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THE ASSESSMENT OF TRANSLATIONS: EXAMPLES FROM CHEKHOV, ZOSHCHENKO AND SIENKIEWICZ

by Anna Chilewska

A THESIS

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NAME OF AUTHOR: Anna Chilewska

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A Chilewska

9412-176 Ave

Edmonton, AB

T5Z 2C1

Date 29. September 2000

ABSTRACT

Translation Study is only now beginning to receive due consideration. Translators deal with problems in their own way; some are more successful than others. But what makes one superior to another? Can translations be assessed by comparing several translations of the same work?

This study examines and assesses English translations of works by Chekhov, Zoshchenko and Sienkiewicz. The assessment is based on categories including the treatment of titles, linguistic register, humour, idiomatic expressions, culture-specific words and phrases, lexicon and recurrent phrases and thematic key-words. The study also looks at compressions or omissions from, and additions and significant changes to, the original works.

Among the conclusions the most important refer to the competence of the translators and their renditions. At least some distinction can be made among translators and their treatment of various elements of the original texts, and some steps can be taken towards comparative assessments.

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE ASSESMENT OF TRANSLATIONS: EXAMPLES FROM CHEKHOV, ZOSHCHENKO AND SIENKIEWICZ submitted by Anna Chilewska in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in SLAVIC LINGUISTIC.

T. M. S. Priestly

P. Rolland

U. Margolin

A. Malena

28 September 2000

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The first thing that must be borne in mind when talking about literary translation is that it is a transposition of work of literature of one language into a work of literature into another language. Therefore it should not simply be translated word for word, but carefully rendered with due respect for the author, her/his work, and also the audience at whom the translation is directed. The translator, if s/he is honest, will admit that sometimes the translation process is more of a guessing game and some interpretation than finding the perfect equivalent. As Leonardo da Vinci once said: "He who can go to the fountain does not go to the water-jug", a saying which can be adapted to translation. In short, those who can, will read the original, those who cannot, will read the translation. Whichever way one looks at it, a translated work is often considered to be second best; something that can never equal the original in style, ease, flow, etc. Certainly the fact that translations have, over the years, acquired a bad reputation does not help the matter.

> Torture and translation are, in fact, amongst the few that can be worse than death. Strictly speaking, translation is a subtle form of torture. (*The Spectator*, 24 September 1977)

Calling translation 'torture' is a bit extreme, although anyone who has struggled with producing a translation at one point or another will admit that locating that perfect equivalent certainly can be torture.

No two languages are ever close enough in grammar, structure or syntax, to allow for word-for-word translation. In fact, some are so far apart that one can ask oneself: is the task worth the effort? And another question comes to mind: why translate anything at all if so much is lost through translation? One answer to this question is that rendering a particular text is the only possibility for another society/culture to become acquainted with it. Translation then, is a means of communication with various cultures of various linguistic backgrounds. And because it serves as a window to 'another dimension', the art of translation should never be taken lightly. Translators have been known to serve as ambassadors of source texts for target audiences. How else would thousands of little girls have enjoyed *Anne of Green Gables* in Poland if it were not for Rozalia Bernstainowa in 1911-12? How else the Japanese *Pocket Monster* (a.k.a. *Pokemon*) could have created such a stir amongst Canadian children if it were not for translators? It is apparent that translations are necessary, not only for the pleasure of children and teenagers, but also to serve as connectors between cultures and societies. By transferring authors' ideas and thoughts into a different system, a translator becomes the communicator and the medium between two different and often distant worlds.

1.1. ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF TRANSLATION

Translation has been in existence as long as people have been using words. Today, in the 21st century, there are numerous translations of almost every text ever written. Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis* has been rendered into over 70 languages, in half of which there is more than one version. Why should there be a need for retranslating anything that has been translated already? Can one plausible reason be that some translations are not very good? And when one says 'good', does it mean that translators are not always competent in their craft? It would be a lie to claim that all renditions from one language into another are excellent and require no corrections. The fact of the matter is that appreciation of translation is constantly changing and so are standards; what one generation finds acceptable may not be acceptable to the next. There are numerous reasons for translations being less than satisfactory. Some contain words which are frowned upon by today's societies such as the use of sexist language. Other reasons might result from changes in political and social systems of the source and target cultures. One can recall that, during the Crimean War and the Cold War, Russian translations in the United States had served less-than-literary purposes, and were "treated as a tool for demonstrating the evils of Russian society" (May 1994:56). Because of the pressure exerted by the receiving cultures, i.e. the American audience, translators became propagandists.

> Instead of silencing translators, the new Russophobic wave made propagandists of them. Supported by publishers who scrupled little about resources or fidelity to originals, they turned to better novels but produced worse translations, or more often pirated adaptations. Throughout this period the translations that did appear were designed to serve political rather than aesthetic ends, providing "information" about Russian life that bolstered stereotypes. (May 1994: 14)

Many translators became, unwillingly or not, servants of political causes such as the perpetration of negative images of the Soviet people. Translations were, hence, far from being faithful to the original, ignoring the style and the content, neglecting the materiality of the language. However, not all of the reasons stated above can be directly blamed on individual translators. Politics, cultural changes, trends - these are factors that go beyond an individual's control and therefore should not, in most cases, be used when judging translations.

> It is unfortunate that translation is perhaps more often criticized for its defects than praised for its merits. The faults of a bad translation are immediately apparent, the virtues of a good one may easily pass unnoticed. The reader, generally, cannot compare: his 'original' is the translation; this is what he judges. It is not surprising, then, that one of the vaguest – but commonest - criticisms of translation should be 'it sounds wrong'. (Duff 1981:1)

As to be expected, it is rather difficult to pinpoint what exactly "sounds wrong" in a translation. But perhaps it can be a starting point in the quest for judging translators' works. And, as Alan Duff (1989) suggested, such a complaint should not be disregarded since it may lead to the discoveries of the translators' weaknesses.

> The reader's reaction in saying 'it sounds wrong' is like that of a music-lover listening to a recording of a symphony and saying "somebody's out of tune": he cannot identify the instrument, but his ear tells him that somewhere in the orchestra one of the players has hit a false note.
> (Duff 1981:2)

Hence let me assume the role of a music-lover who hears a false note and ask my next question. If translations can be judged, then according to whose standards and what criteria? It is never enough to say that a given translation is no good but another one is. Is a translation which reads like an original better than the one which reads like a translation? If Nabokov's views are to be accepted, the latter would be more desirable: "only a literal translation stands any chance at all of being true to the original text" (Alexandrov 1995:716). Nabokov, furthermore, stresses the importance of literal translation because, he writes, only a literal one can render "as closely as the associative and syntactic capacities of another language allow the exact contextual meaning of the original" (Nabokov 1917: vol. I, p.vii). In "An Essay on Translated Verse" Lord Roscommon in 1684 pointed out that the original text is and always should be the only source of the translator's inspiration.

> Let your author always be the best advice.
> Fall when he falls, when he rises rise.
> (Roscommon 1978:45)

Other scholars claim that translation should be done in a loose manner, where the boundaries between translating and paraphrasing, and translating and imitating almost disappear.

> I see translation as the attempt to produce a text so transparent that it does not seem to be translated. A good translation is like a pane of glass. You only notice that it's there when there are imperfections – scratches, bubbles. Ideally, there shouldn't be any. It should never call attention to itself. (Norman Shapiro)[1]

However, none of the above mentioned scholars offer any suggestions for assessing existing translations; most talk about approaches that should be adopted by translators, and this topic is far too wide for the purpose of this thesis. Instead of assessing any existing translations as a whole, I propose to analyze how several translators deal with some of the most troublesome features of literary texts. My approach is to compare several translators and their works. The criteria for my comparisons are as follows:

First, how each translator/translation deals with

- titles
- linguistic register, in particular the level of formality and/or informality of the original language
- humour
- idioms, culture-specific terms
- lexicon (lexical errors)
- recurrent phrases and thematic key-words

Before I proceed further it should be noted that lexical errors are plain mistakes whereas elements in other categories are much more difficult to analyze since more than one option is normally acceptable when translating.

And second, the (non-) occurrences of, when such features are avoidable:

- compressions and/or omissions from the original

- additions and significant changes to the original

I will use translations from three different authors: Anton Chekhov's play *Три Сестры* (1901), Henryk Sienkiewicz's novel *Ogniem i Mieczem* (1884), and Mikhail Zoshchenko's five short stories (1922-1939) "Аристократка", "Пациентка", "Баня и люди", "Нервные люди", "Забавное приключенне". Henryk Sinekiewicz's novel is written in the archaic, 17th century Polish, based in large on the language used in Jan Pasek's *Pamiętniki* (Memoirs) (a 17th century Polish scholar). Four translations of *Три Сестры* will be compared: Julius West (1920), Elisaveta Fen (1951), David Magarshack (1969) and the most recent, stage translation of Brian Friel (1992). For *Ogniem i Mieczem* I will compare Jeremiah Curtain's translation of 1898 and W. S. Kuniczak's of 1991. And finally, the three of the more than six extant translations of stories by Zoshchenko are by: Sidney Monas (1962), Maria Gordon and Hugh McLean (1963), and Serge Shishkoff (1989). The translators will be referred to by their surnames; Gordon and McLean will be referred to as G & M.

Based on the above criteria, I will try to assess the following:

- does one translation seem closer to the original that the other(s)?
- can one assume that the more recent translations should be more acceptable and problem-free than the older ones?

I do not pretend to complete analyses of any of the stated translations, but rather use them as sources of examples for my criteria. The use of archaic or contemporary language will only be touched upon very briefly and the differences of literary and stage translations will not be discussed. It is also not my intent to

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[1] Personal communication, March 2000.

deliberate on different approaches to translation since such a topic demands much more research and knowledge.

In conclusion, it should be mentioned that Translation Studies is a discipline that has been 'tiptoeing' slowly into the academic field for as long as texts have been translated. When discussing early translations, it should be now possible to get a better understanding of the problems that translators were facing at the time. There is a need for a better understanding, so that old mistakes can be corrected and new editions can be mistake-free. And since societies and cultures are "open and adaptive systems" (Roman Jakobson), there is always room for improvement in the future.

Format and sources

Whenever examples are given from the original works they are presented in Italics. Where necessary, phrases and sentences quoted for discussion are provided with my own literal translation in parenthesis.

* An asterisk is used to indicate that the examples quoted are from Zoshchenko's *Уважаемые Граждане* (1940), any other examples are from Zoshchenko's *Рассказы* (1994). Full references are given in the bibliography.

Sources for checking the meaning of the original include:

- Hrabec, Stefan. (1957). *Słownik ukraińsko-polski*. Warszawa: Instytut Polski-Radziecki.
- Linde, Samuel Bogumił. (1951). *Słownik języka polskiego*. Warszawa: PWN.
- Ozhegov, S. I. (1968). *Slovar Russkogo Yazika*. Moskva: Izdatelstvo "Sovetskaya Enciklopedyia".
- Witwicki, Teodor. (1997). *Słownik polsko-cerkiewnosłowiańsko-ukraiński Teodora Witwickiego: z połowy XIX wieku*. Warszawa: WNS.

CHAPTER 2

TITLES

2.1. INTRODUCTION

There are traps waiting to immobilize a translator's every step, thus let me begin with the first element of any source text, be it a story, novella or a film – the title. As Gabriel Karski pointed out in his 1955 essay "Kłopoty Tłumacza" (The Troubles of the Translator), "tytuł stanowi integralną część utworu, nieraz zawiera bądź syntetyczny skrót jego ideologii, bądź ma jakiś symboliczny, zmierzający do wywołania w czytelniku swoistego nastroju czy skojarzenia" (the title is an integral part of the work, sometimes it contains the summary of its ideology or has a symbolic purpose of evoking a mood or association in the reader). (Karski 1955:255). The least problematic instance is when a title has the form of what Karski calls *tytuł-samograj* (title-selfplayer), i.e., a one or two-word title which translates automatically without adding or omitting anything from the original. Examples of this can be found in fairy tales, "Beauty and the Beast", Tolstoy's *War and Peace* or Dostoyevski's *Crime and Punishment*. But even these, which seem simple enough to render, can become problematic if there is a shortage of equivalent terms. For example two American films *The Terminator* and *Dirty Dancing* were introduced to Polish moviegoers in the 80s as *Elektroniczny Morderca* (Electronic Murderer) and *Wirujący Seks* (Twirling Sex). The first one

could not have been rendered as simply *Terminator* since this word in the Polish language has a lexical meaning of 'an apprentice'. *Elektroniczny Morderca*, even though it sounds a bit odd to a Polish speaker, more of less summarizes the film's main idea. However, the latter title kept many fans from enjoying the film due to the fact that Polish mothers would not let their teenage offspring watch something about sex, much less about 'sex that twirls'. In this case the translator's choices were limited since at the time there was no such thing as "dirty dancing" in Poland, but on the other hand s/he could have picked something less "graphic" and controversial.

