeche Mode's new single, entitled "I feel you," was released. The lyrics read as follows:
I feel you	I feel you
Your sun it shines	Your sun it shines
I feel you	I feel you
Within my mind	Within my mind
You take me there	You take me there
You take me where	You take me where
The kingdom comes	The kingdom comes
You take me to	You take me to
And lead me through Babylon	And lead me through Babylon,
що приблизно перекладається так: «Прости мені мамо, блудному синові, я вже далеко не той, яким був тоді, за часів нашого безтурботного дитинства, зла центробіжна сила наркоманії і педерастії засмоктала мене в свої глибини, і життя моє — російська рулетка, без кінця і початку. Але, — продовжує ведучий, очевидно, вже від себе, — я вірю, мамо, що ми ще зустрінемось у нашому старому-доброму Ольстері, і надаємо разом, — ти чуєш, мамо? — обов'язково разом, надаємо по задниці факін-католицьким окупантам…	which can be roughly translated thusly: "Forgive me, mother, your prodigal son. I am by far not the same person I used to be during the times of my remote childhood. An evil centrifugal force of drug addiction and homosexuality has sucked me into its depths, and my life has turned into Russian roulette, with no end and beginning." "But," the host continues, apparently, adding something on his behalf, "I believe, mother, that we will still meet in our good old Ulster and together we'll kick – do you hear me, mother? – we'll kick these fukeen Catholic occupants' asses."
(164)	

As the transmetic confusion climaxes, the host finally loses his composure and bursts into a lengthy tirade on the air, accusing the editorial office in London of inaccurate translation:

Вже сьогодні, з дистанції стількох років можна сказати, що творча доля колективу склалася якнайліпшим чином і що подібній музичній кар'єрі можна лише позаздрити — гурт і далі успішно гастролює, випускає час від часу нові альбоми, котрі миттєво опиняються на вершинах найрізноманітніших гіт-парадів, горопаха Дейв благополучно сидить на героїні і злазити з нього не збирається, та й навіщо, дорогі радіослухачі, йому з нього злазити? було б у вас, — говорить ведучий, — стільки бабла, ви б теж ні про що, крім героїну, не думали. Сиділи б і втикали, і срати хотіли б на кризу духовності і падіння валового продукту, бо на хріна тобі валовий продукт, якщо ти вже зранку заряджений і точно знаєш, що на вечір у тебе теж щось є, сиди собі втикай, ні про що не думай, а тут їбошишся — їбошишся, гнеш хребет на цих гандонів жирних, які вчать тебе, як тобі жити, наживаєш геморой на їхньому довбаному радіо і жодна тобі сука не подякує, одні мудаки навколо, мудаки і придурки, текст, суки, нормально перекласти не можуть, сидять в своєму траханому Лондоні, на своєму, блядь, туманному альбіоні і не можуть нормально перекласти текст про цю довбану білявку Мартін Гор, що за білявка така? трахав я таких білявок, костюма немає нормального, в гості вже кілька років не ходив, зуби, сука, гниють, а ця падла на героїні, разом зі своєю білявкою, сука, ненавиджу, падла, це була програма «Музична толока» і я її ведучий хррррррр хррррррр, дякую вам, шановні радіослухачі, що були цієї пізньої години з нами і хай вам завжди всміхається доля. (164-165)	"Today, after the passage of so many years, one can already say that the band's artistic fate has been one of extremely good fortune and that their career in music can only be an object of envy. The band continues to tour and from time to time releases new albums that instantly reach the top of the charts. Poor old Dave happily remains on heroin and won't even think of coming off it. Because, why, dear radio listeners, would he come off it?" says the host. "If you had his dough, you'd probably care about nothing else except heroin. You'd just sit there, gawk the fuck around, and not give a damn about the crisis of spirituality and the drop of the GDP. Because why the hell would you care about the GDP, if you are already loaded in the morning and know for sure that you've saved some for the evening as well. So just sit there and gawk around, and don't bother thinking about anything. But instead you sit here and fucking toil away, breaking your back for these fat pricks who teach you how to live. You develop freakin piles sitting at this goddam radio station, and not a single bitch would thank you. Only assholes and idiots are all around. Assholes and idiots, they can't even translate a text properly, sitting in their fucking London, in Foggy Albion. Can't even make a decent translation about this freakin blondie, Martin Gore. And who the hell is this blondie in the first place? I used to have such blonde pussies. And I don't even have a decent suit any more. Haven't been out in a couple of years. My teeth are fucking decaying, and this piece of shit is on heroin, together with his blondie, bitches, I hate it, damn it. This was the radio show "Musical Pasture" and its host, crackrack crackrack, thank you, dear radio listeners, for being with this at this late hour, and may good fortune always befall you.

As the above quotation vividly illustrates, here, as in the episode with Johnson-and-Johnson's interpreter, Zhadan hyperbolizes to the extreme. Having vented his anger, the

host turns calmly to recite the evening news as if nothing had happened, news also "kindly translated" by the editorial office in London, and he then encourages listeners to call in to the show. Stoned but conscious enough to record and dial the number, Vasia phones him and begins a long, confusing, and at times hilarious exchange replete with misunderstandings. Although he and the host speak Ukrainian, the continuously misconstrued meanings and the constant need for clarification suggest that translation may in fact be necessary even in the same language.[138] The conversation initially revolves around Depeche Mode, and Vasia, at the host's request, relates what he himself describes as a "sad and indecent" story about a high-school friend who used to masturbate looking at Dave Gahan's poster, but when he later received a gift of a Depeche Mode record, he did not think much of the music. Trying to change the subject, the host mentions that Dave Gahan has grown a beard and probably changed by now, after which the conversation meanders into even murkier terrain. This prompts the narrator to take the phone from Vasia. Taking out his own frustration on the host, Zhadan's narrator tells the host that the future does not hold anything good for them (i.e. youth) because they have no destination and purposelessly fumble around like electric rays. This loss of fulfillment of "the need to be headed somewhere" (177) – a phrase that captures the essence of the entire story – makes the protagonists feel, in the narrator's words, like "a river that flows against its own current" (177). In response, the host asks him to stay on the line to receive a prize for the best question, which as it will later turn out, he does not even have any more:

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[138] The fact that Vasia is under the influence of drugs, however, allows for a possibility of attributing the slippage of meaning to intoxication.

…приз, люб'язно наданий нам нашими колегами із лондонської редакції — випущений у Великій Британії останній альбом степана галябарди «Мамин сад».	…a prize, kindly donated by our colleagues from the editorial office in London. It is stepan haliabarda's latest album, released in Great Britain and titled "Mother's Caress."
— Як-як? — питаюсь.	"Titled what?" I ask. "Caress. Mother's Caress," the host says. "That's e-double-s at the end, not a-double-s" he adds for some reason.[139]
— Сад. Мамин сад, — говорить ведучий. — Через «ес», — для чогось додає він.	
(178)	

This final exchange, with an implied pun (*сад,* sad, and *зад,* zad, standing respectively for *garden* and *behind)* yet again testifies to the uncertainty of meaning and a strong possibility for continuous miscommunication.

Transmesis in *Depesh Mod* is not only crucial in offering important insights into the nature and process of translation, but is also instrumental in interpreting the novel. Both transmetic episodes play with (and by doing so invite us to examine) the stereotype that translation is inherently fallible. Further, not only is this true of translation, but of speech itself (both episodes are portrayed as spoken aloud); even history (of the rock band) is a kind of translation that is also fallible, susceptible to emerging as a mish-mash, where the mythic dimension takes precedence over the factual. In presenting translation through blatant parody and farce, these episodes stress the significance of difference between translation and original, and question the traditional expectation of sameness or similarity. These are shown to be utopian aims, not only because of translators' mistakes or the partly unintelligible originals, and not even because of the difficulty of preserving drastic differences in language and culture, but primarily because of differences in context. For example, adapted to and set in a new context, Johnson-and-Johnson's

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[139] My translation.

evangelical story appeals to the local audience, because despite all that she changes in the story, the interpreter presents it from her viewpoint and renders it in the language of post-Soviet reality to which the audience can relate. Similarly, Dave Gahan's biography, written as a thrilling account that offers listeners a glimpse into Western celebrity culture, strikes a chord with Vasia and Zhadan's narrator because to them it manifests a new kind of discourse of freedom (in the sense of uncensored information, of linguistic expression devoid of taboo and of successful resistance against an empire).

In Zhadan's novel, the act of translation performs what seems to be a counterintuitive role; it inhibits rather than facilitates communication, and results in entropy (to borrow Brisset's term), whereby the structural stability of the original meaning deteriorates, leading to the chaos of ambiguity and ambivalence. In one case, the radio host desperately tries to reverse the chaotic dissemination of meaning and restore order, blaming all the defamiliarized elements in his script on the translation, and in the other, Zhadan's language play and paraphrasing in the interpretation of the sermon serve to demonstrate how even intralingual translation (rewording) may be problematic and will rarely be exact. In both instances, the emphasis is not on the deficit but on the surplus of meaning. It is not so much that something is inevitably lost in translation, but that something unruly is gained. In other words, while omissions, inaccuracies, and distortions may indeed be inevitable, even "the least accurate" translation will offer more than was contained in the original: as such, even if it seems ludicrous, translation is a success story. An immensely nuanced phenomenon, translation not only encompasses the elusive processes of interpreting and creating meaning, but also ideally requires from the translator a perfect erudition coupled with shrewd intuition that must be continuously

buttressed by research. Due to the complexity and variability of these processes and skills, translation will never be immune from mistakes and mis-shading of meanings – and, therefore, should not be judged solely on what is mistranslated.[140]

Although translation is portrayed as impossible in Zhadan's novel, it also appears to be unavoidable. The radio host, after blaming his colleagues from the editorial office in London for their poor translation, nonetheless reads their translation of the evening news. In his famous "Des Tours de Babel," Jacques Derrida discusses this paradox by contemplating, in his ingeniously provocative and thought-provoking manner, "the necessary and impossible task of translation, its necessity as impossibility" (171) and "the necessary (im)possibility" of translation. Translation, it must be specified, seems impossible only if it is conceived of narrowly as an act of linguistic transfer of meaning predicated on sameness or similarity. As Zhadan's novel repeatedly illustrates, the interlingual and intralingual translations are indeed fraught with difficulties and concomitant misunderstandings. But conceived more broadly, following Steiner's conceptualization of any act of communication as translation and including transmutation (or intersemiotic translation), the necessity, viability, and ubiquity of translation are unquestionable. During Johnson-and-Johnson's talk, for example, Cocoa "has trouble making sense of his reverence's speech" (36), but when the Reverend's band begins to

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[140] A fascinating example of this comes from Zhadan's play with the concept of mistake, which is later ironically echoed in the English translation. When the host begins to read the biography of Depeche Mode's lead singer, his last name in Ukrainian is presented as "Ган," which, technically speaking, is not entirely correct as Zhadan does not use the Ukrainian letter "Ґ." Although the rules of transliteration and transcription from English into Ukrainian are quite vague, and there is hardly any unanimity on conveying different foreign sounds, the general rule is that "ґ" corresponds to the English "g," and "г" to the English "h." Later in the story, Zhadan has the friends pronounce the same name as "Ґехан," which could result from having seen the name in print, but never having heard it, and therefore they use a transliteration that reflects the letters but not the sound of the name. In translating, Shkandrij has perhaps no reason to suspect that the English spelling might be different than its sound. So naturally he transliterates the name "Ган" as "Han" (152).

play blues, "Cocoa likes this considerably more than his reverence's sermons, he understands everything" (36).

Music, as a universal code that transcends linguistic and cultural barriers and requires no translation, occupies a special role in Zhadan's novel. Although the band Depeche Mode is only featured episodically, the fact that its name provides the novel's title testifies to its importance. By unveiling to the protagonists a reality that contrasts sharply with the post-Soviet atmosphere of decay, Depeche Mode epitomizes an escape from despondency and serves metaphorically as a harbinger of social change and cultural freedom. Just as Depeche Mode, the band, represented the rising of an underclass to reach a level of performativity that results in accomplishment (records, acclaim), the protagonists of *Depeche Mode*, the novel, in their directionless struggles in Ukraine represent as well a kind of mangled hope. The protagonists' lack of belonging and loss of direction in life may be explained by the general resistance to change that they constantly encounter but fail to overcome. This resistance is manifested, among other things, in the incredulity towards translation as a vehicle of transformation and modernity as well as in the clash of discourses, exemplified by the contrast between the Depeche Mode they desire and the "stepan haliabarda" that is dished out to them. The clash may be discussed in the context of what Volodymyr Ieshkiliev designates, respectively, as "postmodern" and "testamentary and rustic" discourses.[141] Depeche Mode symbolically represents the western/European system of values, which the newly independent Ukraine struggles to adopt, whereas the country's post-Soviet legacy, including its excessive reverence of

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[141] For more, see the entries on "ТР дискурс" ("TR discourse") and "ПМ дискурс" ("PM discourse") in the "Glosariynyi corpus" (Glossary) of "Pleroma – chasopys z problem kulturolohii, teorii mystetstva, filosofii" (Pleroma: A Journal of Culture, Theory of Art, and Philosophy) available online at http://www.ji.lviv.ua/ji-library/pleroma/zmist.htm.

tradition and the cultivation of art driven by a nation-building agenda, is playfully encapsulated in the image of "stepan haliabarda."[142] The fact that Depeche Mode's music is never played but is always substituted by stepan haliabarda's songs echoes Derridean *différance*, the fertile process whereby meaning is simultaneously differed and deferred.

Depech Mod: A Translation from Russian?

Finally, in addition to the two transmetic episodes discussed above, there is also a broader transmetic dimension to the novel as a whole, which gives grounds to view Zhadan's *Depeche Mode* not only as a work that features translation but also as a novel in and of translation. The events are set in the eastern city of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city after Kyiv. Although in the past Kharkiv was a capital of Ukraine and a stronghold of Ukrainian culture and education, today Russian is the language predominantly spoken in the city. Bearing this in mind, when one imagines Zhadan's protagonists, a question arises regarding the language the friends would most likely speak, and the answer, it is safe to presume, as they are urban dwellers, is Russian. In writing his novel in Ukrainian, Zhadan, in fact, may have translated at least part of the story (assuming that the narrator is indeed autobiographical and does speak Ukrainian) from Russian.

Evidence to confirm this hypothesis comes from an analysis of the characters' speech, which appears to contain numerous examples of what in Ukrainian is referred to as *русизми* (*rusyzmy*, translated as "Russianisms"[143]). These Russianisms are the

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[142] It is important to emphasize that the notion of "the West" in this opposition is not necessarily positive. Zhadan's ludicrous emphasis on drugs in Gahan's fictitious biography, for example, might give the opponents of the West ammunition for rejection of any idealization of Europe.

[143] *Russianism* seems to be the most preferred term in English, used, among other scholars, by Laada Bilaniuk in her *Contested Tongues: Language Politics and Cultural Correction in Ukraine* and Salvatore

backbone of *surzhyk* (pidgin Ukrainian), and may vary in types and morphology, ranging from Russian lexemes spelled in Ukrainian, to Russian calques or borrowings, to other forms of solecisms and malapropisms, formed under the influence of both Russian spelling and pronunciation as well as of the difference in meaning of the same word in the two languages. One of the most conspicuous examples is Zhadan's frequent preference for the verb *говорити* (*hovoryty*) over *казати* (*kazaty*), especially in the case of introducing reported speech. Although both verbs mean *to say* (as well as, depending on the context, *to speak, to tell,* and *to talk),* the Ukrainian verb *говорити* (*hovoryty*) has an exact Russian counterpart with the same root, *говорить* (*govorit*). In Russian, *govorit* is used commonly in reported speech or in fixed expressions (such as "говорить по-русски," which means "to speak Russian"). What confuses the matter further is that in both Russian and Ukrainian there is another verb for reporting speech, *сказати* (*skazaty*, in Ukrainian) and *сказать* (*skazat*, in Russian). But in Russian it only has a perfective aspect *(*marked by the prefix *c*) and thus can only be used in the past tense. In Ukrainian, conversely, the verb (*c*)*казати* (*s)kazaty*) has both perfective (with the prefix *s*) and imperfective (without the prefix s) aspects and is more common in reported speech. According to Antonenko-Davydovych, Ukrainian writer and author of a style and usage manual entitled *Iak My Hovorymo (How We Speak),* in introducing reported speech, the Ukrainian verb *казати* is stylistically more appropriate.[144] Zhadan, however, uses

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Del Gaudio and Bohdana Tarasenko in the article on *surzhyk* in the collection *Language Policy and Language Situation in Ukraine: Analysis and Recommendations,* edited by Juliane Besters-Dilger.

[144] Here is Antonenko-Davydoch's explanation in Ukrainian: "З наведених прикладів випливає, що в класичній літературі й народному мовленні є нахил (за деякими винятками) ставити слово *казати* там, де є пряма мова або передається зміст повідомленого, висловленого: «щоб я хлопців у садочок не принаджувала», «що я — файна дівка» тощо; навпаки, там, де мовиться не про зміст, а про спосіб чи якість висловлювання, треба ставити дієслово *говорити:* «уміння *говорити* ясно й просто», «по-німецькому *говорить*». ("Говорити й казати." *Iak My Hovorymo*. http://yak-my-hovorymo.wikidot.com/hovoryty-kazaty)

говорити (*hovoryty*) almost as often as he uses the form *казати* (*kazaty*)*,* which in literary Ukrainian has the effect of sounding rather unnatural.

Other representative examples of Russianisms (or stylistically questionable usage in Ukrainian) embedded in the text are reflected in this chart:[145]

Usage in Depesh Mod	Translation in *Depeche Mode*	Suggested usage / Commentary
…будь-які вияви уваги з боку змонтованої навколо мене реальності обов'язково закінчуються наперед прогнозованими **гадостями** чи просто дрібним житейським западлізмом. (5)	… attention from the reality installed around me always resulted in some predictable **nastiness** or simply more of life's routine crap. (5)	*Гадость* is a Russian word, which translates in Ukrainian as *гидота* (hydota) or *мерзота* (merzota).
…злий золотозубий янгол в білому халаті і капронових **чулках** теж відлетів… (8)	… the angry gold-tooth angel in white coat and nylon **stockings** has also flown off… (12)	The word *чулки* (chulky) is the Russian word for *stockings,* which in Ukrainian is *панчохи* (panchokhy).
Відповзає до проходу, зводиться на ноги і нерішуче **рухає вгору**, до останнього ряду, чіпляється там за металеве кріплення і обвисає на ньому зовсім без сил. (15)	He crawls up to the exit, gets to his feet, and shakily keeps **going up and up**, to the last row; he grasps onto the metal support and hangs off it in complete exhaustion.	The correct usage is *рухається* (rukhaietsia).
Чергові медсестри намагаються кудись **дозвонитись**, … (19)	The nurses on duty attempt to **telephone** somewhere… (19)	The correct spelling of the word *to call* in Ukrainian is *додзвонитися* (dodzvonytysia) – with a *d* – whereas in Russian it is *дозвониться* (dozvonitsia).
Да, Какао,… (26)	**Yes**, Cocoa,… (27)	The use of Russian *да* (da) instead of Ukrainian *так* (tak) is very common in many parts of the country.
…зірка найбільш масових **приходів** на всьому Західному побережжі… (27)	… star of the biggest mass **euphorias** on the West coast… (28)	*Прихід* (prykhid) in Ukrainian means *advent,* whereas *приход* (prikhod) in Russian stands for *parish*. As might be inferred from the translation, the

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[145] This is only a selection of examples, not exhaustive, to prove the point about the transmetic nature of the novel. Also, the list does not contain slang, which frequently mixes forms of Ukrainian and Russian.

		translator must have been confused by this Russianism.
Ладно, говорить преподобний, … (29)	**Fine**, says his reverence… (30)	The word *ладно* (*ladno*) does exist in Ukrainian as an adverb, in which case it is synonymous to *добре* (*dobre*), *вдало* (*vdalo*), *хороше* (*khoroshe*), *гарно* (harno), *славно* (*slavno*), etc. In *Depesh Mod,* however, it is used 28 times as a particle in the manner it is used in Russian. The appropriate Ukrainian counterparts are *гаразд* (*harazd*), *добре* (*dobre*), *згода* (*zhoda*).
…з великої пластикової **кружки**… (29)	… from a big plastic **mug** … (30)	The word *кружка* (*kruzhka*) does not exist in Ukrainian. It is a Russian word for *mug*, which in Ukrainian is *кухоль* (*kukhol*).
…дякуємо вам за увагу, **всього хорошого**,… (35)	… thank you for your attention, **all the best**, … (35)	A more natural expression in Ukrainian is *всього доброго* (*vsioho dobroho*).
... «ЧП ВАХА»… (48)	"PRIVATE SHOP VAKHA"	*ЧП* is a Russian abbreviation for *частное предприятие* (chastnoe predpriiatie). In Ukrainian the abbreviation is *ПП (приватне підприємство, PP pryvatne pidpriemstvo*).
…тоді чуваки **внахалку** лізуть до торби… (50)	… then the guys take a bottle in each hand from the bag	The colloquial Russian word *внахалку* (*vnakhalku*), meaning *shamelessly,* is omitted in the translation. In Ukrainian, the closest counterpart is *безсоромно* (*bezsoromno*).
… раптом скаута **схопив кондратій**… (55)	… what is the boy scout is having an **apoplectic fit**? (56)	*Кондратій* (Kondratiy) is a Ukrainian spelling of the Russian *Кондратий* (*Kondratiy),* which is a proper name and also part of a fixed expression meaning *to have a stroke.* This idiom is not used in Ukrainian. It is interesting that the translator chooses to translate this idiom by using a medical term.
РОВД (69)	District police station (69)	This is the Russian acronym for *районный отдел внутренних дел* (raionnyi otdel vnutrennikh del), which in Ukrainian is *районний відділ внутрішніх справ* (*РВВС*), (*raionnyi viddil vnutrishnikh sprav, RVVS*).
…**по** справах… (85)	We have **some business**… (86)	The correct Ukrainian preposition is *у справах* (*u spravakh*).

…концерт в **дк**… (86)	…in the palace of culture…(87)	This is the Russian abbreviation for *дом культуры* (*dom kultury*), which in Ukrainian is *бк (будинок культури)* (*bk, budynok kultury*).
Зовнішня робітнича ячейка (101)	External Worker's Cell	The word *ячейка* (yacheika) is a Russian word, which in Ukrainian is *осередок* (*oseredok*).
Паранойя (126)	Paranoia (125)	Unlike in Russian, the correct Ukrainian spelling of *paranoia* does not have the *й* before the final *я*.
водородна бомба (138)	hydrogen bomb (136)	The correct Ukrainian adjective for *hydrogen* is *воднева* (*vodneva*).
… тому що ми напхані табаком і драпом, портвейном і спиртом… (176)	[this part is omitted in the translation]	In Ukrainian, a more appropriate word for tobacco is *тютюн* (*tiutiun*). The feminine form *табака* (*tabaka*) also exists, but in that case the correct conjugation of the feminine noun should be *табакою (tabakoiu)* not *табаком* (*tabakom*).
на цей рахунок (190)	on the matter	This is a calque translation of the Russian expression *на этот счет* (*na etot schet*). In Ukrainian, one would say *щодо* (*schodo*).
… до іншої ємкості з водою. (203)	… into another container with water. (178)	The correct usage in Ukrainian is *посудина* (*posudyna*). The Ukrainian word *ємкість* (*iemkist (*or *ємність, iemnist*) means *capacity* or *volume*.

These examples, however, do not allow for straightforward conclusions. On the one hand, based on the numerous Russianisms, one may argue that Zhadan, coming from Eastern Ukraine, has been affected by Russian, and that some of these grammatical inaccuracies and stylistic infelicities might be blamed on his Ukrainian. For example, Oleh Kotsarev, also a writer and fellow Kharkivite, in an otherwise positive review of *Depesh Mod* mentions Russianisms as a shortcoming in Zhadan's writing. It must be pointed out, though, that he does so in a tongue-in-cheek manner by enclosing the word in quotation marks and talking in a self-ironic manner about the school to which he himself belongs:

"And another shortcoming, or 'shortcoming,' of writing style in *Depesh Mod* is its somewhat Russified language, which I propose to interpret as a characteristic feature of the Kharkiv literary school" (par. 2).[146] On the other hand, one may also contend that by incorporating these Russian-sounding words and expressions in his text, Zhadan consciously tries to create an illusion of verisimilitude and convey the real flavor of Kharkiv youth talk. The weakness of this contention is that there are also instances in the story where Zhadan tries to sound almost "too Ukrainian,"[147] which raises the question of whether anyone in Kharkiv actually speaks like that or whether Zhadan is again drawing attention to the constructed nature of this (and any) text.

One answer to the question regarding *Depesh Mod's* transmetic mode comes from Zhadan himself. In an interview he gave together with one of his German translators, Juri Durkot[148] for the Ukrainian edition of *Deutsche Welle*, primarily discussing the German translations of his works, Zhadan was asked whether his especially vivid style, including coarse language, can be captured in German. Here is what Zhadan responded:[149]

Очевидно, на всі сто відсотків неможливо перекласти й відтворити нічого так, як воно є рідною. Але тут є ще один момент. Іноді мені здається, що й українською мовою теж не на сто відсотків передані всі нюанси мовлення персонажів, їхніх діалогів. **Бо слід визнати, що так чи інакше в реальному житті мої персонажі говорять все-таки російською мовою, а не українською.** Тому це вже теж певною мірою такий собі авторизований	Apparently, one can never recreate completely, one hundred percent, everything in the original. But there is another issue here. Sometimes it seems to me that neither does Ukrainian convey one hundred percent all of the nuances of characters' speech and their dialogues. **One must acknowledge that this way or another in real life my characters speak Russian, after all, not Ukrainian.** Therefore, this is already a kind of an authorized translation. And it can either get the

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[146] This is Kotsarev's quote in Ukrainian: "А ще один недолік чи 'недолік' письма у "Депеш Мод" – дещо русифіковану мову – вважаймо ознакою фірмового стилю харківської літературної школи."

[147] For example, "в цьому **я янголів** розумів і підтримував" (p. 4); "телефонний **дзвоник**" (p. 9) or "йдуть **вервечкою**." These expressions are examples of "hyper-correct" somewhat unnatural Ukrainian. The last one *vervechka* is a Ukrainian word for *rosary*, a word that would hardly be recognized or understood in Kharkiv.

[148] With Sabine Stöhr, Durkot translated *Depesh Mod* and Zhadan's other works.

[149] My translation.

переклад. І далі він або наближує читача до першоджерел, або віддалює. ("Ia u nevpynnykh tvorchykh zletakh," par. 8)	reader closer to original sources or, conversely, distance the reader from them.

In admitting that translation (in this case, from Russian to Ukrainian) is a critical factor in creating his characters and his novel, Zhadan also reminds us that writing itself is also an act of translation, a proposition that Sergio Gabriel Waisman, among others, under the influence of Borges, puts forward in chapter three of his *Borges and Translation: Irreverence of the Periphery.* The ramifications of this proposition are far-reaching as they embrace not only the notion of translating thoughts and ideas into words – something commonly taken for granted and thus often disregarded – but also the concept of intertextuality, which presupposes that it is, among other things, through translation that texts migrate and proliferate within one language as well as across times, languages, and cultures. As a text that both features and problematizes the process and significance of translation, addresses the sociocultural role of translation, and, finally, is itself a product of intracultural translation, Zhadan's *Depesh Mod* offers a uniquely rich ground for further exploration of translation practice, theory, and philosophy.

Chapter 3 Heterotopia and Intertext: Viktor Pelevin's *Generation "П" / Homo Zapiens*

The Pelevin Paradox

Since the 1980s, when Viktor Pelevin commenced his career as a writer, he has created – whether deliberately or unwittingly – an aura of mystery around himself. Much like J. D. Salinger or Thomas Pynchon, Pelevin is known for avoiding publicity and agreeing to interviews reluctantly. Yet, the two major websites dedicated to Pelevin's oeuvre (http://www.pelevin.info/ and http://pelevin.nov.ru/) feature not only most of his published works online (for non-commercial use) but also contain links to numerous interviews with the author. In rare 1996 footage of his interview with Clark Blaise,[150] which took place during his visit to the USA, Pelevin, rarely giving straightforward answers, sports dark sunglasses, a signature feature of the majority of his online pictures.[151] Rumors about Viktor Pelevin and his lifestyle abound on the Internet, and, according to an episode devoted to Pelevin[152] in the popular Russian TV program "Главный Герой" ("Glavnyi Geroi" 'The Main Hero'), some even doubt that the writer exists in real life. The latter, of course, is a sensationalist statement that can be explained as a scandalous marketing ploy or an exaggerated hint at the Buddhist-like reclusiveness for which Pelevin is also famous. On the other hand, while Pelevin's appearance on television or at a reading is highly unlikely, he supposedly participates in social networks.

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[150] Available on YouTube. See "Viktor Pelevin, intervyu s subtitrami" in the list of works cited.
[151] Jason Cowley quotes Pelevin as saying "I'm naturally shy. I hate physical attention. It's torture. I'm wearing these sunglasses now while I'm talking to you and in pictures because it's the only way I can be photographed without being photographed, if you see what I mean" (par. 13).
[152] Available on YouTube. See "Viktor Pelevin v Programme Glavnyi Geroi. Chast 1/2" in the list of works cited.

