

**Rediscovering Agency: A Feminist Perspective of Alice Munro's Writing in Translation**

by

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### Abstract

This study focuses on the scope, limits, and implications of literary translators' agency, exploring the gendered aspects of the translators' creative projects and their impact on the cultural transfer outcomes in the context of Alice Munro's writing translated into Russian, Ukrainian, and German. The corpus consists of six short stories from the writer's two collections *Too Much Happiness* ("Child's Play" and "Too Much Happiness," 2009) and *Dear Life* ("The Eye," "Night," "Voices," and "Dear Life," 2013), representing the work of four translators: Heidi Zerning (German), Ievheniia Kononenko (Ukrainian), Andrei Stepanov (Russian), and Tat'iana Borovikova (Russian).

The theoretical approach underlying this study builds on Itamar Even-Zohar's and Gideon Toury's polysystem theory, feminist translation theories (Barbara Godard; Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood; Luise von Flotow; Sherry Simon), and Antoine Berman's positive criticism model to address the issues of intercultural power dynamics in literary translation and the concepts of translators' agency and visibility, with their potentialities and constraints, for the purpose of foregrounding the existing gaps between contemporary translation scholarship and real-life translating practices. On the basis of this theoretical position, the study proposes a translator-centred analytical methodology, grounded in Berman's model and combining textual and extratextual aspects. Within this framework, the overview of Munro's source texts, which suggests their feminist reading as an analytical benchmark, is followed by the contrastive analysis of the target texts, with primary emphasis on the translators' positions, cultural horizons, and creative projects—particularly as regards their treatment of gender and textual representations of femininity. The last methodological stage examines the available translation

paratexts, including peritextual framing, translator-authored and related epitexts, the translators' first-hand comments, and literary reviews to establish the interconnections between the translating projects and their critical reception.

Above all, the study highlights multiple contextual constraints faced by the translators, as well as both transformative and problematic implications of their agency, resulting in diverging representations of gender, culture-specific tensions between the translation projects, and their various impacts on the cultural transfer processes. At the same time, the study argues for wider institutional support and visibility of translators as a way towards their greater empowerment, accountability, and authority.

## Preface

This dissertation is an original work by Anna Antonova. The translator survey project making up a part of this dissertation received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Board, Project Name "Rediscovering Agency: A Feminist Perspective of Alice Munro's Writing in Translation," No. Pro00093436, 15 November 2019. The differing questions in the questionnaires provided to the study participants are reflective of the specific features of their individual translating projects.

Parts of Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 have been published as "Three Faces of the Monster: Interpreting Disability and Creating Meaning in Translations of Alice Munro's 'Child's Play,'" *Transcultural*, vol. 11, issue 1 (2019), pp. 85–103 and "Towards a Translator Criticism: (Mis)translating Connections in Alice Munro's 'Too Much Happiness,'" *Connections: A Journal of Language, Media and Culture*, vol. 1, issue 1 (2020), pp. 1–11.

The Slavic names and titles in this dissertation have been transliterated in line with the Library of Congress Romanization Tables, unless otherwise required by the established tradition.

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## Introduction

The fall of 2021 was marked by a relatively small-scale development that might turn out to have a substantial impact on the discipline of Translation Studies and the entire field of literary translation. On 30 September (International Translation Day, also known as St. Jerome's Day), Jennifer Croft (the translator of the International Booker Prize-winning author and the Nobel Prize in Literature laureate Olga Tokarczuk) and Mark Haddon (the author of the bestselling novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*) launched the hashtag #TranslatorsOnTheCover to support their open letter that called on international publishers to put the translators' names on book covers. The letter encouraged every published writer to add their names to the petition, arguing that "It is thanks to translators that we have access to world literatures past and present. [...] Translators are the life-blood of both the literary world and the book trade which sustains it. They should be properly recognised, celebrated and rewarded for this" (Croft and Haddon quoted in "Bestselling Authors"). The open letter went on to collect 2580 signatures of prominent writers ("#TranslatorsOnTheCover") and resulted in at least one major publisher changing its policy: Pan Macmillan UK announced its intention to acknowledge translators on its book covers and in the related promotional materials going forward (Caplan). However, the very existence of this campaign and the perceived importance of Croft and Haddon's ground-breaking activism highlighted the long-standing theoretical debates about literary translators' status and agency—and uncovered the publishing industry's deep-seated apprehensions about their potential cultural power.

The purpose of this study is to explore the effects and limitations of such power and to demonstrate the implications of the translators' personal agency for the outcomes of cultural

exchange and transfer, with particular emphasis on the role of gender and feminist thought both in the theoretical conceptualization of the translating process and its practical realization. The 2021 #TranslatorsOnTheCover campaign illustrates profound discrepancies that still persist between translation theory and the lived realities of practicing literary translators; my project examines the gaps between these diverging perspectives against the backdrop of the fast-changing Translation Studies field with a view to reframing the (gendered) structures of authority involved in literary translation. Croft, in one of her programmatic writings, argues that the publishers' refusal to openly acknowledge the translators as co-authors constitutes an act of deceit that perpetuates harmful and outdated stereotypes about translators: "[I]s it not precisely this type of ruse that breeds distrust, and not translation itself? [...] Covers simply can't continue to conceal who we are. It's bad business, it doesn't hold us accountable for our choices, and in its wilful obfuscation it is a practice that is disrespectful not only to us, but to readers as well" ("Why Translators"). Apart from raising important questions about accountability and ethics in textual production, Croft's statement advocates—from a practical standpoint—for the same reorientation that is the focus of my argument. Positioning my project at the intersection of translation theory and practice, I will postulate the view of translation as a complex, multiply mediated (and typically collectively produced) act of textual rewriting that inevitably involves a profound shift in the authorship structure, with the translator necessarily assuming a co-author's role.

To address the respective shifts in narrative authority and to investigate how translators' agency is exercised in various target-side cultural contexts—as well as how the factors of gender and power dynamics inform both the process and product of translation—I will focus on the

representation of Canadian women-authored writing in Russian, Ukrainian, and German translations. My study will consider six short stories by Alice Munro with their respective translations into the three target languages. All texts making up the study corpus are taken from two of the writer's short story collections, *Too Much Happiness* ("Child's Play" and "Too Much Happiness," 2009) and *Dear Life* ("The Eye," "Night," "Voices," and "Dear Life," 2013) and represent the work of four translators: Heidi Zerning for German, Ievheniia Kononenko for Ukrainian, and, finally, Andrei Stepanov and Tat'iana Borovikova for Russian. The chosen pieces arguably belong to the strongest and most prominent texts in both collections—two out of six are the titular stories in their respective volumes, and four out of six were published in literary magazines or media outlets prior to being collected: "Too Much Happiness" in *The New York Times*, "The Eye" in *The Guardian*, "Night" in *Granta*, and "Dear Life" in *The New Yorker*.

These stories were selected in order to showcase various facets of Munro's literary talent, as they illustrate diverse sub-genres and narrative strategies in the writer's oeuvre: a fictionalized biography seamlessly blending the author's and protagonist's voices through the employment of free indirect discourse in "Too Much Happiness"; a fragmented and deliberately misleading first-person account of a not-quite-reliable female narrator in "Child's Play," and an autobiographical cycle entitled "Finale," which brings together the remaining four stories ("The Eye," "Night," "Voices," and "Dear Life") to combine the non-linear and seemingly disconnected episodes into an overarching narrative that intentionally blurs the distinction between fiction and non-fiction. Despite their significant differences, these six stories also share key commonalities that establish their thematic and stylistic affinity: all of these texts belong to Munro's later-stage (and lesser studied) work, in which the author's distinctive poetics of ambiguity and evasion of conventional

narrative structures reach new, unprecedented heights. Furthermore, all six stories are united by their focus on the perspectives of female protagonists/narrators and their experiences of gendered vulnerability, silencing, and social marginalization—the central themes in Munro’s entire body of writing (see Rasporich; Redekop; Godard).

Munro’s fiction was selected for the study’s corpus because her self-positioning and unique authorial style pose major challenges for the translation process, often forcing the translators into visible and variously motivated decision-making. As the first Canadian Nobel Prize-winning literary author and a long-standing *The New Yorker* contributor, Munro has earned international recognition for her mastery of the short story form, and her works have been widely translated into twenty languages (see Duffy, “Alice Munro”). Yet her position in the international literary polysystem is paradoxically characterized by a combination of centrality and peripherality markers: while the writer’s multiple awards and *New Yorker* fame have earned her the status of a celebrated literary authority, her identity as an author is grounded in her gender, genre, and nationality—a set of essential characteristics, each of which simultaneously adds to Munro’s appealing “otherness” in the eyes of the international literary establishment and brands her as a “secondary” cultural figure. The thematic scope of her work also opens up multiple avenues for interpretation and representation in the target-language literary systems: Munro’s fiction is known for its consistent focus on women’s perspectives and experiences and for its commitment to exploring gender-related societal problematics (see Rasporich; Redekop; Godard). At the same time, the writer, while espousing profound feminist sensibilities, refrains from openly subscribing to any of the feminist ideologies—as a storyteller, she is not primarily motivated by a feminist agenda; instead, she focuses on portraying life as she perceives it (see

“Interview with Alice Munro”). Nevertheless—or precisely for this reason—Munro’s narratives, with their matter-of-fact depictions of women’s everyday realities and habitual gender-based injustices, lend themselves to a comprehensive and well-grounded feminist interpretation, which forms a powerful subtext to her stories and informs the reader’s experience. Accentuating this subtext, visualizing it in the text itself, or completely ignoring it are all options available to Munro’s translators in their respective linguistic contexts, and the choice between these strategies will be largely defined by the translator’s personal position and cultural or professional environment. However, prioritizing any of such possible readings will result in a distinctly different textual outcome and will significantly impact the target text’s reception in its host culture.

The questions of how and why such decisions are made, to what extent they are personal or collaborative, whether they reflect the translator’s own choices or are motivated by the wider contextual circumstances or outside intrusions, to what extent the translator’s agency is exercised or constrained, whether it is aligned (or misaligned) with the dominant cultural narratives, and how it informs (or is informed by) the overall critical reception in a specific cultural context are the central concerns that have motivated this project. To address these issues, I will analyze the case studies of the translations by Stepanov, Borovikova, Kononenko, and Zerning with primary emphasis on the translators’ decision-making processes, their understanding of their mediating role in their respective translation projects, and the context in which they operate. I will proceed from the assumption that all four translators are acting under multiple institutional and/or cultural constraints and that the degree of their freedom in making creative choices and assuming narrative authority is affected by their personal backgrounds and sociocultural statuses.

In this regard, the four translators' profiles offer substantial sociocultural variety, demonstrating that at least two of them possess significant cultural capital otherwise than in their translating capacity: Stepanov (who is also the only male translator in the sampling) is an academic and a prominent literary scholar, and Kononenko is a well-known Ukrainian novelist and short story writer. Both Stepanov and Kononenko were selected as the first translators to present Munro's works to readers in their respective target languages—the choice probably influenced by the fact that in each of these two cases the translator's name already carried a certain weight in the publisher's eyes. At the same time, the other two translators, while enjoying less public visibility, demonstrate a more systematic engagement with Munro's source texts: Borovikova, a professional technical writer and a long-time resident of Canada, has translated several Munro collections into Russian following *Dear Life*, whereas Zerning, as a successful literary translator with a decades-long career, has been responsible for bringing most of Munro's works to German readers over the years. In many respects, such differences between the translators' personal backgrounds and professional experiences also account for the divergences in their translating approaches: thus, Borovikova, who has to constantly mediate between the cultures and languages of her two homelands, is an example of "multiple allegiance" (Pym 35) in translation. In comparison, the other three translators' cultural affiliations informing their translating strategies are more straightforward.

Particular cultural contexts in which the translators are operating also play a significant role by determining how specific aspects of the texts (or the author's personality) may be read differently when superimposed on pre-existing cultural expectations. Martina Seifert, for instance, claims that historically the representation of Canadian literature in German translation

was distinctly gendered, focusing on the idea of Canada as a heroic masculine space. This stereotype created certain discrepancies for the translations of women-authored literary works focusing on domesticity and private female experiences, leading to the emergence of “conflicting images” in translation (Seifert 328). Klaus Peter Müller further states that the main factors that contributed to the selection of Canadian fiction for translation into German—and also shaped how the respective translations were approached and produced—were Canada’s perceived foreign exoticism, its multiculturalism, regionalism (primarily concentrating on the depiction of the wild North), contemporary (post)modern aspects of Canadian way of life, the popularity of authors and the literary qualities of their texts (54). In the case of Munro, her (post)modernist perspective prioritizing women’s everyday experiences was apparently the decisive factor, whereas her international renown and the literary quality of her writing played a secondary role (Müller 71). The thematic scope of the writer’s work was particularly important for her reception in German, as Munro was seen as part of the 1980s “explosion” of Canadian women’s writing and the subsequent wave of respective German translations. Brita Oeding and Luise von Flotow argue that in the post-1980s West Germany, and later in the unified Germany, the translated Canadian feminist texts were viewed as a “quieter” and less aggressive form of feminist literature as compared to the more programmatic German feminist writing of the time, which was largely focusing on domestic social and political issues. These translations—which included Munro’s earlier stories—were marketed as “gehobene Unterhaltungsliteratur” [higher-class writing for entertainment] (Oeding and Flotow 83), and this preconception to a significant degree shaped both the initial and subsequent reception of Munro’s works in German: while the author’s regionalism may have been downplayed, the feminist undertones of her work for the most part were neither questioned nor met with disapproval.

In the cases of the Russian and Ukrainian translations, Munro's prospective reception would be affected (and complicated) by not only the less established traditions of feminist writing in the domestic cultures and their less visible interest in Canadian literary works, but also the role of literary translation in the formation of the respective national literatures. Brian James Baer, while discussing the history of literary translation in Eastern Europe and Russia, refers to the region as "Europe's *internal* other" (1), which is typically perceived as delayed in its cultural development in comparison with the vaguely defined "West." From a historical perspective, this meant that translated literature enjoyed a central and prestigious status in many Slavic cultures: "The perception that the peoples of Eastern Europe needed to 'catch up' to a more-developed West and to compensate for their belated entry into modernity made translation a highly visible, often self-conscious, and much-discussed practice there" (Baer 4). Accordingly, this situation impacted the translation practices, which tended to be heavily oriented towards the target text and its literary quality: "The target text was expected to stand on its own and compete with—or even surpass—the source text" (Baer 10). This tendency is identified as a common feature of many of the Eastern European literatures; however, local contexts contributed to significant differences in how translating processes were approached and for what purposes they were used.

Andrew Wachtel, focusing on the tradition of literary translation in Russia specifically, defines Russia as an "imperializing state" that nevertheless for centuries remained in a "culturally subordinate, one might even say colonialized, position" (Wachtel 49). The combination of these two factors—imperialist ambitions and perception of own cultural inferiority—led to the development of a unique nation-building project that was deeply grounded in the link between translation and imperialism: "a model that emphasized their nation's peculiar



spongelike ability to absorb the best that other peoples had to offer as the basis for a universal, inclusive national culture,” whose “basis for this national image lay in a novel interpretation of the imperial project as a project of translation of world culture into and through Russia” (Wachtel 52). This ideology, formed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was later appropriated by the communist regime during the time of the Soviet Union, when translation was used as an expansionist strategy meant to absorb other civilizations by translating them into Russian and synthesizing them into the grand Russian nation-building project (Wachtel 53). The approach to translation as the process of subsuming other nations’ cultural achievements to expand the concept of Russianness has also persisted into modern times, marking the commonly acceptable practices of literary translation in the long term and maintaining the traditional interconnection between translation and the state’s imperialist aspirations in the Russian context.

The history of Ukrainian literature also suggests a definitive link between literary translation and national self-identification. As Vitaly Chernetsky points out, “even among its fellow Slavic and East European nations Ukraine stands out due to the extent to which literary translation has played a pivotal role in shaping its modern national identity” (34). The tradition of literary translation has always occupied a strong—if not prevalent—position in the Ukrainian literary system, and most prominent authors (including such iconic figures as Taras Shevchenko, Panteleimon Kulish, Lesia Ukraïнка, Mykola Zerov, Vasyl’ Stus, and so on) engaged in translating efforts<sup>1</sup>. The reasons for such a steady and consistent interest in translation are obvious: Ukraine’s lengthy colonial status and the Russian Empire’s centuries-long

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<sup>1</sup> Chernetsky argues that even Ivan Kotliarevs’kyi’s *Eneïda*—the first foundational work of the modern Ukrainian literary language—is essentially a “travestied translation” of Virgil’s *Aeneid* (37).

determination to eradicate any signs of the Ukrainian national culture by banning or restricting the use of its vernacular language forced writers to resort to translation where original writing was fraught with danger. Translation was a form of creative activity that allowed the translators to express themselves in their language while maintaining an illusion of distance from the final translated product, thus evading at least some forms of imperial censorship. Even more importantly, in the environment where the Ukrainian language was despised and deemed unworthy of literary production, translating classical and European authors helped to establish the status of Ukrainian as a rich and linguistically nuanced medium that made successful translations possible; these translating projects also managed to create and strengthen cultural connections beyond the ever-present shadow of the Russian imperial power.

Therefore, Ukrainian literary translators (or rather writer-translators) typically saw themselves as “nation-makers.” This idealistic self-positioning often came with a price: Chernetsky concludes that “sustaining and developing Ukrainian culture through literary translation was always a many-pronged effort involving both the self-sacrificing work of political prisoners and the inventive promotion of national identity by encouraging the public to read foreign bestsellers in Ukrainian” (49). Both aspects referenced here point to the tragic fate of many Ukrainian literary translators and the language itself. However, they also illustrate the fact that in the Ukrainian context translation has always been a form of political and cultural activism, allowing space for the translators’ agency as part of their bigger “nation-building” project. In 2003, the Ukrainian literary scholar Maksym Strikha argued that the “nation-building” phase in the history of Ukrainian translation was largely over and that literary translation could finally step aside to take its “proper” marginal place in the national literary system (Strikha

203)—the statement with which Chernetsky partially agreed (Chernetsky 50). Nevertheless, as recent history shows, the question of Ukraine's nation-building—including its cultural and translatorial dimension—is still critically relevant.

Identifying such historical tendencies and existing preconceptions in the respective target cultures can provide important insights into the culturally-specific understanding of translation and its role, the place of translated literature in the nation's literary system, and the prevailing (or acceptable) translating approaches and strategies. As part of my theoretical framework, I will rely on Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory to address the interplay of centrality and peripherality and intercultural power dynamics in the context of Munro translations into the three target languages. I will attempt to explore how hierarchical relationships between the source and target cultures—as well as among and within the target cultures themselves—affect the translating and publication processes, and how the issues of power and prestige in relation to languages, literary models, and authors'/translators' personalities shape the translating approaches and the way the translators choose to exercise their agency.

An important role in this theoretical lens will be awarded to the implications of gender for the translating process and its outcome. My analysis of the gendered aspects of literary translation—specifically with regard to Munro's work, which provides an interesting case study in this respect—will be grounded in the feminist translation theories established and developed by Canadian literary scholars, such as Barbara Godard, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, Luise von Flotow, and Sherry Simon. The main focus of the feminist approach to translation is on revealing the socially preconditioned gender-related factors that shape the translating process and uncovering the silenced voices—whether those of translators or authors themselves—which

might have otherwise remained hidden. The feminist translation theories insist that the translator's position is never transparent or neutral, and therefore it needs to be studied as a key dimension of any translating process if translation analysis is to move on from fixating on isolated lexical and stylistic textual intricacies to examining the wider social and cultural significance of translated literature. This perspective has been particularly helpful in addressing the contexts where the author's or translator's gender impacted the processes of textual interpretation and reception, as demonstrated by Valerie Henitiuk in her discussion of the voices of female translators:

Over the past couple of decades, feminists have usefully addressed what it means to be a woman translator, in cases where the source author is male and his text explicitly or even implicitly misogynous, but also where the source author is female and previous critical response has been unfairly dismissive or even non-existent. Translation has rightly been proposed as a means for resisting overly restrictive social constructions, and thus for re-evaluating and challenging the status quo. ("Translating Women's Silences" 4)

In line with the feminist theoretical framework, my approach will prioritize the translators' interpretation of and contribution to the texts, focusing on their visible textual intrusions and paratextual presences. I will treat the resulting shifts in style and meaning as a necessary feature of the translators' creative decision-making, examining them from the standpoint of the translators' power and empowerment. This perspective does not, however, rule out the possibility that a translator's intervention may result in a mistranslation—the scenario that Henitiuk also briefly explores, characterizing it as an act of violence to the text ("Translating Women's Silences" 4–5). While the difference between such aggressive distortion and

purposeful expression of the translator's creative agency may not always be obvious (or easy to establish), my analysis will be guided by the principle of privileging "sensitive, informed readings" (Henitiuk, "Translating Women's Silences" 13) and aligned with the key concepts of translation ethics and respect for the original, rather than fidelity in its conventional understanding as the "transparent" transmission of meaning demanding complete erasure of the translator's presence and involvement.

This theoretical position, putting the emphasis on the personality and authority of the translating subject, finds itself in agreement with Anthony Pym's call for the humanization of translation history and theory by paying attention to the translators themselves even before examining their target texts. Pym claims that "[t]ranslators, the human producers of translations, might also be legitimate objects of knowledge. The history of translators is at least as valid an organizing principle as have been the various focuses on source-text authors, source texts, or target-vs.-source languages, cultures or nations" (31–32). Shifting the focus towards the active agents of the translating process would reveal much about the translators' multilevel involvement in textual production, their cultural and other affiliations that might impact the final translated product, and their operations within professional intercultural and respective institutions (Pym 23). Such insights are highly valuable in elucidating the hierarchical and collective nature of translating processes and in demonstrating how the translators' agency is negotiated, mediated, encouraged, and constrained in particular cultural contexts—and how these multiple factors correlate with the outcomes of the attempted cultural transfers. With this in mind, my study adopts a translator-centred perspective that aims at furthering the field's tendency towards humanization of its theoretical lenses, with the ultimate goal of acknowledging the inevitable

translation-related shifts in the structures of narrative authority and recognizing (culturally as well as legally) the translators' co-authorship of the texts they produce.