It is evident from the examples above that one inappropriate word can cause quite a stir, therefore it is crucial to try and get the best possible translation. One must decide how much of an emphasis the title has on a given piece of work. Does it reveal anything about the content? Does it produce a certain effect on its reader? Does it evoke a mental image? Will the reader expect to find certain elements in the story, or make any type of an association because of the title? And where titles like *War and Peace* do not need elaboration for the target audiences, *Paprzyca* (the title of a Polish fairy tale character – an old man with magical power in his silver hair) certainly does since there is no equivalent term in English. *Отцы и дети* (Ivan Turgenev), just to name another example, is consistently translated into English as *Fathers and Sons*, and not as *Fathers and Children*, although the Russian clearly dictates that. This fact makes it not only an unfaithful attempt at rendering the original, but imposes gender issues on those who will read the book.

2. 2. ANALYSIS

Let me examine the titles of two of Mikhail Zoshchenko's short stories, "Аристократка" and "Пациентка", and compare the English translations with the original. I shall discuss each of the translated titles based on these questions.

- Does it reveal anything about the nature of the story?
- Does the rendered title detract from the meaning of the original?

Zoshchenko's stories have been translated into English by more than half a dozen translators. As stated earlier, I shall examine three. The criticism regarding Monas' work is his treatment of these two titles "Аристократка" and "Пациентка". Anyone who reads Russian will recognize the two words involved as being of feminine gender, meaning precisely a female aristocrat and a female patient. English cannot reflect the original with one word only, since it is not equipped with more than one form for "aristocrat" and "patient". Monas' version "The Aristocrat" and "The Patient" take away from the original the intent to inform the readers that the two stories deal with female characters; and readers of English will therefore most likely expect a male character since there is nothing telling them otherwise. Monas fails here to preserve the nature of the title, and - incidentally - along with his failure to acknowledge the gender issue, the ending of the first story is altered. The original reads: *Не нравяться мне аристократки.* (25), whereas Monas' reads "I don't like aristocrats" (22). The blunder is clear: Zoshchenko's hero does not care for female aristocrats in particular, but Monas makes him sound as if he did not care for aristocrats in

general. The other translations produced this title more faithfully, "The Lady Aristocrat" by G & M and "The Aristocratic Lady" by Shishkoff. However, only G & M neither added anything to nor took away from the ending – "I don't like lady aristocrats"(130), whereas Shishkoff's reads "I don't like aristocratic types" (39). Once again the statement produced here is far too general in nature when compared to a more semantically precise original. The title "Пациентка" suffers in Monas' translation from similar fate. Here too, the translator does not distinguish the gender difference and has it simply as "The Patient" (27). There are no translations of this story by G & M and Shishkoff. Whatever material the translator is working on, s/he should be influenced by the content of the source language and thus reshape it in the form of the target language (Duff 1989).

CHAPTER 3

LINGUISTIC REGISTER

3.1. INTRODUCTION

> The most colorful signal of a personal narrator is the use of colloquial language. In contrast to standard "literary" Russian, the colloquial register carries the suggestion of an oral, speaking storyteller. (May 1994:77)

The style of any literary work is an all-important feature and should not be neglected in translations. If an author gives one of her/his characters a particular way of speaking, it must serve a purpose, normally to present the reader with a certain mental image of that character. Cases where the translators tend to "improve" the original usually end up in distorting or destroying the desired effect which the author has created within the frame of her/his work. In Turgeniev's *Отцы и дети*, one of Bazarov's lines – *я люблю вас глупо, безумно* (147) – was turned into Polish as *Kocham panią do szaleństwa* (I love you passionately) (Guze 1972:152). Throughout the entire novel, Turgeniev painstakingly presents Bazarov as someone who is always rational, sensible and without outbursts of passion. Thus the short line, his confession of love, is not merely a reflection of his nature, but also shows his aversion to anything that is irrational and emotional. It is therefore a statement of a fact and not emotion. One of the most interesting phrases in the book was turned into something very banal in the Polish translation. A simple phrase – *Kocham panią jak wariat* (I love you like an insane person) –

would have been enough to retain the character's manner of speaking and thinking.

3.2. ANALYSIS

As stated above, the second category by which I propose to assess translations is language register, and in particular the degree of formality of style that is associated with various social situations. The most important questions here are:

- Are slang expressions rendered in the translations as slang or as standard language?
- Is the narrative style retained?

In the stories written by Zoshchenko, who is known for his informal style, translators go to great lengths in order to preserve the informality of the register. Many of Zoshchenko's stories begin with '*И вот*', '*Но*', '*А*', which "do not further the story but call attention to the teller" (May 1994:73). These pragmatic connections in Zoshchenko's satires "establish a relationship of banter and good humour between the narrator and the reader. Above all, they stress a quality of personal communication" (May 1994:73) and the lightness of his narrative style.

И вот утром ...(«Забавное приключенте» 124)

И вот ... (126)

Но вдруг ... (131)

Ну нет ... (132)

"*Забавное приключение*" (An Amusing Adventure) begins nearly every paragraph with either '*и*', '*а*', '*и вот*' or '*ну*'. The narrator refers to different characters as '*наша дама*', '*наша балетная*' (126), creating a light, informal mood in this story. G & M try their best to preserve the style by beginning English paragraphs with "but", "and", and "and so".

And so … (220)

Just then … (224)

And … (226)

Monas, too, uses connectors similar to that of Zoshchenko:

But these brief moments… (94)

And so … (95)

This informality of the language is also evident in "*Нервные люли*" (Nervous People), which was translated by G & M and Shishkoff. Slang and phrases of informal register are rendered quite successfully in both translations of this story. One of the funniest expressions, "*Пожалуйста, подавитесь, Дарья Петровна, своим ежиком. Мне, говорит, до вашего ежика дотронуться противно, не то что его в руки взять.*" (39) is rendered more or less literally as "Please, Darya Petrovna, go and choke to death on your brush. It disgusts me to even touch your brush, let alone pick it up" (125) by G &M. Shishkoff's version is freer and evidently directed at the target audience: "You can stick your pipe cleaner, she replied, up your nose, Daria Petrovna. I wouldn't touch your pipe cleaner with a ten foot pole, let alone take it in my hand" (59). "*По морде съездил*" (156) is translated as "gave him one across the mug" (G&M, 126) and "socked him

smack-dab in the puss" (Shishkoff, 60), "*какой-то паразит*» (156) respectively as "some parasite" (126) and "some pest" (60). And the final colloquial expression – "*прописал ижицу*" (156) – G & M have as "gave us another walloping" (126), whereas Shishkoff added a bit more humor to it: "he fixed our wagon, but good" (61).

The word '*баба*' is another slang word that often figures in Zoshchenko's stories and which is not always preserved by translators. "*Я, братцы мои, не люблю баб, которые в шляпках*" (1) in "*Аристократка*" prompted a variety of interpretations, from Monas' "Brothers, I don't like women who wear hats" (20), G & M's "Fellows, I don't like dames who wear hats" (125), to Shishkoff's "Friends, I don't like broads who wear hats" (36). Although it can be argued that the basic meaning of '*баба*' is '*woman*' in the Russian language, rendering it simply as '*woman*' in this story does not reflect the narrator's pejorative feelings towards women aristocrats, nor does it faithfully preserve the informality of the narrative tone. G & M's usage of the term "dame" renders a feeling of dislike towards ladies in hats, so does Shishkoff's term 'broad'. The same cannot be said about Monas' version.

3.3. TENSE SHIFT

Another stylistic device of interest is tense shift.

> The use of present and future tenses allows the narrator to stimulate direct address to the reader. (May 1994: 76)

Such devices are often found in Zoshchenko's stories where there is an on-going tense shift from one speaker to the next. It often creates a mood of rapid action, fast, jagged conversation and quickly moving plot. In Zoshchenko's "Ваня и Люди", the story begins with the narrator speaking in the past tense:

> *"Один техник захотел у нас после мытъя, конечно, одетъся..."*(110)*

But almost an instant later the tense shifts to present tense and from there it intertwines with past.

> *И вдруг он с ужасом замечает, что весъ его гардеров украдли.* (110)*
>
> *Он прямо ахнул...* (111)*

In the three translations, Monas and G & M preserved the shift in tenses, whereas Shishkoff changed everything into the past tense.

> A certain technician of ours, after having washed himself, naturally wanted to get dressed. And suddenly he notes in terror that his entire wardrobe has been stolen. (Monas 78)
>
> A certain technician finished washing himself and then, of course, wanted to get dressed. Suddenly he notices with horror that his entire wardrobe has been stolen. (G & M 204)
>
> A technician, having washed himself, decided, of course, to get dressed. And suddenly he discovered, to his horror, that his whole wardrobe had been stolen. (Shishkoff 92)

Monas' and G & M's versions read very much like the original. The present tense in Russian and tense shifting in English help to propagate the atmosphere of presentification or immediacy which is so prominent throughout the story, hence making things happen at a faster pace. Many voices are being heard at the same time and the use of different English tenses, such as the present continuous helps to achieve that.

> *... он сгоряча надевает на себя жилетку и кепку, берет в руки ремень...*
> *Некоторые из публики говорят* (111)*

> ... he angrily puts on the vest and cap, takes his belt in his hand...
> Some of the public are saying... (Monas 78)

> ... he angrily puts on his vest and cap, takes his belt in his hand...
> Some of the people say... (G & M 205)

And compare that with Shishkoff:

> Eventually, however, he unthinkably put on his vest and cap, took his belt in his hand...
> Some of the customers said... (92)

Shishkoff's version is orderly and does not attain a similar tempo that the original and the other two translations have. It also loses the feeling of immediacy which occurs in the original. The word "eventually" adds to the translation a moment of pondering, as if the hero, Selifanov, took a while to decide what to do, when in the story he put on his vest and cap in the heat of the moment. Shishkoff might have also misunderstood the term '*сгоряча*' (in the heat of the moment/angrily) for he translated it as "unthinkably". The rich possiblity of tense shifts in Russian and its, at times, potentially confusing nature for English speakers, allows for a more informal register and for the reader to feel closer to

the action of the story. Zoshchenko changes the tempo, slows it down, picks it up and astonishes from time to time with the ability to create confusion not only in his stories but also in the minds of his readers. It is a pity that not all translators are willing to present the same pheonomenon in their English translations.

> If we persist in believing that a reader should not be able to tell that she is reading a translation, then we devalue the translator's art and remove one of the main reasons to produce or read translations in the first place: the chance to glimpse at another culture. (May 1994: 109)

CHAPTER 4

HUMOUR

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The humour occurring in any literary work is a distinct topic and in this study will be treated apart from linguistic register. The difficulties in rendering humour reside in the fact that it is context bound, cultural and often intuitive. Native audiences laugh at what foreign audiences do not find amusing. Rowan Atkinson's humor in *Black Adder* is never quite as hilarious in any other language as it is in British English. A particular journalist was once quite disappointed when, seeing her Austrian friends watching an episode of *Black Adder*, she never heard them laugh. Later, when asked about it, the Austrians said that there was not anything funny about the show. The journalist, who is fluent both in English and German, therefore began to compare notes. It turned out that most of the amusing expressions rendered into German required a great deal of explanations for those who are not familiar with the British culture and history. Most of the changes happened when no suitable equivalents were found in the target language.[2]

4.2. ANALYSIS

Ogniem i Mieczem is saturated with humorous dialogues and humorous colloquialisms, some of which date back to the 14th century[3]. Through an old nobleman, named Onufry Zagłoba, Henryk Sienkiewicz is able to give his novel a light and humoristic tone despite the seriousness of the central idea, mainly the mutual hatred between the Poles and the Ukrainians. Comical words that frequently appear in the novel are: *cham*, *łajdak* and *niecnota*. I shall discuss them in the same order.

'*Cham*' is a word with two standard lexical meanings in the Polish language. 1. *Człowiek niekulturalny, ordynarny, grubiański.* (Ill-mannered, vulgar person) and 2. *Dawniej pogardliwie o człowieku nie należącym do szlachty, głównie chłopie* (archaic, pejorative form for a person not belonging to the nobility, usually a member of the peasantry). Both meanings are of pejorative connotation; however, when used by Onufry Zagłoba, even in his anger with the intent to insult, most Polish readers find it amusing. Zagłoba, a social drunk, uses every opportunity to get drunk and it ususally matters not with whom. Therefore his insulting his drinking partners cannot be taken seriously.

> *Za kogo mnie waszmość masz? To nie dość, że pospulituję z chamami, żebym jeszcze za nich miał płacić?* (103)
>
> (What do you take me for, my good man. Isn't it bad enough that I have to deal with cads, that I would have to pay for their drinking too?)

Jeremiah Curtain and W. S. Kuniczak convey the meaning in the following ways:

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[2] Dob, Austria. Personal communication, July 2000.

> For whom do you take me? Isn't it enough for me to hobnob with trash, without paying their scores? (Curtain 97)
>
> What do you take me for, good friend? Isn't it bad enough that I've got to swallow my dignity by drinking with peasants without paying for it too? (Kuniczak 101)

Kuniczak's 'peasant' is simply not enough to render the true meaning of '*cham*' in this context, for Zagłoba speaks not only of peasants, with whom he deals, but also of any noblemen who revolt against the Republic of Poland. Kuniczak is also quite inconsistent because when this word appears meaning 'peasant', he does not acknowledge the difference at all. "To hobnob with trash" is far superior of the two; the expression gives the reader a slang and comical flavor, which in turn conveys the original '*pospulować z chamami*' rather well, although "For whom do you take me" is stylistically stilted and thus incongruous.