Specifically, according to the news portal obozrevatel.com,[153] Pelevin openly supported

the Ukrainian uprising on the Maidan (Independence) Square in Kyiv (which took place

from November 2013 to February 2014) after a peaceful demonstration was brutally

dispersed by the authorities.[154]

Paradoxically, thanks to or despite the enigma in which his personality is

wrapped, Pelevin has undoubtedly been one of the most well-known and prolific

contemporary Russian writers both in his homeland and abroad. His "road to fame"

started in 1962 in Moscow, one fact from Pelevin's biography that is generally

undisputed. Other details, perhaps in the spirit of mystery, still seem to be surrounded by

some contradiction. For example, Gerald McCausland's authoritative entry in the *Russian*

Writers Since 1980 series of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* claims that Pelevin's

mother was an English teacher.[155] Along with the fact that he attended a school offering

an intensive English program, this may help, for instance, to contextualize Pelevin's flair

for and solid knowledge of English that is manifested in many of his works.[156] Another

discrepancy concerns Pelevin's studies at the Maksim Gorky Literary Institute in

Moscow, a degree he pursued after graduating from the Moscow Power Engineering

Institute (McCausland translates it as Moscow Energy Institute), where he also attempted,

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[153] See "Rossiyskiy Pisatel Pelevin Podderzhal Maidan [Russian Writer Pelevin Supported the Maidan]" in the list of works cited.

[154] If indeed true, it is an act of outstanding personal and civil courage on Pelevin's part, considering that those few representatives of the Russian intelligentsia who spoke out (most notably, the musician and rock singer Andrey Makarevich) were brutally ostracized. Interestingly, in his latest novel *Batman Apollo* (2013), Pelevin, among other things, discusses, not without irony, the concept of protest.

[155] The biographical page on the site pelevin.info quotes the painter Aleksandr Messerer as saying that Pelevin's mother, Zinaida Efremovna Semenova, worked as deputy principal and teacher of English in the secondary school that Viktor attended ("Semya i shkola" par. 2). See "Viktor Pelevin – web site about Viktor Pelevin" in a list of works cited.

[156] Alternatively, from Pelevin's interview with Sally Laird, we learn that his mother was an economist (*Voices Of Russian Literature* "Biographia" par. 1).

albeit unsuccessfully, graduate school. Although both Laird (178) and McCausland (209) mention that Pelevin graduated from the Literary Institute, according to several other sources, including allegedly Pelevin's own words, he discontinued his studies at the Literary Institute because he found the whole endeavor worthless.

Even more controversial is the discussion regarding Pelevin's place in a broader context of the Russian literary tradition. As a young writer in the 1990s, Pelevin naturally evades Blaise's pressing questions about literary trends, schools, and possible influences on his work, expressing skepticism about the existence of what Blaise offers to designate as "post-Soviet literature" and rejecting even the most general labels, such as the Moscow group of writers. In an indirect response to some critics who, based on scathing social satire present in both writers' works, draw a (rather distant) parallel between him and Nikolai Gogol, Pelevin stated facetiously that "[a]s for [his] position in the literary lineage … [he thinks] that [his] place is about 200 feet below Tolstoy and 48 feet to the left of Gogol" (Parker 115). In another interview, he also denied any direct influence by the Russian writers, adding philosophically that "[t]he only real Russian literary tradition is to write good books in a way nobody did before, so to become part of tradition you have to reject it" (Kropywiansky 80). On one occasion, however, Pelevin admitted that Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* had made a strong impression on him. But as Laird concludes, "[Pelevin] belongs to a generation that has sought philosophical and cultural alternatives outside the traditional Russian canon – in Chinese philosophy, in Buddhism, in the strange perspectives of computer science, the experience of

hallucinogenic drugs, or the 'mystic' or esoteric works of Castaneda, Hesse, and Borges" (178).[157]

The young Pelevin, much like Zhadan, used to be vocal in his attitude towards postmodernism, comparing it to "eating the flesh of a dead culture" (Laird 184). His negative early view of postmodernism may be justified because, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, postmodernism became a literary fad in post-Soviet countries and was used as an umbrella term for any literary phenomena of the 1990s, thus causing disagreement (and sometimes indignation) both from writers and critics. Many Western proponents of postmodernism, however, tended to disregard that in Russia and Ukraine it evolved primarily as a response to Socialist realism rather than to modernism.[158] This distinction is important to recognize because, as Chernetsky argues, "While chronologically most of Pelevin's writing falls in the post-Soviet era, his thematic concerns signal the determination by the late Soviet cultural condition as the key aspect of his work" (107). Today, however, the consensus is that in view of different postmodernisms (that may or may not share certain affinities with Western postmodernisms), Pelevin's work can be characterized with a good degree of certainty as postmodern. In "Ludic Nonchalance or Ludicrous Despair? Viktor Pelevin and Russian Postmodernist Prose," Sally Dalton-Brown contends that Pelevin's novels "are the most

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[157] To some extent, Pelevin's early work must have been shaped under the influence of Russian conceptualism, whose emergence is associated with Venedikt Erofeev's *Moskva-Petushki* (*Moscow Circles*), which is commonly believed to herald the inception of Russian postmodernism (Lipovetsky, "Kontseptualizm i neobarokko").

[158] For more on this, see my article "Postmodern Approaches to Representation of Reality in Ukrainian and Russian Literatures: The Prose of Yuri Andrukhovych and Viktor Pelevin." An even more nuanced discussion of this issue, including references to Frederic Jameson, is found in chapter 1 "Cultural Globalization, 'the Posts' and the Second World" of Vitaly Chernetsky's *Mapping Postcommunist Cultures: Russia and Ukraine in the Context of Globalization*.

essentially 'postmodern' of contemporary Russian prose" (216). The Russian scholar Bogdanova, who authored a monograph on Russian postmodernism, refers to the thinker and critic Sergei Kornev, who believes that formally Pelevin can be considered a "classical" postmodernist (298), but then proceeds with the unusual pronouncement that Pelevin is essentially a classical Russian "ideologue" like Tolstoy or Chernyshevsky (302). Private yet public, a realist and a postmodernist at the same time, a "phony"[159] to some, yet (almost) a prophet to others, Viktor Pelevin is indeed a man of paradox, and is a writer who, in his works, teases out the paradoxes in language use, and in doing so, casts doubt on any notion of a singular authoritative version, and brings new questions – not always with fixed answers – to the task of translation.

Pelevin's Major Works and Themes

After publishing a collection of short stories, founding a publishing house together with his friends, editing and – according to some – significantly improving a 3-volume translation of Carlos Castaneda, as well as working as reporter and editor for several journals, in 1992 Pelevin had his first novel published. *Omon Ra,* on the surface a story about space exploration but in fact a satirical *Bildungsroman,* is an astoundingly powerful allegory of an individual trapped in Soviet society. Especially after the English translation came out four years later, readers, Russian and international critics, and literary scholars recognized the emergence of a great talent. Pelevin's subsequent novels, beginning from the seminal *Zhizn Nasekomykh (Life of Insects), Chapayev i Pustota (Chapaev and Void,* aka *Buddha's Little Finger*) and *Generation "Π" (Homo Zapiens,*

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[159] See Jason Cowley's "Gogol À Go-Go" (par. 6).

aka Babylon) to the most recent *Empire V, t, S.N.U.F.F.* and, finally, his 2013 *Batmen Apollo,* never disappointed. His early collection *The Blue Lantern* won the Little Russian Booker Prize in 1993,[160] and in 2000 *The New Yorker* named Pelevin one of the six most prominent contemporary writers of Europe (Tukh 199).

More than a decade later, Pelevin still deservedly enjoys the status of one of the most popular and widely read Russian novelists both at home and, thanks to translations into multiple languages, in Europe and North America as well. According to Cowley, when *Generation "П"* – one of Pelevin's most acclaimed early novels – appeared, it was an immediate sensation, selling more than 200,000 copies (par. 4). Speaking of Pelevin's popularity and publishing success in the West, the Russian-American critic Alexander Genis, in a Russian-language article fittingly titled "The Pelevin Phenomenon," claims that:

> Pelevin is one of the very few Russian writers who managed to enter
> American literature, bypassing the Slavic entrance. In the US, his books
> are published by New Directions, famous for its audacious slogan "all of
> Ezra Pound's books have been published here." In addition, American
> critics treat Pelevin much better than do the ones at home. In the US, he is
> compared to Bulgakov and Dovlatov, and also with the author of the
> legendary *Catch 22,* Joseph Heller. (par. 7)[161]

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[160] A comprehensive list of Pelevin's awards can be found in Tatiana V. Keeling's chapter "Liberation through Imagination: A Case of Viktor Pelevin" (58).
[161] Translation from Russian is mine.

The comparisons and analogies, of course, do not stop at either Gogol or Bulgakov, or for that matter even Kafka and Borges. According to Gomel, "Pelevin, through his edgy use of science fiction, cyberpunk, metafiction, pastiche, and playful self-referentiality, has been categorized alongside Italo Calvino, William Gibson, Haruki Murakami, and other internationally known postmodern writers" (311). Even so, it is unclear whether Pelevin receives these comparisons with the all-time greats as compliments.

The themes Pelevin raises in his works are diverse and multifaceted. Ranging from philosophy to popular culture, from politics to religion, from computer games, television and advertising to drugs and violence, they can hardly fail to appeal to wide audiences (and especially to young readers). In the words of McCausland, "[h]is works juxtapose rock culture, Soviet kitsch, and socialist-realist clichés with Continental philosophy and Eastern mysticism…, [all of which] are tossed together with a distinctive style and tone that is pervaded by both a sense of gravity and almost a flippant ironic distance" (209). Pelevin's penchant for pastiche along with the creation of alternative worlds and virtual realities have become trademark features of his writing.[162] As Genis explains, "[p]ost-Soviet authors have come to see the world around them in terms of a sequence of artificial constructs, in which man is forever doomed to search for a 'pure,' 'archetypal' reality. All these parallel worlds are not 'true,' without being 'false' either, at least while someone still believes in them" ("Borders and Metamorphoses" 297). Over the years, Pelevin, whose works, in Chernetsky's apt observation, present "multiple

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[162] For more on the representation of reality, see Audun J. Morch's "Reality As Myth: Pelevin's Capaev I Pustota;" chapter 3 (pp. 108-109 and 111-112) in Vitaly Chernetsky's *Mapping Postcommunist Cultures,* and my article "Postmodern Approaches to Representation of Reality in Ukrainian and Russian Literatures: The Prose of Yuri Andrukhovych and Viktor Pelevin."

ontologies of solipsism" (*Mapping Postcommunist Cultures* 109),[163] has perfected this

game of make-believe, which he plays with himself, his characters, and his readers. As

Dalton-Brown has insightfully noted, "[c]reating ludic texts in which the ontological

ramifications of the 'creative world' itself form the basis of his narrative play, Pelevin

invites the reader to enter the 'game' of text, and to discover that there is never any end to

the game, never any return to 'reality,' and no possibility of winning" (216).

"This game has no name, it will never be the same" is the slogan that Babylen

Tatarsky, Pelevin's protagonist in *Generation "П,"* sees and hears in his hallucinations

after consuming some "magic" (i.e. psychotropic) mushrooms. Similar to the muted post

horn in Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, it is not only the "message" that is loaded with

meaning for Tatarsky, who realizes his involvement in a mysterious game with reality,

but it is also a metafictional reminder to the reader (as well as to the translator) that they

participate in a game of constructing meaning through the acts of reading and writing.

After sketching out the background and plot of Pelevin's novel *Generation "П,"* I

will elaborate on the idea, derived from Chernetsky, that Pelevin's text is heterotopic. In

viewing it as heterotopic and noting its inherently hybrid bilingual mode, I will contend

that Pelevin's work is a transmetic novel. In a performative and self-reflexive manner, it

portrays the process of cultural and linguistic adaptation, and in doing so, highlights

cultural untranslatability, problematizes the relationship between translation and original,

and reiterates the profoundly intertextual, playful, and creative nature of translation.

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[163] In a footnote, Chernetsky refers to Pelevin's own expression "critical solipsism," which is used in the introduction to *Buddha's Little Finger*.

Generation "П": Background and Plot

Generation "П"[164] (*Generation "P"*) is Viktor Pelevin's fourth novel, published in 1999 by Vagrius.[165] The English translation by the British editor and translator Andrew Bromfield, famous for founding the Russian literature journal *Glas* and for translating several contemporary Russian writers, appeared in 2000 from Faber and Faber (London) under the title *Babylon* and in 2002 from the Viking Press (New York) under the title *Homo Zapiens*.[166] In 2011, the Russian-American director Victor Ginzburg produced a movie (titled *Generation P*) based on Pelevin's novel. It received positive reviews in many festivals and a high 6.9 rating from the IMDb site.[167]

The novel is set in Moscow in the 1990s during the tumultuous Yeltsin years, when Russia underwent a transition from a centrally planned to a market economy. The protagonist's name Vavilen Tatarskyi (in English, Babylen Tatarsky) immediately attracts attention not only by bearing an obvious similarity to the city of Babylon and by evoking the image of the Tower of Babel but also by being a Soviet-style acronym. Tatarsky's application to the poetry department of the Literary Institute in Moscow, an institution that Pelevin himself attended, is rejected, and he has no other option but to become a translator from Uzbek and Kirghiz. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which the narrator describes as "entering nirvana" (3), however, translation from the languages of the former Soviet republics has become redundant, leaving Tatarsky with very few employment options. At first, he sells cigarettes at a kiosk run by Chechens and

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[164] Pelevin uses the English word in the original Russian title.

[165] In March 1991, an excerpt was published online at kommersant.ru.

[166] The creative selection of the title, which differs drastically from the original title in Russian, will be discussed further.

[167] Based on 2137 user reviews as of May 2014.

covered by a protection racketeer, named Hussein. Then Tatarsky accidentally meets an old university classmate, Morkovin, who gives him a quick run-down of the newly emerging advertising business in Russia and introduces him to a lucrative job opportunity: the localization of commercials. Upon reading a few useful books on marketing and picking up some fancy jargon, Tatarsky begins to translate/create advertising slogans for famous western brands that are now imported to Russia. Ironically, while during the anarchy of the early post-Soviet years both Tatarsky's employers and their clients are physically exterminated by competitors, Babylen Tatarsky's career is successful. He not only gets promoted to copywriter but, thanks to his networking skills and his innovative, extravagant ideas, he is also given more challenging assignments to develop brand-building concepts. Among the brands Tatarsky helps localize for the Russian market are "Sprite," "Parliament," "Hugo Boss," and "Gap."

Perfecting his craft and making more money, Tatarsky discovers that while drugs give him inspiration (he experiments with mushrooms, heroin, and LSD), his success also depends on reading and doing research. He relentlessly explores the literature on new marketing strategies and annotates ideas while perusing various texts. From one such text, an appendix to the dissertation on ancient history, he learns about the three riddles of Ishtar, a Babylonian goddess who begins to haunt Tatarsky through ubiquitous signs and symbols that he sees, especially after getting high on drugs. Intrigued by this semiotic mystery, he purchases an ouija board in a local New Age shop and communicates with the spirit of Che Guevara. The spirit unravels to him an allegedly Buddhist-based theory whereby reality is shaped by television, and the human species is in fact not *homo*

sapiens but rather *homo zapiens* because they zap through the channels in order to skip through commercials. Che Guevara's spirit further expounds the theory, elucidating its economic premise of consumerism (according to which human behavior is governed by the "oral, anal and displacing wow-impulses" (82-83) that explain why people accumulate and spend money, and its concomitant postulate about identity, which is described as "a false ego" (87) shaped by the said impulses. "From the point of view of economic metaphysics," Che Guevara's spirit concludes, "the meaning of life is the transformation of the oral identity into the anal" (89), while "[t]he end of the world will simply be a television programme" (91).

After trying a new acid stamp, delirious Tatarsky reads about another Mesopotamian character, Enkidu, who like the goddess Ishtar also comes from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*,[168] and delves into the ancient Sumerian legends about him. Hallucinating, he has a mysterious encounter with Sirruf, a spirit who warns Tatarsky about the consequences of LSD (one of which is the ability to see other worlds). Sirruf reveals to him that the Tower of Babel, which Tatarsky believes he might have seen and experienced through the confusion of language(s) – something he now deeply regrets – is invisible and can only be ascended, not seen. Referring to Dostoevsky (specifically, to Father Zosima in *Brothers Karamazov* and the concept of fire), Sirruf explains that television is a technical dimension in which the human world incinerates. According to him, Tatarsky, by working as a copywriter, serves to maintain the fire by forcing people

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[168] Pelevin does not mention *Gilgamesh* as one of the major sources for several of his mythical characters.

to gaze into the flames of consumption. To the bewildered Tatarsky's question about what exactly is consumed and burned, Sirruf responds thusly:

> Man believes that he is the consumer, but in reality the fire of consumption consumes him … Environmentally friendly garbage incineration… Man by nature is almost as great and beautiful as Sirruf… But he is not aware of it. The garbage is this unawareness. It is the identity that has no existence in reality. In this life man attends at the incineration of the garbage of his identity. (119-120)

One day, Tatarsky runs into Hussein, who decides to hold him captive for quitting the business, but his current employer Khanin sends his own racket protection to sort things out. When freed, Tatarsky gets a request for creating what Wee Vova, Khanin's racket protection guy, refers to as the "Russian idea" or a concept of national identity, which he believes Russians lack. In Wee Vova's words,

> 'Our national business is expanding into the international market. Out there there's all kinds of mazuma doing the rounds – Chechen, American, Columbian – you get the picture. And if you look at them like mazuma, then they are all the same; but in actual fact behind every kind of mazuma there's a national idea. We used to have Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality. Then came this communism stuff. Now that's all over, and there's no idea left at all 'cept for mazuma. … There's got to be some nice, simple Russian idea, so we can lay it out clear and simple for any bastard from any of their Harvards; one-two, tickety-boo, and screw all that staring. And we've got to know for ourselves where we come from.'

(137-138)

Before Tatarsky can complete this assignment, which he has found the most challenging of all the concepts he developed, Wee Vova is shot in a showdown, and Khanin is forced to wind down his business. Thanks to his old friend Morkovin, however, Tatarsky is immediately offered a new job in some clandestine organization. As soon becomes evident, this organization, whose entrance sign reads "The Institute of Apiculture," not only controls the entire advertising industry in Russia, but also simulates the reality of Russian political life by designing 3-D images of famous politicians and transmitting utterly fictitious news on TV, which people gullibly take to be real. There Tatarsky meets some of his fellow copywriters and discovers that they create the scripts for everything that happens in the country while his new boss, Leonid ("Legion") Azadovsky, approves them. Still confused, Tatarsky wants to find out how this system holds together if everything is staged and who runs the show, but Morkovin suggests that he pinch himself whenever this question crosses his mind again.

In a typically postmodernist fashion, the novel ends rather unexpectedly and enigmatically. After Tatarsky survives a weird assassination attempt at a seedy pub, he is brought blindfolded to what appears to be a corporate party but turns out to be an initiation ceremony. Tatarsky is supposed to stand before the goddess, who, as he later finds out from one of the most experienced copywriters, is Ishtar, the same goddess he read about doing research and whose messages appeared in his hallucinations. Although the atmosphere seems somewhat tense, Tatarsky is told that the ritual is a mere formality: the goddess must see every new member joining the organization because she chooses her next husband to run the advertising/television business. The incumbent husband,

Tatarsky learns, is to be Azadovsky, and it is unlikely that a better candidate will be found any time soon. Unexpectedly, however, Tatarsky is chosen, and Azadovsky is strangled in front of his eyes. Tatarsky's duty now is to oversee the dissemination of advertising and to ensure that the simulation of reality continues.

Reception of *Generation "П"* and its Translation *Homo Zapiens*

In Russia, the initial reaction to Pelevin's *Generation "П"* was hardly unanimously positive, which may be at least partially due to the author's uneasy relationship with some critics and reviewers. In fact, despite being profoundly intertextual, the novel itself not only repeatedly expresses skepticism regarding literary studies[169] but also satirically portrays one of Pelevin's most vociferous critics, Pavel Basinskiy.[170] In her extensive, insightful review, titled "Etot mir priduman ne nami [This world was not invented by us]"[171] the authoritative critic Irina Rodnianskaya, recipient of the 2014 Solezhnitsyn prize, summarizes (and responds to) some of the criticisms targeted at Pelevin. Specifically, Rodnianskaya, in a generally favorable discussion of the novel, characterizes it as a dystopia and disagrees with vague claims that Pelevin's language is "weak" or non-literary. Rodnianskaia defends Pelevin against accusations of being a commercial writer whose goal is to produce pulp fiction that sells well. The latter criticism came from the critic Aleksandr Arkhangelskii, among others, who opined that

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[169] In one of his notes, Tatarsky, who always struggles to resist his literary experience in advertising concepts, writes "*Пора завязывать с литературоведением и думать о реальном клиенте*" (808). Italics in the original. The English translation reads, "it's time to have done with literary history and think about real clientele" (160).

[170] In the novel, Tatarsky's scenario for Gucci shows a critic, named Pavel Bisinsky, falling into a pit countryside toilet while quoting Pushkin to answer the question whether Russia belongs in Europe. Before drowning, Bisinsky manages to insert another quote by Krylov, who said, "'Sometimes you look around and it seems as though you don't live in Europe, but in some kind of …'" (160).

[171] A title of a song performed by Alla Pugacheva.

Pelevin's text is "a flat pamphlet" (par. 1) and "a kind of intellectual *popsa* [popular pulp]

intended to entertain with a game of philosophizing" (par. 31). Aleksandr Gavrilov and

Andrei Nemzer also find numerous faults with the novel. Drawing a parallel with Gogol

and claiming that every Russian writer whose works suddenly become best-sellers yields

to the temptation of didacticism, Gavrilov accuses Pelevin of "preaching." Nemzer, in

turn, blames him for pseudo-philosophizing and filling his texts with a typical set of trite

wisdom. He then proceeds to "tear" the novel apart by scoffing at the different details and

specific scenes in the story, but mostly by attacking Pelevin the author, sometimes with

seemingly ad hominem remarks. Genis summarizes the situation well when he states that

Generation "П" has undergone the same fate as Pelevin's other books: it has been an

instantaneous success with the readers but met with ferocious rejection by critics

("Fenomen Pelevina" par. 3). Genis, however, considers *Generation "П"* weaker than

Pelevin's previous novels and discusses specific examples of linguistic infelicities,

compositional shortcomings, and sometimes shallow puns to conclude that the novel is a

"misfire" (par. 38). Despite some unfavorable initial assessments, *Generation "П"* won

the 2000 "Bronze Snail" prize for the best fantasy novel written in Russian and the

Richard Schoenfeld Literary Prize in Germany.

Similarly to some rather captious Russian reviews, the overall response in North

America to *Homo Zapiens*, the translated version of *Generation "П"*, was tepid, but still

slightly more enthusiastic than in Russia. Reading the work in translation, Western

reviewers were not able to concern themselves so much with judgments about the quality

of the original Russian. In fact, only a few note anything, even in passing, about the

translation as such. Instead, they tended to approach the novel in a more general and

mimetic light, taking it as an opportunity to learn more about current Russian life and sensibilities. At least one English review, however, did appear before the English translation came out. In a general but informed analysis in *World Literature Today* in 1999, David MacFadyen points out the topicality of *Generation "П"* (for the turn of the millennium) and draws a legitimate analogy between Pelevin's novel and Andy and Lana Wachowskis' *The Matrix,* which came out the same year.

Reviews of *Homo Zapiens*, the English translation of *Generation "П"* by Bromfield, some of which appeared as early as 2001, reveal a mixed range of opinions and reactions. In Frank Caso's view, in *Homo Zapiens* Pelevin "enlivens an offbeat satire of contemporary Russia with esoteric teachings" (924), while Lev Grossman, who calls it "this picaresque nightmare of a novel," interprets Tatarsky's character as "stand[ing] in for a whole generation trapped between a discredited Soviet past and a banal, Westernized future" (par. 1). Whereas Grossman explains Tatarsky's role in light of the Russian novel's title, Michael Pakenham considers his role from an intertextual perspective, calling him "a spiritual cousin of Candide, Gulliver, Tom Sawyer, and Alice stepping into mad worlds" (par. 2). Pakenham, who is familiar with Pelevin's previous works, calls *Homo Zapiens* "a brilliant, complex, multileveled, fully mature book" (par.10) while Pelevin's "genius is in baring truth by presenting it as paradox" (par. 11). For Barbara Hoffert, who feels *Homo Zapiens* is not as strong as Pelevin's previous novel *Chapaev i Pustota* (translated as *Buddha's Little Finger*), "this sobering satire [still] belongs in all literary and world literature collections" (142).

Anthony Quinn returns to the picaresque motif, which for him is related to Tatarsky's drug-inspired adventures, and maintains that the picaresque is not neatly

interwoven into what he calls the "theoretical" parts – which Russian reviews called "preaching" – or, in Quinn's words, "Pelevin's vaguely Burroughsian preoccupation with conspiracy and mind control" (par. 6). Jeff Zaleski describes Tatarsky's work as "creating Russian funhouse-mirror versions of American ads," which is a thought-provoking metaphor for transmesis, as it implies a distorted reflection. Zaleski notes the absence of either "Chekhovian introspection" or plot in the novel, but recognizes Pelevin's creativity and talent, forecasting the possibility of a major masterpiece from him in the future. In a wittily eloquent account, Michael Pinker calls *Homo Zapiens* a "madcap parable" that "prick[es] the bubble of contemporary society's prevailing myth of individual freedom in an age of corporate corruption" (145). Finally, Michiko Kakutani of *The New York Times* calls Pelevin "the enfant terrible of post-Soviet Russian literature" (par. 1), which is the description applied to Zhadan by critics in Ukraine. Kakutani's verdict is harsh as she concludes that the novel "quickly devolves into a self-indulgent (and frequently incoherent) rant" (par. 3), and that the "narrative grows more and more flaccid and long-winded" (par. 8). Her very questionable characterization of the novel's (Pynchon-style) frustrated closure, however, "involving Tatarsky's being selected as the husband of the ancient goddess Ishtar" as being merely a "silly hallucinatory subplot" (par. 12) casts doubt on her other criticisms.

Scholarly Studies of *Generation "П" / Homo Zapiens*

Pelevin's *Generation "П"*, in addition to offering a thoroughly entertaining read, raises themes that can be approached from a number of theoretical perspectives. As a scathing critique of consumerism, it can be discussed in light of Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, while Pelevin's fascination with

simulated reality[172] can be seen as premised on Jean Baudrillard's idea of simulacrum. The problems of personal and national identities problematized in the novel can be viewed both from the post-colonial and psychoanalytic perspectives, as well as through the lens of Judith Butler's theorizing on performativity and Julia Kristeva's writing on abjection.[173] The importance of technology in the novel is manifested not only in a fairly detailed description of the process whereby reality is simulated but also in a reference to Marshall McLuhan's famous dictum "the medium is the message," which—in a postmodern pastiche—Pelevin manages to mesh with Mesopotamian mythology. The novel's pervasive symbolism is captivating from the semiotic point of view, while the idea of entropy ensuing from the dissolution of the Soviet Union coupled with Pelevin's predilection for Zen Buddhism, eastern mysticism, and psychoactive drugs undoubtedly add to the novel's poignancy.

Thanks to its thematic breadth and philosophical depth and scope, *Generation "П"* has been the subject of several academic studies and articles in English, Russian, and other languages. Two useful interpretations of the novel in Russian come from Olga Bogdanova's monograph *Postmodernizm v kontekste sovremennoi russkoi literatury [Postmodernism in the Context of Contemporary Russian Literature]* and Boris Tukh's *Pervaia desiatka russkoi literatury [The Top Ten of Contemporary Russian Literature]*, both of which explain the storyline(s) along with highlighting and interpreting key

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[172] While Baudrillard's writing on simulated reality offers one way to interpret the story, another interesting take on the representation of reality in *Generation "П"* has been taken by Tatiana Keeling, who in her dissertation on Pelevin, Petrushevskaya, and Ulitskaya places Pelevin's work in the framework of magical realism.

[173] In Meghan Christine Vicks's master's thesis, the discussion of *Generation "П"* relies on Kristeva's abjection and Bakhtin's concept of the carnival.

passages. In addition to elucidating the significance of the title and the role of proper names, Bogdanova also gives a well-researched account of a possible prehistory of the novel.[174]

While Sofya Khagi, following Rodnianskaia's review, approaches the novel as "a fin-de-siècle expression of dystopian imagination" (559), Joseph Mozur believes that despite the postmodernist play and satire, the novel, which in his words is "an indictment of post-Soviet consumerism," may still be an attempt to overcome "postmodernist meaninglessness" (66). In a metafictional gesture, Mozur extrapolates Pelevin's depiction of popular culture and commercialization of society, in order to reflect on the shift from elite- toward market-driven mass literature in Russia, suggesting that Pelevin's own work is a hybrid, similar to his own slogan "Uncola" (66). Likewise, Liudmila Parts employs *Generation "П"* as a prism through which she zeroes in on the Russian intelligentsia in post-Soviet times.

Using a comparative perspective, Sally Dalton-Brown insightfully juxtaposes Douglas Coupland's and Viktor Pelevin's novels, claiming that both writers "explore whether a dialectics of emptiness is feasible; whether the character can awaken from the de-animated state of reification in which void is hidden under commodity and attain a non-commodified existence" (239). In another comparative project, Keith Livers examines the works of Viktor Pelevin and Aleksandr Prokhanov through the underlying theme of conspiracy and the concept of the occult.