To that effect, as part of my project I propose a translation analysis methodology that will foreground the study of translators and their personal approaches in the translating process. Although Pym voices some doubts about the practicality of converting the humanization principle into methodology (24), it is my contention that without incorporating this theoretical concept at the methodological level—or rather, without fully reorganizing the practice of translation analysis around the translator-centred theoretical framework—real-life translation practices will not be able to catch up with the advancements made by contemporary translation theories. My suggested model will be based on the analytical algorithm developed by Antoine Berman, who established the translator's "position," "project," and "horizon" as the central three criteria allowing to ascertain the nature and degree of the translator's textual intervention (see *Towards a Translation Criticism*). To enable comprehensive and multilevel analysis, Berman combines this examination of the translator's background, motivations, and strategies with the more traditional close reading and source-target comparative study methods, which are further supplemented by an overview of the accompanying paratext as a significant contributing factor. I will revise this model with a view to including several target text versions in three languages, to allow for a one-to-many rather than one-to-one contrastive framework; this reorientation will also make it possible to explore relationships and mutual influences between the translated versions outside of their connection with the source text. Further, I will expand Berman's interpretation of paratext to account for both peritextual and epitextual elements and the way they frame the text itself, mediating a reader's understanding and experience. The central role

will be awarded to the translator-authored paratext, including the translators' interviews, articles, reflections, and their first-hand comments on the translating process from the Translators' Questionnaires completed specifically for this project. My predominant focus on the representation of the translators in the paratextual analysis is meant to give them a voice in the academic discussion of their work and to elevate their status by offering them the same kind of attention that the authors of original works typically enjoy but the translators are commonly denied. I contend that incorporating the translators' own perspectives in the critical analysis of their work (as long as it is possible and acceptable to all involved parties) may not only expand the translation scholars' toolset and provide a way to support or verify the research findings obtained through other analytical methods but also serve the ultimate goal of the translators' recognition and empowerment by reclaiming and visualizing their authority.

My study comprises four chapters, the first of which will outline the evolution of translation thought towards more acknowledgement of the translators' agency and authority and away from the normative conceptualization of fidelity and transparency in translation. I will address the most significant theoretical shifts in the field that have contributed to formulating my own approach and chosen methodology, starting with the culture-centred conceptualizations of the translating process, the polysystem theory that examines intercultural power dynamics and models cultural transfer processes effected through translation, and theoretical approaches focusing on the economic aspects of translation as a professional activity and the role of globalization and decolonization in negotiating the translators' (in)visibility. From a theoretical standpoint, the emphasis will be on feminist translation theories, with their dismantling of the gendered translation metaphors and their advocacy for the translators' visibility and creative

autonomy. Building on the arguments of feminist translation scholars and on Berman's model of positive translation criticism, I will propose an analytical methodology that will be further applied to the case study of Munro's stories in three target languages as a way to explore practical implications of the above theoretical considerations.

In the second chapter, I will engage with Munro's own narrative project to establish an interpretative baseline for the four translating projects under consideration. Proceeding from the discussion of the terms "original" and "source text" as problematic concepts in the contemporary Translation Studies, I will examine the issues of authorial intent, interpretation, and textual instability as applicable to the literary translation processes, and particularly Munro's work. I will propose a feminist reading of Munro's oeuvre and substantiate its significance in the literary translation context, before moving on to the textual analysis of the six stories, focusing on their gender problematics and women-centred themes and imagery. My analytical approach will attempt to demonstrate the relevance of the feminist subtext both for Munro's wider project, aiming to destabilize narrative conventions and re-centre the very structure of storytelling on women's perspectives and representation of femininity, and for the process of re-creating such gendered narratives through literary translation.

The third chapter will build on the suggested feminist readings of the corpus texts to examine their available published translations in Russian, Ukrainian, and German and to demonstrate how each individual translator addresses women's identities, perspectives, and experiences in their target language versions, thus responding to the feminist potentiality of Munro's stories. My analysis, largely grounded in Berman's methodological model and following Pym's guiding principle of studying translators before texts (Pym 30), will start with



exploring the translators' cultural horizons, personal backgrounds, and translating positions (formulated through any available and relevant translator-authored metatexts). It will be followed by the contrastive textual study of the translated stories, where the translators' treatment of women-centred themes and imagery—and, more generally, their approaches to representing femininity—will be regarded as the main point of divergence between the target text versions. I will consider how such textual differences combined with the known facts about the translators' self-positioning shape and reflect their respective translating projects and, accordingly, frame the representation of Munro's work in the three target languages.

The fourth and final chapter will move on to the extratextual factors informing the end results and wider effects of the translating process, with primary emphasis on the translator's visibility in each particular project. Building on an overview of Gérard Genette's paratext theory and its relevance for the Translation Studies, I will focus on the paratexts accompanying the translated publications of the stories to examine how the translators' visible (or hidden) presences express their creative agency or reveal the nature of their translating projects, what such visibility markers can say about the scope and constraints of the translators' narrative authority, and how they shape (or are shaped by) the texts' critical reception in the target cultures. I will rely on both the translator-authored and translation-related paratextual materials—including the first-hand responses in the Translators' Questionnaires as well as critical reviews reacting to the publications of translated texts in the target cultures—to contextualize the translators' projects within the limits of the respective collaborative/hierarchical structures of authority and to explore the complex interplay between the translators' visibility, accountability, and empowerment. It is my hope that this methodology

will enable a comprehensive perspective on the translators' lived experiences, their roles, powers, and limitations in the translation and publication cycle, and the correlations between their creative projects and the resulting critical reception determining the ultimate outcome of the cultural transfer process.

## **Chapter 1. Through the Lens of Gendered Agency: Translation Theories in Flux**

The ongoing debates and ground-breaking re-orientations that have been taking place in the field of translation studies since the 1980s–1990s are calling for a sweeping revision of the field's key concepts and categories. As translation thought is continuously evolving from normativity to descriptivity and from an idealistic view of a neutral, invisible translator towards acknowledgement and endorsement of translating subjectivity and agency, it is becoming increasingly clear that conventional approaches to translation research are unable to adequately respond to such theoretical transformations. Fidelity-oriented translation analysis strategies, essentially conceptualized as a form of negative criticism concentrating primarily on the judgment of errors, are fundamentally at odds with the discipline's extensive reframing of translators' agency. This conflict highlights the need for an updated analytical toolset that would transcend the idea of fidelity and reflect major shifts in the theoretical understanding of translation both as a mode of cultural transfer and professional activity. To catch up with the conceptual advances made both within the translation studies discipline and in the wider field of cultural studies, translation scholarship needs to convert theoretical arguments into practical methodologies that would be able to address the multidimensionality and complexity of the translation process, with due consideration of the translators' subjectivity as its indispensable characteristics.

In this chapter, I will focus on the most significant theories and schools of thought that have contributed to the discipline-wide conceptual shifts in translation studies and inform both my own theoretical approach and my search for an up-to-date methodological solution. I will start with a brief overview of the culture-centred theoretical perspectives and their impact on

reconceptualization of translation and translators' agency. Next, I will examine the significance of polysystem theory as a starting point for the cultural reorientation in translation studies, while outlining its weaknesses as a framework that focuses exclusively on the objective macro picture and overlooks microlevel considerations, such as translators' decision-making. Further, I will address the impact of globalization and economic factors as forces erasing the visible presence of translators and, subsequently, the translation scholars' resistance to such erasure as a process of decolonization. After that, I will analyze how the implied conditions of invisibility and secondariness in translation are predetermined by conventional gendered metaphors modelling the translation process. Building on the discussion of underlying translation metaphors, the core part of the chapter will foreground the feminist translation theories advocating for the translators' agency and conscious interventionism as a way to dismantle existing conventions, reframe the translator-author and translator-reader relationships, and remedy the gendered bias implied in the traditional conceptualization of translation. Finally, proceeding from the above theoretical considerations, I will outline a translation analysis methodology loosely based on Antoine Berman's model of positive criticism. The resulting analytical algorithm will be further applied to my case study in the following chapters; however, the development of a new methodological model has a broader purpose of reinventing the translation analysis process and bridging the gap between theory and practice in translation research. My methodological lens, informed by gender and agency as critical frames of reference and combining textual aspects of translation with wider contextual factors of literary (re)production, will aspire to re-centre translation analysis on the translators themselves as primary actors and decision-makers driving the process of cultural exchange and transfer.

***Cultural Orientation and Translational Turn: Implications for Translation Studies***

In her 2011 essay “From Cultural Turn to Translational Turn: A Transnational Journey,” Susan Bassnett outlines the entire history of the translation studies discipline as a progression with two crucial milestones (following a previous theoretical transition from source-text to target-text orientation): the 1980s–early 1990s “cultural turn,” which “focussed attention on the broader, translinguistic aspects of translation, including translation as negotiation, as intercultural mediation, as a transcultural process,” and the more recent “translational turn” (240). The latter, happening largely outside of translation studies as such, is marked by the systemic integration of translation as a broad philosophical notion into the study of humanities, where translation itself is treated as a generally conceptualised mode of cultural migrancy and in-betweenness.

The translational turn, which mostly originated in the fields of world literature and postcolonial studies, has led to a wider application of translation as a metaphor for cultural interconnections—while, to some extent, obscuring complex issues pertaining to translation as a creative cross-cultural process with a traceable destination. This important development delineated critical points of intersection between translation studies and related disciplines, bringing translation to the forefront of comparative literature study as an essential mode of reading realized through the agency of a translator: “[T]he growth of world literature [...] offers a reappraisal of the significance of translation and proposes a shift of focus onto interconnectedness, on global literary and cultural flows on the one hand, and on questions of agency on the other” (Bassnett 239). However, this change of focus failed to effect a profound methodological shift within the discipline itself, making it possible for the study of translation to become subsumed by world literature and postcolonial theories. Bassnett suggests that the advances made in these related fields can potentially be used for their mutual enrichment and

assistance. Yet, as she claims, research in translation studies is still lacking innovative thinking and is largely relying on “antiquated methodologies” (239). Therefore, it could be argued that the development of new, progressive translation analysis methodologies is critical for the reconceptualization of translation studies and its survival as an autonomous (albeit interconnected) academic discipline; the focus on methodological transformations within the field itself would also keep scholarly discussions of translation practice-oriented rather than veering into the domain of broadly interpreted cultural metaphors.

Both the cultural and translational turns had far-reaching implications for the positioning of translation studies among other related fields and for the evolution of translation itself as the discipline’s underlying concept. With contemporary translation theories moving towards the ideas of difference, interdependence, and multiplicity, the theoretical notion of translation has transcended its conventional understanding as a clear-cut binary relationship between source and target texts. Where multiple factors and oppositions affecting the translation process are considered, attention inevitably shifts to the contextual factors, ideological considerations, and agency of the translating subject, rendering the conventional goals of equivalence and fidelity both irrelevant and unattainable.

Thus, the principles of formal and dynamic equivalence, postulated by Eugene Nida (1964) and regarded as the cornerstone of linguistics-based translation theory, can have only limited applicability in the contemporary theoretical context where translation is seen less as a purely linguistic activity and more as a culturally conditioned phenomenon, closely intertwined with literary transfer processes. This gradual transition of translation theories from linguistically-oriented normativity to descriptivism grounded in cultural context is the primary concern for André Lefevere. In *Translating Literature: Practice and Theory in a Comparative Literature*

*Context*, Lefevere describes this major change as a shift of focus from language-based to text-based approaches and consistently refutes the idea of equivalence, criticizing it as too vague and abstract for the actual literary translation challenges—instead, he suggests acculturation as a more viable goal and strategy (11). Since literary translators operate at the higher levels of the translation hierarchy defined as “ideology, poetics and universe of discourse” (Lefevere 88), the problems of linguistic equivalence lose their significance, yielding priority to the translator’s strategic decision of how to position the source text into the target culture; consequently, the issues of equivalence are sidelined to the level of contextualized tactical solutions based on the translator’s chosen strategy (97). Lefevere’s theory brings to the forefront the problematics of translating subjects and their decision-making powers, at the same time questioning the place of translation in any given target culture. With its potential for either usurping or bestowing cultural authority, translation is conceptualized as a filtering mechanism that introduces new elements to the target culture, screening out everything that is not deemed compatible. In the process, the target culture’s self-image may be preserved in its current state—or changed (with varying and often unpredictable effects), if new concepts or ideas are appropriated through translation. Accordingly, translation always involves a clash of the source and target cultures that results in negotiation and, ultimately, acculturation. This culture-centred perspective on translation leads Lefevere to the conclusion that, as an antidote to monolingual ethnocentrism and a way to impact the canonization and genealogy of literary works, translation should have a central role in the discipline of comparative literature—a crucial suggestion for the long-marginalized field of translation studies.

Lefevere’s view of translation as a gateway for cultural exchange is shared by David Damrosch, who incorporates it into his concept of world literature. Damrosch defines world

literature as “a mode of circulation and of reading” beyond the culture in which a certain text originated (*What Is World Literature?* 5), positing translation as the key mechanism that enables reading and circulation processes across cultures and languages. Through translation, literary works can travel, reaching new audiences and—in particular cases—becoming a part of the global literary canon, thus ensuring their survival in the cross-cultural “afterlife” (147).

Translation, therefore, becomes not only the method of accessing foreign literary texts, but also the means of selection and canonization of cultural products. Most importantly, translation can be theorized as world literature’s primary form of existence, because in any world location (whether it can be construed as cultural core or periphery) “world literature is experienced [...] as what is translated and published, assigned in schools, and sold in a country’s bookstores” (Damrosch, “Introduction” 9). Especially relevant is Damrosch’s insistence on the temporal limitations of literary translation as a product matching the sentiments and expectations of a particular setting and time period in which it is produced (*What Is World Literature?* 186). The constant need for retranslation is an essential contextualizing factor that emphasizes the non-finality of any translating effort, further adding to the destabilization of conventional thinking about translation —and reframing world literature itself as a highly fluid and ever-shifting subset of translated texts.

Although Damrosch’s theory is largely grounded in the dominant culture’s position, to some extent underrepresenting peripheral perspectives on cross-cultural processes—among other things, glossing over the fact that writing produced in one of the major global languages might not need translation to be able to circulate—the centrality awarded to translation in his model has a positive significance for further mutual integration of world literature and translation studies. The culture-centred theoretical approaches play an important role in mapping out vital



intersections between translation and cultural studies and raising the prestige of translation within literary theories; however, both the cultural and translational turns have so far had limited impact within translation studies in terms of how the discipline treats its own essential concepts. While the theoretical understanding of translation has evolved significantly, taking on a new dimension as an all-encompassing metaphor of cultural migrancy and exchange, translation studies still needs an updated methodological toolset to be able to address the revised theoretical categories from the practical and analytical standpoint.

### ***Translation in Polysystem Theory: Centre and Periphery***

Damrosch's notion of world literature as the translation-enabled cross-cultural circulation of literary texts, as well as Lefevere's perspective on the acculturating potential of translation and Bassnett's position on translation's evolution as a cultural practice, are firmly grounded in Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory, which has largely shaped translation studies as a discipline, transforming it from a marginalized academic specialization into a field at the heart of intercultural debates. The polysystem concept, introduced by Even-Zohar in the late 1970s and further developed by the Tel Aviv school of literary and translation scholars, describes a cultural system as a complex multidimensional model of interdependent and partially overlapping sub-systems, with their mutual influences, struggles, and exchanges. In this framework, translation is theorized as a vehicle of literary transmission, invariably mediated by ideological factors and concerns. According to Bassnett, the study of polysystems "offered a way of rethinking traditional literary history through a lens that put translation into sharp focus" (238), positing its central role for the processes of literary transfer. At the same time, Even-Zohar's prioritization of the ideological angle complicated the theoretical understanding of translation as a process, contributing to the institutionalization of translation studies as an autonomous field of research.

Even-Zohar defines polysystem as “a multiple system, a system of various systems which intersect with each other and partly overlap, using concurrently different options, yet functioning as one structured whole, whose members are interdependent” (“Polysystem Theory” 11). This complex, multidimensional approach to studying the system of literature is rooted in the principles of interconnection and interdependence; thus, any literary phenomenon can only be explored considering the multiplicity of elements and factors and combining synchronous and diachronous perspectives. The status of each particular element is deemed less significant—Even-Zohar refuses to limit the study of literature to the so-called “masterpieces,” claiming that value judgments about particular texts are irrelevant for understanding the bigger picture of an evolving polysystem (“Polysystem Theory” 13). As a result, his theoretical lens gravitates towards examining general patterns and systematic phenomena rather than individual components or single events.

The “masterpieces,” nevertheless, play a special role as the elements comprising the polysystem’s canon—a literary stratum characterized by the highest degree of prestige, recognition, and influence. According to Even-Zohar, clashes between the canonized and non-canonized strata of any polysystem constitute the essence of cultural evolution and determine its outcome. Ensuring healthy competition between the strata, these oppositions rejuvenate the entire polysystem, preventing it from decline and stagnation: “Without the stimulation of a strong ‘sub-culture,’ any canonized activity tends to gradually become petrified” (“Polysystem Theory” 17). In this paradigm, any particular element of the polysystem’s repertoire is significant first and foremost as a marker of the canonization process and a representative of its respective literary model. The tensions between canon and non-canon will ultimately decide

which systems or models will gain prevalence and which repertoires will become most productive in the polysystem.

The repertoires competing in the canonization process, as classified by Even-Zohar, belong either to the primary (innovative) or secondary (conservative) category (“Polysystem Theory” 21). Primary repertoires may be introduced to the polysystem through various modes of intra- and inter-systemic relations, including via translation. Even-Zohar theorizes such translation-enabled transfers as necessary for the development of a stable and resilient polysystem, which does not become stagnant or petrified, but rather consistently expands and renews its stock of repertoires by borrowing from foreign or adjacent systems (“Polysystem Theory” 26); translation, in this respect, may be seen as a force of innovation. Franco Moretti, building on Even-Zohar’s theory, conceptualizes the same transmission mechanism as a “wave model,” where a flow of cultural change powered by translation is moving across cultures and languages (Moretti 166). As Moretti claims, this process most typically takes shape of a movement from the centre to the periphery (173)—that is, translation from stronger or more prestigious languages to the less prominent ones. However, a polysystem’s heavy reliance on translation is not necessarily a sign of its weakness or instability: “a system undergoing permanent, steady, and well-controlled change may adequately be considered stable simply because it perseveres” (Even-Zohar, “Polysystem Theory” 26). Prevalence (and canonization) of translations in a polysystem may be seen as a sign of a healthy systemic transformation driving its further development.

Significantly, Even-Zohar argues for a special place of the translated works in a target literature polysystem, positing that, in addition to its transmission function, translation ensures the selection of the texts and models to be incorporated by the target culture and their adaptation

to the domestic systems and values (“Position” 46). The combination of these critical functions for the purpose of appropriation of foreign repertoires leads to the conceptualization of translated literature “not only as an integral system within any literary polysystem, but as a most active system within it” (46). As a result, in any given polysystem translations constitute a sub-system that, although typically peripheral, does not have to be marginalized and may occupy a more or less central position, depending on a number of factors—not the least the target literature polysystem’s relative authority and stage of development.

In a target polysystem where the corpus of translated texts takes a central position, translation ultimately becomes “an integral part of innovatory forces, and as such likely to be identified with major events in literary history” (Even-Zohar, “Position” 46). Even-Zohar concedes that this scenario is characteristic of relatively younger and less established literatures belonging to “minor” nations and written in local languages; typically, such literary traditions may appear weak or peripheral in comparison with their stronger and more influential neighbours, or be indicative of a transformational crisis the respective culture is experiencing (“Position” 47)—regardless of the nature or possible implications of such a crisis.

Conversely, the opposite scenario is a well-established and authoritative literary tradition where translated literature is perceived as decisively peripheral; in this context, translators find themselves under pressure from their culture’s most respected and prestigious literary models—in terms of both content and style, as well as text selection. That being the case, translated literary works may be (to various degrees) adapted to imitate the target culture’s dominant repertoires: “A highly interesting paradox manifests itself here: translation, by which new ideas, items, characteristics can be introduced into a literature, becomes a means to preserve traditional

taste” (Even-Zohar, “Position” 49). Hence, translation may act as a factor that reinforces, rather than challenges, the target polysystem’s self-centred traditionalism.

At the same time, Even-Zohar’s theory of the centrality and peripherality of translated literature as two distinct possibilities does not rule out a middle-ground scenario where translations may be dispersed across both central and peripheral positions. Depending on the circumstances, different strata of the translated repertoire may widely differ in their statuses, prestige, and popularity within the target polysystem (Even-Zohar, “Position” 49). In each particular case, the outcome will be largely affected by the intensity of literary contacts and existing power dynamics between the contacting cultures.

In this respect, Even-Zohar’s conclusion that “the distinction between a translated work and an original work in terms of literary behavior is a function of the position assumed by the translated literature at a given time” (“Position” 50) acquires special significance. Where the translated repertoire is centrally positioned in the polysystem, its high-prestige status destabilizes the definition of translation itself, extending the boundaries of the concept to include partially original categories, such as semi- and quasi-translations (“Position” 50). Consequently, the translated works are used to introduce a new primary repertoire to the polysystem, and a translator may enjoy more freedom than usual to reject the “ready-made models in his home repertoire into which the source texts would be transferable” (“Position” 50), instead demonstrating a willingness to go beyond the existing home conventions. Such creative efforts may result in the introduction of an innovative translation practice that may become adopted in the local culture, enriching it with a new translational norm—or fail to take hold, giving in to less jarring translation strategies.