The next time the word '*cham*' is used during an argument that concerns the well being of a noble lady, and once again by the same character, who is known for his quick tongue and wit. Curtain keeps the humor intact by coming up with another suitable expression. '*Z chamem pospulował*' (229) is reflected as "I will be hail-fellow-well-met with trash" (222). What Kuniczak presents to his target audience is only a mere "Yes, yes, my lad" (268), which is not in accordance with Sienkiewicz's text. During the same argument between Zagłoba and a character named Bohun, the former goes on using a few more epithets to exemplify his anger further. Zagłoba calls Bohun '*łajdak*' and '*niecnota*' (229), both of which in turn are rendered as "scoundrel" (222) by Jeremiah Curtain. Kuniczak's work, on the other hand, is so different from the original, that it is

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[3] Information source: National Library of Warsaw.

difficult to tell where Sienkiewicz's paragraph begins and ends. At one point, the reader finds Bohun being called "damned pagan soul" (269), which can be found nowhere in the original. When looking at these two terms: *łajdak* and *niecnota*, it must be pointed out that they are foremost of sexual nature. '*Łajdak*', to put it bluntly, is a person with a rather disreputable past and questionable way of life. '*Niecnota*' literary means "not a virgin" but it also carries a meaning of a person who does not live by generally accepted norms or standards. Already in the 18th century, and up to the present, '*łajdak*' could refer to anyone who was vulgar in manner, whereas '*niecnota*' could be described as a person with a questionable reputation and also a person who has found her/himself in trouble. One can guess that Curtain had problems with deciding upon terms for both words, and this is why he translated them both as one and the same. Even though no harm has been done, the result is that the reader does not get the full picture of Zagłoba's talent for name-calling.

Other manifestations of humour in *Ogniem i Mieczem* include phrases and whole segments of texts. Sienkiewicz, for most part, uses Zagłoba's moments of anger and discontent to intertwine humourous expressions with words of less comical nature. Zagłoba takes to name calling or wishing his enemies various misfortunes and diseases. Some of these are amongst the funniest moments in the novel, and as can be expected, each translator deals with every one of them in his own individual way.

> *A żeby ich parchy zjadły, cały ten naród arcypieski! Żeby z ich bebechów poganie cięciwy pokręcili!... Bóg stworzył wszystkie nacje, ale ich diabeł, takich synów, sodomitów! Bodaj im wszystkie maciory zjałowiały!* (28 II)
> (Let them be eaten by mange, this whole arch-dog nation. Let the pagans make bow-strings out of their guts! ... God created every nation, but these sons of Sodom must have been created by the Devil himself. Let their women turn into infertile hogs.)

Curtain with some success is able to reflect Zagłoba's anger and his incredible way of wishing the worst of fates on others.

> May the mange devour the whole race of curs! May the Pagans twist bow strings out of their entrails! God created all nations, but the devil created these sons of Sodom. May barrenness strike the trash. (426)

The same cannot be said about Kuniczak.

> Oh, those flea-bitten dogs! May the Jews grind their bones and fry them for pancakes! May the Tartars twist all their guts into bow strings! God created all men, I admit, but there's no way He had anything to do with these hellish people. The Devil made them, that's who! May all their women turn into fallow mares! (578)

The issue here is the strong emphasis on ethnic issues with Kuniczak's mentioning Jews and Tartars. Sienkiewicz does give the reader an indication that Zagłoba is not well-disposed towards other ethnic groups, but does not do so in this paragraph. Kuniczak interprets here rather than translates. Moreover, Zagłoba has his reasons for using the words he does. '*Naród arcypieski*' (arch-dog nation) refers to '*czerń*' (peasantry) that is rebelling against Poland, and to Cossacks who at the moment have kidnapped Helena (the heroine of the story). Furthermore, he uses the word '*poganie*' (pagans) since there is nothing more humiliating for a Christian, and the Cossacks were Christians (their patron was St. Michael) than to be beaten by a pagan. Kuniczak's rendering of '*takich synów, sodomitów*' as

"those hellish people" is weak and not imaginative when compared to Curtain's "these sons of Sodom". Zagłoba's other ill wishes towards people he does not care for include *'...żeby im gardziele poropiały'* (may their throats be covered with pus) (30 II), which is translated as "... may their throats rot" (428) by Curtain and is completely missing from Kuniczak's (580).

Animals in the novel are not spared either from the sharp tongue of the old knight. When Zagłoba's horses are eaten by wolves, he has the following to say about them:

> *A żeby was psi pojedli! Żeby was ze skóry obdarto! Żeby was Żydzi na kołnierzach nosili!* (246)

This anger-ridden fragment is faithfully rendered by the earlier translator.

> May the dogs devour you, may your skin be torn off, may the Jews wear you in their collars! (239)

Kuniczak again disappoints with his unnecessary additions.

> May the dogs tear out your guts! May you get flayed alive! May the Jews make coat-collar out of you and wear it on their hats! (295-6)

Humourous expressions are not limited to insults and ill wishes. Zagłoba's wits shine through when he feels sorry for himself or talks about making changes in his life, as in the following:

> *Najgorzej to w umartwianiu siedzieć – mówił dalej Zagłoba – gdy na koń sięgdziesz, zaraz ci desperacja od trzęsienia się coraz niżej zlatuje, aż ją w końcu wytrzęsiesz.* (40 II)
> (The worst thing in grief is to sit in one place – Zagłoba was saying – when you mount your horse, all of you worries slide down from the shaking, and finally they fall right off you.)

Curtain's version is well translated but it loses its humour as the translator is not particularly imaginative. His version is too formal and serious, and incidentally he also fails to correctly render the word '*zlatuje*', which in this context does not mean "to fly" but "to slide down".

> The worst thing, in grief, is to sit down in one place. When you get on horseback, all your despair flies down from shaking, till you shake it off completely and entirely. (437)

Kuniczak's version reads awkwardly because of the plural form of "desperations" and his use of personal pronouns as replacement for this noun. His detailed description of where "the desperations" eventually end up is vulgar and uncalled for. The term "bumping up and down on a horse" is inappropriate to use for someone who had been almost born in a saddle and thus is an excellent rider.

> Right, the fat knight said, once you start bumping up and down on a horse, all of your desperations slide down your spine until they reach the place where they can shake themselves right out of you. It's always like that. (586)

On one occasion Onufry Zagłoba speaks of making changes in his personal life. The humour in this passage lies in the fact that a sixty year-old man all of a sudden decides to settle down.

> *Sam ja to sobie często powtarzam, że czas by był by się ustatkować – jeno krew mam jeszcz zbyt gorącą. W tobie jest więcej flegmy, a we mnie sama cholera.* (145 II)
> (I keep saying to myself that it is high time to settle down – although I am still too hot-blooded. You are rather phlegmatic, but I am full of frenzied energy.)

It appears that Jeremiah Curtain either misunderstood the knight's intentions to '*ustatkować się*' (to settle down), or decided that an old man cannot possibly mean to get married.

> I repeat this to myself often, it being time for me to grow sedate; but I am too hot-blooded yet. You are more phlegmatic; in me however, is passion itself. (539)

His translation of '*cholera*' as "passion" is correct - that is what Zagłoba is talking about. Unfortunately the humour is irretrievably lost. Kuniczak disappoints yet another time.

> I've thought of it often. It is time to settle down. Age calls for a certain degree of dignity, don't you know, and I ought to pay greater attention to my status as an elder statesman. But I've particularly hot kind of blood bubbling in my veins and that's my whole problem. It's easy for you because you are a bit of a cold fish in such matters, little as you are, which I am full of fire. (747)

There are too many changes, additions and repetitions. At the end the paragraph one gets a feeling that the same could have been said in two sentences (the precise number of Sienkiewicz's and Curtain's) instead of five. Another issue to consider is Kuniczak's referring to Zagłoba as "an elder statesman". Zagłoba's status in the novel is that of *'obibok'* (free spirit) and *'wolentariusz'* (volunteer) in Prince Jarema Wiśniowiecki's army.

Zagłoba is also a key element in presenting other heroes in the novel. It is often through his eyes and his words that a reader gets a picture of the other characters' physical and mental attributes.

> *Obaczymy też ... i tego wielkoluda, tego żurawia litewskiego, tę tykę chmielową, pana Longina. (145)*
> (We will also see ... that giant, that Lithuanian crane, that hop-pole, Pan [Mr.] Longin.)
>
> We shall see ... that giant, that Lithuanian stork, that hop-pole, Pan Longin. (Curtain 539)

The man described is obviously very tall, that is why he is being compared to '*żuraw*' (crane), but not to the bird but to a long wooden stick used for fetching

water out of a well. In any case, comparing Longin to a stork is not very effective since storks do not live in the United States (for the citizens of which the text was translated), nor are they as tall as cranes. Kuniczak describes the character in far more detail, although not very faithfully to the original.

> I also miss that Lithuanian beanpole, that long drink of water,
> that skinny giant with his pious chastity ... (747)

Chekhov's *Три Сестры* intertwines the tragic with the comic, but mostly the amusing expressions are a result of characters inabilities or unwillingness to listen to each other. Solenij's question, *'как здоровье?'* and Chebutkin's absurd, rhyming answer, *'как масло коровье'* (How is your health/ like cow fat) (69) produced a number of translations. Julius West's "how is your health?" and "mind your own business" (199), Magarshack's "how do you feel?" and "fit as a fiddle" (176), Fen's "how do you feel?" and "like a last year's bird's-nest" (319) all convey the general idea behind those two statements (Brian Friel omitted both in his stage translation). Here, one might suspect, any translator has to do some interpreting and guessing in order to establish if Chebutkin is being sarcastic and angry, and whether his answer has a negative or a positive connotation. West's interpretation lacks the original's rhyme and humor, Magarshack's positive answer does not reflect Chebutkin's bad mood. Fen's phrase is non-English, although her interpretation reflects the nonsense of the original.

CHAPTER 5

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS AND CULTURE-SPECIFIC TERMS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

"Words are more or less affected by their contexts" (Newmark 1991:88), and more often than not must be treated as a part of the whole context rather than individually. A rose is a rose, and in many instances it becomes *róża* in Polish and *роза* in Russian. But in a sentence 'I lost the rose of my watering can", rose is no longer *róża* or *роза* but *nakrętka* and *семка*. Words can certainly be "single, isolable or meaningful units of a language... All words have extra-contextual meanings and contextual senses; sometimes these two types of meaning are identical – occasionally they appear to be remote from each other but there is always some connection between the two. Extra-contextual meaning has more impact than the various contextual senses of a word" (Newmark 1991:89). For example, "*Ty stary koniu*" does not always mean "You, old horse". Depending on the surrounding words, the tone of one's voice and the situation, it can mean "You, old man", "You, big baby" and even "You idiot". Words, which apart from their lexical meanings have their own cultural meanings, often prove problematic for translators of all languages and backgrounds. But even more so, it is idioms and culture-specific or concept-words that require a great deal of skill and

knowledge, so that their meaning can be transferred as close to the original as possible.

5.2. ANALYSIS

The most stiriking feature of Jeremiah Curtain's and W. S. Kuniczak's translations of *Ogniem i Mieczem* is their apparent inability to render idioms and culture-specific terms into the target language. Both being translators and published authors, the two must have been aware that where there are no lexical equivalents in the target language, some form of adaptation should be used.

Throughout his translation there are numerous examples of Curtain's simply providing a literal translation of the original where he is confronted with a lack of translatory equivalents, in spite of the realities behind them. Let me begin here with an example from the scene where Onufry Zagłoba had just slain Buraj and is boasting about it. '*Ha! Zadałem mu pieprzu!*' (Ha! I really gave it to him!) (289) is rendered literally: "Ha! I gave him pepper!" (671). Not only does this expression fail to convey the meaning of the original, it also creates a new one. When a few native English speakers were asked what this sentence means to them, they all answered that it means nothing more than Zagłoba putting pepper on someone's food. In reality, this expression has a wide range of applications, from unintentionally creating problems for another human being, to reprimanding someone, to winning a battle. In this case Zagłoba is boasting that he triumphed over Buraj even though the odds were against him. Kuniczak captures the

meaning with an English idiom much better, "Ha! I really gave it to him, didn't I!" (971)

The hybrid text[4] phenomenon is evident on all levels, not just where idiomatic phrases are concerned. Single words like '*tfu*' and '*czołem*' have not been correctly treated either. In the Polish language, the interjection '*tfu*' is used to describe the action of spitting, or the sound that one makes when one spits; the closest equivalent in North American English is "ptooey". To make matters more complicated, *'tfu'* is also something one would say to express discontent or disbelief. Here are some examples of the last two applications.

> *Tfu! Jak się pan nie wstydzisz, być tak długim... (25)*
> (... How can you not be ashamed for being so long/tall)
>
> *Tfu, do licha, otom jest w kłopocie! (61)*
> (... Damn it! I am in trouble)
>
> *Tfu, jakie gorąco, choć dopiero marzec... (103)*
> (... What heat, although it is only March)

Such a term, which is culturally loaded and requires almost a native knowledge on the translator's behalf, is not something especially easy to reproduce in English. Naturally one cannot always expect to find something equally meaningful in the translation. Yet I cannot help but to admire Curtain's persistence in locating the perfect term. His progress is outlined in the three examples shown above. He begins with "Tfu! How can you not be ashamed to be so tall" (22), then switches to "Well, plague take it, what can I do!" (57), and finally surrenders to a term that he uses from now on: "Pshaw, how hot it is, though, it is only March." (96) His first attempt fails for obvious reasons – '*tfu*' left in the original form most likely

meant nothing to the target audience of his day as it means nothing to English speakers now. The other two are better and certainly can be understood by his readers. Kuniczak deals with this difficult problem in a way that is becoming a pattern for him, mostly by omission. Of the three, he chooses to translate only one: "Pfui, what heat! And it is only March!" (100), and for an unknown reason, Kuniczak uses a German interjection!