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[174] In the 1996 presidential campaign, Pelevin worked on a software-generated image of an ideal president (364-366).

Setting the Stage for Transmesis in *Generation "П" / Homo Zapiens*

It is surprising and, perhaps, symptomatic that none of the above reviews and studies of the novel take even a cursory look at the problems of translation—both literal and figurative– that are featured so prominently in Pelevin's text. Although several discussions dwell on the quality of Pelevin's Russian, in an ultimately futile debate about whether it is high literary style or just a functional, "new generation lingo," only Rodnianskaia and McCausland briefly mention the text's bilingual mode. Regardless of whether the Russian language reader understands English or not, this unusual (even defamiliarizing) mixture of the two languages in the novel attracts attention to itself in a very manifest manner. From the novel's hybrid title and the epigraph (i.e. a Leonard Cohen poem presented in both English original and Russian translation) to the book's last chapter, which in addition to the peculiar un-Russian sounding title "Туборг мэн" ("Tuborg Man") also contains a passage in English with a translation provided in a footnote, *Generation "П"* is conceived as a text that is both about, and in, translation. As McCausland correctly observes, "Small but significant parts of the text are in English, and much of the rest of the Russian text is permeated with foreign words and phrases, many of them in the form of advertising jargon" (219). The first part of the conclusion McCausland draws on the basis of his observation is accurate but does not go far enough. He writes, "The text reveals the growing dominance of English in certain spheres of modern urban life in Russia" (219). The second part, in which he states that "the competition between the two languages is only one of several stylistic contrasts in *Generation 'P,'* which is made of juxtaposition of numerous discourses" (ibid.), is more insightful as the word *competition* implies tension and problematizes the relationship

between the two languages in the novel. Rodnianskaia, in her turn, takes the argument a step further. She sums it up succinctly:[175]

Да, весь текст Пелевина — волапюк. Только не "серых переводов с английского", как тут же добавляет Немзер, а живого, въедливого арго. Что делать, если в очередной раз "панталоны, фрак, жилет — всех этих слов на русском нет",[176] а вещи — просто лезут в глаза...) (par. 2)	Yes, Pelevin's entire text is a *Volapük* [constructed language, a precursor of Esperanto]. But it consists not of "dull translations from English" as Nemzer is quick to add, but of lively caustic argot. What's to be done if yet again "*pantaloons*, *frac* [tailcoat], *gilet* [vest] do not exist in Russian," but these items are always in your face.

The linguistic and cultural complexity of Pelevin's text (or, as McCausland stresses, discourse), however, goes beyond the concepts of bilingualism and code-switching. Nor does it merely encapsulate the ideas of untranslatability of cultural notions, which inevitably leads to linguistic borrowings, and the influence of the hegemony of English as a global language on other languages that, as Rodnianskaia's quotation suggests, depend on such borrowings. As this chapter will demonstrate, the implications are considerably greater.

Two excellent examples of how the linguistic, thematic, cultural, and ideological implications of Pelevin's text can be further problematized, interpreted, and situated in a philosophical framework come from Vitaly Chernetsky and Boris Noordenbos. In Chapter 3, "Travels Through Heterotopia: The Other Worlds of Post-Soviet Fiction," in his *Mapping Postcommunist Cultures,* Chernetsky employs and extends Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia, which stands "spaces of otherness" and was originally

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[175] My translation.
[176] Here Rodnianskaia quotes a line from Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin.*

elaborated in "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias."[177] The term, as Chernetsky

explains, has eventually found a wide application in many fields, including literary

studies. Specifically, the theoretician of postmodernism and literary scholar Brian

McHale, according to Chernetsky, in his study *Postmodern Fiction*, uses heterotopia in a

narrower sense to designate the other worlds/spaces portrayed in fictional works.

Chernetsky proposes to extend the term in investigating fiction to encompass not only

"what the text *describes* but [also] what it *is*" (90)[178] and then proceeds to analyze several

Russian postmodernist texts, including Pelevin's *Generation "П",* which in his opinion

fall into the heterotropic paradigm. For Chernetsky, "'[h]eterotopia seems to be a more

felicitous designation for the texts in question since the centrality of 'other' in its

semantics points to a particular strategy for the interrogation of cultural constructs that

they perform" (91). He further notes that the concept of heterotopia becomes an even

more effective analytical tool in conjunction with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of

"minor literature" because of the possibility to reverse the balance of power through

language.[179]

In the case of *Generation "П,"* the concept of heterotopia is especially relevant,

particularly Foucault's emphasis on the impact heterotopia has on language. Reflecting

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[177] Foucault does not provide a precise definition. Instead, he explains heterotopia by juxtaposing it with a cognate term utopia, the latter being unreal while the former real: "There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias" ("Heterotopias," par. 2).

[178] Emphasis in the original.

[179] In the case of Russian literature, this dynamic does not apply directly because it cannot be characterized as "a minor literature" and because both English and Russian are major world languages. Metaphorically, however, if one agrees that historically Russia has oscillated between accepting Western civilizational values and developing its own, Deleuze's and Guattari's concept might be useful.

on Borges's short story "The Analytical Language of John Wilkins," specifically on the

famous classification of animals in the Chinese encyclopedia, Foucault writes:

> *Heterotopias* are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine
>
> language, because they make it impossible to name this *and* that, because
>
> they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in
>
> advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but
>
> also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and
>
> also opposite one another) to 'hold together.' This is why utopias permit
>
> fables and discourse: they run with the very grain of language and are part
>
> of the fundamental dimension of the *fabula*; heterotopias (such as those to
>
> be found so often in Borges) desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks,
>
> contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our
>
> myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences. (xix)[180]

If one can admit *Generation "Π"* as a heterotopic text, as Chernetsky does, Foucault's

explanation of how heterotopias "undermine" language as a stable, coherent system is

particularly relevant. It helps to situate the remarks of some Russian critics about

Pelevin's use of Russian, described as dry, merely functional. Moreover, in the case of

Generation "Π" heterotopia is largely predicated on translation and the constant shifts

between Russian and English, which allows not only for the representation but also for

the incorporation of *the Other*.

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[180] This passage is also quoted in Chernetsky's work. I first discovered it in his book.

In his article "Copy-Writing Post-Soviet Russia. Viktor Pelevin's Work in Postcolonial Terms," Boris Noordenbos uses Pelevin's novel to discuss the problem of identity construction in Russia through the ideas advanced by the postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha. In tracing the history of Russia's uneasy relations with the West in light of the problematic choice between accepting "universal" (Noordenbos uses this term for *western European*) civilizational values or, conversely, taking its own (uniquely Slavic) path,[181] Noordenbos suggests that Pelevin's novel demonstrates, not without an ironic twist, how Russia continues to struggle in a paradoxical endeavor to simultaneously mimic and resist the West. As the theme of Russia vis-à-vis the West (epitomized primarily by the USA) occupies a prominent place in the story, the argument about Russian identity—along with the idea of self-colonization, whereby the universal is deliberately alienated, and the related notions of tradition, continuity, particularity, and universality—is undoubtedly significant. More pertinent, however, to my discussion of transmesis is Noordenbos's application of Bhabha's views on the role of language in the colonizer / colonized dichotomy. Relying on Bhabha's *The Location of Culture,* Noordenbos predicates his analysis on the notions of mimicry, hybridization, the colonial slippage of meaning, and the disappearing boundaries between the original and the copy. One important caveat to an unqualified application of Bhabha's postcolonial ideas to Pelevin's novel, however, is that, strictly speaking, Russia has never been *the colonized* in the literal sense. In fact, in relation to other nations it has often played a role associated with *the colonizer*, imposing, among other things, its language. But if one views

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[181] This debate dates back to the times of Peter I and his "window to Europe" but reaches an important milestone in the 19th-century debate between the Westernizers and the Slavophiles, which was also reflected in literature, specifically, in the works of Dostoevsky and Turgenev.

colonization in the broader sense of culture – one of Bhabha's most famous concepts of "cultural translation," notoriously absent in Noordenbos's analysis, could be productively applied here – it undoubtedly remains useful in the interpretation of Pelevin's novel. Chernetsky's and Noordenbos's approaches not only inform my argument and discussion but also expand their theoretical and philosophical framework.

Parsing Heterotopia: The Four Categories of Transmesis in the Novel

Pelevin's inherently hybrid text is not only heterotopic, however; *Generation "П"* is also a powerful example of a transmetic novel. In its portrayal of the process of localization (i.e. cultural and linguistic adaptation of a commercial product from its originating place to a local market), it wrestles with cultural untranslatability, problematizes the relationship between the translation and the original, and reiterates the profoundly intertextual, playful, and creative nature of any process of translation. Based on their form and function, the transmetic elements in *Generation "П"* can be categorized into four groups. Although the following categorizations are contingent, they will help to pinpoint the various roles played by transmesis in the novel and make clear the significance of the implications of transmesis for interpreting and translating the book, and for thinking further about translation theory.

The Portrayal of the Process of Translation

The first category of transmetic elements involves the actual portrayal of translation as it is performed or discussed by the characters and commented upon by the narrator. The examples from this category analyzed below will illustrate Tatarsky's and other characters' understanding of and attitude to translation in general, to the process of translation in how Tatarsky goes about localizing/adapting advertising slogans and the

difficulties he encounters, and, finally, to the product of translation, being the slogans

Tatarsky creates and the solutions he finds when dealing with untranslatability. More

specifically, in what follows, the discussion of Tatarsky's job as a copywriter will help to

elucidate the concepts of localization and adaptation, while a closer look at Tatarsky's

assignments will highlight both the difficulties presented by untranslatable cultural

concepts and puns, as well as the solutions Tatarsky manages to find through research—

epitomized primarily by intertextuality—and creativity, manifested in wordplay.

Tatarsky's first encounter with translation is at the university, before the fall of

the Soviet Union. After enrolling in engineering to avoid military service, he discovers

Boris Pasternak's poetry and attempts a switch to the humanities:

> He couldn't get into the poetry department, though, and had to content
>
> himself with translations from the languages of the peoples of the USSR.
>
> Tatarsky pictured his future approximately as follows: during the day - an
>
> empty lecture hall in the Literary Institute, a word-for-word translation
>
> from the Uzbek or the Kirghiz that had to be set in rhyme by the next
>
> deadline; in the evenings – his creative labours for eternity. (3)

Literary translation is presented stereotypically as an inferior, derivative, and mechanical

activity, a boring chore in contrast to poetry, which, on the other hand, is believed to be

an art of creation.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Tatarsky understands that "any more

translations from the languages of the peoples of the USSR [are] simply out of the

question" (3). He realizes that there is no use for him in society, and more importantly,

that he knows very little about the world. A sales job at a kiosk seems the only viable option until in one of his customers he recognizes his former classmate Morkovin, who initiates Tatarsky into advertising and explains to him the intricacies of "an era of primitive accumulation" (9) of wealth in Russia. Morkovin assures Tatarsky that copywriting is a lucrative business and becomes his first mentor.

Tatarsky's first assignment is to write a commercial script for a confectionery, and it takes him only a few hours to concoct a scenario, which "didn't have any specific storyline" and "consisted of a sequence of historical reminiscences and metaphors" (15), including, among other things, an image of the Tower of Babel. The slogan Tatarsky comes up with after consulting the dictionary of Latin maxims reads:

MEDIIS TEMPUSTATIBUS PLACIDUS. СПОКОЙНЫЙ СРЕДИ БУРЬ. ЛЕФОРТОВСКИЙ КОНДИТЕРСКИЙ КОМБИНАТ (661)	MEDIIS TEMPUSTATIBUS PLACIDUS CALM IN THE MIDST OF STORMS LEFORTOVO CONFECTIONERY COMBINE (15)

The intention behind the slogan is to convince the client that in times of tumult – in the 1990s, a strong sense of volatility was in the air in Russia – the company will remain stable. The slogan, however, fails to impress anyone at Draft Podium, an advertising company to which Tatarsky has been referred by Morkovin. A backup version is prepared for submission, but surprisingly, the client prefers Tatarsky's work and agrees to pay a large amount of money for it. Thus Tatarsky becomes a copywriter.

His initial success is followed by a series of rejections. Realizing that he needs more background knowledge, he decides to peruse professional literature on the subject of advertising:

| Была одна волшебная книга, прочтя которую можно было уже никого не стесняться и ни в чем не сомневаться. Она называлась «Positioning: a battle for your mind» [footnote], а написали ее два продвинутых американских колдуна. По своей сути она была совершенно неприменима в России. … Но все же книга была полезной. Там было много шикарных выражений вроде line extention (sic),[182] которые можно было вставлять в концепции и базары.
[Footnote: «Позиционирование: битва за ваш разум» (англ.)]
(663-664) | There was a certain magic book, and once you'd read it there was no more need to feel shy of anyone at all or to have any kinds of doubts. It was called *Positioning: A Battle for your Mind,* and it was written by two highly advanced American shamans. Its essential message was entirely inapplicable to Russia… but even so the book was useful. It was full of stylish expressions like 'line extension' that could be stuck into concepts and dropped into spiels for clients.
(17-18) |

After reading this book, Tatarsky grasps the difference "between the era of decaying imperialism and the era of primitive capital accumulation" (18), about which he has heard from Morkovin:

> In the West both the client who ordered advertising and the copywriter tried to brainwash the consumer, but in Russia the copywriter`s job was to screw with the client's brains. Tatarsky realised in addition that Morkovin was right and this situation was never going to change. One day, after smoking some especially good grass, he uncovered by pure chance the basic economic law of post-socialist society: initial accumulation of capital is also final. (18)

Morkovin's prediction that all the best jobs will soon go to advertising agencies that hire copywriters and so-called "creators" comes true, and Tatarsky tries to secure employment at one such agency. His new boss, Dmitri Pugin, explains to him that in order to be successful in the advertising business in post-Soviet Russia, which remains stuck in a Soviet mentality, Tatarsky also needs to possess such a mentality:

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[182]Although perhaps merely a typographical error, it is ironic that the word *extension* is misspelled.

Tatarsky didn't really understand completely what this Soviet mentality

was, although he used the expression frequently enough and enjoyed using

it; but as far as his new employer, Dmitry Pugin, was concerned, he wasn't

supposed to understand anything anyway. He was merely required to

possess this mentality. That was the whole point of what he did: adapt

Western advertising concepts to the mentality of the Russian consumer.

(19)

In the last sentence of this passage, the narrator offers a fictional definition of what

in the field of translation studies is known as localization. According to Jeremy Munday,

localization is "[t]he adaptation of a product to the linguistic and cultural expectations of

the target locale. In the translation industry, localization is sometimes used as a synonym

for translation" (205). Similarly, Bert Esselink claims that localization "involves taking a

product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale

(country/region and language) where it will be used and sold" (13). Often the term

localization is employed specifically in computer-related industries, for example, software

development. Other related concepts include internationalization, globalization,

hybridization, and bizarre terms such as "language engineering."[183]

In their definitions of localization both Pelevin's narrator and Munday rely on the

verb *to adapt*. The term *adaptation* has always had an uneasy relationship vis-à-vis

translation and creation, not only in translation studies but also in literature, film, and

theater. As Georges L. Bastin notes in his entry on adaptation in the *Routledge*

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[183] According to the website http://www.oxforddictionaries.com, language engineering stands for "[t]he field of computing that uses tools such as machine-readable dictionaries and sentence parsers in order to process natural languages for applications such as speech synthesis and machine translation."

Encyclopedia of Translation Studies, "Generally speaking, historians and scholars of translation take a negative view of adaptation, dismissing the phenomenon as distortion, falsification, censorship, but it is rare to find clear definitions of the terminology used in discussing this controversial concept" (6). One reason why adaptation evades a precise definition is that it is not clear what the process of adaptation entails and how it is supposed to be conducted. Bastin, among other things, quotes what he believes to be the "best-known" definition of Vinay and Darbelnet, who describe it as "a procedure which can be used whenever the context referred to in the original text does not exist in the culture of the target text, thereby necessitating some form of re-creation" (qtd. in Bastin 6). In 1958, when they published their *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais: méthode de traduction,* dropping the "re" and just saying "creation" would have probably been considered almost blasphemous; as such the emphasis is placed on re-creation.

While for Vinay and Darbelnet it is the difference *between* contexts that necessitates adaptation, Pugin's explanation in the novel of why advertisements need to be adapted, and not simply translated, focuses on a more specific problem *within* a cultural context. In a passage that is one of the central transmetic moments of the novel – an example of transmesis par excellence – Pugin (who, as he admits, once possessed a Soviet mentality but got rid of it after working in the United States as a cab driver) elaborates on what is meant by adapting advertising concepts:

– Смотри, – говорил Пугин, прищуренно глядя в пространство над головой Татарского, – совок уже почти ничего не производит сам. А людям ведь надо что-то есть и носить? Значит, сюда скоро пойдут товары с Запада. А одновременно с этим хлынет волна рекламы. **Но эту рекламу нельзя будет просто перевести с английского на русский, потому что здесь другие… как это… cultural references…** Короче, рекламу	'Look,' said Pugin, squinting intensely into the space above Tatarsky's head, 'the country hardly produces anything at all; but people have to have something to eat and wear, right? That means soon goods will start pouring in here from the West, and massive amounts of advertising will come flooding in with them. But it won't be possible simply to translate this advertising from English into

| надо будет срочно **адаптировать**[184] для русского потребителя. Теперь смотри, что делаем мы с тобой. Мы с тобой берем и загодя – понимаешь? – загодя подготавливаем болванки для всех серьезных брэндов. А потом, как только наступает время, приходим с папочкой в представительство и делаем бизнес. Главное – вовремя обзавестись хорошими мозгами! (666-667) | Russian, because the …[185] what d'you call them … the cultural references here are different … That means, the advertising will have to be adapted in short order for the Russian consumer. So now what do you and I do? You and I get straight on the job well in advance – get my point? Now before it all starts, we prepare outline concepts for all the serious brand names. Then, as soon as the right moment comes, we turn up at their offices with a folder under our arms and do business. The most important thing is to get a few good brains together in good time.

(20-21) |

Pelevin constructs this passage in a truly ingenious manner: not only does Pugin explain the essence of localization but also simultaneously illustrates its main challenge of untranslatability through a concept that refers to it – i.e. "cultural references" – and at the same time appears to be untranslatable. In other words, Pugin's explanation is both a metatextual and metalinguistic commentary presented performatively in a work of fiction.

That Pelevin constructs this passage intentionally with the idea of untranslatability in mind is manifested by Pugin's stumbling over the phrase "cultural references" as he is clearly groping for the appropriate word. Unable to find one, he uses the original English term instead. Considering that Pugin has lived in the USA, it appears quite feasible that, like many returned emigrants, he might be prone to inserting English words and phrases into his Russian speech. However, there is one drastic difference between the original Russian text and the English translation in conveying the way in which Pugin stumbles. In the Russian original, the hesitation is caused by the problem of untranslatability, and is resolved by use of the English word. In the English translation, the reader may be left

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[184] All emphases mine.
[185] Ellipses in the original. They indicate the speaker's hesitation, not an omission in a direct quotation.

with the impression that Pugin temporarily blanks out before managing to find the right word. Of course, in Russian Pugin might have instead said something along the lines of *культурная отсылка (kulturnaia otsylka),* a somewhat awkward loan translation (or calque) of the term *cultural references,* but he nonetheless uses the English term.

In translation studies, this concept is more widely known as *cultural concepts* or, as Mona Baker refers to it in her discussion of the instances of non-equivalence, "culture-specific concepts" (*In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation* 21). In Slavic translation literature, on the other hand, it is known as *realia* (in Russian, *реалия*; in Ukrainian, *реалія*) and has been studied most profoundly by two scholars of Bulgarian descent, Sergei Vlakhov and Sider Florin, in their seminal *Neperevodimoe v perevode*[186] (*The Untranslatable in Translation*) and by the Ukrainian translation scholar Roksolana Zorivchak in her monumental *Realiia i Pereklad* (*Realia and Translation).* According to Zorivchak, realia can be defined as single or multiple lexemes whose main lexical meanings include ethnocultural information traditionally attached to them, which, when subjected to contrastive analysis, are foreign —unfamiliar— to the objective reality of the target language.[187] Among the strategies for rendering realia, Zorivchak discusses transcription/transliteration, descriptive paraphrasing, calques, combined renomination, transposition at the connotative level, assimilation, contextual explanation, and situational equivalents, all of which may be effective (to various degrees), considering that the translation is done – as would be natural to assume – from the basis of an original text.

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[186] Written in Russian.

[187] This is my approximate translation. A precise translation of this definition is difficult due to subtlety of its wording in Ukrainian: "моно- і полілексемні одиниці, основне лексичне значення яких вміщає (в плані бінарного зіставлення) традиційно закріплений за ними комплекс етнокультурної інформації, чужої для об'єктивної дійсності мови-сприймача" (58).

But as the above quotation from Pelevin suggests, Pugin's idea is to prepare in advance what he calls "drafts" (or templates) – in Russian he says "болванки" (*bolvanki*) – for all the major Western brands even before they arrive in the Russian market: he uses the word *загодя* (*zagodia*), which means "in advance" or "beforehand" (Bromfield translates it as "before it all starts here" (20). In other words, the process of adaptation as it is presented in the novel does not entail the existence of the original text and is more reminiscent of creation than of re-creation or reproduction.

Tatarsky's first two assignments, or as Pugin called them, "test piece[s]" (21), immediately prove his diligence and creative flair for translating products from one locale to another. His first project is the script for Sprite, and as the narrator facetiously remarks using a metaphor (playing with the notions of *liquid* and *pouring*), "Tatarsky poured into his conception for Sprite every last drop of his insight into his homeland's bruised and battered history" (21). Tatarsky's preparation is thorough, as he not only researches current developments in Russia by scanning newspaper articles but also reviews chapters from *Positioning: A Battle for your Mind.* In a lengthy introduction, Tatarsky predicts social upheavals and a military dictatorship as well as the emergence of a pseudo-Slavonic style in aesthetics, in which traditional Western advertising would be inconceivably altered, from the semiotic perspective (Tatarsky uses the term "знаково-символическое поле" ("znakovo-simvolicheskoe pole," translated as "symbolic signifiers" (22). He then examines the slogan "Sprite the Uncola":

| Рассмотрим классический позиционный слоган «Sprite – the Uncola». Его использование в России представляется крайне целесообразным, но по несколько иным причинам, чем в Америке. Термин «Uncola» (то есть не-кола) крайне успешно позиционирует «Спрайт» | *Let us take a classic positioning slogan: 'Sprite – the Uncola'. Its use in Russia would seem to us to be the most appropriate, but for somewhat different reasons than in America. The term 'Uncola' (non-Cola) positions Sprite very successfully against Coca-cola and Pepsi-cola,* |

против «Пепси-колы» и «Кока-колы», создавая особую нишу для этого продукта в сознании западного потребителя. Но, как известно, в странах Восточной Европы «Кока-кола» является скорее идеологическим фетишем, чем прохладительным напитком. Если, например, напитки «Херши» обладают устойчивым «вкусом победы», то «Кока-кола» обладает «вкусом свободы», как это было заявлено в семидесятые и восьмидесятые годы целым рядом восточноевропейских перебежчиков. Поэтому для отечественного потребителя термин «Uncola» имеет широкие антидемократические и антилиберальные коннотации, что делает его крайне привлекательным и многообещающим в условиях военной диктатуры. (668)	*creating a special niche for this product in the consciousness of the Western consumer. But it is a well-known fact that in the countries of Eastern Europe Coca-Cola is more of an ideological fetish than a refreshing soft drink. If, for instance, Hershi [188] drinks are positioned as possessing the 'taste of victory', then Coca-Cola possesses the "taste of freedom', as declared in the seventies and eighties by a vast number of European defectors. For the Russian consumer, therefore, the term 'Uncola' has extensive anti-democratic and anti-liberal connotations, which makes it highly attractive and promising in conditions of military dictatorship.* (22)

On the one hand, in this passage Tatarsky mimics the pseudo-academic language of the books he has read, illustrating the practical application of Morkovin's advice that in Russia the copywriter must first brainwash the client before the client can brainwash the consumer. On the other, although Tatarsky prepares his script zealously in an effort to persuade the client (i.e. to create a possibly false impression that the agency is professional), ironically, it also reflects several considerations that any translator working on an assignment of this nature would indeed have to keep in mind. For example, it takes heed of the problem of context and the target audience and accounts for ideological issues and the difference in connotations. Moreover, in working on the slogan, Tatarsky also shows attention not just to the meaning but also to the sound of language, which, as it turns out, inspires him to be creative and play with the associations evoked by coincidental cross-linguistic similarities:

В переводе на русский «Uncola» будет «Некола». По своему звучанию (похоже на имя «Никола») и вызываемым ассоциациям это	Translated in Russian 'Uncola' would become 'Nye-Cola'. The sound of the word (similar to the old Russian name 'Nikola') and the associations

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[188] Here Bromfield transliterates the Russian spelling of an American company back into English. The correct spelling in English is "Hershey."

| слово отлично вписывается в эстетику вероятного будущего.

(668) | aroused by it offer a perfect fit with the aesthetic required by the likely future scenario.

(22) |
|---|---|

As a result, Tatarsky produces three versions of the slogan, all based on wordplay and posing an insurmountable challenge for the English translator. The first one is "СПРАЙТ. НЕ-КОЛА ДЛЯ НИКОЛЫ" (668), which Bromfield renders as "SPRITE: THE NYE-COLA for NIKOLA" (22). The second one is a more nuanced version that builds on the first one by adding an idiomatic expression to make the pun even more sophisticated. Tatarsky writes that it might be useful to create a character called Nikola Spritov, by analogy to Ronald McDonald, in order to target the "маргинальные группы" ("marginalnye gruppy," in English "marginal groups"). The slogan, omitted in the English translation because it is untranslatable, reads "ПУСТЬ НЕТУ **НИ КОЛА** И НИ ДВОРА. СПРАЙТ. **НЕ-КОЛА** ДЛЯ **НИКОЛЫ**" (669).[189] The new pun is based on language play on the three similarly sounding words:

1) *Ни кола* (*ni kola*) – the word *кол* (*kol*) means "a stake" (in the sense of a pointed stick) but the idiom *ни кола, ни двора* (*ni kola, ni dvora*), literally, "[to have] neither a stake [in the sense of fence], nor a (back)yard," indicates an extreme state of poverty and is close in meaning to "[to have] neither house nor home." This is the reason why Tatarsky specifies that this version will target "the marginal groups."

2) *Не-кола* (*nie-kola*) means "Un-cola" or as Bromfield suggests, "Nye-kola." The difference between *Не-кола* and *Ни кола* lies only in the second vowel *и* and *е*,

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[189] My emphasis.

respectively, and the stress, which fall on the last syllable (i.e. *ла*) in the former and the first syllable (i.e. *ко*) in the latter.

3) The proper name *Никола* (*Nikola*, colloquial for Nikolai), which is used in the Genitive case, (*Николы*, *Nikoly*, meaning "[for] Nikola") because Russian nouns are declined.

On top of a witty play with homophones, idioms, and proper names, Tatarsky also mocks the cultural incommensurability manifested in the comical image of a poverty-stricken Russian peasant enjoying a can of Sprite:

Кроме того, необходимо подумать об изменении оформления продукта, продаваемого на российском рынке. Здесь тоже необходимо ввести элементы ложнославянского стиля. Идеальным символом представляется березка. Было бы целесообразно поменять окраску банки с зеленой на белую в черных полосках наподобие ствола березы. Возможный текст в рекламном ролике: «Я в весеннем лесу Пил березовый Спрайт». (669)	In addition, some thought has been given to changing the packaging format of the product as sold on the Russian market. Elements of the pseudo-Slavonic style need to be introduced here as well. The ideal symbol would seem to be the birch tree. It would be appropriate to change the color of the can from green to white with black stripes like the trunk of a birch. A possible text for the advertising clip: Deep in the spring-time forest I drank my birch-bright Sprite. (22-23)

As this quotation demonstrates, in his third slogan Tatarsky elaborates the idea of cultural translation by examining and ridiculing the incongruity between the cultural archetypal images (i.e. birch tree vs Sprite) as well as the natural vs artificial dichotomy.

According to Pugin, however, Tatarsky's effort is in vain, as *Un-Cola* is already the term used in the rival product 7 UP's campaign.[190] Despite the mix-up, Pugin praises Tatarsky and assigns him another task: Parliament cigarettes. Finding it more difficult than he expected, Tatarsky tries to explore the associative range of images the word

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[190] An example of how a 7 UP commercial that uses the term "Un-Cola" can be found here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXmc7DG4uu8

parliament conjures up, and he dabbles with some ideas, such as Cromwell's wars. As he is not having much success, Tatarsky goes for a smoke, trying the traditional Russian Yava, a cigarette he is not even able to finish because of its terrible quality and taste. At this point, Tatarsky feels like giving up as the only slogan he can come up with is a simplistic comparison of the two brands, a primitive calque similar to his previous work on Sprite: "PARLIAMENT – THE NYE-YAVA" (23). Then Tatarsky entertains an alternative that results in what he refers to, in frustration, as "рождение слогана-дегенерата" (670), in my translation "the birth of a degenerate slogan"[191]: "ПАР КОСТЕЙ НЕ ЛАМЕНТ" ("Par kostei ne lament"). Like all of his previous efforts, it is also a pun, in this case derived from the Russian idiom *пар костей не ломит* (*par kostei ne lomit*), which literally means "steam doesn't make [one's] bones ache" and figuratively implies that a hot, humid climate cannot be bad for one's health. Structurally, it is based on two parts: 1) the word *пар* (*par,* meaning "steam"), which also happens to be the first syllable of the word *парламент* (*parlament,* "parliament,") and 2) a phonetic similarity between the last two syllables *ламент* (*lament*) in *parliament* and the Russian third-person verb *ломит* (*lomit,* literally "[it] aches").