It is, however, more probable for such innovations to take root in the target culture when the entire literary polysystem is going through a period of transformative crisis, be it for cultural, political, or other reasons: “Periods of great change in the home system are in fact the only ones when a translator is prepared to go far beyond the options offered to him by his established home repertoire and is willing to attempt a different treatment of text making” (“Position” 51). In a more stable and predictable setting, translators’ experiments may be rejected or simply go unnoticed. Furthermore, in a polysystem that distinctly marginalizes the translated sub-system as peripheral, such experiments may never happen at all—meaning that the cultural status of translated literature may affect the translators’ perception of their agency and shape their creative decision-making.

Thus, the polysystem theory—as suggested and developed by Even-Zohar—not only reveals the central role of translation as a vehicle for the transmission of literary repertoires, but also demonstrates how the perceived cultural acceptability of certain translating practices and the outcomes of the respective literary transfers are mediated by the dominant ideologies and power dynamics. Most importantly, Even-Zohar’s views on the function of translation destabilize the concept itself, challenging the binary opposition of translation vs. original and showing that both originality and derivativeness may be seen as relational and context-dependent, rather than absolute qualities.

As regards its applicability for translation studies, Even-Zohar’s theory of literary polysystems was further elaborated by another Tel Aviv scholar, Gideon Toury, who focused on translation as a “norm-governed activity” (207). Toury linked the cultural significance of translation to its societal functions, theorizing the context-dependent relationality of the translation process as the effect of various sets of norms regulating any translation-related

behaviour: “‘Translatorship’ amounts first and foremost to being able to play a social role [...] in a way which is deemed appropriate in its own terms of reference. The acquisition of a set of norms for determining the suitability of that kind of behaviour [...] is therefore a prerequisite for becoming a translator within a cultural environment” (205). According to Toury, translation, as an activity involving two languages and cultures, operates within two separate systems of norms on the source and target sides of the process. The translator may choose to be guided either by the source culture’s or target culture’s norms, setting in motion specific implications in either case: prioritizing the source culture may result in the translated text being unpalatable to the target language readers, while following the target culture’s norms will inevitably result in multiple shifts and even distortions. Consequently, “whereas adherence to source norms determines a translation’s adequacy as compared to the source text, subscription to norms originating in the target culture determines its acceptability” (Toury 208). In this theoretical framework, the translators’ choice to follow either set of norms (or rather their decision where to place their project between these two ends of the spectrum) is defined as an “initial norm” (208). Although this formulation awards some degree of agency to the translating subject, Toury claims that the translators’ decision-making is necessarily directed by the multiplicity of respective translational norms, whether preliminary—which pertain to general translation policies existing in a culture—or operational, i.e. guiding the process of translation itself (209). This perspective significantly downplays the role of a translator’s personal stance for the end result of the cultural transfer process: despite stating that “in translation [...] non-normative behaviour is always a possibility” (213), Toury still regards conscious norm violation as no more than an exception—which, at that, has to be permitted by another kind of norm governing the system. In this model, the translators’ chances of effecting a real change are, therefore, seen as minimal, and the entire

translation process is theorized as completely norm-dependent (Toury 210)—including the type and extent of translation equivalence that is deemed acceptable.

While Even-Zohar's literary polysystem model and Toury's theory of translational norms provide valuable insights into the workings of ideology and hidden power dynamics involved in the production, circulation, and reception of translated literary works, these approaches still have limited applicability in translation analysis due to their generalized perspective on the cultural integration process and their insufficient consideration of the translators' personal agency. Berman criticized Toury for failing to see that the full integration of the translated texts into the host culture is an exception rather than a rule; it only happens with particular works that for certain reasons become especially significant for the target culture: "translated foreign literatures are not generally integrated into a native literature, except for great translations, and by virtue of nongeneralizable specificities [...] They remain 'foreign literatures' even if they mark the native literature" (Berman, *Towards a Translation Criticism* 43). The reasons for a translation to become fully integrated (or, in Even-Zohar's terms, "canonized") may or may not pertain to the translation quality as such; and, whether canonized or not, a translated text may still exert a certain degree of influence on the culture into which it is transplanted. Berman concludes that locating translated literature within a polysystem's centre or periphery would be a simplistic proposition. Rather, it forms a specific subset, which, while remaining foreign to the entire polysystem, nevertheless, has always had a central role in its historical development—and, for "minor" literatures, has acted as a force ensuring their viability: "Translated literature is neither at the periphery nor at the center; it has been and remains that without which no indigenous literature can exist in the space of colinguism [...] constituted by the West" (*Towards a Translation Criticism* 40). Berman sees historical centrality of translations in the development of



literary polysystems and their impact on local literatures as a consequence of the translators' decisions and motivations rather than objectively existing external factors, such as system laws and translational norms. These factors do affect translation behaviour and the outcomes of translation processes—sometimes to a significant extent—but the demands of a receptor culture, the degree of its openness to outside influences, and the pressure it puts on the translating subjects cannot fully explain or predict which direction a particular translation project is going to take. As Berman remarks on Even-Zohar's and Toury's conceptual framework, “the schema seems self-evident, but it negates any autonomy of translation, and, in fact, it negates the whole history of translation in the West. If translators [...] had only worried about obeying norms, translation would never have been in the West this ‘primary’ (not ‘secondary’ or ‘peripheral’) shaper of languages, literatures, and cultures that it has been and still is” (*Towards a Translation Criticism* 44). Thus, complete reliance on the polysystem theory's laws when approaching translation analysis may be misleading.

While it is true that most translators are guided by the norms and tendencies prevailing in their respective cultures (or at least have to take them into consideration in their decision-making), the future of translation projects or cultural models may be transformed by the individual translators' decisions either to follow or challenge such unwritten regulations. Even where a translator chooses to adopt the existing norm, this is a result of their decision (whether conscious or not), which cannot be fully preconditioned by the relevant context. Therefore, the autonomy of the translating subject takes precedence over any normative requirements: “a translation is always individual [...], because it proceeds from an individuality, even one subjected to ‘norms’” (Berman, *Towards a Translation Criticism* 45). This argument points out the biggest weakness of Even-Zohar's and Toury's theories as regards their applicability to

translation-centred research—namely, their lack of attention to the translators’ individuality. Although both theoretical approaches provide a fact-based macro picture of multiple struggles and processes surrounding translation and circulation of literary texts, inclusion of subjective micro-level factors, such as the translators’ personal agency, is critical for in-depth translation analysis.

***Translation in the Globalized Economy: Forced Invisibility***

Along with the culturally or ideologically mediated local norms of acceptability, the translators’ agency may be exposed to significant pressures from both local and global economic considerations and market-related aspects of textual production. In *Translation and Globalization*, Michael Cronin takes the polysystem theory’s findings one step further by adding the dimensions of time, technology, and economy to situate translation in a modern globalized world.

While outlining a distinction between communication and transmission as the functions of translation in terms of their immediate and long-term effects, Cronin argues that “studying translation in isolation from its socialized conditions of production and reception may explain how translation works as communication in the immediate but will not tell us much about how translation works as transmission and, more particularly, how particular forms of translation leave enduring traces on societies” (33). He advocates for an integrated approach to translation, which would consider linguistic aspects of the translating process in combination with the material and technological side of the translators’ work, along with the conditions of textual consumption and circulation (43). In this approach, the importance of the translators’ agency is combined with the role of the technology they use (understood as the physical/virtual means of

textual production and circulation)—and the way modern technology changes the centre-periphery relationships, blurring the boundaries between the two and reframing the distinction in terms of access and outreach rather than geography.

In Cronin's view, technology acts as a universalizing and standardizing factor that has the potential to erase difference, whereas culture is theorized as the site of specificity. This means that in the globalized world translation finds itself at the intersection of these two conflicting forces: on the one hand, it has a universalizing ability that makes local culture globally accessible by minimizing its difference, yet on the other hand it has the power to preserve and showcase the unique and the specific through uncovering hidden potential for mutual intelligibility of the centre and periphery. Cronin argues that "translation partakes of the generalizing drive of the *techne*- and of the particularizing drive of culture" (46). In this framework, translators, acting "both as the zealous elaborators and protectors of national languages and literatures and as the indispensable intermediaries in the opening up of the world to the circulation of commodities, peoples and ideas" (Cronin 88), are revealed to play a double role of guardians and traders of cultural treasures.

What is most important is that both roles are marked by normative silencing. Cronin points out enforced invisibility as an inherent part of the translators' experience, where the ultimate emphasis is on the translated product alone and translators rarely receive recognition or even acknowledgement of their contribution. He claims that readers and consumers of translated products are typically not interested in the translating process and its intricacies, including the translator's personal input (Cronin 94)—which leads to the situation that Michelle Woods, building on Cronin's argument, describes as "a certain societal resistance in market economies to

analyzing the activity of translation” (Woods 77). The resulting “anthropophagic censorship” (Cronin 116) pertaining to translation is, therefore, largely normalized as a common feature of the process, although it tends to erase not only the otherness of a foreign text, but also the person behind the translation process itself.

This systematic silencing of the translators’ voices, although exacerbated by market-related considerations, cannot be attributed to the economic factors alone; it is a long-standing issue brought about by the cultural legacy of normative translation theories centred on the standard expectation of fidelity. Where the faithfulness of translation is theorized as a default requirement, the translators are placed in a secondary, subordinated position stripped of any decision-making powers, which unavoidably leads to their censorship and self-censorship. To some extent, it could be argued that globalization itself is suggesting a remedy to this dilemma in the form of modern digital technologies: with the growing awareness of the translators’ inherent power and activist potential, their access to electronic resources acquires special significance as a tool that can be used to counteract the habitual silencing. Virtual spaces such as professional blogs and social media accounts are increasingly becoming the sites where professional translators can make their presence known, outline their interests and challenges, provide a glimpse into their working processes, or explain and justify their decision-making. To some extent, similar opportunities may be offered by the presses choosing to showcase translators on their corporate websites or to provide platforms for the translators’ publisher-sanctioned blogs; however, such publisher-approved visibility channels are by definition more heavily regulated and cannot ensure the same freedom of self-expression as personal virtual sites do. With expanding global connections and multiple points of contact between the cultures, these private online resources can become visible and easily accessible creative outlets for literary translators

that they are often denied offline. As a consequence, technology may offer a solution for undoing the harmful effects of the translators' censorship, allowing them to resist the erasure and (at least partially) to reclaim their authority over the final product of their work. However, to have a lasting impact, such a transformation requires a profound shift in the public perceptions of translation and translators—as well as a shift in the translators' own self-perception and motivations—at both theoretical and practical levels.

***Translators' Empowerment: Decolonizing Translating Subjectivity***

The critical role of the translators' personal agency and the need for their empowerment are also central to Maria Tymoczko's perspective on modern-day literary translation. Proceeding from an unstable notion of translation as “an open concept with fuzzy boundaries” (310), Tymoczko argues for its radical inclusionary redefinition as an expanding cluster concept that comprises interacting and overlapping modes of representation, transmission, transfer, and transculturation. While in the dominant theoretical tradition the conventional conceptualization of translation was grounded solely in Western interpretations, alternative approaches to the nature and role of translation need to be incorporated into the discipline of translation studies to account for the ideas and metaphors inherent in non-Western cultures. Tymoczko suggests that, to overcome the limitations of traditional translation theory, “[t]ranslation as a cross-cultural concept must be reconceptualized and enlarged beyond dominant Western notions that continue to circumscribe its definition” (310). The proposed rethinking of the translation studies may lead to broadening of the related conceptual frameworks (including approaches to the marginalized translation types) and revamping of the research methodologies, but most importantly it may enable a revision of the entire history of translation where the translators' powers and empowerment will be awarded a decidedly more significant role:

A better understanding of the openness of translation as conceptualized in an international context can foster on the local level a habitual sense of confidence in and performance of translators' prerogatives and responsibilities in making meaning, in constructing culture, in acknowledging ideological aspects of their constructions, in formulating representations, in initiating transculturations, in promoting difference, in taking activist stands, and in introducing newness into the world. (Tymoczko 315)

This suggestion to enlarge and open up translation theory offers a way both to redefine the role of translators and to decolonize the study of translation. The postcolonial perspective Tymoczko brings to translation studies emphasizes complex aspects of culture, power, and ideology involved in the process of translation, which brings to the forefront the need for the translators' self-reflexivity, active self-positioning, political stance, and personal agenda. Translators are therefore reframed as powerful agents of cultural mediation and meaning-makers responsible for selecting, interpreting, deconstructing, and reconstructing meanings at all textual levels. The translators' decision-making and the strategies they employ may mirror bigger power exchanges between their respective source and target cultural contexts: their choices between foreignization and domestication, additions and omissions, providing or withholding explanations, and so on may be to some extent shaped by the relations between centre and periphery. However, they are also affected by the translator's self-positioning towards their translating project and their target audience, which may be expressed either in terms of resistance or engagement. The right of choice between these two modes of the translators' agency empowers translating subjects, while any requirement of neutrality forces their voices to be subsumed by the dominant discourse and ideology. In this respect, Tymoczko's theory puts a special emphasis on the translators' awareness of their ethical responsibilities as both cultural mediators and activists—their

proactivity in recognizing the ethical implications of their task and in formulating their own ethical code could be seen as a way to decolonize translation through empowering translating subjects.

***Gendered Metaphorics and Feminist Translation Theories: Canadian Dimension***

The issues of empowerment become particularly pertinent in the context of feminist translation theories that advocate for the translators' agency as a way to counteract the conventional gendered conceptualization of translation. In "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation," Lori Chamberlain examines sexualized metaphors underlying the power structures involved in the translation process. Proceeding from the opposition of writing as productive work and translating as a merely reproductive process, she demonstrates how this paradigm "depicts originality or creativity in terms of paternity and authority, relegating the figure of the female to a variety of secondary roles" (Chamberlain 306). Translation is, therefore, coded in distinctly feminine terms: whether it is theorized as an "unfaithful" wife betraying the husband/original (307), an act of seduction with the translator as a male seducer and the text as a mistress (308), or the violation of the natural integrity of the "mother tongue" (309), what remains central is the problematics of fidelity and chastity, often with implied undertones of sexual violence. As the concepts of authorship and originality in this relationship are clearly equated with the right of paternity<sup>2</sup>—and associated with productive male activity, relegating reproduction to the female realm—Chamberlain argues that the metaphorics of translation "reveals both an anxiety about the myths of paternity (or authorship and authority) and a profound ambivalence about the role

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<sup>2</sup> It needs to be noted that this analogy substantially overlooks any possibility of female authorship. If considered at all, a female author may be construed as a "victim" of a (male) translator's violent actions.

of maternity—ranging from the condemnation of *les belles infidèles* to the adulation accorded to the ‘mother tongue’” (311). Although all gendered images that Chamberlain engages with demonstrate a restrictive binary understanding of gender, the equation of femininity in the scope of translation hierarchy with the subversive qualities of instability, fluidity, and non-linearity provides a way of undoing the damaging fidelity analogy.

Each of these gendered metaphors considers fidelity as an immutable contract inherent in the nature of translation; yet the essence of this requirement changes depending on the chosen model—whether the translator decides to be faithful to the author/source text or to the norms of their target language. This proposition problematizes the normative expectation of fidelity, revealing its relative nature and bringing the translator’s decision-making power to the forefront. Chamberlain suggests that the reason for multiple norms and metaphorical analogies overcoding and overregulating translation as a professional activity is that translation as a particular form of (re)writing threatens to “erase the difference between production and reproduction which is essential to the establishment of power” (314); accordingly, a perceptual shift towards translation as a collaborative partnership hinging on the translator’s agency and identity might bring about a change in the translators’ status, both metaphorical and legal. It is the task of feminist translation scholarship—as the field prioritizing representation and empowerment of marginalized gendered identities in textual production—to come up with new metaphors of translation as a creative transcultural process that would provide alternatives to the myths of originality and paternity and subvert the existing power hierarchies (source text vs. target text and author vs. translator) based on outdated gendered preconceptions.



The feminist school of thought in translation—which, admittedly, owes much of its theoretical underpinnings to postmodernist and deconstructionist theories—originated and took shape in Canada in the 1980s. It was represented and epitomized by *Tessera*, a Canadian journal of feminist literature and theory that was founded in 1984 and focused on translation as its central theme (Mezei). This scholarly attention to the intersection of translation and feminism came as a response to the explosive development of French-Canadian feminist writing in the 1970s–1980s that was largely characterized by “bilingualism, translation, and women’s agency” (Flotow, “Feminism in Translation” 14). The experimental literary works of France Théoret, Louky Bersianik, Nicole Brossard, Madeleine Ouellette-Michalska, and many others used translation as a form of code-switching that simultaneously foregrounded women’s struggles with male-made language and offered them a way to liberate themselves from the patriarchal linguistic constraints against which they were rebelling: “women’s silence, their (perceived) lack of ability, and their own sense of this are the result of the imposed use of a language that works against them, a masculine language that transcends the different individual languages, imposing silence upon women, and forcing them to translate in order to express themselves” (Flotow, “Feminism in Translation” 14). This shift towards playful creativity as a subversive feminine approach to language led to significant changes in translation theory, reframing translation as a typically female activity meant to counteract silencing and gendered oppression. The most important figures that defined the translation studies field in Canada at the time were Barbara Godard, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, Luise von Flotow, and Sherry Simon. Proceeding from equating the “secondary” (and commonly seen as purely instrumental) position of translators with the marginalized status of women in society, these feminist translation scholars challenged the conventional concept of fidelity in translation as a gendered construct and theorized the

practice of *resistant translation* as a way to express the translator's dissent, expose hidden biases, or pursue one's own activist agenda. In the 1980s, when these revolutionary ideas of a "deliberately interventionist translation that 'makes women's voices heard' and is a political strategy" (Flotow, "Feminism in Translation" 17) were first proposed, they were met with hostility by the field that "still largely believed that translation is an apolitical event, and the translator an innocent conduit" (Flotow, "Feminism in Translation" 18). However, they had a lasting impact that eventually redefined the entire discipline by bringing the aspects of agency, activism, and gendered embodiment into theoretical thinking about translation.

The implications of gender and body in translation are central for Godard, who engages with the concept of women's writing as an alternative literary tradition, using translation as a metaphor of female being-in-language and a subversive solution to the dilemma of "writing as a woman": "Mother's body, father's literature and language. Such duality would perpetuate silence or absence, however. To write, the woman must *translate* sensation into words, into literature" ("Heirs" 45). Godard's writing brings the figure of a female translator to centre stage as an agent of creative (and often political) intervention through her concept of textual "womanhandling"—a translating approach in which "[t]he feminist translator, affirming her critical difference, her delight in interminable re-reading and re-writing, flaunts the signs of her manipulation of the text" ("Theorizing" 94). Yet it is Lotbinière-Harwood who develops the practice of a feminist translator as a form of "rewriting in the feminine" (99)—from the site of female experience and with full recognition of women's moral agency<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> It must be pointed out that these discussions of embodiment and gendered languages are grounded in the second-wave feminist thought that largely reinforces binary thinking about gendered identities; a contemporary revision of these approaches to feminist translation needs to

Similar to Godard, Lotbinière-Harwood takes the female body as a starting point for her argument, proceeding from the assumption that women are inherently bilingual, endlessly having to translate between the dominant male and the muted female languages. Femininity, therefore, becomes synonymous with the act of translation itself—as Lotbinière-Harwood points out by applying the label of “belles infidèles” to both. However, as women translators continue to navigate male-made languages, they find that androcentric linguistic conventions are unable to accommodate female presences. As a result, a woman translator’s “being-in-language” means the need to “resex” the language itself to eliminate the existing linguistic bias and to make female bodies visible through translation (Lotbinière-Harwood 117). This can be achieved either with the help of neutralizing techniques that would erase dominant masculinity from the translated texts to create a sense of equality, or with the help of deliberate feminization—which is clearly the approach favoured by Lotbinière-Harwood. Drawing from her own translating experience, she outlines a number of non-conventional translating strategies meant to challenge the source text’s sexist or non-inclusive language or signify the translator’s resistant position. These strategies span all textual levels and include, among other things, grammatical transformations dealing with gendered nouns and pronouns, typographic solutions playing with the visual representation of the text or its layout, and creative word-building where words are assigned new meanings, blended together to create new lexical units, deliberately misspelled to enable a shift in meaning, or borrowed from other languages to fill a perceived linguistic gap. Where direct textual interferences are not possible or desirable, prefacing and footnoting are suggested as valuable tools to make the translator’s presence known, to indicate their position, or

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account for a multiplicity of gendered identities and move away from the conventional hierarchies.

to allow insight into their work process. Lotbinière-Harwood justifies these textual and extratextual interventions as an expression of the translator's creativity and commitment to the feminist agenda. She unequivocally rejects the idea of a translation's neutrality, claiming that it is always a product of the translator's voice—whether or not it is intended to be so. Accordingly, Lotbinière-Harwood's theory not only adds a rebellious, subversive agenda to the task of a feminist translator, but also reframes such a project as a valid choice a translator can make; “belles infidèles” give way to “re-belles et infidèles,” defining the new translator's role in terms of activism rather than fidelity.

With the shift towards the translator's activism enabled by Lotbinière-Harwood's theoretical approach, the role of literary translator is further evolving, from an invisible mediator to a conscious and visible collaborator—or even opponent—of the author. In this paradigm, any translation can be seen as a form of rewriting and co-writing that is highly contextual and meant to perform a particular time-sensitive function; it is not supposed to be an enduring, definitive representation of the source text, but rather a performative act serving a specific purpose. Consequently, in Lotbinière-Harwood's view, fidelity in translation cannot be treated as a universal requirement—the question to whom or what a translator should be faithful belongs exclusively to the sphere of the translator's ethics and decision-making.