'*Czołem*', the instrumental form of '*czoło*' (forehead), was used as a form of greeting or showing respect between, and to, the members of Polish nobility. Today, it is still used in the same manner by boyscouts (*harcerze*) and in the Polish Army. This form of greeting occurs on numerous occasions throughout the novel and it is relatively trouble-free to translate. '*Czołem, waszmościom, czołem*' (54), for example, can be safely rendered as "regards, gentlemen" or "greetings, gentlemen". Curtain does precisely that on page 15; however, a few chapters further into the book, he astonishes his readers by "the forehead to you, gentlemen, the forehead" (50). Kuniczak omitted the first two cases (23, 50), although not because of lack of knowledge on the subject since everywhere else he identifies it correctly as "my respects to you, gentlemen" (e.g. 91, 403, 762).

'*Hej tam, kto żyw, otwieraj*' (94) is another cultural phrase that was once an acceptable form of asking to be let in when approaching human dwellings. This form literally means "whoever is alive, should open the door", which amounts to "whoever is there, is asked to open the door". Curtain's translation does not quite capture the essence of this expression: "Hallo there, who lives, open!" (89). It is a literal translation, which leaves the reader wondering what exactly the person in

[4] Text which contains elements that are unusual or non-existent in the target language.

the novel is trying to say. Yet this translation, however awkwardly rendered, conveys the meaning much better than Kuniczak's, who, although a Polish-American, offers a ridiculous variant in the target language.

Inside there! Open up! Look alive in there! (90)

'Szelmą jestem bez uszu' (I am a cunning fox who has no ears) (22), which in Curtain's version reads "I am a rogue without hearing" (19) and once more is translated literally, is nowhere to be found in Kuniczak's. Omitted by Kuniczak are also other phrases and expressions of idiomatic nature. *'Masz diable kubrak'* (236) (lit.'there is an overcoat for you, devil', idiom. 'there is trouble ahead'), *'wykręcać się sianem'* (236) ('to get out of trouble against all odds') and *'kot powinien być łowny, a chłop mowny'* (238) ('a cat should be a hunter, a man a talker'), are all excluded, which is lamentable since so much humour, culture and detail is lost. From the three, Curtain manages an adequate translation of one expression only, "A cat should be a hunter and a man a talker" (231). The first one he translates literally, "well, devil, here is an overcoat for you" (229), and the second one he renders without taking the trouble to find an idiomatic equivalent in English, "I've got out of many a trouble" (229). Two obviously occurrent translations of idioms in Kuniczak's *With Fire and Sword* are found on pages 485 and 486. *'Niech waści głowa nie boli'* (Do not let your head ache) (385) and *'Języka dostałeś?'*(lit. 'Did you get the tongue?', idiom. 'Did you get information?') (385) are rendered by Kuniczak without much effort to preserve their cultural structures. His renditions, "Don't worry..." (485) and "You've brought back some prisoners?" are poorly and incorrectly translated when

compared to Curtain's more original efforts: ''Don't let your head ache over that!'' (375) and ''Did you get informants?" (376) Kuniczak's '*Języka dostałeś*' as "... some prisoners" is wrong since the talk here is about obtaining some information and not people.

When analyzing culture-specific words it is essential to include the first chapter of the second volume in *Ogniem i Mieczem*. This particular chapter stands out from the rest. To quickly summarize: Bohun and Horpyna (a Cossack woman considered a witch by the locals) ride towards her lair, called *Czarci Jar* ('The Devil's Den'). Legend has it that her place is haunted by ghosts and spirits. In this chapter the Ukrainian, the Polish and the Cossack cultures come together to form a mosaic so colorful that it is difficult to follow the written language. Words that come into play include an old Polish word '*dziewka*' meaning 'girl', a dialectal form '*Wraże Uroczyszcze*' (Evil, Spellbinding Place), several words of Ukrainian origin: '*Siromacha*' (pauper), '*dit'ko*' (the devil) and one term of the Turkish origin '*esauł*' (commanding officer in a detachment of a Cossack cavalry). This interesting fragment,

> *Siromachy - szepnął młody Kozak, zwracając się do starego esauła.*
> *Nie, to upiory – odpowiedział esauł jeszcze ciszej.* (7 II)

is translated by Curtain in the following way:

> Vampires?, whispered young Cossack, turning to the old essaul.
> No, werewolves, answered the old *essaul*, in a still lower voice. (407)

In this paragraph, Curtain makes a few mistakes. He translates '*siromachy*' as "vampires". Although this word has a lexical meaning of, first and foremost, "pauper" and "an unfortunate person", it was also used to describe the poorest stratum among the Cossacks at the time of the Zaporozhian Sich. Another meaning, occurrent in some dialects is that of a wolf (*волки-сиромахи*)[5]. From the content of the chapter, one can deduct that Sienkiewicz is not talking about paupers but wolves. Another problem in Curtain's translation is inconsistency. At the beginning of the novel, where the word '*upiór*' (2) is mentioned, Curtain renders it as 'vampire' (3), but in this section (407), he changes it to "werewolf".. 45). He also incorrectly identifies the word '*dit'ko*' (the devil) as werewolf".

> *A kto mocniejszy, ojcze: dit'ko czy upiór?*
> *Dit'ko mocniejszy, ale upiór zawziętrzy.* (8 II)
> (And who is stronger, father: the devil or the vampire?
> The devil is stronger, but the vampire is more stubborn.)

> And who is stronger, father – the werewolf or the vampire?
> The werewolf is stronger, but the vampire is more stubborn. (408)

Kuniczak, in this particular chapter, shows better acquaintance with the Polish and the Ukrainian terminology. The first and the second examples he renders in the following way:

> Wolves?, whispered a young Cossack.
> Vampires, the old *esaul* answered even lower. (539)

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[5] Natalia Pylypiuk, personal communication. September 2000.

> But who's stronger, Father? *Dit'ko* the Devil or a vampire?
> *Dit'ko* is stronger, you can bet on that, but a vampire is harder to rid of once he smells a victim. (540)

Curtain makes more errors in this chapter. He inappriopriately calls Helena "Bohun's cuckoo" (409). In the original she is being referred to as *'jego zazula'* (9 II) which normally carry a meaning of "a cuckoo bird", but in this context should be translated as "his beauty" of "his beloved" or, as Kuniczak has it, "his little sweetheart" (541). *'Wraże Uroczyszcze'* (6 II) is rendered by Kuniczak as "The Devil's Playground" (538), which perfectly sets the mood of the place since there is so much talk of the devil in the chapter. Curtain's "Enemy's Mound" does not invoke the kind of terror that the original does. This mistake could have resulted from Curtain's being acquainted with only one of the two words. '*Wraże*' stems from the Polish adjective '*wraż*' meaning "hostile" and from the East Slavic root *'wrag'* meaning "the evil one" or "the devil". But '*uroczyszcze*' signifies "an evil, spellbinding place" and the East Slavic suffix 'iszcze' exaggerates the emphasis of the evil of the place even more. Kuniczak then not only sets the right mood for the reader but also renders it very closely to the original.

Три Сестры is also saturated with idioms and culturally-loaded terms that without a doubt, have at one point or another presented problems for the four translators under discussion, Julius West, Elisaveta Fen, David Magarshack and Brian Friel. Kuligin's commentary on Chebutkin's drunkenness in Act III, *'Назюзюкался, Иван Романыч'* (52) (the verb is a jocular term for "to get drunk") produced a rich variety of interpretations. West rendered it as "Speaking a bit difficult, eh, Ivan Romanovitch" (179), Fen as "Half seas over, Ivan

Romanych" (299), Magarshack as "Sozzled, eh Doctor" (159), and Friel as "You naughty boy, you're inebriated" (80). In this case only West's version does not adequately describe Chebutkin's state of mind.

'Чёрт его знает ...' (The devil knows) (67), a cultural phrase that requires some knowledge about its function in the Russian language, also prompted a number of interesting variants.

The devil only knows ... (West 197)

God knows ... (Fen 317)

Damned if I know ... (Magarshack 174)

God alone knows ... (Friel 103)

It is interesting that West and Magarshack translate this phrase using the term "devil" and "damn", whereas Fen and Friel adopt terms which seem more common in the English speaking cultures. One possible answer that I can present here is that those who are religious chose not to use Lord's name in vain and that may be why West and Magarshack render this phrase as shown above.

'Мастёр на все руки' (22) had at least one translator puzzled; in contemporary English, this is best translated as "jack of all trades" or slang "Mr. Fix-It". In the texts it is rendered by Fen as "he is gifted all around" (262), by Magarshack as "he can turn his hand to anything" (128) and by Friel as "he has all the talents" (28). West's choice is "he is really a domestic Admirable" (143), which would leave any reader with a question of what exactly a "domestic Admirable" is?

Zoshchenko's stories are very funny, that much needs no argumentation. He begins many of his stories as a detached observer of everyday life. But as the plot thickens he gets caught up in the stories themselves, being no longer the indifferent narrator that he set out to be. The sound of the spoken voice is achieved by Zoshchenko's choice in linguistic register (already discussed in chapter 3). Careless and vulgar language is used with utmost care to serve as an indication of anger, frustration or comical relief. Zoshchenko's characters speak with a mixture of peasant idioms, repetitions, foreign phrases and proverbial cliches. These elements make his stories unique but furthermore, require that the translator has a good command of the source language and is well acquainted with the rules and norms governing its cultural and social situations.

"Аристократка", like most of Zoshchenko's short stories, has a strong presence of colloquial and idiomatic phrases. When the narrator finds himself with no money, the translator may very well find her/himself wondering how to proceed with the translation: *'А денег у меня – кот наплакал. (...) А денег – с гулькин нос'* (lit. [As for] My money – a cat cried/ And the money – as high as a pigeon's nose) (22). These two idiomatic expressions were translated in different fashion:

> The money I had on me was damn little.
> About a pigeon's dropping's worth. (Monas 21)
>
> And I had next to no money at all on me.
> Not enough to put in your eye. (G & M 129)
>
> And I was flat broke – flatter than an elephant's instep.
> There wasn't much – as much as a hen has teeth.
> (Shishkoff 37)

Monas' first phrase, although conveys the general meaning, lacks an idiomatic expression. However, the second phrase is translated very closely to the original. G & M obviously reversed the order of the phrases in their translation to create a smoother flow in the English language. But G & M's second expression sounds non-English and is very ambiguous. Shishkoff is more elaborate here. His translation maintains the animal imagery and sends a loud message to the reader about the narrator's financial state.

'Сволочь' (24), a term with a wide range of applications (scum, bastard, jerk) and extremely difficult to translate is also rendered in three different ways. Monas' has it as "scum" (22), G & M as "son of a bitch" (130) and Shishkoff as "bastard" (38). Monas and Shishkoff are correct in their choice of words; however, G & M could refrain from translating *'сволочь'* as "son of a bitch" since there are so many other possibilities in the English language that can express this term quite well.

A similar problem occurs with the next phrase that I shall examine. *'Ложи, говорю, чёртовой матери!'* (Put it down, in the name of the devil's mother) (24) is endowed with too much emphasis by G & M and Monas.

> Put it back, I said, you lousy bitch! (G & M 129)
>
> Put it back, says I, you damn bitch! (Monas 22)

Two mistakes are made here by G & M and Monas. First of all, the phrase *'чёртовой матери'* is not addressed to the woman the narrator is speaking to, but it is there as an interjection to add emphasis to his anger. In G & M and Monas' translations the addressee is the woman. And secondly, the translation of this

phrase is too strong in both cases. When compared with Shishkoff's "Put it back, damn it" (38), the other two renditions appear too vulgar.

CHAPTER 6

LEXICON (LEXICAL ERRORS)

Not only idioms can cause something approaching chaos in the target texts. Simple lexical errors are also common in some translations. Fedotik's *'и гитара сгорела, и фотография сгорела'* (and the guitar burnt, and the photograph burnt) (55) was incorrectly translated by Magarshack and Friel as "my guitar burnt, my camera burnt" (Magarshack162) and "... camera, guitar – all up in smoke!" (Friel 84). Other errors in Magarshack's text include "our Andrey has degenerated" and "he has gone to seed" (163) for *'как измельчал наш Андей, как он выдохся'* (our Andrey has grown shallow, there is no inspiration left in him) (57). West unsuccessfully attempts to bring this sentence to an English-speaking audience by rendering it as "Our Andrey has grown smaller; how he is snuffed out" (185). Friel concocted the meaning – "Poor old Andrey... I've never known anyone to disintegrate as quickly!" (87). Fen produced a translation that is the closest to the original meaning: "Andrey is getting to be shallow minded ... he's lost all inspiration he used to have" (305). In the play, Andrey has gone from a vital, energetic person to someone who has lost the ambition to climb the ladder of success. The other translators' versions are quite inaccurate.