Although the new slogan seems more refined than the first one, Tatarsky remains dissatisfied. The narrator does not specify why exactly Tatarsky believes it to be weak and lets the reader infer the reasons. For one thing, the connection between the steam and bones in the Russian saying and Parliament cigarettes, is quite weak unless one assumes that smoking this particular brand is not going to be harmful. Linguistically, however, the pun is clever as it creates an ironic dissonance with the message of "not breaking" ("не

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[191] Bromfield omits this passage because it contains another untranslatable pun.

ломит"): the idiom literally does break the word *parliament* by splitting it into two parts in order to make the pun. In any case, dissatisfied Tatarsky continues his research on parliamentary systems, which leads him to the sad realization that "the entire history of parliamentarism in Russia amounted to one simple fact – the only thing the word was good for was advertising Parliament cigarettes, and even there you actually could get along quite well without any parliamentarism at all" (28), at which point he reaches a dead end.

The next day Tatarsky, "still absorbed in his thoughts about the cigarette concept" (29) meets his old friend Gireev, who invites him to try some fly agaric mushrooms, which, as Tatarsky recalls from the legend about Ishtar, were among the goddess's ritualistic symbols. Having eaten the mushrooms, Tatarsky and Gireev go for a walk and eventually Tatarsky gets lost in the woods. He begins to hallucinate and his language becomes jumbled and incoherent, echoing Carroll's "Jabberwocky." He says, "– Мне бы хопить вотелось поды!" (681), which Bromfield (over)translates as "Li'd winker drike I watof" (34). One curious hallucination Tatarsky sees while meandering through the woods is the image of Hussein, a protection racketeer whose business Tatarsky left. Though he's scared to death, Tatarsky still decides to ask Hussein about what the word parliament evokes for him, to which Hussein replies: "Al-Ghazavi had this poem called 'The Parliament of Birds'" (35). Although Hussein's allusion sounds intriguing, Tatarsky realizes that he will not obtain enough details, so he continues his search.

In a drug-induced fit of enlightenment, Tatarsky suddenly has an epiphany, realizing that it must have been mushroom tea that led to the confusion of languages known as the Tower of Babel. He begins hearing a voice repeating "this game has no

name," and, according to another metalinguistic comment by the narrator, "the fact that the voice spoke in Russian convinced Tatarsky it was a hallucination" (39). Imagining that he is indeed climbing the ziggurat, Tatarsky finds himself at a dilapidated military base, which leads him to think of "Star Wars" and Darth Vader. On his way, he also finds an empty pack of Parliament cigarettes and a Cuban peso bearing Che Guevara's portrait, which reminds him of the movie "GoldenEye." On the walls of one of the rooms, Tatarsky sees what the narrator describes as "the traces of a soldier's life" (41) – magazine photographs of naked women on the beach. When he traces the resemblance between the palms on the pack of Parliament cigarettes and the palms on a beautiful beach (with the ladies), he is seized by melancholic realization that this is "a part of the world he would never get to see – not even in the Russian style, from inside a tank" (41). An idea for a slogan – a quotation from the 19th-century Russian poet and playwright Aleksandr Griboyedov – dawns on him:

Торопливо вытащив записную книжку, он застрочил: Плакат представляет собой фотографию набережной Москвы-реки, сделанную с моста, на котором в октябре 93 года стояли исторические танки. На месте Белого дома мы видим огромную пачку «Парламента» (компьютерный монтаж). Вокруг нее в изобилии растут пальмы. Слоган – цитата из Грибоедова: И ДЫМ ОТЕЧЕСТВА НАМ СЛАДОК И ПРИЯТЕН. ПАРЛАМЕНТ (688)	*He hastily pulled out his notebook [...] and jotted the ideas down:* *The poster consists of a photograph of the embankment of the river Moscow taken from the bridge on which the historic tanks stood in October '93. On the site of the Parliament building we see a huge pack of Parliament (digital editing). Palms are growing profusely around it. The slogan is a quotation from the nineteenth-century poet Griboedov:* *Sweet and dear* *Is the smoke of our Motherland* *Parliament slogan:* *The MOTHERLAND'S #1 SMOKE!*

(42)[192]

As this example demonstrates, Tatarsky's slogan for Parliament cigarettes originates in a plethora of incidentally discovered interconnections between various allusions and Tatarsky's own personal and historical contexts: Tatarsky combines his vision of palms on a beautiful sunny beach in Cuba with the events of the 1993 constitutional crisis when the Russian government building was shelled by tanks.

Eventually, however, Tatarsky revises his Parliament slogan after a dinner conversation with Khanin in which he learns another useful term, which once again betrays some translation-related confusion. The transmetic exchange starts when Tatarsky tries to clarify one of Khanin's little marketing nuggets of wisdom:

– Я не понял, что это значит: «У всякого брэнда – своя легенда».	'I didn't understand what it meant: "Every brand has its bend",' [said Tatarsky].
– Легенда? Это у нас так переводят выражение «brand essence». То есть концентрированное выражение всей имиджевой политики. Например, легенда «Мальборо» – страна настоящих мужчин. Легенда «Парламента» – джаз, ну и так далее. Ты что, не знаешь?	'Bend. That's the way we translate the expression "brand essence". That's to say, the concentrated expression of a comprehensive image policy. For instance, the Marlboro bend or essence is a country of real men. The Parliament essence is jazz, and so on. You mean you didn't know that?'
– Да нет, знаю, конечно. За кого вы меня принимаете. Просто очень странный перевод.	'No, of course I knew that. What d'you take me for? It's just a very odd kind of translation.'
(754)	(105)

Ashamed that he was not familiar with this concept, Tatarsky steps out to the washroom and reworks the old slogan immediately, jotting down the following ideas:

1) Брэнд-эссенция (легенда). Вставлять во все концепции вместо «психологической кристаллизации».	1) Brand essence (bend). Include in all concepts in play of 'psychological crystallisation'.
2) «Парламент» с танками на мосту – сменить слоган. Вместо «дыма Отечества» – «All that jazz». **Вариант плаката – Гребенщиков,**	2) Parliament with tanks on the bridge. Instead of 'the smoke of the Motherland' – 'All that jazz'.

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[192] Bromfield makes the allusion to Griboyedov's *Woe from Wit* comedy in verse more explicit, and he rephrases Tatarsky's original Russian slogan for Parliament cigarettes in consequence.

сидящий в лотосе на вершине холма, закуривает сигарету. На горизонте – церковные купола Москвы. Под холмом – дорога, на которую выползает колонна танков. Слоган: **ПАРЛАМЕНТ** **ПОКА НЕ НАЧАЛСЯ ДЖАЗ**[193] (755)	(105) **Another version: Grebenshchikov, sitting in a lotus position at the top of the hill, starts a cigarette. The cupolas of Moscow churches are on the horizon. A column of tanks slowly rolls down the road at the bottom of the hill. The slogan reads:** **PARLIAMENT** **UNTIL THE JAZZ HAS BEGUN**[194]

The development of Tatarsky's Parliament concept as well as his previous work, which also often included several versions, highlights the importance of translation multiplicity, reminding us that translation, much like writing itself, is a process that revolves around revising and rewriting. It also suggests that a perfect final version is rarely (if ever) possible as new contexts will lead to new intertexts and consequently to multiple new meanings.

English Insertions

The second category of transmetic elements in the novel involves the English words or phrases interspersed in the Russian text, which creates the constant need for translation and underpins the novel's bilingual and code-switching mode. In some rare cases, these English insertions are left untranslated but in most instances they are rendered into Russian in the footnotes. The first and, perhaps, most notable example comes from the novel's hybrid title *Generation "П"*. In an unusual bilingual construction (somewhat similar to Jean-Claude Germain's A Canadian Play / Une plaie canadienne discussed in chapter 2), Pelevin combines the English word *generation* (likely to be unfamiliar to an average Russian reader) with the Russian upper case letter *П* (in English, *P*). Any

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[193] The highlighted part is omitted in the English translation.
[194] My translation.

translation into English of this seemingly simple phrase would be problematic; therefore, it is no coincidence that Bromfield comes up with a drastically different title for the English translation. Curiously, the title of chapter 1 in the original, though essentially the same as the title of the book, reflects the act of translation by repeating the title in Russian: *Поколение П* (*Pokolenie P*). As is immediately explained, *П* stands for Pepsi, a soft drink popular in Russia, imported from the United States, and an epitome of the West. Some reviewers have noted, however, that despite the textual explanation, the Russian "П" may also imply several other things, ranging from Pelevin's own last name to the prefix *post* (as, for example, in post-Soviet or post-modernist), and from the initial letter of the Russian expression for *lost generation* (*потеряное поколение*, *poterianoe pokolenie*) to the Russian swear word *пиздец* (*pizdets*), which can be translated as "fucking disaster."

Dedicated to the "memory of the middle class," which, it is implied, has been disappearing since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the novel also contains as an epigraph a stanza from a poem by Canadian poet and singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen. The title of the poem is not provided, but the quotation comes from Cohen's "Democracy," which in the complete version has an emphatic repetition of the line "Democracy is coming to the USA" at the end of each stanza. The stanza quoted by Pelevin, however, goes as follows:

> I'm sentimental, if you know what I mean;
> I love the country but I can't stand the scene.
> And I'm neither left or right.
> I'm just staying home tonight,
> Getting lost in that hopeless little screen.
> (643)

In a footnote, he also provides a Russian translation, which is probably his own:

Я сентиментален, если вы понимаете, что я имею в виду.
Я люблю страну, но не переношу то, что в ней происходит.
И я не левый и не правый.
Просто я сижу дома,
Пропадая в этом безнадежном экранчике (англ.).
(643)

In Bromfield's English translation, the epigraph (even its first part, which is originally in English) is surprisingly omitted. However, in the Russian version of the novel, the epigraph is significant for several reasons: 1) by using it, Pelevin sets the stage for the theme of translation and foreshadows that the text will not only discuss translation but will also perform it through constant code-switching and bilingual references; 2) the last line in the quoted stanza mentions a television, one of the novel's most important symbolic images; 3) it is the first of numerous intertextual references whose transmetic role, as will be argued, cannot be overestimated.

Explaining how Pepsi, a symbol of consumerism and American culture, came to define the entire new generation of Russians, whom their predecessors of the sixties called "shitsuckers" (an analogy with the beverage's color), the narrator introduces the protagonist Vavilen Tatarsky (in English, Babylen Tatarsky), who used to drink Pepsi as a child but only later realized that he too belonged to this generation. In detailing the emergence of a new, money-driven consumer society in Russia, the story gradually begins to reflect the appearance of a new language that evolved in parallel. The linguistic changes brought about by political, economic, and sociocultural influences were indeed drastic. As if in passing, the narrator drops a marketing term in English into a comment about the Pepsi commercial. The clip features two monkeys, one of whom is drinking Pepsi and almost turns into a human being, unlike the other one who is drinking Coke.

The narrator suggests that the creators of this clip did not think highly of their audience but in addition to the Russian word for *audience* also adds an English term:

Немного обидно было узнать, как именно ребята из рекламных агентств на Мэдисон-авеню представляют себе свою аудиторию, так называемую **target group**.[195] (646)	It hurt a little to learn how exactly the guys from advertising agencies on Madison Avenue saw their audience, the so-called *target group*.[196]

In this case, the English term serves as an appositive and is placed right next to the Russian word it is supposed to qualify or explain. As the story proceeds, such English insertions become more frequent and pronounced. This ubiquitous presence of English in the novel is best reflected in a comment made by Azadovsky, Tatarsky's last boss, whom he eventually replaces as Ishtar's husband. Looking through Tatarsky's application, Azadovsky remarks:

– Ну хорошо, – сказал Азадовский и снова заглянул в бумаги, на этот раз в какую-то разграфленную анкету. – Так… Политические взгляды – что там у нас? Написано «upper left» [footnote] Не понимаю. **Вот, блядь, дожили – скоро в документах вообще все по-английски будет.**[197] Ты по политическим взглядам кто? [footnote]: Верхнелевые (*англ.*). (801)	'Well, that's good,' said Azadovsky, taking another look into the papers, this time some form with columns and sections. 'OK… Political views – what's this we have here? It says "upper left" in English. I don't get it. What a fucking pain – soon every form and document we have'll be written in English. So what are your political views? (153)

It is never explained how Tatarsky, his friend Morkovin or other characters in the novel have learned English, or picked up English words. Neither is it mentioned directly that they know English. Yet, despite omitting these details, the narrator convincingly creates

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[195] My emphasis.
[196] Emphasis in the translation. In English, it is perhaps the only way to draw attention to the fact that it is a term. The italics, however, do not capture the bilingual mode of the original.
[197] My emphasis.

the impression that the characters' command and use of English is a "given," that it should be taken for granted as a natural ability of the generation of Russians – those who used to drink Pepsi – portrayed in the story.

There are further examples of English words or expressions peppering the text. During a business meeting with his first client, Morkovin sends Tatarsky a text message with "Welcome to the route 666," translated in a footnote as "Добро пожаловать на шоссе 666" (660). Tatarsky takes it for a joke rather than as an omen; here, as well as in other passages to be discussed, Pelevin hardly concerns himself with the thinly veiled symbolism. The intention of Morkovin's message was to fool the client by creating an impression of a reputable company whose employees use state-of-the-art gadgets, but why he sends it to Tatarsky in English remains unclear. Clearly, though, it does confirm that characters in the novel are conversant, if not completely fluent, in English: when Tatarsky sees the English text message, he thinks – with a peculiarly Canadian tag at the end in Bromfield's translation – "Some joker, eh?" (14).

Another message that haunts Tatarsky throughout the story is another English slogan, in various renditions: "This game has no name. It will never be the same," also translated in a footnote, as "У этой игры нет названия. Она никогда не будет той же" (686).[198] Interpreted narrowly, the game may denote the simulation of reality in which Tatarsky is about to be involved. Alternatively, it may be a metaphor referring to the signs he must decipher, or the slogans he must create, or, more generally, to life. But considering that footnoted translations accompany most of the English phrases that

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[198] According to a Google search, this phrase is also found in a song titled "Battle for your Mind" of the band "Pcilocybe Larvae." The song talks about "virtual insanity" and "TV zombies."

abundantly permeate the novel, the game, thus presented in two languages, may also imply a "translation game" that Pelevin plays both with his characters and, even more so, with his readers.

From the readers' perspective, the footnotes – which, of course, are not intended for the characters who cannot "jump out of the story" to refer to them – raise questions regarding their purpose and function. They seem to undermine, if not contradict, the initial impression that English is commonly accessible and understandable. Pelevin recognizes that, unlike his characters, readers may rely on footnotes or be unable to grasp the meanings of the English expressions. On the other hand, while many readers will skip the footnotes, at least some readers who are bilingual may feel as if they were invited to check them against the English text for accuracy. Personally, as a bilingual reader, I treated the footnotes as part of the story and at times felt tempted to question the translations or come up with my own.

The most notable examples of the use of English with accompanying footnotes offering Russian translation are reflected in the following chart:[199]

Он поднял глаза на стену туалета, словно в надежде увидеть там ответ. На кафеле красным фломастером были начерчены веселые округлые буквы короткого слогана: TRAPPED? MASTURBATE![200] [Footnote]: Попался? Дрочи! (700)[201]	He raised his eyes to the wall of the toilet as though in hopes of an answer there. Traced on the tiles in red felt-tip pen were the jolly, rounded letters of a brief slogan: 'Trapped? Masturbate!' (53)
Кислотные журналы посвящали бы пронзительные **cover stories** эстетике пластикового пакета … (701)[202]	Youth fashion magazines would devote revelatory **cover stories** … to the aesthetics of the plastic bag… (54)

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[199] This list excludes advertising slogans created by Tatarsky and his colleagues because they belong to the first transmetic category.
[200] All bold emphases in this chart are mine.
[201] The Russian translation uses a more colloquial word for *masturbate,* which is closer to *jerk off.*
[202] No translation is provided.

Это редкая марочка была, с драконом-победоносцем. Из немецкой серии «**Bad trip Иоанна Богослова**» [Footnote]: Здесь: наркотический облом Иоанна Богослова. (705)	It was a rare tab with a dragon defeating St George. From the German series: "John the Evangelist's Bad Trip". (58)
Среди малазийских «Кама-сутр» с сисястыми шакти выделялось странное полупрозрачное приспособление из синей резины со множеством толстых шипов, очень похожее на голову главного демона из фильма **«Hellraiser»**. [Footnote]: «Восставший из ада» (*англ.*). (717)	Standing out clearly among the Malaysian Kama-Sutra condoms with their bob-bled shafts was a strange semi-transparent device of blue rubber covered with a multitude of thick knobs, looking very much like the head of the main demon from the film *Hellraiser*. (71)
Над прилавком висела черная майка с портретом Че Гевары и подписью **«Rage Against the Machine»**. Под майкой была табличка «Бестселлер месяца!». Это было неудивительно – Татарский знал (и даже писал об этом в какой-то концепции), что в области радикальной молодежной культуры ничто не продается так хорошо, как грамотно расфасованный и политически корректный бунт против мира, где царит политкорректность и все расфасовано для продажи. [Footnote]: «Бунт против машин» (*англ.*) – название американской рок-группы. (718)[203]	Hanging above the counter was a black tee shirt with a portrait of Che Guevara and the inscription: 'Rage Against the Machine'. On the piece of cardboard under the tee shirt is said: 'Bestseller of the month!' There was nothing surprising about that – Tatarsky knew very well (he had even written about it in one of his concepts) that in the era of radical youth culture nothing sells as well as well-packaged and politically correct rebellion against a world that is ruled by political correctness and in which everything is packaged to be sold. (72)
Гигантскими объемными буквами, отбрасывающими длинную нарисованную тень, на стене лифта было вычерчено: ХУЙ Снизу мелкими буквами был повторен слоган Джим Бима: YOU ALWAYS GET BACK TO THE BASICS [Footnote]: Мы всегда возвращаемся к основе (*англ.*). (740)	Traced out on the wall in gigantic three-dimensional letters casting a long drawn shadow were the words: FUCK YOU. Written below it in small letters was the original Jim Beam slogan: 'You always have to go back to the basics.'[204] (92)
– Тебя технология интересует? Могу рассказать в общих чертах. Сначала нужен исходник. Восковая модель или человек. С него снимается облачное тело. Знаешь, что такое облачное тело? – Это что-то типа астрального? – Нет. Это тебя какие-то лохи запутали. Облачное тело – это то же самое, что цифровое облако. Просто облако точек. Его снимают или щупом, или лазерным сканером. Потом эти точки соединяют – накладывают на них цифровую сетку и сшивают щели. Там сразу несколько процедур – **stitching, clean-up** и так далее. (814)[205]	'Are you interested in the technology? I can give you the general outline. First you need a source figure – a wax model or a human being. You use it to model the corporeal cloud. D'you know what a corporeal cloud is?' 'Isn't it some kind of astral thing?' 'No. Some blockheads or other have been feeding you a load of nonsense. A corporeal cloud is the same thing as a digital cloud-form. Just a cloud of points in space. You define it either with a probe or with a laser scanner. Then the points are linked up – you impose a digital grid on them and close up cracks. That involves a whole bundle of procedures – stitching, clean-up, and so on.

[203] In addition to the translation, the footnote provides additional information about

[204] The original slogan in English is "You always come back to the basics."

[205] No footnote is provided to explain these processes.

	(166)
Смотрел «**Starship troopers**»? Где космический десант с жуками воюет? [Footnote]: «Звездный десант» (*англ.*). (818)	Have you seen *Starship Troopers*? Where the starship troopers fight the bugs?' (170)
Татарский сел в последнюю машину – красный «рэйнджровер» Саши Бло. Саша был уже чуть пьян и явно в приподнятом настроении. – Я тебя все поздравить хочу, – сказал он. – Этот твой материал про Березовского с Радуевым – лучший компромат за всю осень. Реально. Особенно то место, где они собираются пронзить мистическое тело России своими бурильно-телевизионными вышками в главных сакральных точках. И какая надпись на этих монопольных денежках – «**In God we Monopoly**»! [Footnote]: «На Бога у нас монополия» (*англ.*). (860)	Tatarsky got into the last car, Sasha Blo's red Range Rover. Sasha was already slightly drunk and obviously feeling elated. 'I keep meaning to congratulate you,' he said. 'That material of yours about Berezovsky and Raduev – it's the best *kompromat* there's been all autumn. Really. Especially the place where the plan to pierce the mystical body of Russian with their television-drilltowers at major sacred points. And those inscriptions on the Monopoly money: 'In God we Monopolise!'[206] (214)

As these examples demonstrate, the bilingual mode completely disappears in Bromfield's English translation because, on a surface view, the footnotes providing translation become redundant. In the original, however, the footnotes do not just perform a paratextual function but, in conjunction with the other transmetic elements, contribute to the novel's bilingual paradigm by repeatedly signaling the hybridity of language and pointing to the need for translation.

Loanwords and Borrowings

The third transmetic category in the novel consists of loanwords (or transliterated English words also known as anglicisms) that reflect the process whereby English as a global language increasingly infiltrates and modifies other languages. At times, these transliterated loanwords, however awkward they may be, serve the purpose of naming concepts for which signifiers in a given language do not exist. At other times, they replace existing signifiers with new coinages that despite their unnatural morphology and

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[206] Here Bromfield corrects Pelevin's slogan to create a normal grammatical sentence in English. This strategy, however, is debatable as "monopoly" creates an interesting interplay between the prefixes *mono* and *poly*, suggesting that many is turned into one or vice versa.

phonetics quickly gain popularity among users and become grammatically adapted to

Russian, to the extent of being conjugated or declined like other native lexemes. In

Generation "П," this tendency to incorporate loanwords from English is brilliantly

captured in a crucial dialogue between Tatarsky and one of his employers, Khanin. The

latter offers Tatarsky a job, but before accepting Tatarsky tries to clarify the job title. The

exchange goes as follows:

- Пойдешь ко мне в штат?	Will you come and work for me full-time?
Татарский еще раз посмотрел на плакат с тремя пальмами и англоязычным обещанием вечных метаморфоз.	Tatarsky took another look at the poster with three palm trees and the promise of never-ending metamorphoses.
- Кем? - спросил он.	'What as?' he asked.
- Криэйтором.	'A creative.'
- Это творцом? - переспросил Татарский. - Если перевести?	'Is that a writer?' Tatarsky asked. 'Translated into ordinary Russian?'
Ханин мягко улыбнулся. - Творцы нам тут на хуй не нужны, - сказал он. - Криэйтором, Вава, криэйтором. (714)	Khanin smiled gently. 'We don't need any fucking writers here,' he said. 'A creative, Babe, a creative.' (68)

Although the word *криэйтор* (*krieitor*, imitating the English word *creator),* is a calque

for the Russian word for *creator*, *творец* (*tvorets*) – which Tatarsky uses in his question

in the Russian original – Khanin's response illustrates that what seems to be an

equivalent, an absolute synonym, is not necessarily "the same thing." For Khanin the

seemingly awkward English borrowing carries prestige and power, whereas the "exact"

equivalent of the same word in Russian, which Tatarsky uses in translation to clarify the

meaning, is devoid of any significance. Unfortunately, the wordplay in this instance is

largely dissipated in the English version, as Bromfield overtranslates *криэйтор* (*krieitor*)

as "writer." In fact, Khanin's language is quite strong when he says that his agency does

not need "tvortsy" – that is does not need them in the Russian sense or rather with the

Russian job title – but certainly needs them under a different, more prestigious name. An interesting – if somewhat counterintuitive – implication is that despite Saussurean insistence on the arbitrariness of the relationship between the signifier and the signified, the former can in fact shape the latter. In other words, the name (at least, in Khanin's opinion) can define the essence of what is named,[207] even though it is unlikely that the name itself would alter Tatarsky's job description. Apparently, for Khanin, the transliterated English borrowing connotes modernity and innovation while the native Russian word is associated with backwardness and lack of progress, or with "business as usual."

The Tatarsky-Khanin exchange, as well as other instances of language borrowing, is reflective of the phenomenon Noordenbos describes as "cultural mimicry," referring to Bhabha's essay "Of Mimicry and Man." Noordenbos claims that "[b]eing an empty cultural mask, the mimic man converts the superiority of the colonizing culture into a set of tricks and signs that can be learned and aped" (224). Tatarsky and his fellow copywriters are indeed portrayed in the novel as trying to mimic Western marketing principles by acquiring and deploying a set of tricks, but Pelevin not only uses this superiority / inferiority dichotomy, but problematizes it, as it relates to the opposition of West vis-à-vis Russia. When Morkovin shows Tatarsky around the equipment room and explains how politicians are artificially created with the help of technology imported – significantly – from the United States, Tatarsky wonders if reality is also simulated in America. Morkovin replies affirmatively, adding that when it comes to computer

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[207] A line in a song from a cartoon reads «Как вы яхту назовете, так она и поплывет», which can be roughly translated as "how you call a boat, so it will float."

graphics, the USA is unsurpassable. Tatarsky then asks if it is true that American copywriters are involved in Russian politics, and Morkovin responds:

> 'That's a load of lies. They can't even come up with anything any good for themselves. Resolution, numbers of pixels, special effects – no problem. But it's a country with no soul. All their political creatives are pure shit. They have two candidates for president and only one team of scriptwriters. It's just a group of guys who've been given the push by Madison Avenue, because the money's bad in politics. I've been looking at their campaign material for ages now, and it's dreadful. […] And the best they can come up with is a blow job in the Oral Office. … Nah, our scriptwriters are ten times as good. Just look what rounded characters they write. Yeltsin, Zyuganov, Lebed. As good as Chekhov. *The Three Sisters.* Anyone who says Russia has no brands of its own should have the words rammed down their throat. With the talent we have here, we've no need to feel ashamed in front of anyone. (173)

Morkovin's "patriotic" rant, reflecting an ironic take on Russia's unflinching imperial aspirations, should, of course, be taken with a grain of salt; Pelevin repeatedly ridicules essentialist images such as the Russian soul, the "pseudo-Slavonic style," and, most notably, "the Russian idea," which, as we've seen, Wee Vova had asked Tatarsky to develop.

In suggesting that reality is simulated, *Generation "П"* also revolves around a premise previously established by many post-structuralist thinkers, most specifically Lacan and Foucault, that identity is constructed. To a significant extent, this construction

rests on language and, by extension, on social interaction between languages through borrowings and translation. The word *identity* is used in the novel exclusively in English and only once as *и-ден-тич-ность* (*identichnost*) in Russian, a word that Wee Vova takes up and parses syllable by syllable when he claims that the Russians lack one. The word *identity* most frequently occurs in Che Guevara's ouija board message, in which he proposes a whole theory about it. According to one of Che Guevara's statements:

...любая identity должна постоянно сверять себя с другой, которая находится ступенькой выше. В фольклоре этот великий принцип отражен в поговорке «To keep up with the Johnes» (sic) *[Footnote]: «Не отставать от Джонсов»* (737)	*…any 'identity' is obliged constantly to validate itself against another that is located one step higher. In folklore this great principle is reflected in the colloquial phrase: 'keeping up with the Joneses'.* (89)

This passage is riveting in its performativity, illustrating the point it makes through the language it uses. Linguistically, the validation it talks about – this metaphorical "keeping up with the Johnses" – is instantiated primarily (and most obviously) through a language incorporating English words and phrases, along with loanwords and borrowings.

Indeed, a hallmark example of borrowing is the Russian word *копирайтер* (*kopiraiter*), a transcription of the English *copywriter*. Going back to Tatarsky's adolescent years when he was a Pioneer (i.e. a Soviet boy scout), the narrator claims that Tatarsky would have been quite surprised then to learn of his future occupation, probably because neither the job itself nor the word to denote it existed at that time:

Если бы в те далекие годы ему сказали, что он, когда вырастет, станет **копирайтером**[208], он бы, наверно, выронил от изумления бутылку	If in those distant years someone had told him that when he grew up he would be a *copywriter,[209]* he'd probably have dropped his bottle of Pepsi-Cola on

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[208] My emphasis.

[209] The word *copywriter* is italicized in the translation because there is no other way to indicate that it stands out in the original as a term borrowed from English.

«Пепси-колы» прямо на горячую гальку пионерского пляжа. (647)	the hot gravel of the pioneer-camp beach in his astonishment. (1)

In an apparently ironic manner, the narrator remarks – in a witty metalinguistic comment – that in those times, "[e]ven that peaceful word 'designer' seemed a dubious neologism only likely to be tolerated until the next serious worsening in the international situation" (2). Back in the day, "language and life both abounded in the strange and the dubious" (2).