Although Lotbinière-Harwood's translation theory, born out of her unorthodox translating practice, is significant in terms of its conceptualization of the feminist perspective on translation and its consistent deconstruction of the translation-specific power structures, it needs to be noted that the practical application of her approach is quite limited. As a translation scholar, Lotbinière-Harwood universalizes practical solutions that were initially developed and

implemented in a very narrow context—in the experimental French-English translations of Québécois feminist writers. As such, her translating innovations largely relied on the institutional support and acceptance of local publishers, editors, and reviewers who were primarily interested in the promotion of the feminist agenda and in the marketing of feminist literature to like-minded reading audiences. Furthermore, these translating strategies to a significant extent assumed and utilized the prospective readers' bilingualism as a necessary prerequisite for the translator's playful code-switching. These factors make Lotbinière-Harwood's suggestions both spatially/temporally limited and somewhat elitist; while they are contextually justified and highly innovative, they would be difficult to apply—or downright unacceptable—in mainstream translating practices.

Nevertheless, Lotbinière-Harwood's ideas about fidelity and the translator's invisibility had a significant impact on the development of feminist translation theories. They were further elaborated by Simon, who pursues the same project of challenging the clichéd translation metaphors. From Simon's perspective, transforming the language used to describe translation and its interplay of identities is an important task for a feminist translation scholar; such a discursive shift would eventually enable undoing of the conventional power structures consigning both women and translators to a decisively inferior position in relation to the (implicitly male) authors. As part of her attempt to upset the existing translation hierarchies, Simon engages with the issue of fidelity, reorienting it towards the translator's project rather than the authorial figure: "For feminist translation, fidelity is to be directed toward neither the author nor the reader, but toward the writing project—a project in which both writer and translator participate" (2). This claim, while emphasizing the collective, collaborative nature of the translating practice, still clearly indicates where Simon's loyalty lies: positing the writing project

as the cornerstone of the translation process prioritizes the translator's agency and demands both acknowledgement and discussion of the translator's decision-making and personal agenda in working with or against the source text.

At the same time, Simon qualifies and circumscribes the scope of the feminist translator's agency by arguing that distorting the original text's message cannot be its goal: "[f]eminist translation implies extending and developing the intention of the original text, not deforming it" (16). Even where a translator has to resort to resistant practices, Simon contends that the translator's dissenting voice should be visibly present in the text as a distinctly separate perspective. To remain ethical and responsible, the resistant translator should not try to silence the author or overwrite the authorial project—instead, the translator should be openly challenging the original to highlight their objections and to make their alternative position clear. For Simon, the translator's outspokenness about their goals and willingness to acknowledge their interventionism are key to the success of the translating project: "To the extent that the translator makes explicit his or her project, and constructs a translating relationship based on coherent esthetic and ethical principles, the translation can be considered successful" (36). Simon outlines supplementing and "hijacking" (understood as the feminist appropriation of non-feminist texts) as the main in-text strategies for such translating interventions, whereas prefacing and footnoting are suggested as paratextual spaces for the translator's self-positioning. Although these feminist translation practices are essentially very similar to those advocated for by Lotbinière-Harwood, Simon's insistence on the translators' openness enables a theoretical shift from feminist translation as a subversive, resistant reworking of meaning to direct and purposeful collaboration.

Feminist scholars' focus on the translator's role and the collaborative aspect of the translation process brings to the foreground the performative nature of translation. The revised notion of the translator's agency means a move away from the expectation of fidelity, which implies erasure of the translator's presence, and from the fixed binary oppositions between original and translation, author and translator, positing a more fluid and reciprocal relationship between the source and target: "Equivalence in translation, as contemporary translation theory emphasizes, cannot be a one-to-one proposition. The process of translation must be seen as a fluid production of meaning, similar to other kinds of writing. The hierarchy of writing roles, like gender identities, is increasingly to be recognized as mobile and performative" (Simon 13). In this reimagined model of the translation process, which prioritizes the translation project itself over the notions of originality and authority, both the source and target contexts as the two poles of cultural exchange are destabilized. Translation can no longer be treated as a "bridge" connecting two pre-existing, immutable realities; it is conceptualized as a creative process taking place in the hybrid space where the two cultures come into contact. As the ongoing globalization and migration processes continuously redefine borders, cultures, and identities, the contact zones are shifting, being recreated anew with each subsequent translation. This by default makes every translator's project incomplete, non-definitive, and performative—by reconfiguring the contact zone between the source and target cultural contexts, translation "brings into being the realities which it links" (Simon 152), inevitably transforming them both.

The concepts of performativity and hybridity in translation lead Simon to exploring it as a form of writing and rewriting from the borders—an act of cultural creation and transmission that is taking place from partial and constantly evolving cultural positions created and shaped by gender. For Simon, the translator's precarious "borderland" position is clearly marked as

feminine; however, it is not necessarily a position of weakness. Feminist translation scholars draw attention to various ways in which gender can become implicated in translation and affect actual translating practices: although translation was historically seen as a weaker form of authorship, it also provided a powerful means of self-expression for women translators, allowing them access to the literary world with its publication opportunities and offering them a safe space for intellectual engagements and political activism (Simon 39). Female translators used literary translation—and particularly, where applicable, the space in the translator's comments and prefaces—to find their public voice, build the networks of solidarity, or open new lines of communication otherwise unavailable for them. These subversive practices, apart from fostering mutually enriching cultural exchange and ensuring a point of entry into the literary world for women writers/translators, contributed to the transformation of a female translator's image from a "betrayed" to a cultural mediator transcending boundaries and barriers. For Simon, this shift in interpreting the figure of a woman translator—along with feminist revisions of the traditional translations of sacred texts and recovery of the work of lesser-known female authors—is one of the most important tasks of feminist translation theory.

Simon's idea of translator as a woman in the borderland has been further elaborated by other feminist scholars, including Pilar Godayol, who theorized a woman translator's position as working from a "frontera space," "a reflective and self-critical space in which the representations of the feminine subject translator are constantly modified and recreated" (13). This site of hybridity is marked by ongoing negotiations between self and other, where the resulting identity of the translating subject can never be fixed or defined but has to be challenged and explored as a continuously fluid and mobile concept: "The fact of questioning and problematizing the feminine subject in the practice of translating as/like a woman means accepting that contingency can never



be eliminated in the interweaving of gender and translation [...] Translating as/like a woman implies, then, proposing a non-stable and contingent representation of the feminine subject” (Godayol 12). The destabilization of basic translation-related categories thus suggested by both Simon and Godayol complicates the development of feminist translation theory in clear and concise terms. However, it opens up a way for the feminist approach to translation to transcend the binary choice between the modes of representation and resistance, bringing contingency to centre stage in the discussion of translation process and marking translation primarily as a site for questioning and problematizing identity rather than transmission of meaning.

Importantly, Simon’s theoretical approach lends itself to outlining key parallels between the conceptualizations of hybrid identities in feminist translation and postcolonial studies. The focus on hybridity—as well as migrancy—creates the potential to challenge the predominant whiteness largely implied by the Western feminist scholarship; it also exposes the interplay of power relations in contemporary cultural exchanges, with emphasis on inequality between the exchanging sides. Women “translate themselves” by navigating the space between their female consciousness and the language of patriarchy similar to how (non-white) migrants are forced to translate their cultural background into a dominant culture’s language to be able to survive and fit in. In both scenarios, the translation process highlights pathways for the movements of ideas, artistic forms, and personal experiences, inevitably revealing imbalances and misalignments between the source and target sides due to the lack of equivalence between the cultural systems. The cultural systems themselves should not be understood as homogeneous sets of fixed meanings and ideas; the meanings are not embedded in culture but emerge as a result of the continuous negotiation process. The translating project has to engage with the given culture’s system of values to enable its double purpose of deconstruction and reconstruction of meaning.

By so doing, the translator activates particular aspects or interpretations of the source text, making implicit meanings visible and uncovering the areas of cultural (in)compatibility. From this perspective, translation becomes the site of cultural production grounded in hybridity; as an activity, it “destabilizes cultural identities, and becomes the basis for new modes of cultural creation” (Simon 135)—with the potential either to undermine or reinforce the existing inequalities.

The same concerns are brought up in the work of Gayatri Spivak, who combines postcolonial and feminist approaches in her discussion of political implications of translation. Spivak examines primarily the cases where texts from “minor” local cultures are translated into English as the language of hegemony; while emphasizing the political weight and prestige of the dominant language, she advocates for the “translation that is grounded in feminist solidarity” (144) as a way to give voices and international visibility to feminist writers from developing nations. Translation, therefore, becomes the means of feminist resistance against the old colonial and more recent neo-colonial attitudes and stereotypes. Through translation, female writers and translators are able to reach out to each other across linguistic and cultural boundaries in an attempt to overturn the conventional hierarchies between “hegemonic” and “minor” cultures and to prevent marginalized women from becoming obscured simultaneously by their gender and by cultural politics.

For Spivak, such an expression of solidarity plays a central role in the act of translation, and the way she envisions a feminist translator’s role is determined by a somewhat utopian paradigm where the author’s and translator’s agendas are perfectly aligned. Accordingly, Spivak suggests that a translator needs to “surrender to the text” of the original (370)—a proposition that

unwittingly reproduces the language of dominance and subordination, reinforcing traditional perceptions of the hierarchy involved in the translation process. The model where a “first-world” translator is surrendering to a “third-world” female author may be seen as an attempt to remedy the postcolonial power imbalances in cultural exchanges; however, such a relationship is by no means universal and—despite Spivak’s acknowledgement of the translators’ interventionism and political activism—still operates in the same outdated framework of primary vs. secondary and “original” vs. “copy”.

This discrepancy becomes clear when Spivak—similar to Simon—seeks to explore and define the limits of the translator’s agency and theorizes it in terms of a loving relationship, with love for the original acting as a limiting factor: “The task of the translator is to facilitate this love between the original and its shadow, a love that permits fraying, holds the agency of the translator and the demands of her imagined or actual audience at bay” (Spivak 370). Love, therefore, is suggested as a replacement for the rejected ideal of fidelity. Yet, the reference to the translation as a “shadow” shows that such a seemingly idyllic relationship can be one-sided rather than reciprocal: while Simon’s concept of the “writing project” as a measure of the translator’s agency focuses on the collaborative aspect of the translating process, Spivak’s notion of love brings to the foreground its imitative function.

Furthermore, the idea of a perfectly harmonious relationship between the author and the translator is not applicable to many real-life scenarios—particularly, where a feminist translator has to engage with non-inclusive (or even openly sexist) writing. In her discussion of María Reimóndez’s Galician translation of Mark Haddon’s novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, Olga Castro describes how the translator’s inclusivity-motivated choices resulted

in a conflict with the proofreader/publisher and the author, eventually causing the translation to be rejected. Initially, the translator, forced to decide on the gender of some of the novel's unsexed minor characters while translating the neuter English forms into grammatically gendered Galician, chose to systematically alternate between the masculine and feminine in a way that would not reproduce the existing gendered stereotypes (Castro 45). However, the publisher (who in this situation was fully supported by the author) saw this strategy as an infringement on the author's rights and insisted on a retranslation in line with the dominant discursive values—with the prevailing use of generic masculine and with feminine forms used only to invoke common stereotypes (Castro 47)<sup>4</sup>. Castro criticizes this outcome, arguing that the translator's position of exclusive access to both cultures and double ethical responsibility towards both source and target texts makes them uniquely qualified to make decisions that have to be respected regardless of the author's own perspective: "Authors are responsible for their own writing, but it is the translator's responsibility to make decisions on how to best convey their understanding of the source text [...] collaboration with the author is an option, but should not be seen as an imperative" (50). Nevertheless, the fact that the translator's inclusive choice was overlooked in favour of a more conventional (and arguably sexist) approach not only problematizes the author-translator relationship, but also highlights an enormous gap that still exists between translation theory and real-life translating practices. Although translation studies as a discipline has moved beyond the requirements of fidelity, neutrality, and invisibility, these normative values are still commonly applied by both authors and publishers to judge the translators' work. Translation is still widely seen as hierarchically inferior to original writing,

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<sup>4</sup> Haddon's support of the publisher in this case seems ironic in light of his more recent involvement with the #TranslatorsOnTheCover campaign.

and, as such, is often modelled on the target culture's dominant discourses. Respectively, translators are expected to comply with such obsolete and irrelevant standards if they want to be considered professional, and their status in the hierarchy of the publishing business leaves them very limited options to insist on their vision. As a result, Castro's study reveals an ethical dilemma faced by many translators: where seamless collaboration with the author—as favoured by Spivak—is not possible or where other stakeholders cannot be persuaded that the translator's interpretation is valid, the translator may have to compromise their values to achieve professional success. At the same time, resistance requires the translator to openly acknowledge their own agenda because, as Castro argues, “failing to consciously subscribe to one particular ideology implies unconsciously adhering to the dominant ideology” (39). From this perspective, Simon's emphasis on the translator's outspokenness becomes especially relevant, as it provides translators with the means to resist their silencing and censorship.

The theoretical concept of translators' agency—along with its practical limitations—was further explored by Flotow, who used gender as a lens for researching translating practices. As a feminist translation scholar, Flotow moves away from the traditional focus on fidelity and equivalence, introducing difference as a fundamental principle; in her work, she investigates how “cultural and contextual differences impose themselves, making *difference*, and not equivalence, the constant of translation” (“Tracing” 41). She demonstrates that difference is inevitable and always governed by context: each translation is produced under specific circumstances that can never be identical or comparable to the factors affecting the production of the original, and this unavoidable discrepancy makes the notion of equivalence unrealistic and unhelpful. Flotow applies a broader definition of context in her discussion of the translating process, including in it “all the conditions affecting the production, the publication, the dissemination, the reception, the

lack of reception and the revival of a text” (“Tracing” 44), in addition to personal subjectivities of multiple involved parties (such as the translators, editors, publishers, and so on) expressed in the form of paratext, metatext, or otherwise. If the translator’s work is to a significant extent shaped by such contextual factors and various personal inputs, the resulting translation has to be seen as a collaborative effort and a project produced by multiple co-authors.

In Flotow’s view, this proposition, with its focus on collaboration and complex mediation of meaning, leads to destabilizing the privileged position of the author and the notion of originality itself. Whereas Castro’s study shows that the author’s position may and sometimes should be questioned in the context of the translator’s project, Flotow takes it one step ahead by arguing that there is “no ultimate authority, no originality, only difference and change” (Flotow, “Tracing” 45). Such claims, however, are not meant to be interpreted as an expression of disrespect or to dismiss the authorial position as irrelevant; rather, their goal is to shift the power balance in the author-translator relationship and to carve out more space for the translator’s autonomous decision-making.

Reframing the author’s authority as relative and contextual also helps to justify the resistant and interventionist translation practices theorized by feminist scholars. Since the target text’s readers typically approach the translated work at a spatial (and often temporal) remove—and under specific circumstances that may substantially differ from those of the source text’s consumers—context, and not authorship, often becomes the key factor defining the translation project. Furthermore, postcolonial processes of decoupling of language and nation widely seen in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, along with the ongoing demographic and cultural shifts caused by globalization, international mobility and migration, as well as modern communication technologies (Flotow,

“Tracing” 45), take contextual aspects of translation and literary text consumption to a new level. As a result, preserving the source text’s original intent—as understood by the translating subject—in the new circumstances may require the translator to resort to the strategy that Flotow terms “‘hijacking’ into the context” (“Tracing” 46). This practice involves purposeful recontextualization of the original narrative where the translator aims to amplify (what they believe to be) the key message of the source text using different and often non-conventional means; the goal is to make the text relevant for achieving a specific purpose in its target context. Flotow exemplifies this claim by referring to the 1994 book *Translating Slavery: Gender and Race in French Women’s Writing–1783–1823*, which examined how the language of both black heroines and female abolitionist activists was altered and “normalized” in English translation to avoid their biased characterization in the eyes of a contemporary reader and to conceal the “otherness” of the 18<sup>th</sup> century voices the reader was supposed to identify with<sup>5</sup> (Flotow, “Tracing” 47). “Hijacking” is, therefore, presented as a justifiable strategy that translators may use to adapt the content of the source text to the new context. Accordingly, prioritizing the context (and not the fidelity) becomes the cornerstone of the feminist approach to translation. As such, context offers a key limiting factor that—as suggested by both Flotow and Simon—simultaneously enables the translator’s agency and outlines realistic boundaries within which it can be exercised.

“Hijacking” as a consciously applied translating technique is essentially similar to recovering the work of the “lost” women writers and translators, which is another feminist project Flotow advocates for. In both cases, the focus is on gender-aware recontextualization of

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<sup>5</sup> While the historicity of this particular strategy may be debatable, this example demonstrates effectiveness of the hijacking approach in shaping the readers’ perceptions and responses.

the source material that would otherwise be ignored or misunderstood in the target culture's context. For Flotow, recovering the forgotten works of female authors and translators—particularly in the case of “feminized” retranslations of religious sacred texts that she sees as highly ideological (“Tracing” 42)—is significant as a way to shine the spotlight on female creativity as a subversive act of resistance. It offers a chance to reassess the history of women in literature and translation by uncovering an alternative female tradition tracing back to the lost “foremothers.” Revisiting their work is a powerful tool that can reveal women's struggles with the androcentric language and the historical role of translation as the only creative outlet allowing them to have a voice. It also brings to light the precarious position of female translators who have to mediate not simply between languages and cultures, but also between societal preconceptions of masculine and feminine, private and public: “Translators live between two cultures, and women translators live between at least three, patriarchy (public sphere) being the omnipresent third” (Flotow, *Translation and Gender* 36). To some extent, Flotow's argument about the female translator's unstable and dependent position is mirrored by Marilyn Gaddis Rose's discussion of interliminality as a hybrid space where the act of translation occurs: “The translation will demarcate the boundary thresholds between the work itself, the translation, and the interliminal space that the translator has enclosed both as proxy author and as proxy reader” (Rose 5). Yet, as Rose's claim shows, interliminal space—apart from signifying dependence—can also be shaped and defined by the translator as the only subject fully inhabiting it; from this perspective, the position of in-betweenness may be seen as not only the site of the translator's vulnerability but also the source of their power.

Flotow's focus on the revisionary translating practices and on the translators' interliminal positionality leads her to positing the non-definitive nature of translation as its important



prerequisite rather than deficiency: “Precisely because every text can be retranslated and every myth can be rewritten, seriality is a condition of translation, a condition that has no end, and no beginning” (*Translation and Gender* 47). The fact that any translation is essentially non-final and subject to the possibility of retranslation makes it a powerful tool for revisiting history and challenging dominant preconceptions. Flotow’s own critique of Howard M. Parshley’s 1953 translation of Simone de Beauvoir’s *Le deuxième sexe*, which exposed the English version as incomplete and profoundly biased in its selective omissions, contributed to the production of the 2009 retranslation, thus helping to reclaim de Beauvoir as a fundamental feminist thinker for the English-language readership (Flotow, “Translating Women” 130). As this example suggests, seriality in translation means that every translated version of a particular source text can be revised and improved upon in subsequent iterations serving as a form of critical response. However, it also means that each of such versions would be definitively marked by the circumstances of its own production. As Rose argues, apart from being bound to a particular temporal context, each retranslation is typically reflective of the dominant ideology at the time and place where it was produced and is further individualized by the impact of the translator’s personality (Rose 7), which Flotow concisely defines as “translator-effect” (Flotow, *Translation and Gender* 35). This argument undermines the model of linear equivalence between the source and target texts: although they should be treated as having equal standing in their respective literary polysystems, one cannot fully supersede the other. Any translation—even if it currently enjoys a canonized status in its respective cultural context—should rather be seen as a single element in a series of (actually existing or potential) versions where each item has limited acceptability and applicability. Any discussion of fidelity, therefore, needs to be reoriented from a definitive one-to-one relationship towards a one-to-many correspondence model with focus on

continuous negotiation of meaning and multiplicity of scripts performing the source text in the target cultural context.

This shift away from the binary understanding of translation and reimagining of the underlying source-target relationship within a more complex framework means that conventional gendered metaphors of translation as described by Chamberlain are completely irrelevant to the actual multidimensionality of the translation process. Even the feminist scholars' attempts to subvert the stereotype of translator as a traitor and to reclaim femininity as a position of authority in translation can be seen as flawed, since they essentially reduce the problematics of gender to advocating for femininity, largely ignoring the issues of queer culture (Flotow, "Feminism in Translation" 19). In response to this criticism, Flotow introduces the concept of "queerying" translation. Relying on Judith Butler's gender performativity theory, she brings to the foreground the concepts of contingency and performativity as important attributes of translation that are mirrored by the queer theory's perspective on gender: "Queer theories similarly avoid the old binaries; while they view gender as a construct, it is one that is performatively contingent—on individuals, situations, discourses, and other aspects of social interactions/interventions" (Flotow, "Translating Women" 131). Therefore, Flotow suggests that performativity applies to both gender and translation: if gender is theorized as a "condition that can be assumed or rejected, imposed or refused" (131), then it enables—similar to translation—flexible context-bound performances of a fixed script. Unlike Butler, who sees the framework of performativity as constrained and pre-determined by the dominant discourse, Flotow points out its liberating potential. The notion of translation as a fleeting act of performance rather than an established equivalent offers the translator a certain leeway in deciding what aspects of the translated text should be accentuated or obscured—thus creating theoretical grounds for the translator's social

and political activism reclaiming the “interlocutory space” between the source and target cultures (“Translating Women” 133). The resulting translating decisions may be affected not only by the translators’ intentions to criticize or reveal various flaws and injustices, but also by the need to highlight what they believe to be most useful or desirable for the text’s target readership (Flotow, “Translating Women” 133). “Queerying” translation, consequently, is conceptualized as an approach that disrupts customary one-dimensional relationships in translation, replacing them with a network of more complex interconnections, where the focus is on difference rather than sameness and contextual relevance rather than fidelity.