Fedotik's announcement about his place having burnt down (Act III), *'Погорел, погорел! Весь дочиста!'* (Burnt, burnt! The whole [thing] to nothing!) (55) has been treated differently by the four translators:

West: I'm burnt out, I'm burnt out! Down to the ground! (182)

Magarshack: Burnt down! Burnt down! To the last cinder! (162)

Fen: Burnt, burnt! Everything I've got burnt! (302)

Friel: Burned to a cinder! Burned to ashes! Not a single thing left! (84)

It is clear to see which translator made a mistake and which successfully preserved not only the original meaning but also the style. West makes Fedotik sound as if he is exhausted, and when followed by the next phrase, the entire sentence does not make much sense. Magarshack, Fen and Friel, on the other hand, maintain Fedotik's style of agitated speech – verbs without pronouns, telegraphic structure.

A complete blunder occurs in West's translation, in Act III, when Andrey scolds Olga for complaining too much. He says: *'Пора уже оставить эти глупости и не дуться так, здорово живёшь'* (lit. It is already that time you stopped this nonsense and stopped sulking thus, you live healthily) (60). The last two words emphasize the fact that even though Olga has a reasonably good life she is still not happy with it. Magarshack and Fen interpret it well.

It's time you dropped this nonsense and stopped sulking like this without rhyme and reasons. (Magarshack 166)
It's time you stopped this nonsense ... sulking like this for no reason whatever ...(Fen 308)

Friel adds more emphasis to his translation:

Isn't it about time you stopped this silly bloody sulking? If I even knew what you were sulking about? (92)

West evidently struggles with this fragment, and he completely misinterprets the last phrase.

> It's time you stopped all that nonsense and behaved
> as if you were properly alive... (188)

Another four expressions: *'Вы сегодния немножко не в духе'* (34), *'Труд без поезии, без мыслей'* (36), *'У Гоголя сказано, скучно жить на этом свете'* (39), *'Вам шестьдесят лет, а вы, как мальчишка, всегда говорите чёрт знает что'* (41) resulted in a number of different renditions. Fen went to a great deal of trouble to present these phrases faithfully. She has: "You're a bit low-spirited today, aren't you?" (277), "It's the sort of work you do without inspiration, without even thinking" (278), "It's a bore to be alive in this world, friends, that's what Gogol says" (282) and "You may be sixty, but you're always gabbling some damn nonsense or other, just like a child..." (285). The same can be said about Friel, for his renditions are, too, well done. They are: "You're in bad form today?" (48), "I want work that was stimulating, fulfilling, creative" (50), "What's that line from Gogol? Life on earth is a complete bore, my friends" (54) and "Sixty if he's a day – and still blathering like a child" (61). West translated them as follows: "You're a little down today" (157), "Labour without poetry, without ideas" (159), "Gogol says: life in this world is a dull matter, my masters!" (162) and "You're sixty, but you're like a boy, always up to some beastly nonsense" (165). Magarshack's attempts are quite similar: "You're not in a very good mood today, are you?" (141), "Work without poetry, without thought" (142), "Gogol says: It's a boring life, my friends" (145) and "You're sixty, but you're always talking some damned nonsense as if you were a silly little boy" (148).

West's and Magarshack's translations of the second example: *'Труд без поезии, без мыслей'* (36) are incorrectly interpreted. The fact of the matter is that Irina's reason for finding another job is that the present one does not suit her intellectual needs. She describes it as a mindless, mechanical work, with no room for the imagination. One can get a good sense of her displeasure only from Fen's and Friel's versions.

Julius West's translation is somewhat flawed with mistakes on both informational and functional levels. Chekhov's *'угрюмый мост'* (20) is translated as "an ugly bridge" (140) in a lovely passage about a dark place where one becomes melancholy and sad. Fen's and Magarshack's translations, "gloomy bridge" (259 and 125), retain the function of the word, which in turn helps to conclude the section with "I remember how sad and lonely I felt there" (259) and "It made me feel so sad when walking over it by myself" (125). Why should anyone "get melancholy when one is alone there" (140), as West suggests, the only thing that is wrong with 'his bridge' is that it is ugly? Brian Friel identifies the bridge as "black bridge" (24), only to finish with a very ineffective phrase "it wasn't the liveliest place to pass." (24)

The translation of *'Простокваша'* (sour milk or yogurt) is erroneous in Friel's version. *'Тебе нужно простоквашу есть...'* (31) is rendered by Friel as "You must eat nothing but omelettes..." (43). In the other three versions, it is properly identified as "sour milk" (West 154, Fen 273, Magarshack 138).

Even *'пирог'* has proven confusing for some scholars. In act I, Olga is announcing lunch: *'Господа ... пирог'* (26). Anyone who has visited Russian

would know that '*пирог*' is a baked pastry with jam or sweet cheese or it also can be stuffed with meat. West's version is confusing for two reasons. First, he translated '*пирог*' as "there is to be a masterpiece of a baking"(147), then, a few lines later, Chebutkin reacts to Olga's invitation by saying "A pie? Splendid!"(147). Here the reader wonders how exactly Chebutkin knew that a pie was being served? Fen, on the other hand, translated '*пирог*' as "pie" from the beginning and retained it throughout the novel. "Lunch is ready. There is a pie." (266) to which Chebutkin replies: "A pie? Excellent!" (266). Magarshack also adopted "pie": "Please, gentlemen, lunch is served. We're having a pie!" (132), "A pie! Excellent." (132) Friel's choice is a bit of a mystery: "Come everybody! The lasagne is getting cold!" (34), and Chebutkin replies: "Did I hear someone say lasagne? I am a great lasagne man." (34)

Anfisa's phrase – '*... вот живу! Вот живу!*' (Look, I'm living! I'm living!) (73) – prompted a series of variations. West simply translated it as "I am still alive, still alive" (204) and in the process lost the original function which was the emphasis on Anfisa's quality of life. Fen, not free from taking liberties, more or less conveyed the meaning: "what a life I am having! Such comfort! (324), and Magarshack interpreted as "I'm having a lovely time now, a lovely time" (180). Brian Friel is the farthest from the original, having rendered Anfisa's phrase as "Sure aren't we happy as a pair of pups together! And amn't I living the life of a queen?" (114).

CHAPTER 7

RECCURENT PHRASES AND THEMATIC KEY WORDS

> A key word is a conceptual term which covers a significant part or the whole text, and which normally recurs several times; it stands out from the text, so that it tends to be context free. In principle, the translator finds a single target language equivalent for any source language key word; and repeats it whenever it is used.
> (Newmark 1993:7)

In *Три Сестры*, the expression *'всё равно'* is used 23 times in total, by nearly every character in the play. The frequency of its occurrence and the fact that it is used at the very end of the play, *'Тара ... ра ... бумбия ... сижу на тумбе я ... Всё равно! Всё равно!'* (78), cannot be treated as a random use of no significance. Chekhov must have had his reasons for using this phrase, whether it was to show the hopelessness of the sisters' situation or their resignation towards a hope for personal happiness. He was not limited to this particular expression and could have used a number of variants. West translates *'всё равно'* 20^{6} times, mostly as "it's all the same" (155, 158, 160, 171, 187, 197, 198, 209, 210). The rest of the renditions take on similar form: "at any rate" (157, 186), "Never mind, it makes no difference" (163), "It's all the same to me" (169), "in any case" (187), "It's of no importance" (194) and "does it matter anyway" (198). Because his translation maintains a similar tone to the original, the feeling that one gets from the recurring phrase is the correct one, namely that none of the characters truly

care much about their lives, have accepted their less-than-perfect fates, nor care enough to improve the quality of their existence.

Magarshack ends up with 17 apparent translations of '*всё равно*'. He, too, renders more than half in a similar fashion: "what difference does it make" (140, 145, 174, 175, 184, 185), "I don't mind" (141) and "I don't think she cares" (143) for the Russian '*Ей, всё равно*' (36). A few produced some variety: "anyway" (138) and "I don't care a damn..." (150). Apart from the fact that Magarshack excluded six of the original expressions, his version also manages to maintain the gloomy atmosphere which is so present in the play. It may be argued that his rendering of '*мне решительно всё равно*' (44) is a bit strong – "I don't care a damn..." and makes Andrey sound rude, but on the other hand, West's simple "It's all the same to me" (171) is a bit too weak in this instance.

Elisaveta Fen has 16 renditions in total and hers are more differentiated, ranging from "it doesn't matter/ what does it matter" (282, 313, 318, 329, 330), "it's all the same" (274, 317), to "in any case" (273), "I don't care" (289, 291) and "Never mind" (282). Her translation of Andrey's "'*мне решительно всё равно*' (44) is the strongest of the three – "I certainly don't care" (289), although she adds more emphasis to Chebutkin's last line in the play: "Tara-boom-di-ay ... I'm sitting on a toomb-di-day ... What does it matter? Nothing matters!" (330). In Fen's version, Chebutkin asks himself a question, to which he immediately gives himself an answer, thus producing an illusion that issues are resolved for the time being. But in fact, nothing is resolved just as, throughout the last act (IV),

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[6] More than one occurrence on several of these pages, hence citations do not total figures provided.

Chebutkin repeats this phrase eight times, and for all eight times it is a statement not a question.

Brian Friel has the smallest number of renditions, only eleven. His are mostly "anyhow" (44), "as well" (45), "does she care anymore?" and "who cares" (57, 69, 68), "nothing" (66, 99) and "does it matter?" (67,68). For Chebutkin's last line, Friel chose "Matters sweet damn all, sweet damn all it matters". The atmosphere of hopelessness is gone and Friel's adaptation has a comical element.

None of the four translators, so it appears, recognize the importance of this phrase which is so prominent in the play. Numerically, *'всё равно'* is not well represented in any of the translations except for West's who is missing only three. With respects to the principle that once a translator spots the key word, "finds an equivalent for the target language and repeats it whenever the word is used", not one translator appears to follow this method. West is the closest to the original whereas Friel the furthest. In the latter's translation *'всё равно'* is no longer a key word but a random use of a few similar expressions.

The word *'чёрт'* appears in this play at least 11 times (there could be a different number in different editions). It is not as significant to the theme as *'всё равно'*, it mostly serves as an interjection; however, it is occurrent in the story and should be retained in the translations. The word itself, literally meaning 'the devil', is used in the context to sometimes express anger, frustration or sheer hopelessness. Translating it then becomes a bit tricky since the word *'чёрт'* and the phrases in which it occurs play an exclamatory role only. It is hardly

bewildering then that the following expressions resulted in a variety of interpretations from all four translators.[7]

1. *'Чёрт побери, скучать цельий вечер у директора'* (26)

2. *'Всегда, городите, чёрт знает что'* (41)

3. *'... чёрт возьми, давайте выпьем'* (43)

4. *'... чёрт бы всех побрал, ... чёрт бы побрал'* (51)

5. *'Чёрт (это) знает'* (52, 60, 67)

The main concern here is: how does one deal with such expressions without sounding "foreign" (unless that is the approach a translator adopted) and without breaking the flow of the original sentence? Elements such as *'чёрт'*, add a colloquial flavor to the language and should somehow be preserved for the target audiences. West, Magarshack, Fen and Friel have, indeed, tried to find a place for this word in their English translations of the play. The first example is rendered as "Damnation, another boring evening at the headmaster's!" (132) and "So now I've got to spend another of these damnably boring evenings at the director's!" (266) by Magarshack and Fen respectively. Friel has a British expression – "Another bloody boring evening at the headmaster's. Bloody hell" (34), which wonderfully describes the characters' enthusiasm for going over to the director's house. West also preserves the informality of the language – "Another full evening at the director's house, confound it!" (148) The second example is quite similar in all four cases: "... you're always up to some beastly nonsense" (165), "You're always talking some damned nonsense" (148) and "... you're always gabbling some damn nonsense..." (286) and "... still blathering like a bloody child" (61)

[7] See pp. 39, 44 for earlier comments on two of these examples.

by West, Magarshack, Fen and Friel respectively. The next expression provides the most contrasts. Friel sticks with "bloody hell, let's have a modest drink" (79), West and Magarshack both have "hang it all, let's drink" (168, 150) and Fen reads "Let's have a drink, the devil take it!" (288) Of the four renditions, only Fen's seems a bit odd to a post-war English speaker. ' *Чёрт бы всех побрал, ... чёрт бы побрал'* (51) is translated as "The devil take them all..." (178, 298) by West and Fen, "To hell with all of them!'(158, 79) by Magarshack and Friel. The last expression is a non-systematic exchange between "the devil" and "God". West translated it literally as "Devil only knows" (52,311 7), Magarshack as "Damned if I know" (174) and the other translators chose an expression, "God knows" (298, 317 in Fen, 103 in Friel) which is more familiar to the English-speaking audience. None of the translators, so it appears, adopt any particular method when translating expressions that include the word *'чёрт'*, neither are they in any way consistent with their choices.