The most striking example of this sociolinguistic bizarreness is the protagonist's name Vavilen (in Russian, *Вавилен* and Babylen, in the translation), which turns out to be "intended" as a portmanteau acronym, a conflation of the initials of the Soviet writer Vasilii Aksionov and the communist leader Vladimir Illich Lenin. In Russian, however, the proper name is also transmetic in the sense that it acquires a cultural translation in its evocation of the name of the ancient city of Babylon, home to the Tower of Babel, which plays a key role later in the story. To keep the Babylon echo, Bromfield comes up with Babylen in his English translation, although he now needs to justify the name by inventing a different etymology from the one in the original Russian: Tatarsky's dad "composed it [the name] from the title of Yevtushenko's poem 'Baby Yar' and Lenin" (2).[210] Naturally, Tatarsky is ashamed of his name, and changes it to the innocuous Vladimir when he purposely loses his passport in order to get a new one.

Another interesting example of a loanword comes from a discussion in which both Morkovin and Tatarsky demonstrate surprising curiosity about and attention to

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[210] Although the combination of Baby Yar and Lenin is questionable, Bromfield still deserves credit here for finding a creative solution to this problem.

linguistic detail. They discuss the etymology of the Russian slang term for money, which

as it turns out, at least to Morkovin, is derived from English:

– А ты не знаешь случайно, откуда это слово взялось – «лэвэ»? Мои чечены говорят, что его и на Аравийском полуострове понимают. Даже в английском что-то похожее есть… – Случайно знаю, – ответил Морковин. – Это от латинских букв «L» и «V». Аббревиатура liberal values. [footnote]: Либеральные ценности[211] (657)	"And do you happen to know by any chance where the term *LV* comes from," asked Tatarsky. "According to the Chechens I work with, it is understood even on the Arabian Peninsula. And in English there must be something similar…" "Yes, I do," Morkovin responded. "These are the initial letters of the English expression *liberal values*.[212]

Later, when Morkovin invites Tatarsky to stop by for a brief visit at the office of Draft

Podium, a company whose English name is transliterated in Russian as "Драфт

Подиум," Tatarsky notices the fancy gadgets:

…компьютер «Силикон Графикс», который стоит черт знает сколько, а программа «Софт Имаж», которая на нем установлена, стоит в два раза больше. (657)	… a Silicon Graphics computer that cost one hell of a lot of money, and the Soft Image program that was installed on it cost twice as much. (11)

Both capitalized names – like the company name *Драфт Подиум* – are transliterated

from English. Commenting on the latter, the narrator remarks in a witty parenthetical

comment that "(after several minutes of intense mental effort Tatarsky abandoned the

attempt to guess what that meant)" (11). The comment seems to ridicule the use of a

loanword that the business owners must have adopted for its fancy sound, likely without

even fully understanding what it means, and certainly without caring that their clients

knew what it meant. Its meaning in the local culture, in this case, quite apart from the

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[211] It is not clear if this etymology is correct. According to an online discussion on the Russian usage site gramota.ru, the Russian term *лэвэ* (l*eve*) or *лавэ* (l*ave*) (as it is commonly pronounced) may derive from criminal jargon or from one of the Roma dialects, in which it means money.

[212] My translation. This passage is omitted in Bromfield's translation.

denotations of the words in English, seems to be that *English is superior and worldly, and so are we.* The very name, and the parenthetical comment, highlight that connotation trumps denotation as a driver of meaning here.

Other instances of linguistic borrowing demonstrate that like *копирайтер* (*copywriter*) and *криэйтор* (*creator*), many words have become naturalized and are used in serious contexts without ironic connotations:

Пропивая как-то в «Бедных людях» мелкий гонорар, он подслушал разговор двух известных **телешоуменов**[213]… Несмотря на то что оба **шоумена** были изрядно пьяны, они не потеряли сверкающей вальяжности, какого-то голографического блеска в каждой складке одежды… (698)	While he was drinking away a small fee in Poor Folk, he eavesdropped on a conversation between two **TV chat-show hosts** … Although both of the **showmen** were thoroughly drunk, they'd lost none of that strange holographic gleam in every fold of their clothes… (51)
"…плакат в окне объявлял пятидесятипроцентный **сэйл**" (716)[214]	"… a poster in the window promised a fifty-per-cent **sale**" (70)
Не хватает понимания, что black public relations существуют только в теории. А в жизни имеет место серый **пи-ар**. (752)	What's missing is the understanding that black public relations only exist in theory. What happens in real life is grey **PR**. (103)
И сами собой сжимаются кулаки, и выступают желваки на скулах, и даешь себе слово, что еще вырвешь зубами много-много денег у этой враждебной пустоты, и сметешь с пути, если надо, любого, и никто не посмеет назвать тебя американским словом **loser**. Так действует в наших душах оральный вау-фактор. Но Татарский, бредя к метро с папкой под мышкой, был равнодушен к его требовательным позывам. Он ощущал себя именно «**лузером**», то есть не просто полным идиотом, а вдобавок к этому военным	… and your fists tighten and clench of their own accord, and the muscles on your temples stand out in knots, and you promise yourself that you rip mountains of money out of this hostile void with your bare teeth and you'll brush aside anybody you have to, and nobody will ever dare to use that American word '**loser**' about you. That is how the oral wow-factor manifests itself in our hearts. But as Tatarsky wandered towards the underground with a folder under his arm, he was indifferent to its insistent demands. He felt exactly like a '**loser**' – that is, not only a complete idiot,

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[213] The emphases in the chart, here and elsewhere, are mine. This word does not have a Russian counterpart, but generally it has widely replaced the more traditional *ведущий* (*vedushchii*), meaning *host, presenter,* or *anchor.*

[214] My emphasis. A Russian equivalent would be *распродажа* (resprodazha) or *скидка* (skidka), which is closer in meaning to *discount* but may work better contextually in combination with "50 percent."

преступником и неудачным звеном в биологической эволюции человечества. (789)	but a war criminal as well, not to mention a failed link in the biological evolution of humanity. (141)
Сев за столик, он каким-то особым образом потряс бутылку и долго разглядывал возникшие в жидкости мелкие пузырьки. – Нет, ну надо же, – сказал он с изумлением. – Я понимаю, в ларьке на улице… Но даже тут поддельная. Точно говорю, самопал из Польши… Во как прыгает! Вот что значит **апгрейд**… Татарский понял, что последняя фраза относится не к водке, а к телевизору, и перевел взгляд с мутной от пузырьков водки на экран, где румяный хохочущий Ельцин быстро-быстро резал воздух беспалой ладонью и что-то взахлеб говорил. – **Апгрейд**? – спросил Татарский. – Это что, стимулятор такой? (811-812)	He sat down at the table, then shook the bottle with some special kind of movement and gazed for a long time at the small bubbles that appeared in the liquid. 'Well, would you believe it!' he said in astonishment. 'I can understand it in some kiosk out on the street… But even in here it's fake. I can tell for sure it's homebrew out of Poland… Just look at it fizz! So that's what an **upgrade** can do…' Tatarsky realized that the final phrase referred not to the vodka, but the television, and he switched his gaze from the opaque bubbly vodka to the screen, where a ruddy-faced, chortling Yeltsin was sawing rapidly at the air with a hand missing two fingers. '**Upgrade**?' queried Tatarsky. 'Is that some kind of cardiac stimulator?' (164)
– Что это такое? – **Рендер-сервер** 100/400. Их «Силикон Графикс» специально для этих целей гонит – **хай энд**. По американским понятиям в принципе уже старье, но нам хватает. Да и вся Европа на таких пашет. Позволяет просчитывать до ста главных и четырехсот вспомогательных политиков. – Крутой компьютер, – без энтузиазма сказал Татарский. (818)	'What is it?' 'A 100/400 **render-server**. Silicon Graphics turns them out specially for this kind of work – **high end**. In American terms, it's already outdated, of course, but it does the job for us. All of Europe runs on these, anyway. It can render up to one hundred primary and four hundred secondary politicians.' 'A massive computer,' Tatarsky said without enthusiasm. (171)
За одним из мониторов сидел паренек с **пони-тэйлом** и неторопливыми движениями руки пас мышку на скудном сером коврике. (843)	A guy with a **ponytail** was sitting at one of the monitors and grazing his mouse with lazy movements on a small grey mat. (196)
– Аллочка, привет! Посмотри уж заодно, какая у Черномырдина волосатость? Чего? Нет, в том-то и дело – мне для полиграфии. Хочу сразу цветопробы сделать. Так, пишу – тридцать два **эйч-пи-ай**, курчавость ноль три. Доступ дала? Тогда все.	'Alla, hi! Could you check the hair density for Chernomyrdin? What? No, that's the whole point, I need it for the poster. OK, I'm writing – thirty two **hpi**, color Ray-ban black. Have you given me access? OK, then that's the lot. (197)

(844)	
– Что, опять с перепою? – жизнерадостно заорал Морковин. – Забыл, что на **барбекю** едем? Давай спускайся быстро, я уже внизу. Азадовский ждать не любит. (856)	'What's this, been hitting the sauce again?' Morkovin roared merrily. 'Have you forgotten we are going to a **barbecue**? Get yourself down here quick. Azadovsky doesn't like to be kept waiting.' (210)
Вообще, не туда мы идем. Нам не долдонов этих надо оцифровывать, а новых политиков делать, нормальных, молодых. С нуля разрабатывать, через **фокус-груп** – идеологию вместе с мордой. (859)	Anyway, we are moving in the wrong direction. We shouldn't be digitising these deadheads; we need to make new politicians, normal young guys. Develop them from the ground up through **focus-groups** – the ideology and the public face together. (213)

Many of these borrowings are related to technology, and their use may be justified since Russian terms for many of these concepts do not exist. As Maria Yelenevskaya writes in her chapter on English loanwords, "Russian: From Socialist Realism to Reality Show,"

> Besides integrating separate words, contemporary Russian has borrowed intensively from developed terminological systems, when entire fields of knowledge, culture or technology became accessible to the large community. A case in point is Information Technology (IT), whose English terminology quickly penetrated professional slang of programmers and electrical engineers and then spread among rank-and-file computer users. (103)

In other cases, lexemes such as *сэйл* (*seil*), *барбекю* (*barbekiu*) or *пони-тэйл* (*poni*-teil), all of which have native Russian counterparts (e.g. *распродажа* (*rasprodazha*) for *sale*; the popular Russian *шашлыки* (*shashlyki*) for *shish kebab*; and *хвостик* (*khvostik)* for *pony-tail*), are indicative of trendiness and cultural prestige rather than linguistic necessity. Along with modernization and economic development, ethnic and linguistic

diversity, and several other factors, prestige is also one of the determinants for linguistic borrowing (Rosenhouse and Kowner, "The Hegemony of English and Determinants of Borrowing from Its Vocabulary," 14-16). From a cultural perspective, Gunta Ločmele and Andrejs Veisbergs's insight that "English, apart from its general cultural weight of symbolizing the free world, carries with it an additional attraction of the once forbidden fruit, and so has an immense impact on the 'information-starved' masses of the former Soviet space" (298) also partially explains the borrowings in *Generation "П,"* but Pelevin's "fictional" motivation may be more complex. Rosenhouse and Kowner hypothesize that nationalism and "cultural threat" inhibit the proclivity to linguistic borrowings (17), and in the novel, the imminence of "cultural threat" is palpable. Although this may be open to interpretation, my personal reading is that Pelevin presents this threat in a tongue-in-cheek, if not explicitly mocking, manner. For example, early in the novel, before Tatarsky is introduced, the narrator says:

Антирусский заговор, безусловно, существует – проблема только в том, что в нем участвует все взрослое население России. (646)	The anti-Russian conspiracy does exist, of course. The only problem is that the entire adult population of Russia is part of it. [215]

Although on a more personal level Pelevin may simply be toying with all the loanwords, showing off his knowledge of English through transliterated slang, from a transmetic perspective these borrowings not only reflect the hybridity of language and the consequences of cultural mimicry but also continuously involve the reader in a subconscious act of translation, even if the words "appear" to be Russian.

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[215] This passage is omitted in Bromfield's translation. My translation.

Metaphorical Representations of Translation

The fourth and last transmetic category in the novel is predicated on an understanding of

translation as a hermeneutic (not just a linguistic) act, and involves symbolic or

metaphorical representations of translation in the text. The idea that translation entails

interpretation and goes beyond merely transferring meaning between two languages is

not new, of course. It goes back to Roman Jakobson's concept of *intersemiotic* translation

as related to nonverbal sign systems and is also epitomized in George Steiner's argument

that "*inside and between languages, human communication equals translation*" (49).

More recently, reminding us of Walter Benjamin's vision of translation as a search for

"pure language," Thomas Beebee has concluded that "the question of translation becomes

part of the much larger search for meaning and truth in general" (*Clarissa On The*

Continent 4). That Pelevin's interest is not limited strictly to the translation of advertising

slogans and that *Generation "П"* also aims to explore (however superficially) the

philosophical dimensions of meaning is immediately obvious from an explicit attempt to

send Tatarsky on a kind of quasi-mystical (even if drug-induced) quest. The level of

semiotic sophistication in *Generation "П"* hardly matches that of the already mentioned

Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*. Given that the allusions to Babylon and the

Tower of Babel demand little special erudition and that these references are made

repeatedly throughout the story, one may safely assume that Pelevin does not intend to

make the symbolism too esoteric to decipher. It is also important to note that Pelevin's

symbolism exists in the midst of a constant play with parodies and imitations of various

discourses, styles, and registers (e.g. academic, poetic, the Russian nouveau riche,

mystical, etc.). At any rate, several episodes in the story, albeit not dealing directly with

translation, can be read and interpreted through the prism of translation, raising some interesting points for discussion.

For example, when Tatarsky struggles to come up with a slogan for Parliament cigarettes and is almost ready to give up, inspiration suddenly comes to him when he remembers a project on the history of parliamentary systems he once submitted at the Literary Institute. Instead of the project, however, he finds a binder mysteriously titled "Tikhamat," which "was the name either of an ancient deity or of an ocean" and, as indicated in a footnote, "could be translated approximately as 'Chaos'" (25). In it, Tatarsky discovers a legend about the ancient Babylonian goddess Ishtar and the three Chaldean riddles. According to the legend, anybody who could solve the three riddles would become Ishtar's husband: "In order to do this, [the contender] had to drink a special beverage and ascend her ziggurat" (26). "It is not clear," the story underscores, "whether by this was intended the ceremonial ascent of a real structure in Babylon or a hallucinatory experience" (26-27). According to some (probably fictional) scholar's controversial opinion – which Pelevin incorporates into the legend – these riddles were "a set of rhymed incantations in ancient Accadian discovered during the excavation of Nineveh, which are rendered highly polysemantic by means of their homophonic structure" (27). In another interpretation, the riddles were simply the three objects whose symbolic meaning the prospective husband had to be able to decipher. Moreover, the legend also suggests that the answers to the riddles existed in writing and could be purchased in Babylon on special tablets, produced by the priests of the god of lottery. The contenders who bought the tablets, however, could only open them once they ascended the ziggurat, a practice referred to as the Great Lottery or, according to a more precise

translation, as the legend points out, "The Game without a Name."[216] The latter is a
symbolic message that reveals itself to Tatarsky on several occasions throughout the
story, especially when he is intoxicated. Although Pelevin clearly intends to preserve
their ambiguity by providing various interpretative options, one way of understanding the
riddles is to view them as a metaphor for translation in a broader hermeneutic sense
whereby the ascension of the Tower of Babel signifies successfully overcoming the
confusion of languages. At the end of the story, when Tatarsky has allegedly perfected
his skill of localizing advertising slogans and has reached the pinnacle of the profession,
the goddess chooses him as her next husband. One may argue that, technically, Tatarsky
was not asked to solve any riddles, unless, of course, the advertising slogans he created of
his own free will are riddles. Be it as it may, the narrator establishes a strong
foreshadowing connection between the legend that Tatarsky finds in the binder and what
happens to him at the end of the story.

Moreover, Tatarsky's professional activity as a copywriter is linked with his
personal search for truth. For example, he wants to find out who stands behind the
simulated reality and addresses his most pressing questions to Morkovin, who seems
reluctant to disclose the whole truth:

– Слушай, – сказал он, – я чего понять не могу. Вот, допустим, копирайтеры им всем тексты пишут. Но кто за тексты-то отвечает? Откуда мы берем темы и как мы определяем, куда завтра повернет национальная политика? – Большой бизнес, – коротко ответил Морковин. – Про олигархов слышал?	'Listen,' [Tatarsky] said, 'there's one thing that I don't understand. Ok, so copywriters write all their texts for them [politicians]; but who's responsible for what's in the texts? Where do we get the subjects from? And how do we decide which way national policy's going to move tomorrow? 'Big business,' Morkovin answered shortly. 'You've heard of the oligarchs?'

[216] To a certain extent, the game without a name echoes the glass bead game described in Herman Hesse's eponymous novel (aka *Magister Ludi*).

– Ага. И что они, собираются и решают? Или в письменном виде концепции присылают? Морковин зажал большим пальцем горлышко бутылки, потряс ее и стал вглядываться в пузырьки – видимо, его что-то захватывало в этом зрелище. Татарский молча ждал ответа. – Ну как они могут где-то собираться, – отозвался наконец Морковин, – когда их всех этажом выше делают. Ты же сейчас сам Березовского видел. – Ага, – вдумчиво ответил Татарский. – Ну да, конечно. А по олигархам кто сценарии пишет? – Копирайтеры. Все то же самое, только этаж другой. – Ага. А как мы выбираем, что эти олигархи решат? – Исходя из политической ситуации. Это ведь только говорят – «выбираем». На самом деле особого выбора нет. Кругом одна железная необходимость. И для тех, и для этих. Да и для нас с тобой. (821-22)	'Uhuh. You mean, they get together and sort out things? Or do they send in their concepts in written form?' Morkovin put his thumb over the opening of the bottle, shook it and began gazing at the bubbles – he obviously found something fascinating in the sight. Tatarsky said nothing as he waited for an answer. 'How can they all get together anywhere,' Morkovin replied at long last, 'when all of them are made on the next floor up? You've just seen Berezovsky for yourself.' 'Uhuh,' Tatarsky responded thoughtfully. 'Yes, of course. Then who writes the scripts for the oligarchs?' 'Copywriters. All exactly the same, just one floor higher.' 'Uhuh. And how do we decide what the oligarchs are going to decide?' 'Depends on the political situation. "Decide" is only a word, really. In actual fact we don't have too much choice about it. We're hemmed in tight by the iron law of necessity. For both sets of them. And for you and me too.' (174-175)

Although, through his questioning, Tatarsky tries to arrive at the essence of the "matrix" itself, which, as Morkovin suggests, revolves primarily around money, his first questions about texts and their subject matter invite a discussion regarding the roles of translators and other stake-holders in the publishing business, especially in the processes of text selection, editing, publication rights, royalties, promotional marketing, and a range of other technical issues.

Another episode that conjures up an implicit association with translation takes place when Tatarsky receives Che Guevara's message through a ouija board, which he buys in a store named – in a Skovorodinian "nosce te ipsum" spirit – "The Path to Your Self." Along with the board, he also purchases a T-shirt with Che Guevara's picture and

an inscription "Rage Against the Machine." The slogan is translated into Russian in a

footnote with an additional comment indicating that the slogan is also the name of an

American rock band. Facing a difficult choice between the crystal balls, a "supreme

practice" frisbee and the ouija board, Tatarsky looks for advice and engages in an

interesting conversation with a sales assistant, whom the narrator describes – through yet

another unmasked reference – as "a pretty girl in a vaguely Babylonian-Assyrian style"

(72). Explaining how the board works, the girl advises Tatarsky that he should "regard

the text received as a free discharge of subconscious psychic energy facilitated by the

motor skills of writing" (74-75). Wearing the new Che Guevara shirt and finishing a

bottle of red wine, Tatarsky decides to summon Che Guevara's spirit and ask him

"something new about advertising, something that wasn't in Al Rice or comrade Ogilvy"

(77). A thought that crosses his mind (and serves as another testimony that he is after all

on a quest for ultimate meaning) is "I want to understand more than anybody else" (77).

Whether in the end he achieves complete understanding is unclear, but by the time the

session is over Tatarsky has been left with aching forearms and "a heap of paper covered

in writing" (91), containing Che Guevara's "lecture" with a convoluted title "Identialism

as the Highest Stage of Dualism" (77). In it, the Argentine revolutionary puts forward a

universal theory of metaphysics, informed by Buddhism and embracing a wide range of

concepts, including reality, television, "homo zapiens," the wow-factors of consumerism,

and identity.

Along with the sales assistant's unusually shrewd observation that textual

production stems from subconscious psychic energy and is a classic example of

communication through metempsychosis, also known as transmigration (which in itself

can be viewed as an instance of transmesis), Pelevin makes an interesting use of the ouija board as an allegorical medium for intersemiotic translation. Emily Apter discusses a similar case when she explains how James Merrill, who together with David Jackson also experimented with ouija board sessions, referred to his own *The Changing Light at Sandover* as "an address from the dead transcribed *en direct*" (223). According to Apter, Merrill's epic poem "constitutes an extreme case of translation without an original – an example of translation as language code transmitted from the beyond" (*The Translation Zone* 223). Che Guevara's message – also "transmitted from the beyond" – presents a curious linguistic conflation that raises a number of questions from the transmetic point of view. Specifically, assuming that Che Guevara's spirit speaks Spanish, is it reasonable to suggest that Tatarsky's ouija board translates it for him into Russian? Or does Tatarsky himself – subconsciously or not – translate it from Spanish into Russian? Or do spirits speak a universal tongue, a Benjaminian "pure language" that does not require translation? Pelevin, among other things, gestures playfully to Che Guevara's Marxist convictions by having him address his message to "Comrades in the Struggle" (79), which is Bromfield's rendition of the original Russian *соратники* (*soratniki*). Pelevin, however, does not experiment with Che's native Spanish and instead, for reasons best known to himself, in addition to having him use English words (e.g. *identity, winner* and *loser*)*,* also equips him with decent knowledge of English and Latin proverbs (e.g. "Money talks, bullshit walks" (83) or "Homo homini lupus est" (90) as well as an ability to pun on *homo sapiens / zapiens*.

My final example of the symbolic representation of translation and translators comes from Tatarsky's initiation ceremony. A sign resembling a double "M" is drawn

with dog blood on his forehead, and it is solemnly announced to Tatarsky: "Thou art the medium, and thou art the message" (241). Moments before the ceremony, the meaning of the double "M" symbol is explained to Tatarsky:

Обычно новые члены думают, что это шоколад «M&M». На самом деле это символ, указывающий на одно очень древнее и довольно туманное изречение. Все древние языки, в которых оно существовало, давно мертвы, и на русский его даже сложно перевести – нет соответствующих глосс. Зато в английском ему точно соответствует фраза Маршалла Мак-Лухана «The medium is the message» [36]. Поэтому мы расшифровываем этот знак как две соединенных буквы «M». То есть не только мы, конечно, – такие алтари «Силикон Графикс» поставляет вместе с рендер-серверами. (884)	New members usually think it's M&M chocolate. Actually it's a symbol that indicates a certain very ancient and rather obscure dictum. All the ancient languages in which it existed have been dead for ages, and even translating it into Russian is difficult – there aren't any appropriate glosses. But English has an exact equivalent in Marshall MacLuhan's (sic)[217] phrase: 'The medium is the message.' That's why we decode the symbol as two 'M's' joined together. And we're not the only ones, of course – altars like this are supplied with all render-servers. (239)

Whether Pelevin intends to make fun of the ambivalence of McLuhan's concise, seemingly straightforward (at least structurally) phrase[218] by conflating its terms is of secondary importance. More significant is the relevance of McLuhan's dictum, and Pelevin's conflation, to translation.

The role of the medium has been examined in the work of other scholars. Discussing a complex interrelationship between communication and transmission in light of translation, Michael Cronin in *Translation and Globalization* argues that the medium gains weight in the information age when words become "weightless" (20-22). In a section whose title reverses McLuhan's phrase, "The message is the medium," Cronin invokes Nicolas Oresme, a medieval French philosopher and translator, to speak of communication as "the emancipation of the message from the medium in translation"

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[217] Bromfield misspells Marshall McLuhan's last name.
[218] It comes from McLuhan's 1964 *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man.*

(22). To Cronin, as to many others, McLuhan "wanted to describe the nature of the new media and how they were profoundly altering our perception of reality" (22). With rapid and revolutionary advances in technology having possibly outpaced McLuhan's theory, Cronin refers to Manuel Castell's reversed argument "the message is the medium," implying that "the features of the message […] shape the characteristics of the medium" (23). The conclusion Cronin draws for translators, however, is somewhat tautological, "If the message drives the medium, then the translators have to become as attentive to messages as they are to media" (23).

Meanwhile, Mark Federman explains McLuhan's phrase from a different and more complex angle, suggesting that metaphorically the medium is an "extension" (in analogy to tools) of the human body while the message is, essentially, about the "change" of, in McLuhan's own words, "scale or pace or pattern" resulting from a new invention (qtd. in Federman, par. 6).

Based on these two readings of McLuhan, what can be inferred from Pelevin's conflation of medium and message in the figure of the translator, which is introduced in the novel when Tatarsky learns that he is both? If Federman's insistence that the medium represents a bodily extension) is valid, then the translator, and the translation, serve as a metaphorical extension of the text through another language. In other words, the translator can be conceived not just as a mediator of meaning who negotiates the differences and establishes bridges between two languages[219] but also as a medium that extends language and consequently understanding. Notably, when Cronin expounds on

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[219] The popular "bridge" metaphor implies fixity between the two points it connects, which was questioned by Weber in his reading of Benjamin.

Oresme's views about the emancipatory power of translation, he writes that "[m]eanings were no longer bound to the utterances of origin" (*Translation and Globalization* 22), which indicates that meaning is not dictated solely by the original but is carried through and shaped by the medium, which thereby creates the message. The delivery of the message through the medium of translation (i.e. the extension of language) comes with serious ramifications as the content and the nature of the message inevitably undergo change effected by the medium.

In a lucid exposition of Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator," Samuel Weber too invokes McLuhan, who challenged and subverted a long-held view (going back to Aristotle) that a medium is "a diaphanous interval" (67), "an intermediary between the two places" (ibid.) making the transition possible. Weber concludes that as translation "brushes up against a past and in so doing opens itself to the future," it "suggests a conception of medium that would be very different from that of the transparent interval between the two fixed points" (77). Weber's conclusion, however, is entirely predicated on a hardly less abstract Benjamin who asserts that to discover "the pure language" the translator must "[break] the brittle limits of his own language" (qtd. in Weber 76), an example of which, in Benjamin's opinion, can be found in "Luther, Voss, Hölderlin, [and] George [who] have extended the limits of German" (ibid.). Thus, although at first sight superficial, Pelevin's reference to McLuhan allows a thought-provoking and wide-ranging discussion of translation issues that go beyond the medium / message dichotomy to problematize the agency of the translator as well as the relationship between translation and original.

The Challenges of Translating *Generation "П"* into English

Andrew Bromfield, who has also translated Pelevin's previous and subsequent works, must have faced daunting challenges when rendering *Generation "П"* into English. This is evident, first of all, from the multiple omissions in the translation, some of which have been mentioned. Addressing the problem of omissions, Nadya Peterson's in her letter to the editor of *The New York Times* summarizes the most formidable problem: "To provide an adequate English translation of a text built on the tension between two linguistic-cultural systems, where the target language is one of the two used in the original, is exceptionally difficult" (par. 2). "Bromfield's translation predictably fails in this area," Peterson concludes (ibid.). Although I cannot agree with either the concept of "adequate" translation or, especially, "failure" – after all, Bromfield did complete the translation which has gained critical acclaim in English – Peterson has made a strong point regarding the tension between the two linguistic systems present in the text. In my opinion, however, it is not so much this tension that provokes difficulties but the overall transmetic mode of the novel, its heterotopic nature, hybridity, and the very theme of translation (more specifically, localization). Indeed, all of the transmetic elements, ranging from English borrowings to English insertions to some of the slogans Tatarsky creates by playfully intertwining English and Russian, leave the novel bordering on untranslatability. Even the hybrid title in the Russian original forces Bromfield to look for alternatives: *Babylon* and *Homo Zapiens.* Peterson prefers the former, which is the title of the first edition published in the UK, because in her opinion it better captures the idea about the confusion of languages. *Homo Zapiens,* however, is Pelevin's own invention, a multilingual pun linked to one of the central themes in the story, which both justifies and explains Bromfield's choice for the American edition.

Wordplay is undoubtedly one of Pelevin's fortes, the novel being interspersed with numerous puns and double entendres, which in themselves are commonly believed to be untranslatable. For example, explaining that advertising agencies grew in number rapidly the narrator uses Tatarsky's own pun-simile: "Эти агентства множились неудержимо – как грибы после дождя или, как Татарский написал в одной концепции, гробы после вождя" (665). Bromfield leaves this passage out because the pun seems to be untranslatable. The Russian sentence reads: "These agencies proliferated incessantly **like mushrooms after the rain**," which is an expression that is also possible in English. Then the narrator adds another simile playing on the first one: "… or, as Tatarsky wrote in one of his concepts, **like coffins after the leader.**" The verbatim translation appears to be not only irrelevant but also ridiculous. In Russian, however, the expression is formally meaningful because the two similes bear a close phonetic similarity, only a few letters (highlighted in bold) making the difference: "Как гр**и**бы после **д**ождя" ("kak griby posle dozhdia") means "like mushrooms after the rain," whereas "как гр**о**бы после **в**ождя" ("kak groby posle vodzhdia") means "like coffins after the leader." One feasible approach in this case would be to explore associative meanings evoked by the notion of proliferation and create a new pun based on simile. For instance, experimenting with a sentence from Isaiah (44:3-4) that reads "[t]hey will spring up like grass in a meadow" may open up some productive possibilities because it not only contains the phrasal verb *to spring up*, which approximates the notion of proliferation, but also sparks off a curious association between mushrooms and grass, both echoing drugs and thereby fitting contextually.