In terms of translation metaphors, Flotow marks this significant shift by suggesting a female-centred image as an alternative to the traditional unfaithful wife analogy or to the androcentric Oedipal myth reimagining the translator as a usurping son dethroning the author-father. Relying on Bracha Ettinger’s concept of “the non-rejection of the unknown non-I(s)”, she introduces a symbolic parallel between translation and a woman’s body in late pregnancy, where the source-target dynamics is modelled on the intimate relationship between a mother and her unborn and yet unknown child (Flotow, “Translating Women” 136). This metaphor signifies a revision of psychoanalytic thought in the study of translation: Flotow attempts to formulate a feminist version of psychoanalytic translation theory by centring it on the feminine, maternal (rather than masculine) imagery. In this framework, the mother-child connection accentuates closeness, affinity, and interdependence instead of separateness; the notion of derivativeness is clearly present, but it does not imply secondariness or inferiority. Even though one grows out of the other, the process of growth and transformation affects both parent and offspring, eventually resulting in two distinct but interrelated—and equally valuable—identities. Flotow applies this maternal paradigm to the process of translation, theorizing it as “a matrixial relationship, a

metamorphic activity” (“Translating Women” 136), where the focus shifts from establishing equivalence to acknowledging and accepting difference of the unknown other: “the translational relation is seen as one of encounter, exchange, and mutual transformation rather than assimilation, displacement, or rejection” (“Translating Women” 137). This proposition means that both difference and acceptance of it become critical prerequisites for a successful translating relationship, and that the condition of originality has to be revised. The translation seen as a “child” is no longer a pale imitation of the “parent” but rather an “original” in itself. With both sides of the exchange permanently in flux and contributing to the reciprocal transformative process, difference is not only inevitable but positive as a factor of exploration and enrichment—as long as the “familial bond” is maintained through systemic commonalities. As a result, Flotow’s concept of a mother-child dyad modelling the connection between the source and target texts reframes the idea of fidelity in translation in terms of matrilineal genealogy instead of paternalistic hierarchy.

Flotow’s innovative revision of translation metaphors, which places the female body at the heart of contemporary translation theory, is a part of a wider feminist project of rethinking the nature and power of translation—an initiative that serves the ultimate purpose of rewriting the history and mythology of translation from a feminist perspective, as well as laying down theoretical foundations for the translators’ interventionism and sociopolitical activism. The interventionist strategies advocated by Flotow and other feminist scholars are highly creative and subversive in the way they enable the translators’ visibility and reinscribe obscured femininity through translation, while “making up for the differences between various patriarchal languages by employing wordplay, grammatical dislocations and syntactic subversion” (Flotow, *Translation and Gender* 24). These techniques—although very effective in their specific

context—were successful particularly because they met the demands of the cultural setting and historical period in which they originated, essentially serving the needs and satisfying the tastes of Canadian feminist literary community from 1980s onwards. They were never adopted into mainstream translating practices outside of Canadian publishing industry and the French-English literary translation scene of the time. Flotow herself recognizes important limitations of these experimental translating methods, speaking to their limited context-bound applicability and perceived elitism (“Tracing” 46). However, the advances made by Canadian feminist scholars and their controversial ideas had a significant theoretical impact on translation studies, largely defining how the discipline envisions the agency of the translating subject and the potential of translation in undermining dominant discourses and resisting the structures of power.

***Berman’s “Positive Criticism”: Translation Analysis Methodology***

Despite its substantial achievements, feminist translation scholarship is still lacking a consistent approach to translation analysis that would enable the systematic evaluation of translated texts in line with the scholars’ declared theoretical principles. Such a methodological model would be a necessary step towards bridging the gap between the theoretical reconceptualization of translation—which could be seen as a purely intellectual and essentially elitist mental exercise—and the actual application of these ideas in real-life translating practices. I believe that the “positive criticism” approach proposed by Berman in *Towards a Translation Criticism: John Donne* could provide a sound foundation for developing such a model. For the purpose of my case study, I will be using an analytical methodology that is largely based on Berman’s ideas, particularly as regards the combination of textual and extratextual aspects of the translating process and accountability of the translator’s agency.

Berman's approach to translation analysis is grounded in his understanding of criticism as a positive and creative act rather than an inherently negativistic judgment of errors. From his perspective, translation criticism is an essential component of a successful cultural transfer—a translation needs to be supported by critical works to become fully “transplanted” and to start affecting the recipient culture (Berman, *Towards a Translation Criticism* 7). Moreover, the two are structurally intertwined, as translation itself may function as a form of criticism: “Whether he feeds on critical works or not in order to translate such-and-such a foreign book, the translator acts like a critic at all levels. When translation is retranslation, it is, implicitly or not, a ‘criticism’ of previous translations” (28). It must be added that any translation could be seen as a critical response simply because it offers its own interpretation of the original. Nevertheless, this broad understanding of criticism means that translation analysis performs an important dual function that goes beyond obvious pointing out of deficiencies: it makes translation visible as such, revealing any markers that link it to a particular temporal, spatial, and cultural context in which it was produced (Berman, *Towards a Translation Criticism* 28), and it sets the scene for future retranslations, thus fostering literary transfer processes and ongoing intercultural dialogue.

Berman's focus on the constructive aspect of translation criticism first and foremost as a way to demonstrate to the reader “the positive *creative act [faire-oeuvre]* of the *translator*” (*Towards a Translation Criticism* 79) makes his approach largely translator-centred. In this respect, his theory converges with the theoretical principles advocated by such feminist scholars as Flotow, Simon, and Lotbinière-Harwood. Although Berman does not acknowledge the similarities his analytical model shares with feminist translation theory, there is significant overlap between the two in terms of how they conceptualize the source-target relationships in literary translation and particularly the role and power of the translator in the transfer process.

Thus, Berman insists on the autonomy of translated literary texts as works of art in their own right, rejecting the widespread notion that translation is inherently “secondary” to the “primary” source text and unavoidably “defective” simply by reason of not being the original (*Towards a Translation Criticism* 29). Instead, he emphasizes a possibility that a translation may become a “new original” (30) and attain a consecrated and enduring status in the target literary polysystem through realizing its own originality potential. For Berman—as for the feminist scholars—this undoing of the clear-cut hierarchy between the source and target texts and blurring of such categories as “original” and “derivative” undermine the dominance of fidelity as a mandatory requirement in translation. In this framework, faithfulness to the original—in its traditional sense—is no longer applicable as a criterion for judging the quality of translations; for the concept to be useful from an analytical point of view, it has to be reoriented in a way that would reflect the ongoing theoretical shifts in translation-related values.

Berman solves this dilemma by transposing the concept of fidelity from the normative expectation of textual “sameness” to the sphere of translating ethics. In line with his definition of translation as “trial of the foreign” (“Translation” 276), he posits that the ethics of the translating act consists in “receiving the Foreign as Foreign” (“Translation and the Trials of the Foreign” 277)—although this task can be compromised by various manipulations, deformations, and other domesticating or appropriating intrusions employed by the translators. Thus, any purposeful transformation within the text can be viewed as a sign of the translator’s disrespect for the original—and, accordingly, a violation of the ethics requirement. However, from Berman’s standpoint, a translation can be considered “truthful” as long as the translator remains respectfully open about their intentions and consistent in their translating project. Any of the translator’s interventions can, therefore, only be deemed unethical if they are knowingly

concealed from the reader: “there is untruthfulness only insofar as the manipulations are silent, unacknowledged. Not saying what one is going to do, for instance, to adapt rather than to translate, or doing something other than what one has announced, is what [...] the critic must forcefully denounce. The translator has every right as soon as he is open” (Berman, *Towards a Translation Criticism* 75). This argument mirrors Simon’s insistence on the translator’s openness about the goals of their translating project as the measure of the project’s success and integrity. The focus on the inner workings of the translator’s agency brings the two theoretical approaches even closer, revealing how they can be aligned from an analytical point of view.

Arguably, Berman takes his prioritization of the translating subject one step further, as he makes full transparency an ethical responsibility of the intervening translator and raises the lack of the translator’s visibility as a legitimate point of criticism. It is clear that even this demand has certain limitations because it either ignores or fails to notice the subversive aspect of the translating activity pointed out by the feminist scholars. In fact, the requirement of complete openness can hardly be applicable to various scenarios where translators operate in hostile conditions and either are not allowed or choose not to speak out. Berman himself is largely oblivious to the implications of gender in translation—although he denounces the stereotype of translation as being “secondary,” he never makes the connection between its “secondariness” and marginalized femininity; moreover, his consistent use of masculine pronouns when referring to translators reads as problematic. Nevertheless, the significant overlap between Berman’s approach and feminist translation theories shows not only how the two can be combined in a mutually enriching manner, but also how the translation studies discipline, despite its diversity of reasonings, approaches, and perspectives, is irreversibly moving away from the restrictive



framework of fidelity, searching for new language to discuss translation as a process—and new analytical criteria to be able to judge its products.

In terms of such new criteria, Berman posits the concepts of ethics and poeticality as the cornerstones of literary translation. In his interpretation, ethics (as previously shown) largely hinges on the translator's respect for the original, while poeticality signifies the literary quality of a translator-authored text as an autonomous—although unambiguously derivative—work of art (Berman, *Towards a Translation Criticism* 74). Taken together, both requirements are meant to ensure a relationship of “correspondence” between the source and target texts, which, in Berman's view, is much more complex and less straightforward than the conventional faithful/unfaithful dichotomy. Correspondence is oriented simultaneously towards the source text and the target language (Berman, *Towards a Translation Criticism* 76) and is treated as a measure of not only re-creation—in the meaning of maintaining a traceable originary relationship between the two textual versions—but also of “new creation” in the translating process. As a concept, correspondence is deliberately vague, but precisely its intentional polysemy makes it flexible and applicable to a wide range of contexts and translation projects that cannot be adequately analyzed within the one-dimensional fidelity paradigm.

Most importantly, Berman's approach lays down the foundations for a systematic and consistent methodology of translation analysis that enables a holistic approach to the translated text through combining textual and extratextual aspects. His model is broken down into a series of non-conventional steps that are meant to address both the process and the product of literary translation: 1) the study of the translation as an autonomous text, 2) the study of the original, 3) comparative analysis of both texts with a heavy emphasis on the translator's decision-making,

and 4) overview of the translation's critical reception to evaluate the success of the relevant literary transfer.

Within the framework of this methodology, the analysis process starts with studying the translation itself outside of its relationship with the original, with the goal of determining whether the translated text can “stand” on its own and whether it possesses integrity that Berman terms “immanent consistency” (*Towards a Translation Criticism* 50). This initial phase is to be followed by a careful study of the original as a form of “textual pre-analysis” (Berman, *Towards a Translation Criticism* 51) leading to the eventual confrontation between the two versions. Berman suggests that this pre-analytical stage should focus on selecting “those passages of the original [...] where the work condenses, represents, signifies, or symbolizes itself. These passages are signifying zones where a literary work reaches its own purpose (not necessarily that of the author) and its own center of gravity” (Berman, *Towards a Translation Criticism* 54). Pre-analysis based on the interpretation of such signifying zones not only establishes a starting point for the subsequent examination of the translation project but also offers a space for the researcher's own critical self-positioning.

The third—and central—part of the translation analysis model focuses on the translators themselves as the key actors and empowered agents of the transfer process. Berman names the following key criteria used for determining the nature (and degree) of the translator's agency: 1) “the translating position” (*Towards a Translation Criticism* 58), 2) “the translation project” (60), and 3) “the horizon of the translator” (63). The translating position relates to the translator's theoretical approach and is understood as “the compromise between the way in which the translator [...] perceives that task of translation, and the way in which he has internalized the surrounding

discourse on translation (the norms) [...] the self-positioning of the translator vis-à-vis translation, a self-positioning that, once chosen (for it is, in fact, a choice) binds the translator” (Berman, *Towards a Translation Criticism* 58). The concept of the translation project focuses more on the practical realization of this theoretical understanding and is broadly construed as the purpose of translation (whether consciously articulated or not). It “defines the way in which the translator is going to realize the literary transfer and to take charge of the translation itself, to choose a ‘mode’ of translation, a translation ‘style’” (Berman, *Towards a Translation Criticism* 60). Finally, the translator’s horizon considers multiple outside factors and is seen as “the set of linguistic, literary, cultural, and historical parameters that ‘determine’ the ways of feeling, acting, and thinking of the translator” (Berman, *Towards a Translation Criticism* 63), thus providing a wider contextual background to the translator’s professional activity.

The next stage, focusing on the translation analysis itself, signals a return to the comparative textual study where the actual confrontation between the available textual iterations of the same literary work takes place. Berman argues that such confrontations occur not only between the textual versions and their particular “signifying zones” but also between the projects themselves, including possible tensions between various translations and retranslations (*Towards a Translation Criticism* 69). However, these tensions can only become visible and understandable if several translated versions are analyzed back-to-back within the paradigm of their relationships with the source text and with each other.

In my adapted methodology based on Berman’s model, I will be focusing on making such confrontations visible by studying the translations of Munro’s texts into three target languages through a comparative lens. While my analysis will generally follow Berman’s

outline, the shift towards multiple target-language versions will require some methodological changes, with partial rearrangement of the key steps. The case study will begin with the pre-analytical part focusing on the examination of the source texts; this initial phase (corresponding to Chapter 2) is meant to determine an interpretive baseline for further translation analysis. The central part of the critical process (Chapter 3) will address intertextual tensions and confrontations as a way to gain a deeper understanding of the translators' creative agency. Building on the independent study of each translation as an autonomous text (step 1 in Berman's classification) and drawing from the available information on the translators' positions and cultural horizons, I will incorporate the resulting observations into a comparative analytical framework that will highlight the goals, means, and results of each particular translation project. The next stage of the analysis (Chapter 4) will centre on the extratextual factors affecting the translators' visibility and the outcome of literary transfer. This section will supplement Berman's model with a study of the translator-authored paratext as a potential visibility zone, along with a survey of the translators' first-hand comments on their projects as intended and as realized. Finally, the process will conclude—as Berman's model does—with the analysis of the translation's reception, which will allow to reach important conclusions about the success or failure of the attempted literary transfer.

This multilevel approach is meant to enable a comprehensive representation of the translation process in all its complexity, while putting an emphasis on the role of the translator's agency and decision-making. My perspective on literary translation will be firmly grounded in the ideas and concepts of feminist translation scholars, contextualized through the lens of the polysystem theory and intersections with the world literature studies. Accordingly, I will rely on the conceptual framework that prioritizes translating subjectivity as a driving force of the cultural

exchange process, while rejecting conventional translation hierarchies and requirements of fidelity; the idea of interconnectedness growing out of difference will be key to this model. Essentially, this approach will highlight tensions between the translators' personal choices and normative expectations to which they are subjected, revealing not only the crucial role of the translators' agency but also how it may become constrained by cultural or ideological factors, causing the translation projects to either resist or perpetuate dominant discursive values. In this respect, my integrated analysis methodology largely based on Berman' critical model is suggested as a tool that can make such tensions and their wider implications visible by drawing attention to the dialectic of agency and norm in the literary translation context. Conceptualized as a way to bridge the gap between translation theory and practice and to systematize the analytical process by aligning it with the key theoretical advancements in translation studies, this methodological model aims to provide a new framework for evaluating translation quality both on the textual and extratextual level. Apart from foregrounding and normalizing non-conventional translation practices, it is designed to advance the study of translation primarily as an empowering translator-centred activity rooted in multiplicity and difference.

## **Chapter 2. Source Text Analysis: The Feminist Subtext of Munro's "Minor Literature"**

The focus on the translators' agency in translation analysis does not diminish the importance of the authorial narrative project as a starting point of the translators' creative meaning-building. In fact, feminist translation scholarship puts a special emphasis on uncovering and recreating the (female) authors' voices through translation (see Henitiuk, "Translating Women's Silences"). Marilyn Gaddis Rose, while mapping out the complex interlocking of constructive and reconstructive aspects in the translating process, states that "[a] translation remains what the copyright law says: a derivative work. But it is a derivative that validates the etymology" (72). The etymology, in the case of literary translation, can be interpreted as the imperative originary connection between the author's and the translator's voices claiming narrative authority. While the relationship between the notions of originality and derivativeness, as well as between "original" and "translation," is debatable, an examination of the "originals" is vitally important for understanding the translation projects they inform and the voice(s) they represent. This chapter will focus on the six stories by Alice Munro ("Child's Play," "Too Much Happiness," "The Eye," "Night," "Voices," and "Dear Life," the latter four being combined in a short story cycle titled "Finale") to offer an interpretation of their feminist subtext as a reflection of the author's overall narrative project and to establish an analytical benchmark for subsequent engagement with the respective translation projects in Russian, Ukrainian, and German.

In my preliminary remarks, I will address the controversial notions of "source text" or "original," their treatment in contemporary translation theories, and implications of the related theoretical shifts for the practice of literary translation. Further, I will discuss the issues of authorship, textual instability, and interpretation, which pose substantial challenges for literary

translators, particularly in the circumstances of significant textual variation that often apply to Munro's work (see Fladd and Beran). The next section will outline my position regarding the suggested feminist readings of Munro's stories, summarizing the most important critical debates concerning the writer's relation to feminist thought and substantiating the significance of the feminist elements to her writing. The rest of the chapter will comprise the textual analysis of all six stories, with primary emphasis on gender-related themes, motifs, and imagery. The resulting analytical framework will demonstrate that the feminist subtext of Munro's stories is critical both for the understanding of the author's overarching intertextual project of creating an alternative female-centred and historically contextualized type of narrative meant to challenge and disrupt conventional storytelling forms—"minor literature," to borrow Deleuze and Guattari's term—and for the creative meaning production in translating her fiction.

### ***Originality, Authorship, Interpretation***

The discussion of source texts in the context of literary translation would not be accurate without indicating how problematic the concepts of "source" and "original" essentially are. The "original" works underlying all translators' efforts are almost never available as solid entities, and any search for a pure and reliable "source text" on which to base a translation would be futile. As Karen Emmerich posits in *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals*, "The textual condition is one of variance, not stability. The process of translation both grapples with and extends that variance, defining the content and form of an "original" in the very act of creating yet another textual manifestation of a literary work in a new language" (2). Drawing a distinction between a "text" and a "work," Emmerich asserts that most literary works exist in a variety of diverging textual forms rather than a single and unchangeable original. Depending on the particular circumstances surrounding their creation, circulation, and/or publication history,

most written or oral works of literature, whether created by known, unknown, or collective authors, display varying degrees of textual instability. This instability finds its expression in the prevalence of multiple versions, neither of which can be definitively pinned down as the only true original. Differences between such versions may be major or minor, and variations may occur as a result of editing, rewriting, censorship, adaptation, abridgement, copying, publication, medium and mode of circulation, or simply misunderstanding. The resulting fluidity of any so-called “source text” inevitably adds to the problematics of translation.

According to Emmerich, “The very idea of a textual ‘origin’ or ‘source’ not only ignores the many sources upon which an ‘original’ may itself rest, but rhetorically strips translations of *their* potential for what we conventionally (if problematically) call ‘originality’” (14). As she contends, translation exercises its originality potential not only by offering a new version of the fluid “source text” in another language, but also by defining the very starting point from which it proceeds: “I argue that each translator creates her own original, fixes a particular text as the ‘prior’ text to be translated—fixes it sometimes before translating, and sometimes during and even by way of the process we tend to think of as ‘translation proper.’ So-called originals are not given but made, and translators are often party to that making” (Emmerich 13). While this claim may underestimate the collective and hierarchical nature of the translation process, it makes an important point about the complex nature of “original” writing and its implications for the translation of literary works.

In the case of Munro, this argument has particular significance, since the textual instability of her fiction may be interpreted as the writer’s conscious choice, and, accordingly, determining the source text version to base a translation on has to be the first of many decisions a



translator would have to face. As an author widely published in multiple literary magazines—and, most importantly, a celebrated *New Yorker* contributor—Munro is known to have collaborated with editors who introduced and even insisted on substantial cuts and alterations to many of her stories. Most of her pieces that have been published prior to being collected exist in two or more versions marked by varying degrees of editorial intrusion, the intensity of which decreased over time as the writer acquired a more established status. During her decades-long association with *The New Yorker*, Munro has worked closely with five fiction editors—Charles McGrath, Daniel Menaker, Bill Buford, Alice Quinn, and Deborah Treisman—and under four editors-in chief: William Shawn, Robert Gottlieb, Tina Brown, and David Remnick (Fladd 199). These relationships were often fraught with tension, as Munro resisted substantial changes and was not willing to relinquish authority over her texts. Moreover, the results of such editorial interactions largely depended on the power dynamics involved and the editor's willingness to break the mould of prescribed patterns—as was the case with McGrath:

Although the author/editor relationship was, formally, a hierarchical one in the sense that the editor held more institutional power than the author and both had defined roles, the fact that Munro was already an established writer when she began publishing in *The New Yorker* helped to reduce the power differential between her role and McGrath's, thus freeing McGrath to abandon the hierarchical approach other *New Yorker* editors have used and adopt a more fluid role in relation to Munro's work. (Fladd 222)

While such collaborations produced a number of successful publications, Munro was not always happy with the outcome. In many cases, she reversed those editorial changes in subsequently published collections. It can be argued that her long-term relationship with *The New Yorker* helped her to crystallize her writing style and find her unique voice, albeit in a paradoxical way

by making the reasons for her original choices all the more clear—especially where those choices conflicted with the magazine’s editorial requirements.

The changes introduced by *The New Yorker*’s editors mostly reflected the way the magazine “branded” Munro for its reading audience. For instance, the editors Americanized her spelling to bring it into compliance with the magazine’s internal standards, but at the same time accentuated her Canadianness and regionalism, making her distinctly “foreign.” Editorial revisions also significantly downplayed the gothic features of Munro’s writing, which mostly related to her depiction of Ontario localities, and toned down her explicit or graphic language as regards the representation of female bodies and sexuality. The most illustrative examples discussed by Carol Beran include description of female pubic hair compared to a dead rat in “Lichen,” suggestive language in “The Turkey Season,” as well as sex scenes in “White Dump” and “The Moon in the Orange Street Skating Rink” (208). Similar modifications were applied to colloquial or vulgar expressions used by Munro to convey the typical manner of speech of her uneducated lower-class characters. The magazine’s editors consistently took out colloquialisms and obscenities from Munro’s stories, classifying these stylistic devices as “language and descriptions that might offend conservative readers” (Beran 207)—that is, *The New Yorker*’s primary audience. While bordering on censorship, such editorial choices still—at least formally—required the author’s consent and cooperation.