In *Ogniem i Mieczem*, the word that dominates the text is, without a doubt, '*Bóg'* (God). Poland, as presented in the novel, is a very religious nation, one that puts its fate into the God's hands, and credits God with everything that happens. The phrase "*Wola boska*" (God's will) can be heard throughout the story. God's name is used in times of sorrow, in moments of fear and hope. Moreover, there are numerous proverbs that include the word '*Bóg*', which are carefully chosen by the author to perpetuate the idea that nothing can happen without God's willing it. Because the word '*Bóg*' is mentioned in the novel nearly a thousand times, I shall only concentrate on a few examples from chapters 2, 3 and 4. I shall start with

examples where the meaning is independent from the sentence. Such expressions as *'Na Boga'* (18, 45), *'Daj Boże'* (24, 37), *'Boże miłosierny'* (36, 37) have their equivalents in "For God's sake" (Kuniczak 21) and "in God's name" (Curtain 15, missing in Kuniczak), "God grant" (Curtain 22, 34) and "Merciful God" (Curtain 34, Kuniczak 42). Other expressions depend on the context and draw their full meaning from single sentences or whole paragraphs. At the end of chapter IV, an old Tartar, when discussing Helena's situation, ends with *'Bóg jest jeden'* (God is one) (62), for which is the most appropriate translation is "justice has been served" or "it is only fair". Jeremiah Curtain's misunderstanding cannot be overlooked, he translated it as "God is one" (58), and most likely it is a result of his lack of knowledge about this particular expression. Kuniczak, however, who should have been very familiar with the phrase – being a native Pole – must be criticized for changing it to "Allah willed it" (62). It may be more natural for a Tartar to speak of Allah rather than the Christian God; nevertheless Sienkiewicz has his character mention *'Bóg'* and not Allah. Kuniczak imposes his own interpretation on the text yet another time for with the word 'Allah' he brings an element of the exotic into the novel. *'Pohulamy jako Bóg w niebie'* (56) is reproduced well by Curtain, "We will frolic, as God is in heaven" (52), but completely missing from Kuniczak's edition. All in all, the 18 mentions of the word '*Bóg*', in the three chapters, are included each and every time within the pages of Curtain's translation, whereas the word is omitted 8 times by Kuniczak.

> *Tak mi Bóg dopomóż, jakobym dla takiej podzięki*
> *w ogień skoczyć gotowy* ... (41)
> (So help me God, I am ready to jump into the
> fire for such thanks...)

> May God be as good to me, as I am ready to rush
> into fire for such thanks... (Curtain 38)
>
> I'd gladly jump through fire for you, he heard himself saying.
> gladly with all my heart. (Kuniczak 48)

Sienkiewicz also uses a number of proverbs to distinguish the Christians from the Pagans in the story. Those who are highly religious often speak of God and his presence during their daily activities. In one scene an old woman invites a few of the main characters to her home for supper and rest. She says:

> *Prosiłam już ichwaszmościów panów an nocleg do Rozłogów,*
> *a teraz w im się pokłońcie! Gość w dom, Bóg w dom!* (43)
> (I have asked these gentlemen to stay the night in Rozlogi,
> and now you greet them! When guests are in the house, God
> is in the house.)

Her use of the proverb is ironic since nothing but trouble will come from the visit: she will end up slain with her entire family and her house will be burnt to the ground. Curtain, as usual, is there to render the meaning to the best of his abilities, which in this case sounds foreign to the target reader, although not incomprehensible.

> Well, my sons, I have asked these gentlemen to spend the
> night with us at Rozlogi: and now greet them! A guest
> in the house is God in the house. (40)

Kuniczak must not consider the phrase important enough, for his version is "God-free".

> I've asked these good men to spend the night with us in
> Rozloghi, and now you ask them too. Welcome them, I
> tell you! (50)

The last expression in *Ogniem i Mieczem* that I shall look at is '*A niechże waści Bóg sekunduje! Pewną masz służbę u księcia pana!*' (May God be your aim! You surely have service in the Prince's army) (26). Once more, nothing worth while in the novel should happen without God's help or God's intervention. "May God be your aid! You have sure service with the prince," (23) reads Curtain's sentence but, alas, Kuniczak appears to lose direction in his: "The devil take you. You are as good as wearing the Prince's uniform right now!" (31) The issues here is "The devil take you", which is normally an expression of abuse and may not be taken as a good omen.

CHAPTER 8

OMISSIONS AND COMPRESSIONS

8.1. INTRODUCTION

> When we "look up" at the end of a sentence, we look where the author has instructed us to look. (May 1994: 138)

Omissions in translations of any text are often necessary due to various reasons. The Russian language, for example, is replete with words and phrases that may be omitted in the English language in order to make the translated text easier to read. Instances where two or three Russian words can be, and should be, replaced with just one or two English words are numerous in the language of science and computer. One does not have to look far to find these: *акт деления* (fission), *колонка с материалом для набивку* (packed column) just to name two. Another reason for omission may be purely economical – shorter translations are cheaper for publishing houses. Omissions that are found in scientific texts happen usually for good reason, i.e., there is often no need to reapeat three or more words where one can replace them (as in the examples above). Unfortunately the omissions that are present in translated literary texts happen for different reasons and often detract from the original meaning. Large-scale omissions, those that leave no trace in the target language, often create changes in translations; however, as Gideon Toury has said, they can be accepted if they are not integral sentences, paragraphs or chapters. As is well known to those who have at one

point or another dealt with translation theories, scholars are faced with the fact that not all items they render exist in the target cultures. A paragraph describing a light bulb would prove to be completely useless in a society that never lived with electricity. Giraffe proverbs would not be appropriate for cultures where these animals have never been seen. And until very recently the term minority languages had to be omitted in Polish translations due to the fact that the communist authorities refused to let their subjects know that such a phenomenon was in existence.

8.2. ANALYSIS

In order to fully analyze this issue with respect to *Ogniem i Mieczem*, a few things must be mentioned about the structure of the novel. The novel consists of two volumes, the first having 33 chapters and the second 30. Most of the chapters cleverly end in some crucial points thus leaving the reader wanting more and sometimes almost gasping for air from the suspense. The first volume, for instance, ends with two words – *Bar wzięty* (413) /[The fortress] Bar is taken/ – which are designed to send shivers down any reader's spine since at that very moment s/he finds out that the heroine may either be dead or in great distress. Kuniczak's version does not retain the original's structure nor does it retain its suspense tactics. In fact, the reader of his translation would be surprised how uneventful the novel seems to be when compared to the original. His translation is

divided into eleven parts and eighty chapters, almost each beginning and ending in a different place than the original. Kuniczak rearranges Sienkiewicz's sections, cuts out single sentences and whole paragraphs and from time to time adds bits and pieces of what appears useless information. Non-existent is Sienkiewicz's style, which is that of a wonderful storyteller, and the smooth transitions from one page to another, from one adventure to the next are replaced by what appears to be a race against time and boredom. In short, Kuniczak's translation seems hurried and paraphrased rather than translated.

When examining the types of omissions made, no other logical explanation comes to mind but that Kuniczak was either in a great hurry to finish the novel or his own interpretation went too far and he crossed the boundaries of his own competence. Or perhaps his desire to adapt the novel for the target audience clouded his better judgement, although it seems highly unlikely. And since my every attempt at contacting Mr. Kuniczak failed, I can only speculate.

The first noticeable difference between the original and the translation is the fact that Kuniczak has not maintained the original's structure. Even though this is not so unusual when compared to translations in general, in this case the translation loses more than it gains. And this fact becomes evident in the first few chapters already, indeed, even in the first few lines.

> *Rok 1647 był to dziwny rok, w którym rozmaite znaki na niebie i ziemi zwiastowały jakoweś klęski i nadzwyczajne zdarzenia. Współcześni kronikarze wspominają, iż z wiosny szarańcza w niesłychanej ilości wyroiła się z Dzikich Pól i zniszczyła zasiewy i trawy, co było przepowiednią napadów tatarskich. Latem zdarzyło się wielkie zaćmienie słońca, a wkrótce potem kometa pojawiła się na niebie. W Warszawie widywano też nad miastem mogiłę i krzyż ognisty w obłokach.* (3)

> (The year 1647 was a strange year, during which various signs appeared in the sky. On earth they foreshadowed disasters and extraordinary events. Contemporary chronicle-keepers recall that in the spring locusts appeared in an unbelievable numbers from the Wild Lands and destroyed crops and grasses, which was a sign of Tartar raids. In the summer there was an eclipse, and soon after a comet appeared in the sky. In Warsaw, people saw a tomb and a fiery cross in the clouds.

And Kuniczak's version:

> The year 1647 abounded with omens. Strange signs and portents of terrible disasters appeared on earth and in the skies. A plague of locusts spilled out of the Wild Lands in the spring: a sure sign of Tartar incursions, possibly even a great war. In early summer the sun disappeared under an eclipse. Soon afterwards a comet trailed fire through the sky. In Warsaw, people saw tombs and fiery crosses in the clouds... (3)

In this paragraph Kuniczak took out the words *'współcześni kronikarze'* (contemporary chronicle keepers), added 'possibly a great war' and pluralized *mogiła* (tombs) and *krzyż* (crosses). In the Polish tradition it is always only one cross and one tomb that appears as a bad omen. Sienkiewicz goes to great lengths to make the first paragraph sound mysterious and to prepare his readers for something terrible to come. He uses adjectives such as *'dziwny '* (strange), *nadzwyczajne* (out-of-this world) and *'niesłychana'* (unheard of or unbelievable) which all create a mood of suspense and terror. However, Kuniczak's version lacks all these elements, retaining only the word *'dziwny'*.

The ending of the first chapter seems to be summarized rather than translated. Sienkiewicz leaves his readers with a lovely Cossack tune:

Wysłuchaj Boże, u prośbach naszych.
U neszczasnych mołytwach.
Nas bidnych newilnikiw (14)
(Oh hear, God, our requests
in our miserable prayers
[the requests of] the poor slaves)

And Kuniczak end his with the lines preceding this song:

"harsh air that swirled up suddenly from the gullies
below the mound." (18)

An entire paragraph in chapter III, which describes the beauty of one of the ladies-in-waiting whom Skrzetuski is in love with, is omitted. Omitted is also a song that the young man sings whenever he thinks of her.

Oczy te należały do Anusi Borzbochatej-Krasieńskiej,
panienki respektowej Księżny Gryzeldy, najpiękniejszej
dziewczyny z całego fraucymeru, bałamutki wielkiej,
za którą przepadali wszyscy w Lubniach, a ona za nikim.
U księżny Gryzeldy mores był wielki i surowość
obyczajów niepomierna, co jednak nie przeszkadzało
młodym spoglądać na się jarzącymi się oczyma i wzdychać.
Pan Skrzetuski posyłał tedy swoje westchnienia ku czarnym
oczom na równi z innymi, a gdy bywało, zostawał sam
w swojej kwaterze, wówczas chwytał lutnię w rękę i śpiewał:
Tyś jest specjał nad specjaly...
Lub też:
Jak tatarska orda
Bierzesz w jasyr corda! (43)

(Those eyes belonged to Anusia Borzbochata-Krasienska,
a lady-in waiting to Princess Gryzelda, the most beautiful
girl of all her attendants. She was a great flirt, whom
everyone adored in Lubnie, but she was indifferent to all.
At Princess Gryzelda's court the discipline was harsh and
the manner was strict, although this did not prevent
the young people from glancing at each other and sigh.
Pan Skrzetuski, along with others, sent his glances
to the dark eyes, and when alone in his room,
he would seize a lute and sing:

You're the prettiest of them all...

Or,

Just like the Tartars capture people
You capture hearts!)

Kuniczak summarizes the entire paragraph in less than a sentence:

> ... but he anticipated another welcome from the bright eyes of Anusia Krasienska, one of the young ladies-in-waiting of Princess Gryzelda. (40)

Sienkiewicz, in chapter four, describes in great detail the birth line of Helena (Jan Skrzetuski's object of affection), in order to establish her as a noblewoman from the legendary line of Rurik:

> *Kurcewicze Bułyhowie był to stary ród książęcy, który się Kurczem pieczętował, od Koriata wywodził, a podobno istotnie szedł od Ruryka"* (49).
> (The Bulyhy of Kurcewicz were of an old, princely stock,
> who used the escutcheon of Kurts and claimed to
> be from the line of Rurik)

Furthermore, the author contrasts the behavior of Helena's aunt and her sons to Helena herself in order to show the reader the great differences between them. The five men were unruly and Helena did not fit into their kind of lifestyle. Such a fact becomes important a little later in the novel when Helena falls for Jan Skrzetuski, who, in behavior, mannerism and code, resembles more the type of

man her father was. None of the information, which should be somewhere between pages 56 and 62, is to be found in Kuniczak's translation. Thus the reader finds nothing about the history - neither of the family nor about the trials and tribulations of the girl's life with five brutish men. Moreover, Helena is presented by Sienkiewicz not only as a chaste, noble girl, but also as a God-fearing and religious woman. She sings sacred songs, says prayers on many occasions to God to protect her loved ones. Unfortunately none of that is evident in Kuniczak's translation because the sacred song and prayers are all taken out.

As was mentioned previously, Sienkiewicz ends many of the chapters with words that foreshadow up-coming trouble and leave the reader in suspense. A wonderful example of that is found on page 67, at the end of chapter four. Skrzetuski had just fallen in love with Helena but also found out that another man loves her too.

> *Kochamy jedną, więc jednemu z nas nie żyć*
> *na świecie. Dobądź, kozacze serpentyny!* (65)

Which is well translated by Curtain.