A similar example comes from the narrator's comment about Tatarsky's successful slogan for Parliament cigarettes, which conjured up a quotation from Griboyedov:[220]

Единственным сомнительным эхом этого слогана в заснеженном рекламном пространстве Москвы оказалась фраза «С корабля на бал», взятая неизвестным коллегой Татарского у того же Грибоедова. Она мелькала одно время на щитовой рекламе ментоловых сигарет – яхта, синь, фуражка с крабом и длинные ноги. Татарский ощутил по этому поводу укол ревности, но несильный – девушка с ментоловой рекламы была подобрана под вкусы настолько широкой целевой группы, что текст самопроизвольно читался как «С корабля на бля». (689)	The only dubious echo of the slogan left in the snowbound advertising space of Moscow was the phrase: 'From ship to ball', another borrowing – by an unknown colleague of Tatarsky's – from the poet Griboedov. It was to be glimpsed at one time on large hoarding advertisements for menthol cigarettes – a yacht, a blue sky, a peaked cap with sunburst and a pair of long legs. Tatarsky felt a pang of jealousy at this, but not a very powerful one – the girl in the menthol advert had been chosen to suit the taste of such a wide target group that the text seemed spontaneously to read as: 'From ship to balls'. (43)

The original expression, which has become a popular adage in Russian implying a sudden change of situation, reads "с корабля на бал" (s korablia na bal) and translates literally as "from ship to ball." It is noteworthy not only due to its idiomatic nature and widespread use but also because of an interesting phonetic effect created by the last syllable in the word *корабля* (*korablia*) and the word *бал* (*bal*): although not quite the same, they produce an alliteration. A popular, albeit crude, spin-off of this expression is to substitute the word *бал* (*bal*, literally, "ball") by *бля* (*blia*), thereby repeating the last syllable in *кора**бля*** (kora**blia**). *Бля* (*blia*) is a contracted interjection for *блядь* (*bliad*), which is a foul word standing for "whore" or "bitch," but as an interjection is closer in semantic and emotional meaning to the English interjections *shit* or *damn*. Bromfield keeps the expression simple (by staying close to the original) and successfully conveys a

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[220] Pelevin's narrator makes a mistake, quite common in Russian, by attributing the quote to Griboyedov himself, whereas the expression comes from Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin,* in which Pushkin compares Eugene with Chatskii, Griboyedov's protagonist.

sense of crassness by playing with the polysemy of the word *ball* and its plural form in English.

There are more seemingly insurmountable hurdles to the already difficult task of translating wordplay: Pelevin's transmetic (often multilingual) puns that not only testify to his virtuosity with language and perform a playful function but are also central to the plot. The best example of such transmetic wordplay in the novel is a slogan for the Russian GAP chain that Tatarsky finds while browsing through another writer's folio. Importantly, the description of the concept starts with a comment about the target audience, and the highlighted part, omitted in Bromfield's translation, explains why the forthcoming slogan is written in English:

Второй слоган, который понравился Татарскому, был предназначен для московской сети магазинов Gap и **был нацелен, как явствовало из предисловия, на англоязычную прослойку, насчитывающую до сорока тысяч человек.** (709)	The second slogan that Tatarsky liked was intended for the GAP chain of shops in Moscow **[and was targeted, as was obvious from the introduction, at the English-speaking customers numbering up to forty thousand people].**[221] (63)

Pelevin continues to play with allusions to famous poets – something he does repeatedly throughout the novel, echoing Tatarsky's initial inclination towards poetry – by creating a spurious impression of intertextuality:

На плакате предполагалось изобразить Антона Чехова: первый раз в полосатом костюме, второй раз – в полосатом пиджаке, но без штанов; при этом контрастно выделялся зазор между его голыми худыми ногами, чем-то похожий на готические песочные часы. Затем, уже без Чехова, повторялся контур просвета между его ногами, действительно превращенный в часы, почти весь песок в которых стек вниз.	The proposal was for a poster showing Anton Chekhov, first in a striped suit, and then in a striped jacket but with no trousers: the gap between his bare skinny legs was emphasised (sic) in strong contrast, so that it resembled a Gothic hourglass. Then the outline of the gap between Chekhov's legs was repeated, but without Chekhov; now it really had become an hourglass, with almost all the sand already fallen through into the bottom half.

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[221] The highlighted translation in square brackets is mine.

(709)	(63)

The slogan is in English in the original novel and the only difference from the slogan in the English version of the novel is that Bromfield omits the accompanying footnoted translation into Russian, as being unnecessary to readers of English:

> RUSSIA WAS ALWAYS NOTORIOUS FOR THE GAP BETWEEN CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION. NOW THERE IS NO MORE CULTURE. NO MORE CIVILIZATION. THE ONLY THING THAT REMAINS IS THE GAP. THE WAY THEY SEE YOU. (709)

The Russian footnote, however, not only offers a Russian translation of the English slogan but also explains the pun. In fact, the slogan in the footnote is not identical to the original slogan in the text (above), and this once again serves to underscore the conceptual importance of difference, rather than sameness, in translation, a point lost in the English version where the footnote does not appear.[222]

[Footnote:] В России всегда существовал разрыв между культурой и цивилизацией. Культуры больше нет. Цивилизации больше нет. Остался только Gap. То, каким тебя видят *(англ.)*. (Игра слов: *gap* – разрыв, *Gap* – сеть универсальных магазинов). (709)	In Russia there always existed a gap between culture and civilization. There is no more culture. No more civilization. The only thing left is Gap. This is how they see you (Engl.). (Play on words: gap – break, Gap – a chain of supermarket stores).

If Pelevin's footnoted translation were judged against the criterion of "adequacy" (as Peterson and others suggest), it might be possible to conclude – in a "nitpicking" way – that the narrator's translation is not exactly precise either because it leaves out the word

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[222] My translation.

notorious and instead uses milder wording: "there always existed." More important, though, is the realization that the function of footnotes in *Generation "П"* – as I have argued – is not merely paratextual. They are part of Pelevin's game (of translation) "that will never be the same;" thus, their exclusion from the English version erases the original text's bilingual nature, turning the translated version into a profoundly monolingual text.

Another critical example of transmetic wordplay comes from Tatarsky's first employer Pugin and his description of the copywriter's job:

Работа была free lance – Татарский **переводил** это выражение как «свободный копейщик», имея в виду прежде всего свою оплату. (665)	The work was 'freelance' – Tatarsky **used** the term as though it still had its original sense, having in mind first of all the level of pay. (19)

Capturing the pun in this case requires the visibility of the act of translating, which, as I will explain, is made to disappear in English. Bromfield writes: "Tatarsky **used** the term as" whereas the original Russian reads "Tatarsky **translated** this expression as…" In other words, the act of translation is absent in the English translation: because English is the language from which Tatarsky translates, Bromfield – writing this sentence in English – must come up with a different way to create a pun. Moreover, in Bromfield's version, "the original sense" of "freelance" remains a mystery, while in the Russian original, the pun exploits the ambiguity of the word *копейщик* (*kopeishchik*), literally "lance knight," as well as a further, intentionally "incorrect," humorous translation. According to the OED, *freelance* means "[r]elating to, of the nature of, or designating work which is not done as part of one's permanent or long-term engagement by a single employer, but which constitutes an assignment for a particular employer, or may be offered to prospective employers or clients." One historical meaning of *freelancer* is "a type of

military adventurer, typically of knightly rank, who offered his services to states or

individuals for payment, or with a view to plunder." The latter is evidently the meaning

that Tatarsky mistakenly uses instead of the former when he translates "free lance" as

"свободный копейщик" (the word *lance* in Russian is *копье*, *kopye*). The word

копейщик (***kopeyshchik***), "freelancer" or "lance knight," also echoes the word *копейка*

(***kopei**ka*), "penny." Based on this similarity, *копейщик* (*kopeishchik*) can be interpreted

as the person who makes pennies (in the sense of earning little money). The humorous

implication, which is also implicit in the English word *free*, is that translators often find

themselves working for a pittance or for free.

One of the most challenging puns illustrating Bromfield's creativity as well as the

role of the author in the process of translation (which will be clarified further) comes

from the chapter titled "The Babylonian Stamp." It describes how after experimenting

with LSD Tatarsky gets petrified and repents to the Lord, promising never to try acid

stamps again. Hallucinating, the intoxicated Tatarsky turns on the TV and watches a

concert of religious music, which encourages him to pray. To redeem himself before

God, Tatarsky offers to write a better slogan for him: "I can't do anything else except

write bad slogans. But for Thee, oh Lord, I'll write a good one – honest I will. You know,

they do position Thee quite wrongly" (123). He explains the downsides of the latest

commercial, featuring a Mercedes and an old Zaporozhets[223] whose owners donate

money for the church, after which he offers his own improved concept[224]:

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[223] A Soviet version of a subcompact car, a counterpart of the Volkswagen beetle, Zaporozhets was
notorious for its terrible design and quality, and became a token of the shoddy automotive industry in the
Soviet Union.

[224] Translation into English is mine. Bromfield reworks the passage. His version will be discussed below.

Плакат (сюжет клипа): длинный белый лимузин на фоне Храма Христа Спасителя. Его задняя дверца открыта, и из нее бьет свет. Из света высовывается сандалия, почти касающаяся асфальта, и рука, лежащая на ручке двери. Лика не видим. Только свет, машина, рука и нога. Слоган: ХРИСТОС СПАСИТЕЛЬ СОЛИДНЫЙ **ГОСПОДЬ** ДЛЯ СОЛИДНЫХ **ГОСПОД**[225] Вариант: ГОСПОДЬ ДЛЯ СОЛИДНЫХ ГОСПОД (771-772)	Poster (a clip script): a long, white limousine with the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in the background. The back door of the limo is open, and light is radiating from it. A sandal, almost touching the ground, emerges from the light. A hand is resting on the limo door handle. The face cannot be seen. Only the light, the car, the hand, and the foot. The slogan reads:[226] CHRIST THE SAVIOR THE REPUTABLE LORD FOR REPUTABLE LORDS Alternative version: THE LORD FOR REPUTABLE LORDS

The verbatim translation into English, however, makes little sense and does little justice to the original pun in Russian, whereby Pelevin plays with the words *Господь* (*Gospod* [soft d pronunciation[227]]), meaning "the Lord" and *господ* (*gospod* [hard d]), the genitive plural of the Russian noun for *lord* or *gentleman,* which has replaced the Soviet *товарищ* (*tovarishch*), "comrade," as a form of address. Sharing a common etymology and overlapping in semantic meaning, the two words, as the highlighted example above demonstrates, only differ in the quality of the final sound *д* (*d*), which is soft (due to the soft sign) in the word *господь* (*gospod,* "the Lord").

In contrast to the previous examples, in this case Bromfield uses poetic license and rewrites the whole episode by creating a new setting for the concept. Bromfield's reworked version of the slogan also stresses the significance of context in translation, as

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[225] My emphasis.
[226] This is a verbatim translation of both slogans.
[227] Nonexistent in English

untranslatability often results not only from irreconcilable differences in meanings and cultures but also from the inevitability of de- and re-contextualizing the message in translation. Bromfield reworks the episode as follows:

> *Poster (theme for a clip). A room in a very expensive hotel. Carrara marble table. A laptop computer flashes out a message: 'Transaction confirmed'. Near the computer we see a rolled-up hundred-dollar bill and a hotel-room Bible in three languages. Slogan:*
>
> *THE SHINING WORD / FOR YOUR SHINING WORLD!*
>
> *Variant: another setting – a private jet airplane, a stock exchange, a Manhattan penthouse, a Côte d'Azur estate, etc. Instead of the Bible we see the Saviour Himself approaching the camera in the rays of his glory. Slogan:*
>
> A FIRST-CLASS LORD / FOR YOUR HAPPY LOT! (123)

Both slogans differ drastically from the original, only echoing the concepts of god and religion and conveying the parodied image of the Russian nouveau riche glamour; yet, in both instances, they aptly reflect the language play, which both Pelevin and his protagonist constantly tease out.

Whether this creative effort can be entirely attributed to Bromfield is unclear, though. In an interview "Viktor Pelevin: istoriia Rossii – eto priamo istoriia mody" for gazeta.ru, Pelevin stated that he usually goes over translations of his own works, adding that he had a difficult time with *Generation "П."* Pelevin's words are worth quoting, as they indicate he had a hand in Bromfield's reworking:[228]

Пришлось заново придумать почти все слоганы по-английски, потому что перевести русские было трудно. При этом часто менялся весь кусок текста вокруг слогана. Например, «Солидный Господь для солидных господ» переводчик предложил превратить в «The Sound Savior for the Sound Savers» или что-то в этом роде. Мне не понравилось, потому что	I had to create most of the slogans from scratch in English because it was difficult to translate the Russian ones. This often entailed changing the entire piece around the slogan. For example, the translator suggested that "The Reputable Lord for Reputable Lords" be transformed into "The Sound Savior for the Sound Savers" or something along

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[228] My translation.

исчезало самое главное.	those lines. I didn't like it because the most important thing disappeared.
В результате я заменил рекламу Бога на рекламу Библии. Клип стал выглядеть так:	As a result, I substituted the commercial of God for the commercial of the Bible. The clip then read thusly:
номер в роскошной гостинице, столик из мрамора, на котором стоит включенный ноутбук с надписью «Перевод денег подтвержден» на экране. Рядом – свернутая трубкой стодолларовая бумажка и гостиничная Библия на трех языках, на которой только что раскатывали кокаин. Слоган: «The shining Word for your shining world!»[229]	**a room in a luxurious hotel, a laptop on a marble table with the screen showing the message "Transaction confirmed." Near the laptop a rolled one-hundred dollar bill and a bible in three languages with traces of recent cocaine lines. Slogan: "The shining Word for your shining world!"**
Это пример того, как трансформируется текст в переводе, но очень трудно говорить о каких-то принципах, на которых основаны подобные изменения. Принципов здесь нет, только ощущения. А Эндрю Бромфильд – очень хороший переводчик.	This is an example of how a text is transformed in translation. But it is difficult to talk about some principles according to which these transformations occur. There are no principles here, only feelings. And Andrew Bromfield is an excellent translator.

Pelevin's response sheds light not only on the collaboration between the author and the translator but also on Pelevin's own understanding of translation as transformation rather than reproduction. Moreover, it suggests that even though Pelevin for some reason might have disapproved of Bromfield's initial version of the slogan (i.e. "Sound Saviour for the Sound Savers") – which, in my opinion, is witty and contextually appropriate – Bromfield eventually managed to put forth another creative idea (i.e. "A First-Class Lord for Your Happy Lot"). Finally, the "insider's look" offered by Pelevin's interview upon the process of decision-making both in writing and in translation emphasizes the existence of different possibilities and versions. This, along with the fact that Tatarsky often comes up with several alternatives for the same concept, reminds us that because translation primarily depends on contextual interpretation – especially in cases of untranslatability – any singular "adequate" translation is simply inconceivable.

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[229] Highlighted in the original.

Significance of Transmesis in *Generation "Π"*: Engaging the Intertext, or Translation without an Original

Transmeses in *Generation "Π" / Homo Zapiens* bring to the fore a number of central theoretical questions regarding (un)translatability, the translation of culture, the relationship between translation and adaptation, the translator's role, the importance of world play and translation, and the heterotopic problem of translation multiplicity. However, the two crucial aspects highlighted in the novel — whose significance for translation theory and philosophy cannot be underestimated — are the relationships between translation and intertextuality as well as between the original and the translation. In this final section, these particular aspects will be addressed more thoroughly.

The idea of translation as an intertext, although relatively new, has already been discussed in several studies. For example, approaching translation as "a response to the text that precedes it" and as "art producing art" (26), Beebee views intertextuality as "a mechanism for textual production" (*Clarissa on the Continent: Translation and Seduction* 26-27). Elaborating on the same subject, Venuti notes that "[i]ntertextuality enables and complicates translation, preventing it from being an untroubled communication and opening up the translated text to interpretive possibilities that vary with cultural constituencies in the receiving situation" ("Translation, Intertextuality, Interpretation" 157). Outlining three different kinds of intertextual relations and arguing for "the relative autonomy of the translated text," Venuti claims that translation, as a simultaneously decontextualizing and recontextualizing process, is in fact "an interpretation that plays havoc with equivalences" (158). Both Beebee's and Venuti's

arguments shed light on (and are in line with) how *Generation "П" / Homo Zapiens* presents Tatarsky working on his translation assignments.

At first glance, Tatarsky's approach to translation can be characterized from the theoretical perspective as functional(ist), whereby the function, the purpose, and the intention of the original text – in this case, of advertising slogans – determine the translator's strategy and become primary criteria for establishing what the proponents of this approach call an "equivalent" relationship between the source and target texts. Known in translation studies as *skopos* theory, it is attributed to German scholars Hans Vermeer[230] and Katharina Reiss.[231] Reiss's definition of translation as "a bilingual mediated process of communication, which aims at the production of a TL [target language] text that is **functionally equivalent**[232] to an SL text" (160) reflects the importance of textual function. As Christina Schäffner explains in her entry on *skopos* theory in *The Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*,

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[230] According to Vermeer, skopos is "a technical term for the aim or purpose of a translation" (221). Vermeer asserts that it cannot be "expected that merely 'trans-coding' a source text, merely 'transposing' it into another language, will result in a serviceable translatum" (222) and argues that the relationship between the source and target texts can be defined through "intertextual coherence," which the translator attains on the basis of the skopos (i.e. goal) of translation. In Vermeer's view, however, the term skopos can be employed rather broadly and should encompass the goal of translation as a process, the purpose of translation as a product, and even the aim of the mode of translation (224). In an attempt to forestall criticism of his theory, Vermeer addresses some of its possible limitations, including such caveats as the restriction of interpretative possibilities caused by following only one goal; the difficulty of identifying specific addressees of the message, and the drastic shift of emphasis from the source text to the target text.
[231] Relying on the author's intention, which in my opinion is a rather untenable premise, Reiss argues that "[t]hrough the intention, verbalized by the author in his text, this text receives a communicative function for the process of communication. In order to be able to establish this intention the translator receives significant assistance if he determines to which text-type and text-variety (relevant for translating) any given text belongs" (161). She then identifies three major text types (specifically, informative, expressive, and operative (i.e. persuasive) (163) and claims that "[t]he text type determines the general method of translating; [t]he text variety demands consideration for language and text structure conventions" (166).
[232] My emphasis.

> [t]he main point of this functional approach is the following: it is not the
> source text as such, or its effects on the source-text recipient, or the
> function assigned to it by the author, that determines the translation
> process, as is postulated by equivalence-based translation theories, but the
> prospective function or *skopos* of the target text as determined by the
> initiator's, i.e. client's, needs. (236)

The ultimate purpose of the advertising concepts Tatarsky localizes is to convince Russian consumers to buy imported American products. More immediate goals – according to the advice Tatarsky receives from Pugin and Morkovin – are, respectively, "to adapt Western advertising concepts to the mentality of the Russian consumer" (19) and, whether Morkovin says this facetiously or not, "to screw with the client's brains" (18).[233]

On closer examination, however, these objectives define Tatarsky's job only nominally as he manifests little (if any at all) interest in how his slogans will function or what effects they will have on the potential target audience. Tatarsky's focus is almost entirely on the process rather than the product of translation as he devotes his full attention to research and creativity. The latter is attributed in the novel – in a somewhat reductionist, though playful, manner – to substance abuse (as Tatarsky repeatedly indulges in drinking and experimenting with drugs) as well as to the concomitant supernatural occurrences and hallucinations, from which Tatarsky seems to draw his inspiration. Research leads Tatarsky, who always carries his notepad around and writes

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[233] Morkovin says: "In the West both the client who ordered advertising and the copywriter tried to brainwash the consumer, but in Russia the copywriter`s job was to screw with the client's brains (18).

down allusions and associations, to explore the "mosaic" (to borrow Kristeva's metaphor) of texts, events, and experiences, which ultimately allow him to come up with creative solutions.

For example, here is how the narrator describes Tatarsky's preparation for the Sprite project:

> Tatarsky poured into his conception of Sprite every last drop of his insight into his homeland's bruised and battered history. Before sitting down to work, he re-read several chapters from the book *Positioning: A Battle for Your Mind,* and a whole heap of newspapers of various tendencies. He hadn't read any newspapers for ages and what he read plunged him into a state of confusion; and that, naturally, had its effect on the fruit of his labours. (21)

As this passage illustrates, the translation process is influenced not only by the difference between the original and translating contexts (i.e. Tatarsky approaches it from the perspective of his home country, not the USA) but also by the intertext of the original and receiving cultures, which inevitably creates surplus meanings. In his analytical introduction to the concept (through which, one must bear in mind, Pelevin parodies a pretentious academic style of writing), Tatarsky expands on both the American and Russian contexts. He discusses the slogan "Sprite – the Uncola" (22) and compares the differences in reception in America and Eastern Europe, specifically paying attention to the connotations that Sprite and Uncola may evoke in different audiences. Before he decides on the final version, Tatarsky writes:

Translated into Russian 'Uncola' would become 'Nye-Cola'. The sound of

the word (similar to the old Russian name 'Nikola') and the associations

aroused by it offer a perfect fit with the aesthetic required by the likely

future scenario. (22)

This associative, intertextual thinking not only leads Tatarsky to play with words (which

has already been discussed in this chapter) but also prompts him to experiment, in a

clearly facetious manner, with the character named Nikola Spritov – a Russian version of

the prototype "Ronald McDonald," but, as it is emphasized with a touch of irony,

"profoundly national [i.e. Russian] in spirit" (22).

Similarly, working on the commercial for Parliament cigarettes Tatarsky initially

thinks of "Cromwell's wars in England" (23) but eventually ends up exploring the history

of parliamentarianism in Russia and recalling a paper he once submitted at the Literary

Institute. During his search, he also accidentally comes across a "collection of articles on

theoretical physics, *Infinity and the Universe*" (24) and later — hallucinating in the forest

— runs into his former racketeer boss and decides to ask him, of all things, about the

associations evoked by the word *parliament.* In this case, Pelevin plays with the

intellectual significance and status of intertextuality by having a supposedly uneducated

man, possibly a criminal, mention Al-Ghazavi's "The Parliament of Birds" (35).[234] In the

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[234] This playful intertextual reference might be both confused and confusing. In the Russian original, Pelevin writes: "Была такая поэма у аль-Газзави. 'Парламент птиц'" (682), which Bromfield translates thus: "'Al Ghazavi had this poem called "The Parliament of Birds"'" (35). However, neither an English nor a Russian search has led me to the Persian poet named Al Ghazavi. The poem titled "The Conference of Birds" (also known as "Speech of Birds") was written by the poet Farid ud-Din Attar. In 1889, Edward FitzGerald published an abridged translation of the poem under the title *Bird Parliament.* I assume that Pelevin either intentionally wants to complicate the reference by having Hussein make it, or simply makes a mistake, which Bromfield replicates in the translation by transliterating the poet's name as well as the poem's title without researching them first.

end, however, Tatarsky will choose for one of the final versions of his slogan an allusion to Griboyedov, the early 19ᵗʰ-century Russian playwright and poet, whose connection to Parliament cigarettes, of course, cannot be more tenuous.

Other examples of how the intertext plays a significant role in the localization of advertising slogans abound throughout the novel. They range from the deliberately "sacrilegious" connections between Ariel, the character in Shakespeare's *The Tempest,* and "Ariel," the detergent marketing line by Procter & Gamble, to Hamlet acting in a Calvin Klein commercial with a modified slogan "Just Be," alluding to Hamlet's soliloquy (709); from the no less irreverent, caricature references to the Russian poet Fyodor Tyutchev (famous for his dictum about Russia that cannot be understood with the mind alone) in relation to the Smirnoff vodka[235] to another great writer Anton Chekhov depicted in a poster without trousers with "the gap between his bare, skinny legs" (63) in relation to the GAP clothing chain.

The intertext may pose a problem to translators, especially if they fail to recognize an allusion, in which case the text will most likely be rendered semantically (as if it belonged to the original author) but still with a high probability of being captured correctly, even if inadvertently. On the other hand, when translators *are* able identify an intertextual reference precisely, they are sometimes tempted to explain it to the target reader, which is always a judgment call because (as has been previously pointed out)

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[235] The full episode reads like this: "Tatarsky noticed an advertising poster on the wall. It showed the nineteenth-century poet Tyutchev wearing a pince-nez with a glass in his hand and a rug across his knees. His piercing sad gaze was directed out of the window, and his free hand was stroking a dog sitting beside him. The strange thing was, though, that Tyutchev's chair wasn't standing on the floor, but on the ceiling. Tatarsky looked a little lower and read the slogan: RUSSIA – NO WAY IS THERE TO UNDERSTAND HER / NO WAY HER SECRET SOUL TO RENDER /SMIRNOFF" (56).

gauging the audience's response (namely, the reader's ability to catch an allusion) is an almost impossible task. For example, in a conversation with Tatarsky, Morkovin brings up a line from Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* without mentioning the author's name or the novel's title. Bromfield takes it a step further, though, by explicating the reference:

– Вечный вопрос, – засмеялся Морковин. – Тварь ли я дрожащая или право имею? (565)	'It's **Dostoevsky's**[236]eternal question,' Morkovin said, laughing. 'Am I a timid cowering creature or have I got moral rights?" (11)

It is unclear whether, in addition to signaling to the reader the reference to Dostoevsky, Bromfield has in fact consulted any of the numerous English translations of *Crime and Punishment* or whether he translated the phrase himself.[237] Whereas in Russia and other post-Soviet countries, most high school graduates would be expected to recognize the phrase, elsewhere it may only ring a bell to readers more educated in Russian culture. On the positive note, Bromfield educates the reader; however, on the minus side – given that one of the most exciting aspects of intertextuality is for the reader to be able to make these implicit connections — once Bromfield has explicitly mentioned Dostoevsky's name, readerly discovery of the Dostoevsky connection is no longer an option.

Despite the possibility of difficulties in reception, intertextuality also provides an invaluable source of creativity, often offering solutions to extreme cases of untranslatability. For example, in at least one instance Bromfield takes the liberty of supplementing the original intertext so that the allusion may allow him to render

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[236] My emphasis.
[237] For example, in Peace's and Coulson's translation the line reads, "'Was I the trembling creature or had I the *right*?" (402), while in Constance Garnett's translation it reads, "'…whether I am a trembling creature or whether I have the *right*…'" (chapter 5, n.p.).

Tatarsky's first name, one of the central elements in the story, by capturing both its portmanteau structure (as is explained by the narrator) and its resemblance with the city of Babylon, which serves as an important symbol:

Взять хотя бы само имя «Вавилен», которым Татарского наградил отец, соединявший в своей душе веру в коммунизм и идеалы шестидесятничества. Оно было составлено из слов «**Василий Аксенов**»[238] и «Владимир Ильич Ленин». (647)	Take the very name 'Babylen,' which was conferred on Tatarsky by his father, who managed to combine in his heart a faith in communism with the ideals of the sixties generation. He composed it from **the title of Yevtushenko's famous poem 'Baby Yar'** and Lenin. (2)

As the highlighted parts demonstrate, Bromfield substitutes Yevtushenko (or more precisely, Yevtushenko's poem) for another writer, Vasilii Aksyonov, because the first two syllables in Yevtushenko's poem (i.e. *baby*) make it possible to create an allusion to Babylon by translating Tatarsky's first name (*Вавилен / Vavilen*) as "Babylen."

Notably, Pelevin's novel reveals another crucial intersection between intertextuality and translation; not only does it highlight the paramount importance of intertextuality for the process of translation (specifically, for finding solutions to untranslatability by relying on the intertext) but it also draws a parallel between the acts of writing and of translating. These two, the novel reminds us, are inherently intertextual acts, despite an unfortunate common tendency to view the former as original and primary, and the latter as derivative and secondary.

In essence, *Homo Zapiens / Generation "П"* is a profoundly intertextual novel. It must be admitted, of course, that intertextuality in Pelevin is hardly akin to that in James Joyce, T.S. Eliot or Vladimir Nabokov. Pelevin's is for the most part a kind of parodic intertextuality of "dropping names." It is a "fun," accessible, "recognizable"

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[238] Emphases mine both in the original and in the translation.

intertextuality rather than an intellectual, erudite one that requires notes and sends the reader on a labyrinthine cultural journey. Pelevin's approach is not to go deep but to go broad. Some representative examples include references to Boris Pasternak, Marina Tsvetaeva, and Fyodor Dostoevsky (there is a direct reference to *Brothers Karamazov* and the character named Zosima, while one of the chapters in Pelevin's novel is titled "Poor Folk," which turns out to be a seedy pub in *Generation "П" / Homo Zapiens*, but is also the title of Dostoevsky's first novel). Other allusions include George Orwell, Ishikawa Takuboku, Ron Hubbard, Vladimir Mayakovsky and his poem "The Cloud in Pants" (used as a chapter title), Alexander Pushkin, Anna Akhmatova, and Oscar Wilde, to mention but a few literary ones.[239]

In addition to being constructed as and predicated on the intertext, Pelevin's novel also embeds the intertext of the translation process into the plot. This creates an effect of the double-intertext, because translation is manifestly presented as a text that is born and exists in relation to innumerable other texts, both in the original and translating (i.e. English- and Russian-speaking) contexts. In other words, it is portrayed as an "in-between text" that arises amidst and in response to other texts from which the novel also originates, thereby erasing the boundary between writing and translating.