These types of alterations generally undermined Munro’s subversive portrayals of body, romance, and sexuality, but also the authenticity of her characters, making them more cultured and well-mannered than originally intended. These interventions effectively transformed the author’s voice, infusing it with other, external presences. As Nadine Fladd suggests, such editorial collaborations produced “a third voice: the author construct or function that is ‘*The New*

*Yorker's* Alice Munro” (225), who was substantially different from the author writing on her own terms. Importantly, from a translation theory perspective, the existence of such diverging versions inevitably presents a translator with a dilemma: how to “brand” the author to the overseas target audiences, and how to choose between several varying source texts?

Furthermore, according to Fladd, who theorizes such editorially influenced magazine publications as “multiply-authored,” “[t]hese unsigned co-authorships also help to reveal the constructed, historically contingent nature of our current concept of authorship” (28).

Whereas the traditional understanding of authorship emphasizes the primacy and uniqueness of the original text, postmodernist literary and translation scholarship, as illustrated by Emmerich’s argumentation, tends to acknowledge that any kind of writing is unfixed, originates from multiple sources, and is subject to various influences, which in many ways makes it derivative. This debunking of originality as a myth may contradict the writers’ own understanding of their work as a mode of self-expression, which is demonstrated, for instance, by Munro’s protectiveness of her writing and resistance to any external intrusions. The prioritization of authorship and authorial intention is particularly typical for feminist literary theory. Due to women’s historically limited access to the production and publication of literary works, attention to the author’s identity and agency has become a crucial part of feminist literary criticism engaging with recovery of lost women writers and seeking to reclaim the erased female literary traditions. As stated by Rita Felski, because women’s writing “has often been seen as derivative and secondary, minor rather than universal, authorized by others rather than self-authorizing” (58), feminist scholars have to defend authorship “as an indispensable part of the feminist toolkit, a way of tracking the historical injustices faced by women writers and of moving toward more adequate and inclusive forms of scholarship” (58).

However, it has to be recognized that the question of authorship is not always straightforward and that, more often than not, widely circulated literary texts tend to be multiply-authored or at least marked by external interventions. Moreover, the issue of authorial intent is equally problematic, as in most cases there is no way of knowing what the author's intention or underlying message was, unless the writer has provided an extensive commentary on the meaning of their work. Consequently, any discussion of an author's agenda would hinge on a highly subjective and open-ended interpretation. So the author, in turn, becomes a fictional projection constructed by the reader: "An author," writes Felski, "is not a solid and unshakable presence that precedes a work of art and guarantees its meaning, but a figure created by a particular way of reading [...]. The author does not simply create a text; rather a text—or more precisely a particular way of reading a text—creates an author" (63). Therefore, even where readers (or translators) choose to prioritize the text itself as a manifestation of the author's vision, they have to start by defining both the message and its meaning based on their personal perspective. Interpretation becomes key to determining which of the available textual versions will be treated as the source text for a translation project and how the author's figure will be represented. Neither of the two can be seen as a fixed, pre-determined category—rather, both are reimagined and brought into existence by the translation process itself.

As a result, multiple translations of the same literary work will consolidate their own variations and interpretations of the same unfixed "source text" into separate representative entities. Each of these will also establish its own authorial figure that may have little to do with the real person behind the writing, and everything to do with how books are to be marketed to their overseas target audiences. From this point of view, translation ceases to be a process of meaning carryover (because it was never a simple transfer of meaning in the first place) and

emerges as a complex map of multiple connections and endless ramifications mutually affecting and transforming each other. There can be no finality and no singular destination to translation, but the starting point is just as transient and unclear. In this paradigm, translation can be firmly grounded only in multiplicity and difference, and the constraining notion of fidelity cannot remain unchallenged. This means that loss is both inevitable and acceptable in translation, but potential for gain is also immense: the translator's reworking of the text may further and enhance the author's creative thinking, adding new dimensions to the literary work that may be drawing from and appealing to the particular local context into which such a work is being transplanted. These new contributions and transformations, as Tim Parks points out, are essential to a successful translator's reading (see "Gained in Translation").

The fluid, unfixed nature of the source text, its intended message, and the authorial figure itself, while opening up creative possibilities for translators, creates a danger of one-sided interpretations that may take away from the richness and complexity of original writing. In the case of Munro, this fluidity—further complicated by the existence of multiple textual versions and by the author's intentional narrative ambiguity—raises important questions about the writer's self-positioning in relation to the feminist ideologies of her time and the relevance of her work in light of the present-day feminist agendas. The dilemma of feminist subtext in Munro's writing turns out to be a stumbling block enabling various readings and diverging critical responses—which, naturally, result in very different translations.

### ***Munro and Feminist Readings***

The question of whether Munro is a feminist writer seems to have arisen very early in her literary career and marked critical engagement with most of her texts. However, her own answer has never been straightforward. In her interview with Harold Horwood published among the

papers of the Waterloo Conference in 1984, Munro, when asked if she considers herself a feminist, responds: “Yes, I think I am. Of course everybody defines it differently. I’m a feminist about certain measures that I would support. But if it’s defined more broadly as an attitude to life which is imposed on me by someone else, then I don’t accept that. I have to know what the word means” (“Interview with Alice Munro” 133). She also makes sure to draw a clear line between her personal political convictions and her creative process: “In fiction I not only don’t think of feminist politics, but of the class struggle, or anything else; I think of what’s going on *in* my story and that is all” (134). Despite her steadfast commitment to portraying women’s lives and exposing their realities, Munro does not seem willing to subscribe to feminism as a broadly understood ideology (or any ideology, for that matter), even if she shares its fundamental values.

In fact, Munro became more reluctant to discuss feminism over time, presumably as her realization of the complexity and multiplicity of feminist debates and ideologies grew. It is true that her works are not explicitly programmatic, and a political agenda or societal critique never appears to be her primary motivation for writing; JoAnn McCaig rightly claims that Munro “has been exceedingly cautious about making overt feminist statements or espousing feminist activism throughout her career” (148). Nevertheless, what insistently links Munro’s works to feminist beliefs is the story itself that she keeps on telling. Her recurrent basic plot of a woman’s gendered socialization inevitably problematizes the social implications of gender formation, thus revealing women’s marginalization in the society she depicts. Her female protagonists, first and foremost her non-conforming adolescent narrators, and their narratives of facing prejudice and objectification, social injustice, gender stereotypes, and discriminatory structures of power cannot fail to lay bare their deep-seated discontent with the status quo—and, by extension, the author’s personal feminist sentiments. Whether intended as a sharp social commentary or simply

a realistic depiction of what it means to live as a woman, Munro's stories have a distinct feminist undertone and warrant a feminist reading. Moreover, I would argue that for a present-day reader well-versed in contemporary feminist discourses, this reading of Munro's works will be among the most appealing and significant.

Some literary scholars seem to have shared this perspective as far back as the 1980s and 1990s, particularly with regard to the writer's early works. Beverly Rasporich takes a distinctly pro-feminist stance, interpreting Munro's authorial evolution as a movement from the feminine through feminist to female, where exposing women's lived realities and questioning social conventions becomes key to the critical reimagining of a female identity:

The feminist quest in Munro's fiction is primarily undertaken by the dominant persona of an intelligent and mature narrator who questions society's expectations of her as female both in past memory and present circumstances. Both outer and inner directed, this voice speaks for a collective female experience and, at the same time, dramatizes the compelling, private lives of individuals. (32)

As Rasporich claims, Munro's strength as a feminist author lies in her unwavering focus on the experiences and perspectives of her female protagonists that initiate her "feminist odyssey" (88)—a thorough and realistic portrayal of women's life cycles from childhood and adolescence in earlier collections to maturity, aging, and decay in her later books. While being essentially a study in vulnerability, these narratives also trace the evolution of Munro's characters from conventional "earth-mothers" to independent "surviving women" who are constrained, but not crushed by the patriarchal system in which they live. The writer investigates and extrapolates their perceptions to reveal wider human experiences, taking a woman's worldview as a vantage point in her exploration of social conventions. According to Rasporich, Munro's irony as an

essential element of her authorial style stems from this split consciousness between self-constructed female identities and societal gender stereotypes; at the same time, the folk and gothic dimensions of her writing find their origin in the gendered use of space as the source of memory and identity (122). Along similar lines, Magdalene Redekop poses the figure of a “mothering clown” or “mock mother” (4) as a central archetype in Munro’s work signifying the erasure of matrilineal traditions and female histories (29) and performing (through masquerading and parody) the ironic distance between women’s lived experiences and essentializing patriarchal views of motherhood and female bodies (26).

Smaro Kamboureli supports the feminist interpretation of Munro’s writing in her discussion of Munro’s language as grounded in the feminine body, which is presented simultaneously as audience and performance (Kamboureli 35). Barbara Godard voices a similar view, arguing that Munro constructs a new feminist literary aesthetic based on female sexuality: “Munro is in quest of a body experienced by women as subject of their desires not as object of men’s desires and of the words and literary forms appropriate to this body” (43). The focus on physicality and individual experiences enables the rewriting of traditional female plots and the re-appropriation of both language and literary tradition by female writers, whether real or fictional. Thus, Godard claims that the essence of Munro’s feminism is rooted in the fact that she “asserts women’s experience as an autonomous origin of knowledge” and as a way of “coming-into-being-in-language” (44). This autonomy of self-construction in narrative, however, does not mean complete rejection and devaluation of male language and tradition. Munro allows her protagonists (particularly women writers, like Del Jordan in *Lives of Girls and Women*) to make a conscious choice between the masculine and feminine sides of their identities, but instead of disparaging one and embracing the other, they ultimately choose to transform and manipulate



both to their liking, to reinstate their foremothers' authority while also exploiting their forefathers' legacy. Most importantly, such characters approach both gendered traditions critically, as Del does with her uncle's writing and her aunts' oral storytelling (see "Heirs of the Living Body"). If Munro can be seen as a feminist writer, it is not simply because she espouses women's liberation or criticizes dominant masculinity, but because she subverts gendered limitations, rewriting the primal Oedipal script as a woman by "enlarging the father/son relationship to include both mother/daughter and father/daughter ones" (Godard 70). Her answer to the question of how a woman can write is merging conventional categories and blurring both gender and genre boundaries where feminine playful creativity is infused with masculine authority and assertiveness. Although Munro (as well as Godard) does not question the binary encoding of these gendered qualities, her engagement with gender was certainly innovative for her time and aligned with progressive feminist thought of the day.

Coral Ann Howells, building on Godard's argument, draws attention to the multiple ways in which Munro's writing resists "the erasure of women's history and the suppression of women's voices" (101), simultaneously pointing out women's own complicity in constructing oppressive patriarchal narratives. Howells suggests gossip as a model for Munro's stories—a stereotypically feminine, elliptical narrative mode that allows the writer to "alter female plots so that they become stories of entrapment and escape with women seeing themselves as spies or aliens, and where secrecy and silence are strategies of camouflaged resistance to conventional social decorums" (4). As a result, Munro's fiction is conceptualized as a form of "counter-discourse" (Howells 4), bringing into focus the displaced and marginalized female perspectives and mapping out alternative women-centred storylines and forms of storytelling.

Nevertheless, an emphasis on women's stories alone cannot define the writer's work as feminist. In her essay "Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels?," Rosalind Coward challenges the preconception that the centrality of women's experiences in a literary work is sufficient to categorize it as such. Pointing out similar conventions in classic realist and women-centred writing, in particular quasi-autobiographical/confessional sub-genres and a focus on women's sexuality (232), she concludes that these features, while being characteristic of feminist fiction, do not in themselves constitute a feminist narrative. The difference may consist in how sexuality and experience are treated in both cases: in feminist novels, a female protagonist's sexual experience is increasingly becoming the significant experience of the story (Coward 233), often superseding marriage as the central event.

What is particularly important for feminist writing, Coward suggests, is changing the dominant discourse on sexuality: "That the equation of female sexuality with the illicit and disgusting is no longer a dominant representation, and that the possibilities of sexual enjoyment are no longer focused on motherhood, are changes for which feminism has fought" (234). Munro's works fit this description very well, and Coward does unambiguously refer to *Lives of Girls and Women* as a feminist novel (233), although her definition of the genre in this case may be debatable. Both *Lives of Girls and Women* (more accurately seen as a short-story cycle rather than a novel) and a number of Munro's other stories, including "Too Much Happiness," treat sexuality as the source of significant life-changing experience in women's lives—but not the only defining experience that matters. Munro does, in Coward's view, "escape beyond defining women entirely by their sexuality" and "disrupt the conventions of the central narrative voice or character" (235), which puts her on par with other feminist writers of her time.

Yet, this attempt at classification is complicated by Coward's insistence on tracing a feminist agenda back to the writers' conscious choice to treat sexuality and experience as political (235). This approach to a feminist outlook, while being limited from the standpoint of the multiplicity of contemporary feminist discourses and ideologies, would clearly not work for Munro who never appears to write with a political message in mind. Still, even this rather narrow definition allows her the space to be read from a feminist perspective—assuming that the individual, private experiences on which Munro focuses (whether fictional or autobiographical) can be taken as representative of her generation (and, notably, class) in her part of the world. As Coward herself states, “to speak the personal and experiential was to go beyond it and to discover its ‘representativeness’, which would show the workings of ideology and its relation to objective, material structures of oppression” (237). Accordingly, even though Munro writes about personal experiences alone, they do have political value in the historical context of her writing.

In fact, this multidimensionality of female experiences in Munro's works and their deliberate openness to interpretation render an unambiguous answer to the question of the writer's feminism not only impossible but immaterial. As JoAnn McCaig remarks, “Often, feminist dogma is seen as an amusing irrelevance to the complex lives of Munro characters” (149). For Munro, representativeness of personal experience loses its value and meaning if it becomes the means to a political end that obscures the living person behind it.

Adrian Hunter further develops this point in his article “Story into History: Alice Munro's Minor Literature.” While identifying two revisionary projects—post-colonial and feminist—in Munro's writing, he reveals how these may clash with one another. Hunter claims that “in those stories that deal with Canada's colonial inheritance, Munro in fact includes

revisionary feminism among discourses which have the effect of suppressing, rather than liberating, the female imaginary” (220). In his view, feminist interpretations have their limits in the case of Munro’s work precisely because their impact may be as one-sided and essentializing as that of colonialism. Admittedly, critique of generalizing and plainspoken feminist narratives is definitely present in some of Munro’s texts, pointing out how “feminist political rhetoric may in fact conspire with colonialism in its insensitivity to women’s experience” (Hunter 232); however, I would argue that it speaks more to the writer’s more complex treatment of feminism than resistance to it, and that feminist and post-colonial motifs in her work are closely intertwined rather than clashing, as they are driven by the same liberating impulse.

As Hunter points out, Munro’s bigger project aims at creating an alternative type of literary narrative—a version of “minor literature” as theorized by Deleuze and Guattari. When first suggested, the term was meant to describe the literature marked by “the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation” (Deleuze and Guattari 18). “Minor literature” is by definition revolutionary, being driven by the need for expression, breaking established literary forms in search for new, more radical ones (Deleuze and Guattari 28). Hunter applies this concept to Munro’s work to present it as a subversive type of writing that avoids open resistance to the structures of power but cleverly undermines them, deliberately appropriating the underused and underappreciated short story genre and defying any perceived requirements of linearity, transparency, or narrative authority: “Munro writes a ‘minor’ literature by resiling from the imposition of authority in her narratives. She looks to tell women’s stories in terms other than those offered by male narrational models, hence the interest in all her work [...] in types of female alterity that resist patriarchy not by open opposition on male terms, but in ways that

patriarchy itself does not conceive of” (Hunter 232). This perspective on Munro’s fiction as a form of “minor literature” seems fitting as far as it addresses the writer’s engagement with women’s voices and their displacement from the dominant discourse into “deterritorialized language”, and her representation of personal female stories as part of a larger-scale collective experience. These are not narratives of protest but of quiet dissent that may not be immediately recognized as such precisely because they evade the conventional laws of narrative construction; yet, Munro’s storytelling remains consistent in its unceasing challenging of the status quo.

As a result, as Hunter elaborates, the writer develops a unique sub-genre: an “interrogative short story” that provides a “counter-narrative variously to the novel, the public historical record, and even the feminist revisionary project, in order to reveal how these culturally powerful narrational models fall short of the private life stories of women” (222). This critical, questioning approach makes it possible to misread the author’s distrust of loud statements and one-size-fits-all generalizations as her opposition to feminism, particularly as she refuses to offer any clarity of vision or purpose and stresses the unknowability of human experience: “Munro’s increasingly interrogative fictions marginalise narrative agency itself by declaring openly their failure to account adequately for the disregarded lives that are their subject [...]. Hers are not narratives of empowerment in which the subaltern is made to speak. On the contrary, the stories conspire formally in inarticulacy, minority, and even silence” (Hunter 226). Consequently, Munro’s “minor” literature, albeit not being deliberately revolutionary or openly political, offers a view from the margins—a dissenting outsider’s perspective that aligns itself with both feminist and post-colonialist ideologies but refuses to limit itself to either of them. Hunter argues that Munro’s work, while being largely motivated by the ideas of feminism, cannot and should not be defined by it alone (233). I would add that it is not and should not be

defined by any ideology whatsoever, but that any critical engagement with Munro's fiction (including translation as a form of critical analysis) should be informed by these ideological concerns and acknowledge their relevance for her texts.

If the writer's complex relationship with feminism is trivialized or completely ignored, this may result in simplistic, one-sided interpretations that distort her motivations in storytelling and treatment of her characters. Thus, Brad Hooper fails to recognize Munro's quiet opposition as an expression of her profound dissatisfaction with the social status quo, focusing instead on her characters' status of passive outsiders that "without a man [...] ha[ve] no place to fit in" (66) and who neither rebel against the accepted practices of patriarchy nor show any interest in participating in them; silent non-conformance is therefore misinterpreted as reluctant submissiveness. Other critics who downplay feminist aspects of Munro's work also demonstrate similarly one-dimensional perspectives on her female characters. Janice Fiamengo and Gerald Lynch, in their introduction to *Alice Munro's Miraculous Art: Critical Essays*, paint a biased picture of the writer's protagonists, stating that her "storytellers seem so often motivated not by compassion and warmth but by unforgiveness or downright malice, who betray friends or family members seemingly on a whim [...] or who record without apology their long-smouldering resentments, jealousies and ill-wishing" (4). In this framework, Munro's complex, unknowable characters are reduced to pure physicality of the body, to stereotypical femininity seen in a distinctly negative light, as the critical analysis centres on the shocking, repulsive, and grotesque side of female existence:

Her [Munro's] particular genius has been, perhaps, her matter-of-fact portrayal of the realities of sex and body: sexual initiation, the adulterous desires, shocking inclinations, betrayal of maternal impulse, animalistic obsessions, and remorseless necessities of

female desire. Never flattering feminine sensibilities or pandering to sentimental (or radical feminist) conceptions of female (or childhood) innocence, she has returned repeatedly to the conflict between small-town sexual mores and carnal compulsions, often to unsettling effect. (Fiamengo and Lynch 6)

This patronizing, essentializing view of Munro's work is just as flawed as the feminist "master narrative" challenged by Hunter, because both approaches treat a feminist reading as a straightforward and authoritarian strategy it does not have to be. Rather than imposing a restrictive interpretative framework with a fixed set of meanings on Munro's oeuvre, I believe what critics and translators need to do is recognize its complexity and acknowledge the impact of feminist ideologies (among other influences) on the writer's work as one of the factors defining its historical significance.

According to Robert Fulford, Munro's biggest contribution to literature is that of a historian—both of her land and her generation: "[T]he great unspoken theme of her work is history, the history of private life in her time and place [...]. Her work speaks of her era, to which she gives brilliant and perceptive shape" (496). Perhaps most importantly, what she writes about is "Munro Woman"—an archetype of the author's own contemporaries and many of her clever, questioning, underappreciated characters, "with all their resentments and hopes, all their unused talent and their derided intelligence" (Fulford 496). Fulford does not directly mention patriarchal constraints, but he acknowledges that "Munro Women" are more often than not trapped by gender prejudice and by the typical limitations of their historical moment (496), both of which, I must add, are further complicated by the rigid and unforgiving class system. Remarkably, from a historical perspective, Munro witnessed and portrayed in her writing the biggest societal shift of her time:

Through the 1950s and the 1960s in North America a new generation of women was emerging, more or less in silence, waiting to articulate itself, hardly guessing that before the twentieth century ended the roles of the sexes in public and private would fundamentally change. In the last fifty years nothing more important than this evolution has happened in the democracies of the West; and no one has written about it with more subtlety and more acute observation than Munro. (Fulford 496)

Defined by her moment in history as much as by her choice of subject, Munro became a part of this major “feminist turn” that made a distinct mark on the Canadian societal and literary landscape in the 1970s and 1980s. She joined the ranks of other outstanding Canadian women authors writing about the changes happening in the lives of girls and women and awakening of their feminist consciousness, such as Margaret Laurence, Carol Shields, Audrey Thomas, Margaret Atwood, France Théoret, Louky Bersianik, Nicole Brossard, and Madeleine Ouellette-Michalska. These connections highlight Munro’s place in Canadian and world literature, cementing her ties with the evolution of feminist thought that makes up a subtle but intelligible subtext to most of her stories. This wider context of Munro’s literary career and her moment in history is critical for understanding her choices and motivations as a writer. Therefore, I would argue that, regardless of whether she may or may not be considered a feminist, her writing lends itself to a coherent, complex, and non-restrictive feminist reading. Such an interpretation would be consistent with the author’s reinvention of genre conventions and challenging of narrative authority, as well as her insistence on textual variability and instability—all elements contributing to the construction of an alternative, women-centred “minor literature” meant to represent and amplify the marginalized women’s voices. A well-informed translation, sensitive to this aspect of Munro’s work, may have significant potential for representing her as a Canadian



writer in the transcultural literary scene, while drawing attention to the experimental and nonconformist side of her writing and redefining her “originals” themselves for international reading audiences.