> We both love the same woman; therefore there is
> one of us who cannot live in this world. Draw your
> sword, Cossack! (Curtain 63)

Here the reader is warned about the troubles that await the young couple. This is not the case with Kuniczak's ending of this chapter, which consist of lines that do not exist in the original:

> The image of Helen's brightly glowing face, so full
> of wonder, love and overwhelming happiness,
> floated before his eyes all the way to Lubnie. (68)

Those reading Kuniczak's version will not be aware of Skrzetuski's foreshadowing of troubles ahead. Instead they get a happy image of Helena's "brightly glowing face".

Sienkiewicz signals more problems up ahead, in his regular fashion, at the end of chapter eight.

> *Skrzetuski ... począł myśleć o Helenie, o tym, że ona dotąd nie w Łubniach, że Bohun został a on odjeżdża. Obawa, złe przeczucia, troski obsiadły go jak kruki. Począł mocować się z nimi, aż się znużył, myśli mu się mąciły, zmieszały jakoś dziwnie z poświtem wiatru, z pluskiem wioseł, z pieśniami rybaków – I usnął.* (107)

Curtain renders this passage faithfully.

> Skshetuski ... began to think of Helena, - that she was not yet in Lubni, that Bogun was behind, and he was departing. Fear, evil presentiments, care, besieged him like ravens. He began to struggle with them, struggled till he was wearied; thoughts tormented him; something wonderful was blended with the whistle of the wind, the splash of the oars, and the songs of the oarsmen, He fell asleep. (101)

Kuniczak does not. In fact, he summarizes the entire passage in one sentence.

> He left Rozloghi shortly after dark, and his troubled sense of danger and uneasiness about what the future might bring to him and Helen returned with the night. (95)

He fails to mention that Bohun stayed close to Helena and Helena has not arrived yet in Lubnie the way she was supposed to. The reader does not find out why Skrzetuski is worried or what is going on with the remaining characters. The suspense is all lost.

The most important message that Sienkiewicz offers in his novel is that of the growing hatred between the Poles and the Ukrainians, which unfortunately has lasted, to some degree, to the 21st century.

> *Po chwili huk dział z bramy prowadzącej z Hassan-Basza do siczowego majdanu zatrząsł ścianami izby I rozległ się posępnym echem po całym Czertomeliku, zwiastując wojnę.*
>
> *Rozpoczynał on także epokę w dziejach dwóch narodów, ale o tym jeszcze nie wiedzieli ni pijani siczowcy, ni sam hetman zaporowski.* (140)

If there is a crucial piece of information in the novel, it is this. Curtain, as always, renders it to the best of his abilities, indeed reasonably well in this instance:

> Soon the roar of cannon from the gates leading from Hassan Pasha to the square of the Saitch shook the walls of the room, and spread with gloomy echoes through all Chertomelik, giving notice of war.
>
> It opened also an epoch in the history of two peoples; but that was unknown to the drunken Cossacks as well as to the Zaporojian hetman himself. (134)

Kuniczak, on the other hand, omitted the two paragraphs completely, thus sentencing his readers to ignorance of such a historic event, taking away the most powerful images of the horrible future and making Sienkiewicz appear to be neutral on the subject. But contrary to this idea, the author was never neutral. He expresses his sorrow over this on-going hatred in the last sentences of the novel.

> *Nienawiść wrosła w serca i zatruła krew pobratymczą, i żadne usta długo nie mówiły Chwała na wysokościach Bogu, a na ziemi pokój ludziom dobrej woli.* (401 II)
> (Hatred grew in people's hearts and poisoned brotherly ties, and no lips could say for a very long time "God be praised in the highest, and peace to those who are of good will".)

This paragraph is also missing from Kuniczak's last chapter. So also is the eight-page epilogue where the reader finds out the fates of some primary and secondary characters.

Although the most important aspect of the novel is the unfortunate hatred between the Poles and the Ukrainians, there are lighter motifs intertwined with the story line. Just when a reader thinks that things cannot get any better for the heroes, Onufry Zagłoba enters and calms the atmosphere with his wit and non-stop talkativeness.

> *Chamie, pójdź no tu tylko. Nos is uszy ci obetnę, gardła nie wezmę bo to kata własność. A co, tchórz cię obleciał boisz się, parobku Związać mi Tego szelmę, a łaskę znajdziecie. Cóż wisielcze, cóż, kukło żydowska, sam tu wychyl jeno łba na strop! Chodź, chodź, będę ci rad, poczęstuję tak, żeś się przypomni i twój ojciec diabeł, i twoja matka gamratka!*
> (71 II)
> (Come here, trash. I will cut off your nose but I won't touch the throat, that's the hangman's property. Ah, you're scared to death, you workhorse. Tie him up, this cunning fox and I will spare you. And what do you say, you deadman, you Jewish puppet bring your head closer to the ceiling. Come, come, I will gladly share something with you so that you will recall your father – the devil, and your mother, the harlot.)

Kuniczak divided Zagłoba's long speech into two separate paragraphs and left out the most imaginative parts.

> Come here yourselves, you peasant clown! I'll save your neck for the hangman because that is property but I'll have your nose and ears for a keepsake! (636)
>
> Come here all you mangy, flea-bitten mongrels, and the more the better! (637)

In Kuniczak's translation, the aspect that suffers the most is Onufry Zagłoba's style. It is this man who emerges triumphant from dangerous situations, makes them easier to bear for the reader, and generates a lot of sympathy for himself despite the fact that at times he can be a liar, a coward and a self-centered individual. Zagłoba is never at loss for words: the toughest of situations creates a war zone for his sharp tongue and quick wit. This is a man who is virtually unable to express his feelings in less than three sentences, nor is he able to describe himself or his deeds without great exaggeration, which sometimes approaches lying.

> *Ha! Zadałem mu pieprzu! Umyślnie udałem ucieczkę, żeby go za sobą wybawić. Nie będzie nam więcej psubratu burłajował! Mości panowie! Trzeba było dać przykład młodszym! Na Boga! Ostrożnie, bo mnie uronicie i potłuczecie. Trzymajcieże dobrze, macie trzymać! Miałem z nim robotę, wierzcie mi! O szelmy, lada hultaj dziś szlachcicowi się nadstawia! Ale mają za swoje. Ostrożnie! Puśćcie – do dīabła!* (289 II)

> (Ha! I really gave it to him! I only pretended to retreat to get him to chase after me. He will no longer be helping that son-of-a-dog! Gentlemen! I had to show a good example to the younger generation! For God's sake! Hold me, or you will drop me and break me. Hold me tight, you must hold me tight! I had problems with him, believe me! These rascals, these lowlifes nowadays think they can go against a nobleman! But they got what was coming to them! Careful! Let me go, for God's sake!)

And compared to Kuniczak:

> Ha! I really gave it to him, didn't I! Easy ... easy, don't
> Drop me for God's sake! We won't be seeing any more
> Burlaying in these parts, eh? Hey, watch out! Take care!
> I faked escape at first to draw him after me, but then I gave
> Him something to remember if he's got time for memories
> In Hell! Hmm. Ha. Watch it now! I had to show a good
> Example to some of the young people, after all...
> Hey, careful there! He urged. Hold on tight, will you?
> Keep a good grip if you've got to hold me up and watch
> where you're going. Don't drop me for God's sake.(971)

Apparently Kuniczak feels some great need to embellish many of Zagłoba's long speeches by adding absolutely unnecessary words and taking out the essence of the knight's way of speaking. He takes out "nowadays these lowlife think they can go against a nobleman" and repeats too many phrases that are not very important in the passage.

Omissions in Jeremiah Curtain's translation are due to personal censorship and feelings of appropriateness of the time. In Curtain's work most of the omissions deal with any phrase which hints or implies sexuality and/or sensuality. During a conversation with his future wife, Jan Skrzetuski asks a cuckoo bird a question: *'Zazulu nieboże, a siła będziemy mieli chłopczysków?'* (98) (Lit. poor little cuckoo, how many boys are we going to have?). Curtain omits it altogether, but Kuniczak enhances it, making his version inappropriate for the time of the novel: "Ey, Zazulu, and how many boys are we going to make?" (95). The mistranslation resides in the verb "to make", which clearly implies a sexual act, and which is something that a 17th century gentleman would never have said to a noble lady.

By and large, there are very few omissions or compressions in Curtain's translation, and those that are present are insignificant. Kuniczak, in contrast, who has 1.36[8] words for every Polish word, makes so many omissions and compresses so many paragraphs that his translation reads like an altogether different novel. Due to numerous changes, the novel is neutral on the subject of the Poles and the Ukrainians, but not on the subject of other nationalities. But that is a topic that I leave to others to discuss.

[8] Jan Rybnicki, personal communication.

CHAPTER 9

ADDITIONS AND SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

9.1. INTRODUCTION

Small amplifications are sometimes crucial when the translator must ensure that the target reader understands terms that s/he may not familiar with in her/his native language. For this purpose different devices can be adopted. Translators may manage with explanatory translations, substitutions or footnotes. Original terms can be left in translations but provided with target terms in parenthesis. If everything fails, additional explanation can always be included. However, a text with numerous footnotes has a different effect on the reader than a text without. The translator must then, consider carefully whether other procedures may be more appropriate to the type and the function of the target text.

Both Kuniczak and Curtain use foreign terms in their translations such as *'bat'ko'*, *'essaul'*, *'maty'*. And both have them in Italics, although only Curtain explains them in either footnotes or at the end of the book in a section called "Offices and Things" (779). In Kuniczak's translations, where additions would be appropriate and welcomed, none of the terms - save for *'dit'ko'*- are explained nor are they substituted with English terms. The reader receives only a superficial knowledge of the source language and/or culture.

9.2 ANALYSIS

Additions are very common in Kuniczak's translation, and it would seem that this particular scholar likes to add as much as he likes to omit. In chapter seven, Kuniczak not only omits one sentence but in its place adds another full sentence to '*Dalszą rozmowę przerwało wejście starego Czechły*' (96) (The rest of the conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the old Chehla):

> The morning passed so swiftly that they hardly noticed when old Tchehly, the Tartar, came in... (93)

Chapter 23, part II, has also some additions. The original reads:

> *Ale wówczas zatwardziały się jeszcze tym bardziej serca ludzkie i żaden anioł zgody nie przelatywał nad pobojowiskiem. (294)*
> (But at that time the human hearts grew even more bitter and not one angel of peace flew above the field.)

And Kuniczak's:

> But at this time, they knew, human hearts could grow only more embittered, and they listened in vain for some angel of harmony and forgiveness flying above the field. (979)

Other additions in Kuniczak's translation could be seen as attempts to "improve" the original. In the phrase '*Chmielnicki porwał się za czuprynę*' (Chmielnicki seized himself by the hair) (290) Kuniczak adds a mental image, or so it appears: "Hmyelnitzki seized himself again by the hair and started around blindly like a drunken man" (972). To a short conversation between Bohdan Chmielnicki and his people, Kuniczak adds two whole paragraphs.

Niektórzy zeszli z koni i zbliżyli się do ognia.
- a my śpieszyli, śpieszyli, batku, szczo z toboju?
- Zasadzka była. Chwedko, zdrajca, wiedział o miejscu i tu czekał z innymi. Musiał podążyć dobrze przede mną. Na arkan mnie ujęli!
- Spasi Bih! Spasi Bih! A to co za Laszek koło ciebie? (11)
(Some of them dismounted from their horses and came closer to the fire.
- and we hurried and hurried, little father, what's with you?
– There was an ambush. Chwedko, the traitor, knew about this place and was waiting for me with the others. He had to ride well before me. They captured me with a lariat!
- Get them, get them. And who is this Lechian with you?)

And Kuniczak's version reads:

The Cossacks leaped out of their saddles and came swiftly uphill towards the fire.
"Ay, how we hurried, little father. How we hurried. How is it with you, Batko?"
"There was an ambush. Hvedko, the traitor, knew the place and waited with some others. They got a noose around me.
"The sons of bitches!" Fierce curses crackled out in the chilly air. "The plague on him, then! But who's that little Polack over there beside you?" They used the Ruthenian word which carried at least as much respect as derision. "What's the Lah doing here?"
The Steppe rovers started like hungry wolves at Pan Yan and his troopers, their wolfish faces black and red in the light of the fire. (15)

Let me return to the term mentioned before, i.e. superficial knowledge. This is one of the more serious faults with Kuniczak's translation. The description of the main hero, Jan Skrzetuski, for example, differs greatly from that of the original. Sienkiewicz describes his as follows:

Był to młody jeszcze bardzo człowiek, suchy, czarniawy wielce przystojny, ze szczupłą twarzą i wydatnim orlim nosem. W oczach jego malowała się okrutna fantazja i zadzierżystość, ale w obliczu miał wyraz uczciwy. (7)
(This man was still very young, thin, dark, very handsome, with a slim face and a prominent aquiline nose. There was great youthfulness and self-assertiveness in his eyes, but he had an honest face.)

The qualities, with which this young man is presented in the book, make him a perfect protagonist for 17th century Poland. He is young yet serious, self-assertive yet honest, a complete contrast to the flashy, wild-looking Bohun (the antagonist and Skrzetuski's rival). His qualities are one of the main reasons why Helena chooses him over Bohun. Kuniczak's description is faulty and altered.