In underscoring an important intertextual similarity between the processes of writing and translating, Pelevin's *Generation "П" / Homo Zapiens* shifts the focus from how the intertext is translated (or omitted) to how it can serve, especially in cases of apparent untranslatability, as a source of innovative, creative solutions. Consequently, the

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[239] There are significantly more allusions and intertextual references dealing with general cultural concepts, famous people, events, etc.

novel demonstrates, in quite rigorous fashion from a theoretical perspective, how the intertext may supplement and even supplant the original text. Paradoxically, then, transmesis implies a possibility of translation without the original work. This counterintuitive, perhaps, even revolutionary idea has been put forward in more discursive form by Emily Apter in "Translation with No Original: Scandals of Textual Reproduction." By considering the case of pseudotranslation and pondering – through a Benjaminian lens – the paradox of a translation that "mislays the original, absconding to some other world of textuality that retains the original only as fictive pretext" (160), Apter suggests that translation should be viewed as "a cloning mechanism of textual transference or reproducibility rather than as a discrete form of secondary textuality" (161-16 2). This suggestion, which drastically undermines the rudimentary dichotomy at the base of conventional translation studies, that of original vs translation, finds supportive evidence in Pelevin's novel. Following Pugin's advice about "get[ting] straight on the job well in advance" (20) and creating "test pieces" (21) before the products actually arrive, Tatarsky, quite surprisingly, does not work directly from or with original sources. He analyzes the original American slogans, then treats them not as anchors of meanings that need to be transferred, but as points of reference and departure, opening up very unusual ways of disseminating and multiplying (rather than merely replicating) meaning. This way, it is primarily the intertext rather than the original text that makes the whole enterprise of translation possible by providing the translator with an intellectual impetus and, more importantly, with the textual resources to resolve the most daunting cases of untranslatability.

Chapter 4 Conclusions: Towards a Philosophy of Translation

I started my thesis by defining the term *transmesis* and overviewing the so-called fictional turn in translation studies in order to explain the largely overlooked value of fiction in studying and understanding translation. Fiction, of course, can raise more questions than it can answer, and rarely can it provide specific solutions to problems. Neither can it or nor should it (re)shape the theoretical tenets of translation studies. Even so, by combining reality with imagination, fiction offers a unique perspective on the discipline in general and gives a fresh – outsider's, out-of-the-box (or to return to Beebee's original metaphor "inside the black box")[240] – view of the problems faced and debated by translators, critics, and theorists. This in itself creates openings for new thinking from within the discipline, and this new thinking will act, in time, to shape and reshape the tenets of translation studies.

My opening premise was that, since critical engagement with the text is one of the greatest benefits of (close) reading, works of fiction that portray translation and translators invite us to reflect upon these very issues, by juxtaposing what may already be known from theory, practice, and criticism with what may appear fictitious, invented, unrealistic, or counterintuitive but nonetheless productive and thought-provoking. This juxtaposition, I asserted, can therefore shed new light on the unknown and the

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[240] I have recently come across another stimulating and thought-provoking variation of the "black box" metaphor used in the context of simultaneous interpreting. In "The Single, Shared Text? Translation and World Literature," Valerie Henitiuk discusses a transmetic episode from the Japanese writer Yoko Tawada's essay, in which a simultaneous interpreting booth is described as "beautiful" and "transparent." Elaborating on the different questions Tawada's episode raises, Henitiuk writes: "As Tawada's narrator idly marvels at the language professionals hard at work inside what is for all intents and purposes a black box [i.e. the transparent booth], it dawns on her that she has no more insight into what is involved in the extremely complicated activity that they are performing than do, in all likelihood, the vast majority of those who are listening to the interpretation through their own headphones…" (31).

problematic. I initially presupposed that transmesis had the potential to contribute to three distinct yet closely intertwined areas of translation studies, namely, practice, theory, and philosophy. In this last chapter, based on my analyses of the transmetic episodes in the novels under consideration, I will discuss the ramifications of transmesis in the three respective areas. Finally, I will address the contribution and limitations of this project.

Transmesis and Translation Practice

Transmesis is essentially a performative and self-reflexive concept because, much like Derrida's *différance*, it epitomizes and serves as an example of what it intends to illustrate: specifically, in this case, that by representing translation, transmesis simultaneously defies it. In other words, any actual translation of the fictional portrayal of translation appears to be problematic, particularly when the target language of the translation is one of the languages used in the original narrative or in the original transmetic episode. Pelevin's novel serves as a clear example of this somewhat paradoxical situation, because in the original story written in Russian the author uses both Russian and English whereas in Bromfield's English translation "everything" becomes English (i.e. the Russian is translated into English, and the English remains English). In this paradox, transmesis is seemingly untranslatable, yet at the same time (with varying degrees of success, of course) translatable and translated. To me personally, this realization of the performative untranslatability of transmesis became even more apparent when, in preparation for a job interview, I was advised to be ready to talk in my other languages (e.g. Ukrainian or Russian) about my research. The term *transmesis* immediately turned out to be a stumbling block, not only because it is a neologism, an invented portmanteau term, but also because of my need to translate or express it

somehow in Ukrainian or Russian. While most Slavic languages allow for a transliteration (metaphorically speaking, an *imitation*) of the *(mi)mesis* part, rendering "trans" is more complicated due to the confusion between *trans* as a Latin prefix standing for *across, beyond,* or *through* and *trans* as a contraction of the word *translation*. When discussing it with my Russian- or Ukrainian-speaking colleagues and friends, I still resort to an awkward transliterated version *трансмесис* (*transmesis)*, which happens to take the same form in these two cognate languages.

Although there are significant overlaps and similarities in the transmeses in the three novels discussed in this dissertation, Andrukhovych, Zhadan, and Pelevin evidently employ different techniques in creating their transmetic episodes. Formally, Zhadan stands out because, with some minor exceptions, he primarily relies on Ukrainian transliterations of English speech in *Depesh Mod*, while Andrukhovych and Pelevin use a combination of English and, respectively, Ukrainian and Russian, along with the narrator's footnote commentaries to explain instances of language play or making tongue-in-cheek remarks about the accuracy of translation.

Regardless of the technical differences, Bromfield, Naydan and Shkandrij each faced the same dilemma of capturing what I broadly refer to (for lack of a better term) as the transmetic mode of the original, and they had only a few options available to them. With some possible minor variations, these options can be summarized as follows: a) using italics (sometimes accompanied with footnotes explaining what the italics stand for); b) using footnotes (or endnotes) commenting on the language used in the original; c) omitting the transmetic phrase, sentence or sometimes, unfortunately, the entire passage; d) transliterating the transmetic element or highlighting it through intentional misspelling

or usage mistakes in English; and e) using "poetic license" or taking a creative leap to construct a different sentence/passage distanced from or completely independent of the original. Each of these approaches — except perhaps omissions, which is equal to giving up to untranslatability — has its benefits and limitations. Yet even in the case of omission, which in the three analyzed novels occurs most frequently in the English translation of *Depesh Mod*, it is difficult and unfair to blame the translators, considering the caliber and the complexity of their translation projects.

The footnotes/endnotes strategy proves to be more effective (though not without limitations either), and it is employed frequently by Naydan. Footnotes are not used at all in Shkandrij's and Bromfield's translation. While Shkandrij's decision was clear (as Zhadan does not rely on footnotes), the reason for Bromfield's omission of some crucial footnotes present in the original (most notably, the Gap commercial footnote, in which the narrator not only translates the English slogan but also highlights the pun based on the word *gap*) remains unclear. In Naydan's *Perverzion,* however, the translator's endnotes create an interesting interplay with the narrator's footnotes, some of which are skipped in the translation while others are incorporated into Naydan's own commentary and marked "[author's note]." This makes for an interesting effect whereby the translator himself becomes part of the story, investigating the protagonist's disappearance and tracing, as it were, his trail "linguistically." Naydan, therefore, undertakes a "Nabokovian" approach, offering extensive commentary (but not as "copious"[241] as Nabokov's notes) on his translation choices, intertextual connections, etymologies, additional denotative and

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[241] This word comes from Nabokov's claim about footnotes: "I want translations with copious footnotes, footnotes reaching up like skyscrapers to the top of this or that page so as to leave only the gleam of one textual line between commentary and eternity" ("Problems of Translation," 143).

connotative meanings, etc. Naydan's approach, in fact, prompted several reviewers to point out the translator's "annotator" role, which, like most strategies in translation, comes with pros and cons. An obvious advantage is that Naydan, despite insurmountable translation obstacles, manages to disseminate, rather than constrict, meaning. The objection that it would take a very dedicated and enthusiastic reader (like reviewer Bailey) to flip to the end of the book every time to explore the minutiae of the process of translation, and that, further, not every publisher would agree with endnotes, is really inconsequential inasmuch as Naydan clearly suggests that translation research does not have to be tedious and can be fun. His endnotes also illustrate the scintillating multiplicity of interpretations and, by extension, possible translation versions, which is all very much in the spirit of the novel, celebrating the idea of "versions" through uncertainty and undecidability.

On the downside, no matter how interesting or playful, footnotes nonetheless tend to contribute to an essentially educational rather than to an aesthetic experience, and many readers may simply disregard them because they want to be absorbed in the novel without being distracted. I, however, believe that Naydan's strategy in *Perverzion* is justified because in assuming the author's role and "competing" with what Andrukhovych does in the original, he offers his English-language readers an experience as rich as that which is available to readers of the original text. Another explanation of why footnotes have been considered a plausible solution is that many English-language translators (especially of Ukrainian literature) are academics;[242] thus, their general

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[242] All Andrukhovych's English translators, for example, are academics: Naydan (PennState), Chernetsky (Kansas University), and Pavlyshyn (Monash University).

inclination towards teaching, doing research and using a scholarly writing style may persist in their translations. Although Bromfield is not a professor of Slavic Literatures, it must be admitted that in several instances his translation betrays a penchant for research (a quality that most good translators possess) and an excellent familiarity with Russian literature in general.

Use of italics indicating that the original text includes English insertions (Bromfield's overall strategy) or of endnotes that merely say "in English in the original" (which Naydan does on one or two occasions as well), however, are a rather passive and unimaginative approach to dealing with transmesis. Serving primarily as a paratextual element, italics fail to capture the bi- or multi-lingual mode or to convey the act of code-switching for the English reader, effectively turning a rich multilingual text into a monolingual one and transforming the playful plurivocity into a subdued single voice. In the case of *Homo Zapiens,* Bromfield's italics are even more confusing to the reader, because he resorts to them for other purposes as well (e.g. Tatarsky's introductions to advertising concepts and Che Guevara's ouija board message). Thus, even on a visual level, the reader may have a difficult time recognizing and telling apart their different functions.

A concession argument, to be fair, raises a legitimate point: there is very little (if anything) a translator of any of these novels can possibly do to tackle the transmetic instances of English in the original, because substituting this English with other languages or modifying it in any other way in the translation would not only drastically decontextualize the original but also create problems in developing the storyline. For example, in the case of Pelevin's novel, introducing other languages is hardly feasible for

Bromfield because the novel is set up in a specifically bilingual Russian-English mode, unlike in the case of Andrukhovych's multilingual European setting, which gives Naydan more room for experimentation. In this respect, *Depesh Mod* differs significantly from both *Perverziia* and *Generation «П»* because Zhadan's narrative technique — which consists in intentionally inaccurate paraphrasing (a parody of Jakobson's intralingual translation) and also in incorporating what could be referred to as "Ukrainianized" English words (presented as transliterations) — almost compels Shkandrij to take action and not ignore the transmetic elements. One may argue for or against some of the choices Shkandrij makes, but the bottom line is that, in the case of untranslatability, bold and creative action on the part of the translator, whether the reader may eventually like it or not, is always more effective than omitting or italicizing the crucial aesthetic building-blocks of the text. For example, although I cannot quite agree with his translation of "щось із голі байбла" (29) as "something from De Holy Bible" (30), as discussed in detail in chapter 2, Shkandrij undoubtedly deserves credit for not disregarding these ludic transmetic snippets in *Depesh Mod* and for attempting to play with language in the translation.

This leads me to discuss the last strategy, that of play, which, I argue, provides the only feasible and rewarding way (though definitely a challenging one) of wrestling with untranslatability. In the majority of transmeses analyzed from the three English translations, in the places where the translators seemed less concerned with reproducing (i.e. staying too close/"faithful" to) the original or with recreating its effects/functions and instead treated the whole process of translation as a game, playing with language(s) and allowing their imaginations to run wild, the result inevitably proved more gripping and

absorbing than when feeble attempts were made to establish equivalences. Consequently, meaning was disseminated, not captured; even more importantly, both the translating and reading experiences[243] turned out to be enjoyable and pleasurable – fitting what Roland Barthes would describe as *jouissance*.

Two vivid examples from Bromfield's *Homo Zapiens* illustrate the difference between the two approaches. In the first one, Bromfield goes an extra mile with the slogan that the intoxicated Tatarsky dedicates to the Lord in the glamourous style of the Russian nouveau riche: "СОЛИДНЫЙ ГОСПОДЬ ДЛЯ СОЛИДНЫХ ГОСПОД**"** (discussed in chapter 3). The translator might have taken the path of least resistance and translated it verbatim as "THE REPUTABLE LORD FOR THE REPUTABLE LORDS," but he made a different choice. From the point of view of equivalence, a word-for-word translation would have been legitimate because in both languages the wordplay lies in the multiple meanings of the word *lord* (with a slightly more pronounced difference in Russian). However, whereas in Russian the pun is somewhat witty (though far from hilarious), in English it frankly becomes quite bland. Bromfield, therefore, proposes two different versions, both of which are creative and playful: "THE SHINING WORD FOR YOUR SHINING WORLD!" and "A FIRST-CLASS LORD FOR YOUR HAPPY LOT!" Moreover, as an interview with Pelevin makes clear, Bromfield's initial suggestion was "A SOUND SAVIOUR FOR THE SOUND SAVERS," which the author rejected because (in Pelevin's own words) "the most important thing disappears."[244]

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[243] The concepts of reading and translating experiences are undoubtedly subjective. When I say "reading experience," I speak, of course, of my own experience as a reader who can understand both the source and the target language. A claim that the process was also enjoyable for the translators is again only a speculation. The point, however, is that if they approach their task as a game, they will be more likely to accept and enjoy these challenges.
[244] Quoted from a gazeta.ru interview in Chapter 3.

Though Pelevin was against it, I personally find this initial suggestion excellent, because it makes the pun even more sophisticated, exemplifying and underscoring the incompatibility between wealth and piety mocked in the novel.

In the second example from *Homo Zapiens*, Bromfield takes a slightly different, more conservative approach and stays closer to Pelevin's original wording, which ultimately erases much of the captivating transmetic tension in the original exchange between Tatarsky and Khanin. The latter has just offered Tatarsky a job as a *криэйтор* (*krieitor*), which is an English borrowing used instead of the Russian word *творец* (*tvorets, creator).* In response, Tatarsky tries to determine if he understands correctly what the word *krieitor* stands for, and whether it means *creator* in Russian. Although the denotations are "identical," Khanin emotionally exclaims that they have no need for *tvortsy* (*творцы*) and will only hire *krieitory* (the transliterated English word, *криэйторы*). What Khanin may be implying here is that they do not need Soviet-style "creators" who know nothing about marketing and business and who engage in boring "literariness" instead of coming up with creative ideas to boost sales. In his translation, Bromfield decided to use the invented substantive *a creative* to render *krieitor* and to translate *творец (tvorets)* as *writer.* Further, the translator also inserted the phrase "translated into **ordinary Russian**"[245] (68) whereas the original is less explicit ("если перевести" (714),[246] which makes the passage even more confusing in the English translation. In a later episode, Tatarsky himself makes the following comment: "Литературщина. Сколько раз повторять: нам тут нужны не **творцы**, а **криэйторы**"

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[245] Here and below, emphases mine.
[246] Please see chapter 3 for the entire exchange.

(807), which Bromfield then had to keep consistent with his previous choice: "'Too literary. How many times do I have to tell you: we don't need **writers** here, we need **creatives**'" (159). Although it may be tempting to use the adjective *creative* as a substantive due to its closeness to the Russian *krieitor,* this choice results in a misleading opposition between *creative* vs *writer,* whereas a more effective binary in this case may be *translator* vs *copywriter*, or more broadly *translator* vs *writer.* In other words, Khanin and others in the advertising business do not simply want American slogans to be translated into Russian. They want new Russian slogans written (from scratch) or created, based on the American ones.

Naydan's *Perverzion,* like Bromfield's and Shkandrij's translations, also contains some excellent creative solutions, but still is not spared of passages in which the ludic impulse wanes, yielding to fidelity and consequently resulting in somewhat insipid passages. For example, when Perfetsky fashions "an approximate translation" (as the narrator points out, without providing the original) of an accidentally discovered medieval Latin poem into Ukrainian, Naydan's English translation appears to be very precise, almost verbatim, conveying the lascivious message but for the most part disregarding the soundscape[247] of the ditty.

On the other hand, one of the most striking examples of Naydan's creativity in *Perverzion* is a rendition of Perfetsky's poem written while the protagonist was listening to Ada's simultaneous interpreting during the conference. This poem, an embodiment of pure alliteration and assonance based on the female protagonist's proper name *Ada*, is all

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[247] I borrow this term from Erín Moure, who conducted a poetry translation workshop as the UofA writer in residence in 2013-2014.

about the soundscape. Andrukhovych's original ostentatiously plays with the most absurd associations and rhymes related to the name Ada, producing a generally meaningless, though phonetically mesmerizing ode, to his lover. Faced with untranslatable meaning (or, one may even argue, with non-meaning that Andrukhovych beautifully wraps in rhythm and rhyme), Naydan wisely chooses to write this poem as if it were his own. Despite the fact that some parts in the original and the translation correspond, in the most crucial instances of wordplay, he ingeniously uses German and Spanish, among other things, along with repetitions and other phonic devices to create puns or sound effects in English.

It may seem a safe claim to state that Naydan produces a functionally equivalent poem by preserving the sound qualities of the original one. But this is an observation about the product rather than the process. In other words, some may view Naydan's translation of the poem as capturing a similar effect, and others may disagree,[248] but it is indisputable that in order to produce the poem in English Naydan had to explore – as if he were a writer – associations, sounds, images, rhymes, and words in other languages that might work with the word *Ada*, regardless of what choices Andrukhovych had made. More specifically, Naydan's playful lines such as, among others, "My ode to Ada. My enchilAda" or "Either Ada or I'm nada" (90), especially in view of the fact that Andrukhovych's poem has not the slightest hint of Spanish, indicate that the translator actively plays with the potentialities and resources of English and other languages, rather than trying to recreate similar effects or functions.

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[248] I have previously addressed the problem of the impossibility of measuring or even identifying the effect on the audience of a literary work or of a translation.

Another telling example of how translators may take a playful approach and, depending on whether they do or not, of the considerable difference in the resulting translations, comes from a comparison of the two episodes in *Perverzion* and in *Depeche Mode*. The first one is di Casallegra's letter to Perfetsky inviting him to participate in the conference (discussed in chapter 1), and the second one is the episode with Johnson-and-Johnson's sermon (mis)translated by his interpreter (discussed in chapter 2). In the letter, translated by di Casallegra with the help of forty-four dictionaries and riddled with malapropisms, the reader detects a parody of both translation and diasporic Ukrainian, whereas Zhadan's narrator pokes fun at the progressively exacerbated misunderstanding between speaker and interpreter, resulting in two disparate messages when normally we would expect them to be the "same." These two episodes are comparable in their complexity because both parody ways in which a translation can go terribly wrong. The difference is that Andrukhovych creates his parody by playing with outdated and/or diasporic Ukrainian, while Zhadan employs inaccurate paraphrasing along with *surzhyk,* slang, and foul language. In both cases, the English translation required a tremendous creative effort, and whereas Naydan attempted to play with Andrukhovych's malapropisms in English, Shkandrij stuck close to the original meanings of words instead of distancing himself from Zhadan's distortions and jokes, and creating his own English version brimming over with puns and double entendres.

Transmesis and Translation Theory

In addition to posing practical problems for translators, the study of the handling of transmesis also has strong potential to elucidate important theoretical issues in translation. Specifically, it helps to dispel common stereotypes about translation as an

inherently fallible act that inevitably results in loss; it helps to unravel the dichotomous structure of translation studies discourse, predicated largely on binary oppositions; it allows one to probe further and question the problematic concept of equivalence (and other related concepts such as adequacy, fidelity, faithfulness, correspondence) that unfortunately continues to dominate translation-related discussions; and, finally, it raises other important issues pertaining to translation theory, such as untranslatability, intertextuality, visibility, parody and adaptation. In this section, I will summarize the theoretical implications of transmesis.

My discussion of the role of transmesis as a translation problem was initially centered on the concept of untranslatability. As the three novels in question demonstrate, transmesis does not yield easily to translation. By defying translation, it simultaneously brings into focus the theoretical issue of untranslatability, which is reflected most succinctly in Derrida's astute remark regarding "the necessary and impossible task of translation, its necessity as impossibility" ("Des Tours de Babel" 171). The philosophical complexity of this paradox of untranslatability is implicitly manifested in my own project too because, in a strict sense, untranslatability means the impossibility of translation. This implies that either no translation is possible or exists or that certain "untranslatable" parts of a text must be omitted. Some instances of omission have indeed been traced and discussed (for example, in Bromfield or Shkandrij, who encountered the most daunting transmetic dilemmas). Yet all three novels have been translated, and some transmeses have been rendered effectively.

Untranslatability, naturally, is not a popular concept among translation scholars because it puts into question the foundations of the entire discipline. Hence the common

confrontational rhetoric of "wrestling" or "overcoming" untranslatability: if it prevails over translatability, the entire enterprise of translation may be at risk. However, as Kathleen Davis explains in *Deconstruction and Translation*, "'translatability' … is a concept, which is based on the assumption of meaning as a presence" (50). Untranslatability is thus viewed metaphorically as "surrender" due to the purported impossibility of transferring or expressing meaning in another language, and sheds light on the formidable challenge of "no meaning" (nonsense, for example) in translation. By transforming fictional texts from their customary monolingual state to a bi- and/or multi-lingual state, and by blurring the boundaries between different languages in one narrative, transmesis (in a deconstructive way) invites readers and translators to question any belief in the (full) presence of meaning or, in other words, in the existence of meaning as a "solid" that can be identified, captured, and transferred.

In her recent, thought-provoking and provocative study *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*, Emily Apter critically investigates the unconditional acceptance of translatability as the foundation of world literature.[249] Raising the problematic point (with which many agree) that nothing is ultimately untranslatable (despite loss being concomitant with translation), Apter then writes: "With translation assumed to be a good thing en soi – under the assumption that it is a critical praxis enabling communication across language, cultures, time periods, and disciplines – the right to the Untranslatable was blindsided" (8). In line with Apter's (counter)argument,

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[249] Apter's argument is concisely summarized by David Damrosch, who writes: "In *Against World Literature*, [Apter] offers a bracing critique of the politics of translation in American literary studies. All too often, she argues, scholars and teachers of world literature assume a ready transferability across open linguistic and political borders, and she aims to complicate these matters, both linguistically and politically" (par. 1).

transmesis, in my opinion, allows new light to be shed on the untranslatable, inviting us

to contemplate how what seems untranslatable may in fact help to resist the current

hegemonic influence of English and prevent the homogenizing erasure of difference

through translation (as evidenced, for example, in Zhadan's parody of the American

minister, and his interpreter who subconsciously subverts his proselytizing message, or in

Pelevin's depiction of the "linguistic invasion" of English).

One of the most crucial and debatable concepts that has defined and dominated

the discipline of translation studies since its inception is the concept of equivalence,

implying an equivalent relationship between the original and the translation. Examining

transmesis, I argue, reinvigorates the ongoing interrogation of equivalence, casting

further doubt on its validity and applicability. Already in the late 1980s,[250] Mary Snell-

Hornby's *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach* contained a sub-chapter,

conspicuously titled "The Illusion of Equivalence" (13).[251] Snell-Hornby argued

unequivocally that "equivalence is unsuitable as a basic concept in translation theory: the

term *equivalence*, apart from being imprecise and ill-defined, . . . presents an illusion of

symmetry between languages which hardly exists beyond the level of vague

approximations and which distorts the basic problems of translation" (22). Yet

equivalence is so deeply ingrained in our thinking about translation that it continues to

maintain academic currency and even has staunch supporters.[252]

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[250] This is not a specific temporal reference but rather an indication that the equivalence debate has been going on for a long time.

[251] This symbolic phrase, as Snell-Hornby confesses in her 2006 *The Turns of Translation Studies: New Paradigms of Shifting Viewpoints?,* was born in a conversation with Fritz Paepcke, an ardent supporter of Gadamerian hermeneutics and vocal opponent of applying linguistic models to translation (32).

[252] One of the most intellectually rigorous supporters is Anthony Pym. See, for example, his article "Why Equivalence Needn't Be a Dirty Word" as well as the more recent monographs *Exploring Translation Theories* (2009) and *On Translator Ethics: Principles for Mediation Between Cultures* (2012). Pym

Recently, the most articulate and well-grounded criticism of equivalence has come from Edwin Gentzler[253] and Rosemary Arrojo, both of whom strongly advocate the idea of translation as transformation that produces new (not replicates "original") meaning. Drawing on Foucault's essay "What is an Author," Gentzler, for example, dispels the common misconception of "the primordial status of an original text," which leads him to a conclusion that "[a]ny translation of an original into a second language involves a violation of the original, thus the impossibility of ever creating 'pure' equivalents" (*Contemporary Translation Theories* 150). My analysis of transmeses provides abundant evidence in support of Gentzler's point. Neither the fictional translators portrayed in the novels (e.g. Tatarsky, Ada Tsytryna, Johnson-and-Johnson's interpreter), nor Naydan, Shkandrij or Bromfield manage to establish equivalence. Such attempts are deliberately parodied and presented as ludicrous in fiction, and result in untranslatability in reality.

It must be conceded, however, that as a purely technical term, equivalence will inevitably resurface in translation discussions, and if it has any value at all, it will continue to serve as a "measure" of what a "good" translation is, especially for bilingual

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proposes to distinguish between natural and directional types of equivalence and aligns himself with Toury and Gutt in believing that equivalence is "historical, shared, and cost-effective in many situations" ("Natural and Directional Equivalence" 290). His ironic conclusion, however, betrays his conventionalism. Claiming that his purpose is not so much to resuscitate equivalence but rather to debunk some of the misunderstandings that surround it, Pym summarizes by disparaging what he sees as the opposing viewpoint, which hardly constitutes a valid argument: "Equivalence might thus appear to be dead, except for the occasional deconstructionist who has read little translation theory and is in need of a cheap Feindbild" (290).

[253] In an introduction to his *Contemporary Translation Theories,* Gentzler states, "The focus in translation investigation is shifting from the abstract to the specific, from the deep underlying hypothetical forms to the surface of texts with all their gaps, errors, ambiguities, multiple referents, and "foreign" disorder. These are being analyzed – and not by standards of equivalent/inequivalent, right/wrong, good/bad, and correct/incorrect, . . . which imply notions of substantialism that limit other possibilities of translation practice . . . and impinge upon real intercultural exchange" (4).

critics and reviewers focused solely on the discrepancies between the original and the translation. For practitioners, however, it will remain a utopian ideal that has little significance in the process of translation, because the demand that a translator seek equivalence in another cultural and linguistic context (be it the meaning, the form, or the effect) presupposes definite knowledge about and absolute stability of the original, both of which have been effectively and irrevocably debunked by poststructuralist thinkers.

A set of related concepts comparable to and congruent with equivalence includes such terms as adequacy, correspondence, faithfulness, and fidelity. Despite constant criticism, especially the latter two are still frequently employed both in academic discourse and in translation reviews. Moreover, many translation programs and professional associations continue to use them as a normative criterion for quality assessment and ethical standards. For example, article 6 of the Code of Ethics of the Association of Translators and Interpreters of Alberta states that:

> Every translation shall be faithful to and render exactly the message of the source text - this being both a moral and legal obligation for the translator. (A faithful translation, however, should not be confused with a literal translation. The fidelity of a translation does not exclude an adaptation to make the form, the mood and deeper meaning of the work felt in another language and culture.)
>
> (Professional Conduct Required of ATIA Members)

The author of this provision must have understood that faithfulness and fidelity are vague and irrelevant. That is why they decided to qualify them in the parentheses, but how "the deeper meaning" can be "felt in another language and culture" still remains vague.

An effective response to such a provision can be found in Rosemary Arrojo's complete and utter rejection of the twin concepts of faithfulness and fidelity. She writes:

> no matter how good or bad a translation may be considered, it is always and inevitably unfaithful, since it is sure to take the place of another, in a different language and culture, and in a different time. If we accept the translator's inevitably authorial interference and the transformation that any interpretation always implies, it does not seem to be theoretically coherent – or even useful – to keep the age-old notion of fidelity to the original.
>
> ("The 'death' of the Author and the Limits of the Translator's Visibility" 27).