The next section will elaborate on this approach to Munro’s writing, offering a critical interpretation of six short stories from the standpoint of feminist literary theory and feminist narratology to contextualize them as “source texts” informing the respective translation projects.

### ***“Child’s Play”***

“Child’s Play,” first published in *Harper’s Magazine* in 2008 and later included in the 2009 collection *Too Much Happiness*, stands out among Munro’s oeuvre as a particularly bleak and bitter narrative. It addresses a sensitive issue of the culturally reinforced opposition between “normal” and “monstrous” with regard to physical and intellectual disability. As the story suggests, stigma and hate resulting from normative thinking about the human body and its abilities marginalize the “special” bodies marked by disability with a disastrous effect.

The plot of “Child’s Play” revolves around the narrator’s memory of Verna, a mentally disabled girl and one of the “Specials” abhorred and despised by the so-called “normal” children. Verna’s “otherness” and her instinctive attempts to reach out to the narrator named Marlene provoke the latter’s hostility and physical revulsion—feelings that are instantaneously shared by her friend Charlene and culminate in a violent act when the two girls kill unsuspecting Verna on the last day of summer camp. The act of murder itself, although unpremeditated, is perceived by them as a natural and even liberating impulse because both girls see it as the elimination of an object of disgust. They intuitively stigmatize and reject the difference of a “special” body, feeling that “minds that are affected by disability [...] disturb, provoking a desire to repudiate

and expel” (Darroch 110). In Marlene’s and Charlene’s eyes, Verna’s otherness makes her revolting. Munro, through her protagonist, makes it clear that the girls’ aversion to Verna and, respectively, their attempt to distance themselves from the “Specials,” with their distinctive bodies and unpredictable behaviours, is only a logical consequence of their society’s deep-seated prejudice against disability. However, it also stems from their own feeling of gendered vulnerability that forces them to self-identify as “normal” to attain safety. This instinctive rejection of weakness defines Munro’s depiction of gender and affect: her protagonist refuses to extend empathy to someone she sees as different, because she wishes “to avoid being associated with a disabled other’s dejected state, to avoid a traumatic identification” (Darroch 118). In the case of Marlene and Charlene, perception of their own vulnerability as a personal threat precludes any possibility of positive affect towards the vulnerable other.

The act of killing Verna, therefore, reveals that “able-bodied privilege and absolute subjectivity can only survive or thrive through the destruction of disability and thereby the reproduction of social norms around appropriate bodies” (Narduzzi 86). The opposition of two relationships in the story, the powerful and almost mystical connection between Verna and the narrator, and the intimate closeness between Marlene and Charlene that borders on twinship (and is amplified by their almost identical names and similar appearances), demonstrates that “negative affective responses to disabled bodies or queer expressions both reinforce and are reinforced by ‘normal’ able-bodied and heterosexual bodies. The effects of negative affect toward ‘othered’ bodies silence difference and curtail disabled reproductions, sometimes through actual murder” (Narduzzi 72). Destruction of the other becomes the triumph of the “normal” self.

This aggressive act of annihilation requires the dehumanization of the enemy, which is reflected in the language Munro's narrator uses with regard to Verna and other "Specials." The passive voice is employed consistently when referring to them to accentuate their random behaviour, lack of purpose, and the need to be controlled and steered: "the Specials [...] were being herded by" ("Child's Play" 202); "Some [...] had to be yelled at and fetched back" (201); "At the supper table they were marched in [...] Then they were deliberately separated, and distributed amongst the rest of us" (202). The personal agency of the "Specials" is thus routinely denied both at the levels of action and language in the story. The motif of their passivity further evolves into the metaphorical vision of Verna as an inanimate object: "The skin of her face seemed as dull to me as the flap of our old canvas tent, and her cheeks puffed out the way the flap of that tent puffed in a wind" (195). Often this objectivization reduces Verna in Marlene's eyes to a single repulsive attribute, a feeling of disgust: even her name sounds "like a trail of obstinate peppermint, green slime" (196). But the most recurrent motif that helps to understand the motivation behind Verna's murder is the narrator's perception of a "special" child as an animal. At one point, Marlene admits: "I suppose I hated her as some people hate snakes or caterpillars or mice or slugs. For no decent reason" (200). Her consistent equation of Verna with a revolting, nonhuman creature sets the scene for the ultimate denial of the girl's humanity, highlighting how such metaphorical perceptions may eventually lead to justifying an act of violence against her.

Insisting on Verna's animalistic nature, Marlene assumes her inability to speak and thus undermines any possibility of communication: "Her voice was hoarse and unmodulated, her words oddly separated, as if they were chunks of language caught in her throat" ("Child's Play" 195). This understanding of the "special" body as not quite human, incapable of what is seen as

“normal” human behaviour or interaction, creates an unbridgeable divide between the two girls—or rather, the narrator puts up the wall herself for fear of associating with Verna and discovering their similarities. Refusing to see the person behind the “special” body, Marlene obsessively fixates on Verna’s animal-like qualities and individual body parts. She metaphorically takes the “special” body apart to completely dehumanize it; but in so doing, she ascribes a strange, almost mythological power to Verna, making her a threat. In the narrator’s eyes, fear and aversion transform a clueless, mentally disturbed child into a dangerous monster.

Still, it is essential to stress that for Munro the central conflict of the story is not limited to the narrator’s abhorrence of non-conforming bodies—the crux lies in the socially sanctioned rejection of disability. As Katherine Sutherland asserts, “‘Child’s Play’ exposes the failed social attachment of the ‘able’ to the ‘disabled’ [...]. This is an ethical failure of care that is broad and external to Marlene and Charlene, a social failure without which they might not have acted as they did” (158). The author underlines that Marlene’s perspective on disability is an expression of the commonly accepted mindset that children internalize and reproduce in their own relationships with the “Specials”: “But I certainly did blame her [Verna]. I did not question that it was somehow her fault. And in this, whatever my mother might say, I was in tune to some degree with an unspoken verdict of the time and place I lived in” (“Child’s Play” 196). This inner monologue reveals not only the society’s general consensus in treating disability as abnormal and unnatural but also how the silent majority becomes complicit in the protagonist’s violent drive to remove the disabled body as a source of danger.

The act of killing Verna, whether consciously or not, is meant to reinforce these normalized beliefs and restore the “order” in the world violated by the presence of the “other”; however, in reality it reverses the roles of victim and monster, revealing “normal” children as the

true monsters. The murder scene, which is the climax of the story, is presented like a slowly unfolding, almost static picture where Charlene and the narrator seem to be as inactive as Verna herself and where the focus is deliberately shifted from the victim to an inanimate object, a body part: “Verna’s head did not break the surface [...] Charlene and I had our hands on her, on her rubber cap” (“Child’s Play” 221). Up to a certain point, this change of focus helps Marlene to conceal the full significance of what is happening and to plant a seed of doubt in the reader’s mind about the girls’ true intentions. The narrator is trying to justify herself and to appear less guilty, but her apologetic monologue eventually turns from self-justification to mockery, as she suddenly leaps from “This could have been an accident. [...] I think we would have been forgiven. Young children. Terrified” (“Child’s Play” 221–22) to “Yes, yes. Hardly knew what they were doing” (“Child’s Play” 222). This caustic change of tone, when Marlene imagines the adults’ possible reaction to the truth of the story and switches from the first person to the third, undermines her attempt at honesty and clearly shows that she herself does not believe in her own innocence, regardless of what she is trying to maintain.

This spontaneous outburst makes the narrator stop and question her own story—and as a result, she has to admit that her actions in killing Verna, although not premeditated, were intentional and conscious: “Is this in any way true? It is true in the sense that we did not decide anything, in the beginning. We did not look at each other and decide to do what we subsequently and consciously did. Consciously, because our eyes did meet as the head of Verna tried to rise up to the surface of the water” (“Child’s Play” 222). What is revealed is the monstrosity hiding behind the face of “normal” and “regular”: preconceptions of normativity internalized by the “innocent” children push them to the point where being oneself means annihilating the

“abnormal” other and where the act of murder becomes a logical and natural response, a necessity imposed on them from the outside rather than a hateful, evil intention.

At this moment of highest affective intensity, the killers paradoxically reveal their similarity to their victim, as Marlene describes Charlene and herself in the same terms she previously only used to talk about Verna—as a combination of disparate, instinctively acting out body parts: “Charlene and I kept our eyes on each other, rather than looking down at what our hands were doing” (“Child’s Play” 222). Through this disembodiment, both girls “detach themselves from any ethical sense of what it means to *feel* embodied, vulnerable, empathetic, and human [...] There is an almost synesthetic confusion there [...] which creates an affective disconnect—or rather, a purely affective reaction, unmediated by ethical thinking” (Sutherland 159). Even more importantly, the narrator is trying to use this mental state to justify her actions, to manipulate the reader into questioning her own guilt at the same time as she admits it.

For Marlene, this pivotal moment becomes a never-ending cycle of negotiation and self-justification that is never effectively resolved in ethical terms. Munro does not provide a neat resolution in redemption for the narrator and offers her “nothing beyond the desolate and fully aware acceptance of the failure her murderous act signifies” (Warwick 146). At the end of the story, pondering Charlene’s impulse to redeem herself through a religious confession, the protagonist drops all pretences and pronounces her own judgement by denying any feelings of guilt. This final rejection of forgiveness concludes the cycle of the character’s evolution bringing together her child and adult selves—both equally destructive and unrepentant.

The narrator’s duality, while signifying the character’s development and binding together multiple levels of narration in “Child’s Play,” constitutes a characteristic strategy for Munro. An

intradiegetic “dual narrator” presented simultaneously as a participant and observer of the recounted events (Thacker, “Clear Jelly” 50) appears in many of the writer’s stories. The figure of the “dual narrator” typically serves as a starting point of the text’s internal conflict that brings about “a commingling of the remembered event, vividly described so as to lend immediacy to it, and [...] detached understanding of it” (“Clear Jelly” 45). At the same time, in Munro’s writing this double perspective becomes the source of narrative polyphony that destabilizes the act of narration itself, questioning its meaning and coherence. This approach reflects Susan Lanser’s discussion of narrative’s inherent complexity: “in narrative there is no single voice [...] voice impinges upon voice, yielding a structure in which discourses of and for the other constitute the discourses of self” (“Toward a Feminist Narratology” 349). This multiplicity of discursive perspectives not only challenges the author’s own command of the story—or any possibility of narrative control—but also implies that in such a polyphonic structure self can only be constructed through the other. Still, as shown by the case of Marlene, this negotiation of identity only reveals unknowability of all such voices, the impossibility of knowing the truth or formulating a conclusive, definitive story, and the inevitable unreliability of the most forthcoming narrator. By refusing to wield the omniscient authorial voice, Munro questions the narrative conventions of the “‘author-function’ [...] constructed in white, privileged-class male terms” (Lanser, *Fictions of Authority* 6) and opens the way for an alternative, “feminine” narrative structure marked by uncertainty, fluidity, and non-linearity. This structure, stereotypically interpreted as characteristic of women’s writing, provides a framework where her female protagonists’ stories can be told on their own terms, and where “the powerless form called ‘women’s language’ is revealed as a potentially subversive—hence powerful—tool” (Lanser, “Toward a Feminist Narratology” 349). Munro’s condensed, overlapping, fragmented

narratives with volatile perspectives and domination of double-voice discourse serve as a way to expose the patriarchal silencing of women and their limited access to the public sphere, which, according to Ailsa Cox, makes Munro's protagonists seek "empowerment through silence" (46). However, as Lanser suggests, the very act of telling a story means that a woman writer, while questioning man-made narrative authority, inevitably reinforces the things she brings into question as she finds herself on her own "quest for discursive authority: a quest to be heard, respected, and believed, a hope of influence" (*Fictions of Authority* 7), even if her initial goal was to dismantle authority as a structure.

Both conflicting projects—self-authorization and subversion of narrative authority—manifest themselves in "Child's Play" and its first-person narration where Marlene simultaneously insists on and questions her own version of events, both defying and perpetuating the structures of power in her story and in her relationships. What makes her different and unusual for Munro is that this time the narrator is clearly a villain. As Isla Duncan points out, "[i]n the narrator of 'Child's Play', Munro unveils another addition to her cast of troubled and troubling characters that have transgressed: this narrator outdoes the others, however, in the violence of her actions, and the disjunction of her tale" (160). Marlene's account of Verna's murder is deliberately manipulative, and she shows no empathy whatsoever—neither for Verna, whom she consistently sees as less-than-human, nor for Charlene when after many years Marlene finds her old camp friend dying in the hospital: "I obeyed, and looked down at a bloated body and a sharp ruined face, a chicken's neck for which the hospital gown was a mile too wide. A frizz of hair—still brown—about a quarter of an inch long on her scalp. No sign of Charlene" ("Child's Play" 213). In both cases, it is the same dehumanizing gaze that enables the narrator's violence and manipulation.



In fact, this lack of positive affect extends to all women or girls with whom Marlene comes into contact, as both a child and an adult (Charlene being the only brief exception—perhaps because of the uncanny similarity between the two). With other women, Marlene feels like an outsider who can never really become one of them: “I’ve observed but never taken part in these female exchanges. Not truly. Sometimes I’ve pretended because it seemed to be required, but the woman I was supposed to be making friends with always got wind of my pretense and became confused and cautious” (“Child’s Play” 193). Not only is she unable to identify with other women or forge connections with them—she quite openly despises them and their stereotypical life choices. Hearing about her estranged friend Charlene’s wedding (years after the camp incident), Marlene dryly comments: “I would have thought it the height of hypocrisy to congratulate any woman on her marriage” (“Child’s Play” 209). She herself never marries, resenting any possible submission to a man and evading possible exposure of her true colours in an intimate relationship.

Similarly, when the narrator learns about Charlene’s choice of college, her response is just as dismissive: “Of course I would have considered myself a more serious student, once I discovered she was going to St. Hilda’s. My friends and I regarded St. Hilda’s as a Ladies College” (“Child’s Play” 209). Marlene does not see herself as one of the “ladies”—she deliberately sets herself apart from other women, seeking authority and recognition among men. Although she rejects the passive and deferential female role and refuses to accept male domination, her solution to this dilemma is not solidarity with other women, but rather self-identification with men as the source of the assertiveness and independence she craves for herself. In both her personal life and academic career, she appropriates typically “masculine” modes of behaviour that for her signify freedom of choice and action. As a middle-aged woman,

Marlene feels stifled by the “normal” expectations of her gender and aspires to transcend them. Her personal evolution can be interpreted as a movement from protecting normativity to challenging it—although the narrator’s instinct to distance herself from the people she sees as vulnerable, be it “special children” or women, and to avoid sharing their vulnerability ultimately leads to reinstating the idea of “normal”. As a result, Marlene is left isolated and suffers a double ethical failure, first in submitting to the murdering impulse as a child, then in refusing to feel remorse or accept responsibility for it.

On the surface, Marlene’s independence, with her academic aspirations and her protest against the conventions of marriage, could be seen as a feminist statement, and the fact that she is presented as the story’s villain could be interpreted as the writer’s anti-feminist message. However, Munro’s shift of focus changes this perspective: Marlene is not interested in empowerment, equality, or justice, and her quiet protest against patriarchal conventions turns out to be nothing more than a quest for personal privilege that ultimately upholds the existing structures of power. Intelligent and rational, but unable to transcend or even recognize her own limitations, Marlene is rather a feminist antihero whose lack of sensitivity and blatant disregard of ethics signify the disconnection between Munro’s personal, deeply empathetic sentiments about women’s vulnerability and the totalizing feminist “master narrative” she views with distrust. This reimagining of the female narrator in “Child’s Play” as an antihero may be seen as a move away from stereotypical portrayal of non-conforming women in literature towards their more complex and diverse depiction, including a realistic and encompassing perspective on women’s complicity in their own societal marginalization and in systemic gendered violence.

***“Too Much Happiness”***

If the narrator of “Child’s Play” may be constructed in terms of a feminist antihero, then the protagonist of the titular story in the same collection is as close to a feminist icon as Munro’s characters will ever get. In “Too Much Happiness,” Munro ventures into the territory of fictionalized biography recounting the last days in the life of Sophia Kovalevsky, the nineteenth-century Russian mathematician and novelist who subsequently came to be known as the first female university professor in Northern Europe. The story offers an “an ambitiously imagined, intricately structured novella-length work, a tale of ambition and isolation, a narrative of displacement” (Zsizsmann 202) that consistently fluctuates between accurate historical facts and Sophia’s fictionalized personal experiences.

Structurally, the text is both linear and fluid, moving continuously between the present time where Sophia is making her long and exhausting train journey from Paris to Stockholm, and the past in the form of multiple flashbacks. Sophia’s memories bring her back to her childhood spent with her sister Aniuta at the family estate of Palibino, her marriage to Vladimir Kovalevsky, her studies in Germany under the supervision of Professor Karl Weierstrass, and her time in Paris during the Commune. She revisits both significant family events and professional milestones, such as the birth of her daughter, the dissolution of her marriage and financial ruin followed by Vladimir’s suicide, her move to Stockholm for a university teaching job, and her prestigious Bordin Prize in mathematics—but all the while her thoughts circle back to her recent unhappy courtship with the Russian professor of law Maxsim Kovalevsky. This last relationship comes to an abrupt end when Sophia suddenly dies of pneumonia soon after reaching Stockholm. The story’s title “Too Much Happiness,” which quotes Sophia’s last words, becomes symbolic of

the protagonist's inability to reconcile her professional ambition with the societal expectations imposed on a woman.

Based on these true facts from Sophia's biography, Munro's narrative constructs a fictional, subjective interpretation of her heroine's perceptions and responses, bringing together real historical events, memories, dreams, character-authored letters and author's speculations, in an attempt to blur the boundary between history and fiction—or rather to reveal how the two grow into each other, essentially becoming the same thing. Sophia does not directly narrate her own story in “Too Much Happiness,” although her fictionalized inner monologue pervades the text through the author's preferred structure of free indirect discourse that effectively blends the protagonist's thoughts with other textual presences, playing both on her need to be heard and her instinct of self-silencing. This polyphony further complicates the fiction/history divide inhabited by Sophia as a character.

It should be pointed out that the historical dimension of “Too Much Happiness” and particularly its Russian/European setting are highly unusual for Munro. Dennis Duffy compares this piece with some of the writer's earlier works, such as “The Wilds of Morris Township,” “A Wilderness Station,” and especially “Meneseteung” where she explores storytelling possibilities of a historical/biographical account (“Alice Munro's Narrative” 197). However, in all these previous cases the author relied either on her own family history or local Canadian material. In this respect, “Too Much Happiness” is a step in a new direction, as it expands Munro's geography and uses less familiar locations as a convenient backdrop for reimagining the life of an outstanding woman.

The first version of the story was published in *Harper's Magazine* in August 2009, to be followed by a second publication in *The New York Times* in November of the same year. The

biggest textual difference that can be detected between the magazine and book iterations indicates the depth of Munro's background research, which in turn acquires a special meaning for the story's interpretation. In *The New York Times* version, some of the Russian characters, particularly Maxsim, address Sophia as Sonya, using a common diminutive form of her name. This minor detail shifts the dynamics of Maxsim and Sophia's relationship, revealing his ambivalent feelings towards her: on the one hand, this form of address underlines their intimacy and closeness, but on the other hand it lays bare his urge to diminish her and render her less significant.

This nuance highlights the central crux of the story—the conflict between creative work as Sophia's vocation and domesticity as the basic requirement in a woman's life of her time. Lizbeth Goodman describes this internal crisis as “the opposition between marriage as a fate or ‘job’ for women, and the need for women to improve themselves through education” (74) and classifies it as a typical feature of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century women-centred fiction. Sophia's life story can, therefore, be seen as a version of the female *Bildung* plot that embodies the clash between romance and quest. According to Rachel Blau Duplessis's narrative theory, such plots could traditionally end either in the female hero's marriage or death, the latter being seen as a punishment for her transgressions but also as a form of protest. From the very beginning, Sophia behaves as a female hero who manages to subvert “the marriage plot, with its high status [...] and the quest plot of punishment for female aspiration” (Duplessis 21). Although in her time women in Russia were not allowed to study at universities or to leave the country without their father's or husband's permission, Sophia, driven by her aspiration to study mathematics in Germany, finds a way to overcome this outrageous obstacle by entering into a fictitious “white marriage” (a union of convenience that was never meant to be consummated) with the like-

minded progressive student Vladimir Kovalevsky. By making this radical choice, she gains freedom both from her family and her home country and avoids the requirement of female domesticity, at the same time maintaining proper appearances. This decision takes her beyond the conventional ending of the “marriage plot,” in line with Duplessis’s discussion of “writing beyond the ending, taking ending as a metaphor for conventional narrative, for a regimen of resolutions, and for the social, sexual, and ideological affirmations these make” (21). Sophia finds herself on the “quest plot” of studying mathematics, which leads her to another important man in her life, Professor Weierstrass—and into the academic world where she is not only mentored and supported but can excel and shine, even surpassing the men around her: “[A]ll his life he [Weierstrass] had been waiting for such a student [...]. A student who would challenge him completely, who was not only capable of following the strivings of his own mind but perhaps of flying beyond them” (“Too Much Happiness” 270). For Weierstrass, it is Sophia’s talent and not her gender that matters, and he is genuinely willing to help her succeed on her own terms.