> Seen in that sharp, crackling light, it was a harsh, adventurous face, fierce as a Steppe hawk's and proud as the Devil. But there was laughter in the eyes and a lean carefree youthfulness to the powerful body, and there was an untroubled cheerful confidence about him that went a long way to erase the hint of savagery. (9)

Perhaps a 20th century female audience would have preferred their hero to be of powerful built with a "hint of savagery" and that is why Kuniczak felt compelled to change Skrzetuski's description. Yet comparing him to a hawk and the devil makes Skrzetuski appear arrogant and almost sinister, and this is clearly not the case in the novel. On many occasions the reader realizes that there is no knight more chaste, noble and modest than the one Kuniczak calls "proud as the Devil". Kuniczak's use of the word "harsh" also indicates that he misunderstood the term "suchy" which in Polish means "dry" but also "thin". Curtain does not disappoint.

> He was a very young man, of spare habit of body, dark complexion, very elegant in manner, with a delicately cut countenance and a prominent aquiline nose. In his eyes were visible desperate daring and endurance, but his face had an honest look. (6)

Kuniczak embellishes further in chapter III, but at the same time omits some facts which are important to the story.

> *Tymczasem Bohun ruszył z kopyta naprzód wedle rozkazu kniahini, która spoglądając za nim rzekła wpół do siebie, wpół do namiestnika.* (46)

> (Bohun spurred forward immediately at the princess' order, who, looking after him, spoke half to herself and half to the lieutenant.)

And Kuniczak's reads:

> The Cossack spurred his horse without a word and vanished in the darkness where the forest fell away at the mouth of a deep gorge littered with fallen trees and boulders. (52)

Important in this sentence is the fact that *kniahini* (princess) has complete control over the savage and dangerous Bohun. Kuniczak's readers, on the other hand, get a romantic picture of the young Cossack riding away into the dark night.

Additions can be found in almost every chapter of Kuniczak's text. A whole paragraph was created out of one sentence in chapter II.

> *Nie byłem, bom już w Galacie palmę męczeńską otrzymał. Jeśli łżę, jestem arcypies, nie szlachcic.* (22)
> (I did not go there because I received the palm of martydom in Galats already. If I am lying, then I am an arch-dog and not a nobleman.)

> "True, true." The fat noble nodded and went on as naturally as if no one had challenged the truth of his story. "But that was only because I'd already earned my martyrdom among the Turks where the Sultan allowed himself certain gross indignities against me. Call me prince of mongrels if I'm lying! To your health, lieutenant!" (27)

Kuniczak changes the original and adds a piece of information which is repeated again a few paragraphs later and thus unnecessary in this case.

Additions and embellishments in the other translations examined are not as common as in Kuniczak's, but there are a few which are worth looking at. Zoshchenko's phrase *'Зачастил я к ней в седьмой номер'* (I started visiting her in apartment number seven) (1) in "Аристократка" is rendered by Shishkoff as "I

started dropping by apartment seven every chance I got". (36) Shishkoff does not need to inform his readers that the narrator visits the woman on every occasion that is available to him, because they will read that in the rest of the story. Monas' way is subtler: "I began to see her often. To Apartment Number Seven." (20), although "often" is also unnecessary. G & M's version is the closest to the original: "Began calling on her in Number Seven." (127)

Shishkoff takes liberties on another occasion in the story. *'И чего сказать - не знаю ... '* (And what to say, I don't know) (1) is rendered as "I don't know what the hell to say to her ..." (36). Monas' and G & M's are "And what to say, I don't know..." (20) and "I couldn't thing of anything to say ..." (128) respectively. There is no reason for Shishkoff's addition in this simple statement, especially since Zoshchenko is always so careful with the choice of instance to vulgar language.

CHAPTER 10

ASSESSMENT OF THE TRANSLATIONS DISCUSSED

10.1. *ТРИ СЕСТРЫ*

After a careful analysis of selected elements of the four translated texts, and the extent that they are representative – and I believe they are – it is possible to say that all four translators triumphed, as well as struggled. Julius West's translation suffers from poorly rendered idioms and words of non-idiomatic nature. A few instances where the Russian expressions are translated literally make the text sound foreign to the target reader. But the role of any translator of a literary text is to bridge the differences between cultures and languages in the translation process. These differences are symbols of cultural identities and should not be treated as hurdles on a running track but rather as goals that need to be achieved. On the other hand a translator needs to avoid idiomatic phrases that are alien to the atmosphere of the text and to the target reader. Where the situation absolutely demands, footnotes or additional explanations can be used.

Magarshack's translation has similar problems. Here and there words are incorrectly translated, omissions appear, but all in all, no significant deviations can be spotted. Friel takes most liberties with the original, often adding somewhat of an Irish flavour to it and therefore making the translation distant from its native, Russian culture. Although here the issue lies in the fact that his translation is a

stage translation and therefore made for a completely different audience and for a different setting. But the fact remains that any translator, if possible, should chose an author who is relative to the nature of the translator's talent and also the translator's area of expertise. Friel does not appear particularly knowledgeable on the subject of the Russian culture and its colorful elements.

Fen's translation is the one that stands out for its quality. Allusions, citations, idioms and absurdities, are all accomplished by her. Moreover, *Three Sisters* reads well, retains the Russian flavor and maintains the atmosphere of gloom and hopelessness.

All four translators devalue the importance of Chekhov's thematic key words and recurrent phrases. These terms are not represented in any of the translations to the same extent as they are in the original, nor are they replaced with the same equivalent word throughout.

10.2. *OGNIEM I MIECZEM*

Both Curtain and Kuniczak made an enormous number of errors in their translations. Although Curtain clearly tires to keep close to the original meaning of the source text, his problems are self-evident – stemming from his lack of knowledge on the subject of the Polish and the Ukrainian cultures – which in turn can be explained by the times he lived in (19th century) and the fact that Slavic Studies were most likely not an available discipline to this scholar. Many cultural words and idiomatic expressions are translated literally, interjections are not

substituted with English equivalents and humour is often lost due to an overly serious tone. Curtain's translation does not read well because of the numerous false renditions and too much of a foreign flavour, which is mostly incomprehensible to an English speaker. But on the other hand there are very few omissions, almost no embellishment of the original and no additions. The theme of *Ogniem i Mieczem* is present as much in Curtain's translation as it is in Sienkiewicz's text. The passages about Polish, Ukrainian and Cossack culture are faithfully rendered, and not presented on a superficial level. And Curtain uses 17th century archaic language wherever possible. All in all, with some amount of re-working, his translation would have definite possibilities.

Kuniczak's faulty translation is a result of a hurried work. For a native Pole, he is surprisingly incompetent as a translator. His rendition has everything that a translation should not: omissions, additions, compressions, and contemporary vocabulary which is not in accordance with the time of the novel. The Cossack and the Tartar cultures are not represented as they are in the original. Key elements, such as songs and vivid descriptions of Cossacks and Tartars, are taken out. In Kuniczak's hands the novel loses its charm. The translation lacks suspense, does not contain enough information about primary and secondary characters, and the information that is included is often faulty. The language is too contemporary when compared with the archaic Polish that Sienkiewicz uses. The main theme is not emphasized upon enough to make the reader feel sympathy for both nations involved. Bohdan Chmielnicki is too often presented as a hopeless drunk due to Kuniczak's embellishment of the original (for one example see

chapter 8). In short, Kuniczak allows himself too many liberties and too much of his own interpretation, when he should be concerned above all with the original's form, content and intent. Striking a balance between the original and the translation, which seems to be the biggest problem in Kuniczak's work, is wonderfully summarized in the following quote by Zofia Szmydtowa.

> Tłumacz znajduje gotowe dzieło, gdy autor musi je sam budować. Autor wyręcza więc tłumacza w zakresie koncepcji i w ostatecznym ukształtowaniu się całości, ale jednocześnie ogranicza go i wiąże, a co najważniejsze, daje mu utwór, który tłumacz z kolei musi zanalizować, a więc rozłożyć na części i cząsteczki, zachowując ich związek z całością, i złożyć na nowo dając treściowy i formalny odpowiednik pierwowzoru. (Szmydtowa 1955:111)
> (The translator finds an already completed work, whereas the author has to create it from the beginning. Thus the author relieves the translator from the initial concept and the final product, but at the same time he puts limitations and restraints on the translator. Most importantly, though, the author gives the translator the model which he then must analyze, take apart into bits and pieces but keep their ties with the whole product. And then the translator must put everything back in order and give the translation a contextual and formal equivalent of the original.)

10.3. ZOSHCHENKO'S SHORT STORIES

The difficulty in assessing Zoshchenko's three translations stems from the fact that no one ever can reproduce his style and sense of humour. Zoshchenko's language is saturated with phrases like "he says, I say" to the point of absurdity. His sentences are short and often incomplete, beginning with conjunctions or words that in the English language are more often reserved for the middle of a sentence. One would almost have to invent a new dialect or new slang in the

English language in order to faithfully render Zoshchenko's narrative style since "the style of a text is the way the information is presented to the recipient" (Nord 1991:83). Shishkoff is most orderly and more faithful to the grammatical forms of the English language than that of the original. His translation lacks the sense of confusion, fast pace and absurd situations. Monas is also too bland, there is not enough energy in his translation, not enough of Zoshchenko's fire. Although Zoshchenko's shift in tense is maintained and to some degree so is his narrative style. Gordon and McLean's translation is not trouble-free either. They manage with the linguistic register quite well but allow themselves some liberties with the text. All in all, it is their translation that seems to be preferable to the other two for the main reason that they appear to be the most sensitive when it comes to Zoshchenko's narrative style and gender issues.

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of my research one of the questions that I asked myself was – can one safely assume that more recent translations have a smaller number of mistakes than earlier ones? This hypothesis was based on the fact that with a growing number of translation disciplines, conferences, articles, books, etc., translators should appear more sensitive to the issues that arise when two cultures meet on paper. Gender issues, as exemplified in Zoshchenko's rendering of titles, should no longer present a problem or be ignored by those who translate. M & G and Shishkoff acknowledged this issue in their translations. Linguistic register and tense shift, however different from English, should be preserved because they give the target audience a peek into the world of the source culture. This too, has been successfully achieved by G & M and Monas. The appropriateness of the words (the right word in the right place) is one of the problems that one would think should be fixed with the availability of numerous dictionaries and quick telephone and Internet contact with the source language culture. Too many mistakes are present in the recent translations of *Ogniem i Mieczem* and *Три Сестры* to conclude that chronological order plays a role in improving the quality of translated literary works. Translations do not go from worst to best based on chronology. Mistakes are made on all levels of the language: idiomatic expression, lexical, cultural terms, and interjections. The problem of the source

language's influence on the target language, which is evident in Curtain's translation of *Ogniem i Mieczem* and West's *Три Сестры*, has been eloquently summarized by Alan Duff.

> Whatever material he is working from, the translator will be taking the content of the source language and reshaping it in the form of the target language. One of his main difficulties is that he cannot help being influenced by the form of the source language. Once thoughts have been given a particular shape – set down in a certain words in a certain order – it is hard to conceive of them as having different shape. (Duff 1981:4)

Based on the translators' treatment of the following:

- titles
- linguistic register
- humour
- idioms and culture-specific terms
- lexicon
- recurrent phrases and thematic key words

I was able to assess to some degree the competence of the discussed translators. Kuniczak stands out as the most incompetent due to his complete lack of sensitivity of various topics and unfaithful renditions on more than one occasion. As Ferdinand de Saussure once said, "Language is a system at a given moment in time and translation is a language activity", thus as with any activity, translation requires a great deal of thought, adaptation, imagination and understanding of the source and the target language system. Kuniczak proves to have very few of these qualities. His translation is not in any way a reflection of the original, nor is it well thought-out or particularly well-written. Kuniczak fails with respect to other

criteria as well. His translation has the greatest number of omissions, additions and compressions. His is the one translation that screams the loudest for a retranslation.

Magarshack, West, Friel, Monas and Shishkoff are in the middle of my grading scale. They certainly present the target audience with somewhat a faithful picture of the original. The problems that occur can easily be corrected by changing a few terms and phrases, removing the foreign flavour that persists in Friel's and West's translation and making Shishkoff's translation less orderly and more chaotic.

Curtain's problems, which include the above, are larger in number but not impossible to fix. Since he is a very faithful translator with respect to content and form, all one needs to do is remove the inaccurate words and phrases, supply idioms with English equivalents and create a more humoristic atmosphere.

Fen, as it was mentioned already, stands out from the other translators. There is no need to retranslate her version since she is most faithful not only to the structure and form, but also to the Russian flavour, humour and lexicon.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This thesis only touched on the subject of assessing translations using the criteria first presented in chapter 1. Because of the length of the thesis and the length of the analyzed works, not every available assessing device was used. For further research the following parameters may be suggested:

- methods of anachronising or contemporising vocabulary
- richness of vocabulary in translations as compared with original
- the maintenance of foreign flavour or its "naturalizing" into English
- word order or specific grammatical issues

To sum up, the surface of the topic presented has only been scratched as far as the assessment of translation is concerned. There is a great deal more to be done if one is to understand the problems of translations and the reasons behind their weaknesses.

> A translator is like a copy artist who never creates his own masterpiece but who can copy with an exceptional skill. But copy artists vary too. Some do it without restraint and naturally, others will present a copy where everything seems to be there and yet there is a feeling of something unnatural as if the work was done under pressure or was coerced. (Truchanowski 1955:370)

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