Although considerable skepticism towards faithfulness/fidelity is expressed in the narrative in all three novels, it is Andrukhovych's *Perverziia* that offers the most scathing parody of these concepts. The female protagonist Ada Tsytryna never even intends to be faithful when she translates for Perfetsky, and Andrukhovych draws a clear parallel between her marital infidelity and her unreliability as an interpreter who has fallen in love with the client. After all, as George Steiner puts it in *Language and Silence* "an act of translation is an act of love" (271), and, according to Kierkegaard, faithfulness is not a

characteristic of sensuous love.[254] Moreover, a depiction of the faithful translator in a work of fiction could not only be considered "unrealistic" but also quite mundane. Translators can only be faithful to their own interpretation, not to the original author or the text or even to language, despite a famous adage that the poet's only responsibility is to language.[255] As Bassnett and Trivedi aptly put it in their introductory essay to *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, translation "is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with significance at every stage, [rarely involving] a relationship of equality between texts, authors or systems" (2).

More important than faithfulness, however, is the novelists' portrayal of their translator characters — most notably in *Perverziia* and *Generation «П»* — as visible and powerful, dispelling the stereotypical image of a translator as an invisible subservient scribe. Only in Zhadan's novel is the interpreter a nameless "dame in a gray business suit" (29) and, even so, her agency is invested with a naïve boldness and creativity. Transmesis, thus, helps to bring attention to the figure of the translator that until recently has been largely neglected by the public (to the extent that sometimes the translator's name does not appear on the book cover) because translators have been viewed as merely mechanical transmitters of information.

In their respective novels, the characters Ada Tsytryna and Tatarsky reach powerful positions in their careers, but power comes with responsibility and vulnerability. Ada is portrayed as an educated, smart, influential woman[256] who makes

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[254] Speaking about Don Juan, Kierkegaard says that "sensuous love is not faithful but totally faithless" (94).
[255] I have not located the exact quotation but sometimes this adage is attributed to T.S. Eliot. It has been pointed out to me that the adage is actually common across many thinkers on poetry.
[256] There is ground to believe that in the story she is also objectified from a masculine perspective of both the protagonist and the narrator, but this point is less relevant to the present discussion.

conscious decisions about what should be translated, omitted, or mistranslated. She is clearly not so much a mediator as a stakeholder. Yet she occupies a perilous position in the novel because even in relation to Perfetsky, her roles (i.e. spy, lover, and escort interpreter) are apparently conflicting. Realizing the precariousness of her situation, Ada eventually resigns from La Morte di Venezia, but nonetheless loses Perfetsky. Similarly, Tatarsky's talent and skills help him to get promoted, and at the end of the novel he is put in charge of the entire advertising / reality simulation / TV industry. Although the story stops at that point, the fate of his former boss, who was strangled right in front of him, must still sit somewhere in the back of Tatarsky's mind. In other words, because of their position of in-betweenness and purported impartiality, translators and interpreters must often accept the responsibility and the blame.

Another common stereotype about translation that the transmeses in the three novels partially challenge (and partially reinforce) is that of the fallibility of translation, which is perpetuated in a common public attitude of incredulity and suspicion towards translation as an activity that inevitably results in loss and distortion. In fact, all three novels contain episodes parodying translation as an act of broken communication. This point is particularly prominent in Zhadan's *Depesh Mod,* in which almost any miscommunication or misunderstanding is blamed on inaccuracies in translation or the translator's incompetence. It is also present in Andrukhovych, who plays with malapropisms in di Casallegra's translated invitation letter to Perfetsky. However, parody, as I have stressed on the basis of Linda Hutcheon's theorizing, is not necessarily aimed at one target. In *Depesh Mod,* it is also directed at Johnson-and-Johnson as a

speaker whose sermon is at times incoherent and meaningless irrespective of any (mis)translation.

Finally, transmesis reminds us of the importance of translation multiplicity, or, in other words, of multiple versions that exclude a possibility of singular correct interpretation, inviting different (even counterintuitive) readings. Just as there are numerous *Hamlets* in both Russian and Ukrainian literatures because each generation needs its own Shakespeare,[257] *Perverziia* and *Generation «П»* champion the idea of multiplicity. While the plot in Andrukhovych's novel is ingeniously centered on the concept of versions (competing stories or shreds of evidence), in Pelevin's *Generation «П»*, Tatarsky often entertains different possibilities of advertising slogans for the same brand. Consequently, Bromfield on at least one occasion also comes up with several versions of the same slogan, which not only underscores the translator's "dialogic imagination" (to borrow Bakhtin's words) but also points to a fascinating plurivocity of meaning, made possible thanks to translation.

Transmesis and Translation Philosophy

In his 1873 essay titled "On Truth and Falsity in an Extra-Moral Sense,"[258] the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche discusses the problem of truth in relation to language and reality. He defines truth as:

> A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms: in short a
>
> sum of human relations which became poetically and rhetorically

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[257] I may be borrowing this idea from Marjorie Garber's lectures on Shakespeare, and more specifically, from her claim that Shakespeare invents modern culture as much as modern culture invents Shakespeare.
[258] Translated in other editions as "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense."

intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage seems to a

nation fixed, canonic, and binding; truths are illusions of which one has

forgotten that they are illusions; worn-out metaphors which have become

powerless to affect the senses; coins which have their obverse effaced and

now are no longer of account as coins but merely as metal. (63)

In an attempt to get closer to the "truth" about translation (or as Beebee metaphorically –

no redundancy intended – put it, to "look inside the black box" of translation), we keep

(re)inventing metaphors[259] for translation. In their empirical study of such metaphors,

Martin de Leon and Presas, for example, look at the metaphors of "transfer, change, and

imitation" (19). But the list is indeed much longer: adaptation, intervention (Munday),

transmutation, reparation (Bandia), intercultural communication, synthesis, social action,

performance, "trust, aggression, embodiment and restitution" (Steiner), manipulation,

rewriting, problem-solving, decision-making, "authorized plagiarism" (Apter),

transposition, transcoding, etc. Similarly, translators have been compared to writers,

mediators, ambassadors, transmitters, scapegoats, intermediaries, messengers,

"subversive scribes" (Levine), actors to "the post-horses of Enlightenment" (Pushkin).

These metaphors emerge because a precise, comprehensive, and intellectually

rigorous definition of translation is difficult, if not impossible. Some metaphors, to return

to Nietzsche's point, become trite, so new ones appear to reflect new theoretical

tendencies, trends, or findings. The value of inventing metaphors for translation lies in

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[259] One of the most unusual and captivating metaphors about translation, comparing it to a wave, was shared by Dr. Valerie Henitiuk, Executive Director, Centre for the Advancement of Faculty Excellence, and Professor in the Department of English at MacEwan University in Edmonton, Canada, who was a keynote speaker at the 12th Annual St. Jerome's Day conference "Women in Translation" at the University of Alberta in the fall 2014.

their ability to open up new angles of thinking about translation. They help us to

conceptualize it both as a product and as a process, as well as to imagine (sometimes in a

different light) the roles and tasks of the translator and other stakeholders, such as the

author, the critic, the editor, the reader, the reviewer, scholarly communities, literary

institutions, and publishing houses. In a nutshell, metaphors allow us to philosophize

about translation (the way Benjamin, among others, did) and to create a vision that can

shape our own choices in, and guide our own approaches to, practicing translation. My

investigation of the concept and phenomenon of transmesis and its challenges to

translation have also prompted me to come up with a metaphor that I would like to

discuss in the remainder of this chapter.

I propose to view translation as an essentially playful act, "a language game" (to

borrow Wittgenstein's concept). If translation is conceived as a playful and creative act

rather than a merely reproductive one, solutions to problems of untranslatability will be

more plausible, and translators, rather than striving for illusory sameness or similarity and

being governed by the ideas of adequacy, fidelity and reproduction, will then approach

their task as an intertextual and interpretative language game predicated on creative

transformation.

This idea has taken shape as a result of several findings, conjectures, and

influences. First, my analysis of transmesis has led me to observe that it is not just a

literary phenomenon but also a device that authors use (consciously or subconsciously) in

their novels to make them both fun and thought-provoking; transmesis serves as a literary

tool, a trope intertwined with other elements of what I broadly describe as postmodern

playfulness.[260] For example, transmeses in the works of Andrukhovych, Zhadan, and Pelevin are often predicated on linguistic play (i.e. puns, neologisms, double entendres, slang, foul language, malapropisms, and nonsense); sociocultural play (i.e. cultural notions, realia terms, cultural stereotypes); intertextual play (i.e. allusions, references, parody, iconoclastic attitudes towards the canon, etc); and multilingual play (i.e. code-switching and multilingualism).

Viewing transmesis as an element of literary playfulness, which allows the author to play with language as well as with the (inter)text and the reader, thus led me to assume – perhaps, too hastily – that if the author plays, then so should the translator. In other words, if playfulness, instantiated among other language games[261] through transmesis, constitutes part of the "literariness" of the postmodernist text and epitomizes one of its crucial "poetic functions" (to use Jakobson's terms), then by all means it must be preserved in translation.

This line of thinking, however, albeit logical at first glance, has proved to be erroneous. Not only does it stem from the very functionalist approach against which I have tried to argue, but it also brings the translator back to the "equivalence / sameness"

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[260]In postmodern fiction, play occupies a special place. Speaking of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, a work that is believed to herald a transition from modernism to postmodernism, as "a monstrous prophecy of our postmodernity," the critic Ihab Hassan mentions play among the crucial elements in postmodernist novels (*The Postmodern Turn* 115). In his notoriously schematic table of distinctions between modernism and postmodernism, Hassan even goes as far as to highlight the opposition (however arbitrary it may be) between modernist "purpose" versus postmodernist "play," claiming that "if much of modernism appears hieratic, hypotactical, and formalist, postmodernism strikes us by contrast as playful, paratactical, and deconstructionist" (91). However, by no means do I imply that either transmesis or play is solely a postmodern phenomenon. Numerous examples from literature and film prove otherwise. I associate transmesis with postmodern playfulness because the novels that I study are postmodern.

[261] While the terms "play" and "playfulness" are used as synonyms, in order to distinguish between the concepts "play" and "game," I follow Hutchinson's suggestion to treat the term "(literary) game" as an instantiation of a "wider, all-embracing" term "play" (*Games Authors Play* 2).

mode of operation, ultimately requiring that the same "function" be recreated. This approach, as my discussion has illustrated, rarely yields effective results in practice because it imposes the loss/gain mentality and constantly forces the translator to seek compensation rather than to produce spontaneously and creatively.

To avoid this deterministic trap (i.e. reproduction or preservation of a specific function or effect) while still conceptualizing the act of translation as playful, I had to seek answers in more general cultural and philosophical theories of play. Specifically, taking as a starting premise Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of "a language game" (put forth in *Philosophical Investigations*), I decided to turn to Johan Huizinga's and Hans Georg Gadamer's investigations of play, offered respectively in *Homo Ludens* and in *Truth and Method,* as well as to Jacques Derrida's philosophizing on the concept of "freeplay" in order to explore how they can inform a philosophy of translation.

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein revises many reductionist claims regarding language that he put forward in his earlier work *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus.* For example, he repudiates his early picture theory, according to which every object has a corresponding name and which was somewhat reminiscent of Saussure's signifier/signified distinction. Wittgenstein thus jettisons the idea of direct referentiality of meaning, arguing that "the meaning of the word is its use in the language" (par. 42, 18). To account for the multiplicity of language functions and the "countless different kinds of use of what we call 'symbols', 'words', 'sentences'" (par. 23, 10), Wittgenstein introduces the concept of a "language game," by which he refers to "the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven" (par. 7, 4) and "which is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of

an activity, or of a life-form" (par. 23, 10). Notably, "translating from one language into another" is mentioned among the examples of various language games (par. 23, 10). Although Wittgenstein does not provide a specific definition of a language game, his metaphor encapsulates a number of important implications, ranging from diversity, flexibility and fluidity of language, to following and violating the rules, to the problems of language learning, signification, and understanding.

Applied to translation, the concept of a "language game" opens an even broader perspective. As Dinda L. Gorlée explains in "Wittgenstein, Translation, and Semiotics,"

> The language game of translation is meaningful rule-governed behaviour aimed at producing a concrete result, the translation. Like all language-games, translation is something we do, a praxis. We can play this game because we have mastered a technique, not because we have learned a set of rules. Therefore, it is possible to practice translation without consciousness of the rules which are implied in the game itself. The language-game of translating is embedded in rules, customs, codes, and grammar but not reducible to them. (82)

When translation is viewed as a "game," the distance between "ad<u>o</u>pting" and "ad<u>a</u>pting" the rule is drastically reduced, leaving more room for creativity without altogether rejecting linguistic norms. Translation then becomes, in Gorlée's words, "at the same time rule-following, rule-changing, rule-building, and rule-creating" (83), which not only gives translators more flexibility in terms of operating within the grammar of the language, but also grants them license to interpret and generate meaning without always being constrained by an obligation to stick to the original.

In addition, the act of situating the translator as a player in a complex game which, allegorically speaking, involves multiple individual players (e.g. author, translator, editor, and critic) as well as "teams" of players (co-translators, the source audience, the target audience, and other authors), helps to break down the conventional dichotomous structure that has shaped the discourse of translation studies since its inception as a discipline. These binaries (in which the former is privileged over the latter) include: author vs translator; source text vs target text; source language vs target language; translation as a product vs translation as a process; word-for-word vs sense-for-sense; domesticate vs foreignize; literal vs figurative; art vs craft; loss vs gain; and sameness vs difference. Approaching translation as a language game that allows for multiple moves and interactions and is not of a strictly dual nature (i.e. comparing the translation to the original to identify what is missing or lost) offers one way to gradually eliminate bias towards translation as intrinsically flawed, derivative, and inferior.

In *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture,* Huizinga offers an all-encompassing treatment of play as one of the rudiments that underlies human culture and civilization, ranging from art, philosophy, and language, to mythology, law, and war. Play, according to Huizinga, is free (8), voluntary (8), and related to a desire to dominate or compete (2); it contains an indispensable element of fun (3) and possesses a "profoundly aesthetic quality" (2). "The great archetypal activities of human society are all permeated with play from the start," claims Huizinga, speaking among other things of language (4). Huizinga points out that play is "limited" and "secluded" because "it is 'played out' within certain limits of time and place" (9). In addition to creating order (10), play is marked by two other important aspects: rules and tension: "[t]hough play as

such is outside of good and bad, the element of tension imparts to it a certain ethical

value in so far as it means the testing of the player's prowess" (11). Eventually, he arrives

at a comprehensive definition of play as "a voluntary activity or occupation executed

within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but

absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy,

and the consciousness that it is 'different' from 'ordinary life' (28). Since Huizinga views

"poeisis," which according to the Oxford English Dictionary means "creative

production," as proceeding "within the play-ground of the mind" and being in principle

equivalent to a play-function (119), translation, which results in text production, is by

analogy also playful.

The discussion of translation, in light of Huizinga's theory of play, opens up a

number of interesting avenues that have not been previously explored in translation

studies: translation as competition (with the author, with the language, or with the

reader); translation as a fun activity rather than drudgery; or translation as a game of

solving riddles. Speaking of the latter, Huizinga emphasizes that "[t]he answer to an

enigmatic question is not found by reflection or logical reasoning" but "comes quite

literally as a sudden solution – a loosening of the tie by which the questioner holds you

bound" (110). If we can say that a translation problem, such as transmesis or wordplay, is

metaphorically comparable to a riddle, then Huizinga's argument leads us to two

important inferences: first, the spontaneity of solution, which is a result of "playful

poiesis" rather than of careful observance of rules, and second, the "loosening of the tie"

with the original text or author in favor of playing with language. In either case, the

translator's experience might be best described through a distinction, introduced by

Roland Barthes in his *The Pleasure of the Text,* between *pleasure* and the originally

Lacanian term, *jouissance*. According to Frank Kermode, Barthes's notion of *jouissance*

"always involves a loss, a dispersion; it is outside the context of pleasure, is indeed closer

to pain" (*Pleasure and Change: The Aesthetics of Canon* 22). In relation to translation,

jouissance may therefore be seen as a pleasure of finding a spontaneous creative solution

to the problem, mixed with the simultaneous feeling of loss of what was in the original

but is now transfigured in the translated text.

Unlike Huizinga, who focuses his attention on "play *of* culture," Gadamer

discusses the role of play in art, more specifically, in the hermeneutics of art. For

Gadamer, play means "neither the orientation nor even the state of mind of the creator or

of those enjoying the work of art, nor the freedom of a subjectivity engaged in play, but

the mode of being of the work of art itself" (101). "Play," he contends, "fulfills its

purpose only if the player loses himself in play" (102), which he characterizes as a "to-

and-fro motion" (103, 104) without any goal or purpose. Gadamer is convinced of the

primacy of the very process of play over the subjects involved in it (106). To elucidate

this further, he turns to the metaphorical uses of the word "play" as in the case "he plays

with possibilities" and interprets it as freedom from commitment to one or the other

possibility, which, however, is fraught with risk. "One enjoys a freedom of decision

which at the same time is endangered and irrevocably limited" (106).

Gadamer's opening remarks bear significance for translation not only because of

his emphasis on the "to-and-fro motion" which binds play and the process of translation,

but primarily because he conceives play as "a mode of being" that has primacy over each

individual player. In other words, if one accepts that translation is inherently playful, then

it absorbs the translator in the act of playfulness and shapes his or her behavior accordingly. The translator is spared of the original initiative, which belongs to the author; his or her decisions, however contradictory it may seem, are free but limited. Describing play as "a process that 'takes place in between,'" and is both about "self-presentation" and "representation" (108-109), Gadamer concludes that "[t]he players play their roles as in any game, and thus the play is represented, but the play itself is the whole, comprising players and spectators. In fact, it is experienced properly by, and presents itself (as it is 'meant') to, one who is not acting in the play but watching it. In him the game is raised, as it were, to its ideality" (109). Translation, too, is a process that takes places in-between at least two languages and two cultures but ultimately reaches its ideality (to use the term both Huizinga and Gadamer employ) in the audience. Gadamer, however, develops his idea of the audience further, describing a moment when "it becomes apparent that the play bears within itself a meaning to be understood and that can therefore be detached from the behavior of the player" (110). Drawing an analogy with drama, Gadamer concludes that the player (very much like an actor) does not want to be recognized by the spectators and his identity ceases to exist. From the point of view of translation, the question of identity raises the issue of the translator's visibility.

Acknowledging the fact that the classical theory of art is of mimetic nature and originates from ritualistic dancing (113), Gadamer touches on the concepts of presentation, representation, and imitation, which are also relevant to translation. In Gadamer's view, imitation is closely related with recognition. He writes, "[w]hen a person imitates something he allows what he knows to exist and to exist in the way that he knows it" (113). Importantly for translation, he adds: "Imitation and representation are

not merely a repetition, a copy, but a 'bringing forth,' they imply the spectator as well. They contain in themselves an essential relation to everyone for whom the representation exists," claims Gadamer (114-115). He then proceeds to discuss the concept of "double mimesis": a situation when both the writer and actor represent (117), which is similar to translation's double-representation by the author and by the translator. Gadamer believes that "the fact that the representation is bound to the work is not lessened by the fact that this bond can have no fixed criterion" (119). This idea echoes with Huizinga's "loosening of the tie" with the original. Striving for one correct interpretation, Gadamer continues, "would not do justice to the true binding nature of the work, which imposes itself on every interpreter immediately, in its own way, and does not allow him to make things easy for himself by simply imitating a model" (119).

To conclude this examination of the links between the handling of transmesis and translation philosophy, I step from Gadamer's hermeneutics to Derrida's poststructuralism. In discussing and contrasting Saussure's and Peirce's theories of semiotics, Derrida claims that "[o]ne could call play the absence of the transcendental signified as limitlessness of play, that is to say as the destruction of onto-theology and the metaphysics of presence" (*Of Grammatology* 50*).* In an earlier seminal essay, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," Derrida puts forth the concept of "freeplay," which resists the limits imposed by the organizing principle of the structure's center (224). In other words, for Derrida "freeplay" is "a field of infinite substitutions" that lacks a center and is defined by "the movement of supplementarity" (236). Juxtaposing what he calls "the sad, *negative,* nostalgic, … facet of thinking of freeplay" with "Nietzschean … joyous affirmation of the freeplay of the world and

without truth, without origin, offered to an active interpretation," Derrida apparently sides with the latter, claiming that such a mode of interpretation "is no longer turned toward the origin, [but] affirms freeplay …" (240). As such, (free)play not only entails the impossibility of any finite anchored meaning, but is precisely the locus in which meaning arises only to be eventually subverted by another supplement. In practical terms, for the translator, this means that the original text should inspire rather than dictate an interpretation or, more precisely, inspire different interpretations that could be played against each other.

To return again to Wittgenstein, the concept of "a language game," despite the fact that Wittgenstein might have seen it from a more functionalist perspective, serves as a productive metaphor that can be extended and elaborated to philosophize translation. Though considered a precursor of postmodernism, Wittgenstein is nonetheless a positivistic philosopher who prioritized logic. His idea that meaning equals use, along with his rejection of direct referentiality, is applicable to translation, just as is Huizinga's insight about the playful spontaneity of solving riddles (i.e. cases of untranslatability).

In their discussions of play, both Gadamer, a hermeneutist, and Derrida, a poststructuralist, put much emphasis on the idea of interpretation, which is a crucial — yet often underestimated and superficially understood — concept in translation. To claim that translation is interpretation seems almost to border on cliché. A definition of translation as interpretation implies that what is translated is not what the original is or what it may mean, say, or do (and definitely not what the author may intend it to be). What is, in fact, translated is a translator's interpretation of the original, one of the many possible readings that is eventually given expression in another language. Interpretation,

however, does not stop at reading and continues also in the process of writing. Gadamer's idea of moving "to and fro," and his distinction between part and whole in the deciphering of meaning, elucidate this process. As the translator begins to write, moving "to and fro" between the original and the translation and tracing the transformations that occur during this movement between "part" (of the translation) and "whole" (i.e. both the original and the revised final product of translation which, however, can never be final), interpretation also is subject to change. Every next writing choice, in the Derridian chain of supplements, modifies the following one, invalidating a possibility of sameness. One of the greatest challenges for the translator, who is simultaneously a "closest" reader and a writer, is not to eliminate ambiguity and undecidability. Good readers of fiction marvel at ambiguity in novels, because much in the same way as silence is no less important than sound in music or poetry, ambiguity is also paramount in appreciating literature. But whereas readers do not necessarily need to resolve ambiguity in the process of reading, by the very nature of their hermeneutic task, translators as writers are compelled to explain and spell things out, to search for the transcendental signified despite recognizing the impossibility of ever finding it.

Additionally, the relentless, interpretative, and creative search of the translator must be driven as well by the desire to "compete" with the author — or to be on the same playing field as the author — by simultaneously playing with language(s), with (inter)text, and with the reader (irrespective of whether the author does so or not).

To conclude this study, I cite Borges, the greatest transmetic player of all time, who aptly said: "Translation is a long experimental game of chance played with omissions and emphasis" (qtd. in Kristal, *Invisible Work,* 18). Study of transmesis in

fiction, and in the subsequent translations of these fiction into English, demonstrates a need for acceptance — and begs for further work in the field of translation studies — of the concept of translation as *playing the game,* rather than as the drudgery of finding equivalents, measuring effects, and identifying similar functions. This latter course leads only to the lamenting of and compensating for losses, whereas the former results in translations that are not only fun to read, but fun to produce.

Contribution, Limitations, and Future Projects

Contribution

My research project advances knowledge in the fields of Translation Studies, Slavic Languages and Literatures, Comparative Literature, and Cultural Studies. After investigating the phenomenon of transmesis in three Slavic postmodern and post-Soviet novels, and the challenges of transmesis for the translator into English, I then advocate for a revised paradigm for considering the practice of translation. The topic is of major practical, theoretical, and philosophical significance that, in addition to offering a new comparative perspective in scholarly and practical domains where translation is of prime consideration, promotes cross-cultural understanding between Slavic and Anglophone communities and cultures, and demonstrates the utility of Slavic literary studies for enhancing literary study and creation in English.

Specific contributions of my project include:

a) close readings of Andruhovych's *Perverziia*, Zhadan's *Depesh Mod*, and Pelevin's *Generation «П»* with special attention given to transmesis, the portrayal of translation and the figure of the translator;

b) a comparative analysis of the three novels in question and of key episodes in their English translations;

c) a theoretical and practical discussion of the problem of untranslatability;

d) a critical interrogation of the concept of translation equivalence;

e) a proposal to view translation as a playful act, stemming from my analysis of how transmesis and other instances of untranslatability are most successfully handled in translation;

f) an attempt to test how a translation paradigm based on the concept of play in the form of "a language game" can be supported by cultural, hermeneutic, and poststructuralist theories of play.

Novelty

The central thrust of my project, which I develop by building on Thomas Beebee's ingenious pioneering study, is new and previously unexplored. As of fall 2014, there have been no major studies in English, Russian or Ukrainian dealing with the representation of translation in Slavic language literatures. While the three novels analyzed in this dissertation have been widely discussed in reviews, articles, dissertations, and books, not a single study has been dedicated to or discussed extensively the theme of translation in either *Perverziia, Depesh Mod,* or *Generation «П»*.

Although viewing translation as a playful act is not an entirely original idea, and arises from time to time in a peripheral way, it has not been fully and centrally explored with reference to the postmodernist and poststructuralist context. According to my knowledge, there have been few studies that entertain the idea of translation as a game. In an essay titled "Translation as a Decision Process," Jirí Levý claims that his approach to

translation is based on game theory and proceeds with an excessively pragmatic attempt to dissect the process of translation into clusters of semantic and syntactic solutions. Despite its overly structural approach, Levy's study as well as Marilyn Gaddis Rose's article "Translation and Language Games" and Dinda Gorlée's "Wittgenstein, Translation, and Semiotics" have informed my project.

Limitations

My project has several limitations that arose during my research and writing of the dissertation, and that exceeded either the scope of the dissertation itself or the time available; these will be addressed as I expand my thesis into a monograph. While some of these limitations are merely technical, others are of a more conceptual nature and require more reading and thinking.

Although I generally believe that my analysis of the originals and translations is thorough and well-grounded from the perspective of translation studies and linguistics, methodologically I found myself still operating in the traditional comparative/contrastive mode despite arguing for greater independence of translations from originals and for viewing translation as an act of writing in its own right. In the next stage of my work, I would like my discussion to lean more towards the intertext and to delve into issues beyond linguistics (excellent examples of which come from Beebee or Apter), rather than just scrutinizing translations for what I believe may have been translated differently. In other words, while trying as much as possible to stay away from faultfinding and nitpicking, I am not sure that I have managed to avoid them altogether.

My selection of texts and examples must be significantly expanded in order to develop a more compelling argument for translation being a playful act. One author whom, to my deep regret, I was unable to include in my discussion because of time constraints is the American writer Jonathan Safran Foer and his novel in English entitled *Everything is Illuminated*, an examination of which would have allowed me to test my approach in the other direction. A broader corpus, including contemporary works by women as well, would also ensure a greater sample of examples illustrating the ways in which play may lead translators to successful solutions, and my conclusions would be better supported.

Finally, the application of Wittgenstein's, Huizinga's, Gadamer's, and Derrida's theorizing to translation studies will need to be tested more profoundly, to ensure that calling translation a playful act is not yet another empty signifier. Although I never intended to produce a step-by-step algorithm of what play in translation must entail – this idea would be ludicrous as I deal, after all, with abstract philosophical concepts, not the creation of an instruction manual – I would still like to draw clearer philosophical connections in emphasizing the relevance of play in translation. In addition, it is important to bear in mind that the whole enterprise of translation cannot be reduced to play, and reductiveness is not the intention of the paradigm I espouse. It may seem to be most applicable to postmodernist literature in which the ludic aspect with its decentralizing, liberating, and carnivalesque energy is indeed crucial, while on other occasions and in other situations translation cannot always be conceptualized as a game. Slavic literatures themselves furnish numerous examples of this. During times when writers have been exiled, repressed, and silenced by political regimes, translation was not

about play but more so about life and death, about survival as a writer and as a person, and about nation-building through literature. Even so, play at times, even in these areas of Slavic literature, can have a role.

Future projects

I intend to expand my thesis into a monograph by further exploring the ramifications of transmesis in postmodern and post-Soviet Slavic fiction as indicated previously in this section, and drawing out the significance of the portrayals of translation in Slavic works for literary production and study in English. I also foresee a second monograph in which I expand the reach of my research to explore the ramifications of transmesis in film and theater, which will allow me to incorporate the intersemiotic dimension (in addition to the interlingual and intralingual ones) to further explore the intersection between translation, imitation, adaptation, interpretation, and transformation.

My examination of the portrayal of translation in fiction in Slavic literatures is firmly situated in this era of globalization, when societies in general and writers in particular are confronted with the need to cope with multilingualism and clashes of cultural meanings. My conceptualization of translation as a playful act may help to address this need, as well as to develop translation theory to meet the demands of the era. Additionally, the study of transmesis and translation as a language game also holds promise for interdisciplinary study that other researchers may continue to develop.

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