However, the “marriage plot” catches up with Sophia when her fictitious marriage with Vladimir becomes real, which ultimately leads to a break between them, as he starts to demand submission and domesticity of his wife and finally alienates her with his dismissive behaviour: “Name me one truly important woman, he said. One who has made any real difference in the world, except by seducing and murdering men. They are congenitally backwards and self-centred and if they get hold of any idea, any decent idea to devote themselves to, they become hysterical and ruin it with their self-importance” (“Too Much Happiness” 284). For Sophia, this shift in her husband’s perception of women signifies the inevitable end of their relationship.

Having failed at her attempt to reconcile her need for love and family with her scientific aspirations, the heroine returns to her studies and finally reaches success, becoming a professor of mathematics at Stockholm University, where she receives an important award for her research. Still, even then she is not accepted by the European scientific community but rather seen as a dangerous, although curious, transgression. Remarkably, other women prove to be even more hostile than men, as Sophia's life choices and her success threaten to overthrow their normative vision of the world:

Then they [the academics] had given her the Bordin Prize, they had kissed her hand and presented her with speeches and flowers [...] But they had closed their doors when it came to giving her a job. They would no more think of that than of employing a learned chimpanzee. The wives of the great scientists preferred not to meet her, or invite her into their homes.

Wives were the watchers on the barricade, the invisible implacable army. Husbands shrugged sadly at their prohibitions but gave them their due. Men whose brains were blowing old notions apart were still in thrall to women whose heads were full of nothing. ("Too Much Happiness" 266)

The societal opposition faced by Sophia indicates that women do hold some power—but the authority available to them is only meant to uphold the clear-cut division of society into exclusive male and female spheres, with a woman's purpose being limited to domestic life. This is a vision that Sophia, with her sharp intelligence and her passion for both scientific and social progress, is unable to tolerate.

Sophia's struggles with inequality and her commitment to her ambitious goals in the profoundly sexist society definitely make her a feminist heroine, as she becomes a trailblazer

among European female academics, the first among the many to follow. As Duffy suggests, “Munro obviously has a particular story to tell about women savants and the obstacles they encounter, a pointed, even didactic, tale of the trials endured by women [...] ‘Too Much Happiness’ proffers the pointed exposition of an exemplary life whose ultimate meaning lies beyond that of the particular moment in material history caught in the story” (203). Yet Sophia turns out to be more complex than an exemplary feminist role model—in many respects, she is constrained and stalled by her own weaknesses.

Being aware of her outstanding talent and academic vocation, Sophia easily accepts the unique status that singles her out from among other women, and even looks down on conventional wives, judging their lifestyle as something that is impossible for herself. Looking at Professor Weierstrass’s sisters, with their humble occupations, she thinks of them condescendingly, clearly drawing a distinction between their lives and hers:

[T]hese two women who had made him the centre of their lives. Knitting mufflers, mending the linen, making the puddings and preserves that could never be trusted to a servant. [...] And never, as far as Sophia could see, a flicker of dissatisfaction.

I would go mad, she thought. (“Too Much Happiness” 278)

Nevertheless, Sophia herself rarely expresses her own dissatisfaction when faced with humiliation or neglect. Initially, her open rebellion against her father’s authority and her reckless, unconventional marriage were inspired by her more determined, single-minded sister: “Sophia was overjoyed, not indeed to be marrying Vladimir but to be pleasing Aniuta by striking a blow for the emancipation of Russian women” (“Too Much Happiness” 276). However, losing Aniuta—and even more so, watching her bitter decline—makes Sophia lose that rebellious spark and long for the safety of her lost home.



As she believes that Russia, with its legal discrimination against female academics, can never again be a safe home for her, Sophia comes to associate home and safety with the prospect of marriage—something that, she thinks, can give her a respectable social status, protection, and financial independence. But when she falls in love with Maxim Kovalevsky, the deep conflict between the two sides of her life becomes painfully clear: Sophia's longing for love and companionship—but above all, safety—is so strong that she readily submits to his male authority, temporarily trading her own goals for the reassuring pleasure of his company. She begins to see her fiancé as a symbol of stability and prosperity, and her revised perception of marriage at this stage of her life reveals her deep-seated insecurity:

She is thinking of Maxim [...] His coat of rich expensive cloth, its smell of money and comfort [...] That marvellous assurance he has, that her father had, you can feel it when you are a little girl snuggled up in their arms and you want it all your life. More delightful of course if they love you, but comforting even if it is only a kind of ancient noble pact that they have made, a bond that has been signed, necessarily even if not enthusiastically, for your protection. ("Too Much Happiness" 294)

At this moment, the promise of comfort and security is so appealing to Sophia that it seems to outweigh her personal aspirations. Still, being who she is, she is unable to completely reject her progressive values and tries to reconcile the two most important things in her life. She hopes to find the solution in a clear and honest arrangement with a man who could both protect her and respect her as an equal.

And, at first, it seems that such an idealistic compromise is possible. Sophia and Maxim's relationship appears to be a union of equals, a happy encounter of two soulmates who share a common language and precious memories of the home they both lost. After they decide

to get married, Sophia, obviously relieved and looking forward to her new, peaceful life, writes to a friend saying that “it is to be happiness after all. Happiness after all. Happiness” (“Too Much Happiness” 253) in a letter ironically foreshadowing her sad finale. However, it soon becomes clear that Maxsim, while acknowledging his future wife’s outstanding talent and seemingly supporting her work, is unable to handle her professional success, especially when her achievements surpass his own—even though they both know that she will never truly have the recognition she deserves:

The Bordin Prize was what spoiled them. So Sophia believed. She herself was taken in by it at first [...] The compliments quite dizzying, the marvelling and the hand kissing spread thick on top of certain inconvenient but immutable facts. The fact that they would never grant her a job worthy of her gift [...] While she was basking Maxsim decamped. Never a word about the real reason, of course [...]

He had felt himself ignored. (“Too Much Happiness” 249)

Maxsim’s unsupportive response to her achievement shatters Sophia’s hopes and makes her realize that her needs for blissful domesticity and academic success cannot be successfully aligned and that the truly equal partnership she has envisioned is impossible. So, in fear of losing her fiancé, she tries to accommodate his wounded ego by downplaying the significance of her work in comparison to his own: “Maxsim would not interfere with her real work, which was research, not teaching. He would be glad she had something to absorb her, though she suspected that he found mathematics not trivial, but somehow beside the point. How could a professor of law and sociology think otherwise?” (“Too Much Happiness” 253). This sudden willingness to restrain her ambition and to reduce her mathematical gift almost to a frivolous pastime indicates

a downward shift in Sophia's perception of herself and her relationship with Maxsim. Now she feels the need to control her behaviour at all times to avoid his displeasure:

But she says nothing and contains her shudder. And as if to reward her for this self-control he announces that he will ride with her [...] She can barely answer, she feels such gratitude. Also a disastrous pressure of tears. Weeping in public is something he finds despicable. (He does not think he should have to put up with it in private either).

She manages to reabsorb her tears. ("Too Much Happiness" 253)

The instinct to repress her emotions in his presence gradually develops into a habit—one that fundamentally contradicts Sophia's true outspoken nature.

Despite her progressive views and rebellious character, Sophia starts to see this submissive behaviour and forced self-control as a reasonable compromise for the security of marriage—because she knows too well that, as a woman, she cannot earn acceptance and make a comfortable living on her own. But, to attain this desirable status, she has to reconsider her notions of femininity and, to some extent, abandon her modern ideals of women's emancipation, to diminish herself to a more conventional and acceptable role. As Emma Nilsson suggests, "[t]his self-reducing process may be seen as an attempt to live up to the ideal of the Angel in the House [...] Munro's short story could be interpreted as a critique of the ideal of the Angel in the House, suggesting that [it] still affects society's norms even in the 21st century" (2). From this perspective, "Too Much Happiness" may be read as a profoundly feminist message.

Nevertheless, Munro complicates things by problematizing the role of Sophia's feminist beliefs in her own life. In the end, both Sophia's rebellion and her attempt to force her free and inquisitive spirit into the Procrustean bed of the conventional ideal of femininity turn out to be painful and futile endeavours. Her health is undermined by her commitment to her scientific

work and by the pressures to fit in and become accepted, and she proves unable to reconcile two most important aspirations in her life—a bright academic career and the safety of family. The “marriage plot” and the “quest plot” cannot be reconciled, because they are written for two different heroines; but Sophia is both and cannot stop being either. Eventually, her death signifies the impossibility for a woman of her time—as for Munro’s own generation—to “have it all”: while Sophia has an insight of what this life could be, it remains an unattainable vision of “too much happiness.”

This becomes painfully obvious at the end of the story, when the protagonist looks back on her life comparing it to that of a poor mother she sees on the train:

How terrible it is, Sophia thinks. How terrible is the lot of women. And what might this woman say if Sophia told her about the new struggles, women’s battle for votes and places at the universities? She might say, But that is not as God wills. And if Sophia urged her to get rid of this God and sharpen her mind, would she not look at her—Sophia—with a certain stubborn pity, and exhaustion, and say, How then, without God, are we to get through this life? (“Too Much Happiness” 293–94)

At that moment, Sophia realizes that she is privileged by her class and her education, but for her it means only that she is more fully aware of the inevitable limitations she has to face.

Ultimately, she has as little control over her life as the uneducated lower-class woman sitting next to her on the train. The progressive feminist ideals of equality and justice that Sophia so passionately believes in turn out to be useless for the poor peasant woman, as these elitist and idealistic notions have no bearing on her real everyday struggles. Moreover, these beliefs fail to help Sophia herself, because the men in her life, although initially supportive, prove unable to live by the progressive convictions they claim to share—but also because, to some extent, she

herself remains in thrall to the promise of safety and home that she sees in a conventional marriage.

Duffy points out this contradictory duality in his reading of “Too Much Happiness” as a story that “epitomizes the heroic image of a woman who was in some ways done to death by her culture’s restrictions, and in other ways strengthened the chains of her bondage through her own recklessness” (204). Still, he insists that Munro’s discovery of Sophia’s story “indicates the major role that a writer like Munro has played in the cause of feminism” (Duffy 204), fitting in her overall project of dealing with “the exploitation and resistance of women through a generic continuum of narrative devices and hybridization ranging from the quotidian realistic to the historical to the exemplary” (205). Sophia’s (and Munro’s) feminism in “Too Much Happiness” may be subtle and limited—up to the point of being critical of its own limitations—but it is ground-breaking in its sincerity, never shying away from the “uncomfortably honest treatment of the role played by victims in the cruelties visited upon them” (Duffy 205). Whether Sophia Kovalevsky is seen as a hero or a victim, the act of telling a story like hers becomes a signal of change in itself.

### ***“Finale”***

“Finale,” an autobiographical cycle that concludes Munro’s last short story collection *Dear Life*, published in 2013, continues and expands the overarching theme of female identity quest, which is already present in both “Child’s Play” and “Too Much Happiness.” “Finale” comprises four pieces—“The Eye,” “Night,” “Voices,” and “Dear Life”—interconnected by multiple recurring plot lines, but most prominently by the motif of loss, epitomized by the figure of the narrator’s mother. The latter is largely based on Munro’s personal memories of her own mother, Anne Laidlaw. All the incidents related in the four stories are admittedly grounded in

facts from the writer's early life. As Munro herself acknowledges in the brief foreword to the "Finale," "The final four works in this book are not quite stories. They form a separate unit, one that is autobiographical in feeling, though not, sometimes, entirely so in fact. I believe they are the first and last—and the closest—things I have to say about my own life" ("The Eye" 255). This vague admission, while leaving the author just enough of a safe distance between reality and fantasy, nevertheless—by the fact of its existence alone—merges fiction and autobiography into a powerful narrative act that is simultaneously both and neither, rendering the boundary between these two genres not just invisible but insignificant. After all, the stories Munro is telling here are both deeply personal and yet timelessly universal.

As a powerful concluding chord in Munro's decades-long writing career, "Finale" returns to the beginning, to explore the writer's childhood and first of all the complex story of her relationship with her mother, whose presence has been central in her daughter's writing and whose "palpable absence has resonated then and since throughout Munro's imaginary" ("This Is Not a Story" 25). Four seemingly disparate incidents from various stages of the narrator's early life tell a cyclical story of a child's rebellious breakaway from her mother's authority that destabilizes their initial bond and leads to the search for her own path, only to conclude with the rediscovery of the mother as the source of the daughter's identity. This movement from oneness to separation and finally to reconnection follows Duplessis's narrative strategy of "reparenting," which posits a "return by the female hero to parental figures in order to forge an alternative fictional resolution to the oedipal crisis that these parent figures evoke" (83). As a result, Munro's autobiographical arc evolves into "a female quest plot whose final answer was the revelation of mother and child" (Duplessis 83)—a story that can be interpreted as a profoundly

feminist project of exploring the women's generational bond and reinstating the lost foremother, imperfect as she may be.

### *I. "The Eye"*

The cycle starts with "The Eye," the opening part of the "Finale," which focuses on "a female protagonist who is (re)assessing a crucial event in her past connected to gender constraints and rural repressive social norms in general and to her mother in particular" (Bussolera 109). It is the story of a five-year-old girl who is starting to drift away from her mother's all-encompassing control, and at the same time developing a fascination with another female presence, the family's housemaid, Sadie. Sadie's death, as the narrator's first exposure to a woman's vulnerability, marks an irreversible change in the mother-daughter relationship by sealing up their growing estrangement and putting an end to the innocence of early childhood.

The tension between the narrator and her mother becomes obvious from the very beginning, when their respective perceptions of reality start to diverge after the arrival of a younger child. The daughter is gradually realizing her own personhood as separate from her mother's, starting to sense the latter's presence as burdening and even hostile—however, the same passage already foreshadows future loss: "Up until the time of the first baby I had not been aware of ever feeling different from the way my mother said I felt. And up until that time the whole house was full of my mother, of her footsteps her voice her powdery yet ominous smell that inhabited all the rooms even when she wasn't in them" ("The Eye" 257). The signs of the mother's presence, which the daughter interprets as the all-pervading, almost supernatural authority, at the same time signify an empty space the mother will eventually leave behind, the painful absence to come.

At the beginning of the story, when the mother's power over her daughter starts to diminish, the young narrator feels liberated to explore the world and her own mind, although she is wary of this freedom and sees it as something secret and almost forbidden: "My mother had shrunk to whatever territory she had with the babies. With her not around so much, I could think about what was true and what wasn't. I knew enough not to speak about this to anybody" ("The Eye" 258). The daughter initially views her own newly-discovered autonomy as a betrayal of the mother, as something that drives them apart, although she cannot explain or resist it: "And something in me was turning traitorous, though she didn't know why, and I didn't know why either" ("The Eye" 263). But over time, as she continues to observe her mother from this distanced perspective, she comes to resent everything she now associates with motherhood (and, by extension, femininity): daily chores, the demands of childcare, limitations of a housewife's lifestyle, and the requirements of "ladylike" appearance and behaviour. It also does not help that the mother herself finds it hard to fit in: as a schoolteacher, an educated woman with a low-class background but ambitious social aspirations, she is stuck between the country and the town embodying two different lifestyles and two different social groups, neither of which is willing to accept her.

As a result, the narrator feels alienated from her mother. The daughter's discontent blossoms into a hidden rebellion where she—consciously or not—sabotages any communication between the two. Instead, she manages to forge a meaningful connection with another woman—the family's housemaid Sadie. From her, the young girl learns a valuable lesson about a different kind of femininity that is so unlike her mother's: Sadie does not readily follow the conventions imposed on her by the others or care about her acceptance by the "proper," desirable social circles. Fiercely independent, she refuses to seek anyone's approval and chooses to live for her



own pleasures, such as her love of singing and dancing, easily dismissing the inevitable small-town judgement and mockery.

As she makes it clear to the narrator, Sadie is well aware of the dangers she is exposing herself to while going to the dance halls alone. But she believes that she is smart and careful enough to avoid sexual assault from the men she meets there:

[I]t was not always the feet you had to look out for. It was where they wanted to get hold of you. Sometimes she had to read them the riot act and tell them what she would do to them if they didn't quit it [...] That would straighten them out. Sometimes they were good dancers and she got to enjoy herself. Then when they played the last dance she bolted for home.

She wasn't like some, she said. She didn't mean to get caught. ("The Eye" 261–62)

When Sadie mentions getting caught, the narrator immediately understands the danger, because, even at her age, she has already experienced masculinity as a source of threat and knows what it means to be exposed to habitual, ungrounded aggression: "They hate me of course. Boys either ignored you if they met you somewhere that wasn't school (they ignored you there too) or they made these faces and called you horrid names" ("The Eye" 265). Therefore, the idea of getting caught terrifies the young girl as it evokes these traumatizing experiences and speaks to her gendered feeling of vulnerability: "Caught. When she said that, I saw a big wire net coming down, some evil little creatures wrapping it around and around you and choking you so you could never get out" ("The Eye" 262). Sadie is the only one who not only understands and shares the same fear but is also able to reassure her young friend, restoring her confidence in herself and in the world.

Ironically, Sadie does get caught in the end, as she is hit by a car while running home from the dance hall. As the narrator imagines, the accident might have been provoked by Sadie's unwavering defiance of the norms of female behaviour, her insistence on her right to be where she wanted to be, to be noticed and treated as an equal: "She would have been hurrying along just the way she always did, and was no doubt thinking cars could see her, or that she had as much right as they did" ("The Eye" 266). Since her rural conservative environment sees her behaviour as an infraction, Sadie eventually gets blamed for her own death, when the neighbours agree that "[a] girl without a boyfriend going to dances on foot" must have been "asking for trouble" ("The Eye" 267). It seems that, with Sadie dying, her brave ideal of a free, happy, and unconstrained female existence is utterly defeated as incompatible with reality.

However, unexpectedly, that ideal continues to live in the young narrator's mind, as the memory of Sadie inspires her own, although childish, rebellion against her mother. In the central scene of the story, when the mother forces the narrator to look at the dead Sadie's body—perhaps in an attempt to "dethrone" her daughter's idol and to regain authority over her child—her insistence inadvertently "provided the initial momentum for her daughter's empowerment" (Bussolera 114):

"Come now," she said to me. Her gentleness sounded hateful to me, triumphant.

She bent to look into my face, and this, I was sure, was to prevent me from doing what had just occurred to me—keeping my eyes squeezed shut. Then she took her gaze away from me but kept my hand tightly held in hers. I did manage to lower my lids as soon as she took her eyes off me [...]

[H]er hold on me weakened and I was able to get myself free of her. She was weeping. It was attention to her tears and sniffles that had set me loose.

I looked straight into the coffin and saw Sadie. (“The Eye”268)

Here the simple ritual of saying goodbye to a deceased friend becomes the scene of an intricate power play. The daughter, resenting her mother’s pressure, finds inner strength to overcome her fear and explore the unknown, and, instead of being scared into submission, suddenly finds reassurance in a transcendental experience that sets her free. While looking at Sadie, the narrator believes that she has spotted a slight movement of her dead eye, a subtle wink that she deciphers as a secret personal message from her friend, meant for the little girl alone: “I was not surprised then and not in the least scared. Instantly, this sight fell into everything I knew about Sadie [...]. And I did not dream of calling anybody else’s attention to what was there, because it was not meant for them, it was completely for me” (“The Eye” 269). Acknowledging (or imagining) this final meaningful exchange between the two of them, the narrator creates an alternative reality where she can make peace with the loss of her friend and, in a way, carry on Sadie’s “legacy” by incorporating and reproducing her non-conforming beliefs. As Silvio Bussolera argues, the last look of Sadie’s eye marks the beginning of the narrator’s independent “I”; that key moment “connects the narrator’s young(er) self and the adolescent Sadie in the form on an *unio mystica*, simultaneously setting them apart from everybody else, the local community of norm-setting adults” (115). Therefore, the “eye”/“I” experience signifies the narrator’s choice of a female role model and perspective on femininity, where she, both literally and figuratively, breaks away from her mother to connect with Sadie.

This moment of epiphany recounted by the narrator in retrospect could be interpreted as the awakening of her feminist consciousness that shapes her outlook and survives long after the memory of Sadie herself has faded in her mind. Through Sadie, she discovers the freedom that helps her to adjust to the world around her. However, Munro complicates the young girl’s

experience at the end of the story, when she hints that this idealized freedom is not easily achieved in adulthood: exposed to the reality of growing up, the disillusioned narrator loses her faith in her memory of Sadie: “Yet for a long time when I did think of her, I never questioned what I believed had been shown to me. [...] Until one day, one day when I may even have been in my teens, I knew with a dim sort of hole in my insides that now I didn’t believe it anymore” (“The Eye” 270). Feminist ideals, yet again, fail to provide the answers in Munro’s writing—but they do shape her characters’ female consciousness and inform their exploration of the world around them in a meaningful way.

## II. “Night”

The next “Finale” piece is “Night,” a story initially published in *Granta* in 2012. On the surface, this second installment offers a detour from the story of the narrator’s mother, who does not feature in it as prominently as in the other three stories. Yet on a deeper level this narrative engages with the same trauma of loss, interconnected with the motifs of female embodiment, silence, and gendered vulnerability.

“Night” focuses on the teenage narrator and the experience of mortality that she has to process after she goes through an urgent appendectomy, an event that she initially views in childishly romanticized terms: “I remember it was a kind of rite that quite a few people my age had to undergo [...] perhaps not all that unhappily, because it meant a holiday from school and it gave you some kind of status—set you apart, briefly, as one touched by the wing of mortality, all at a time in your life when that could be gratifying” (“Night” 272). Still, the narrator’s feelings about this special experience are slightly disturbed when her mother tells her about a complication during the surgery—a “growth” that the doctors had discovered and removed. Significantly, the mother only talks about it briefly and evasively, refusing to discuss the

problem in further detail or to refer to it directly—and in this she follows the social conventions of her time dictating that female bodies, and particularly their “unpleasant” physiological aspects, have to be shrouded in mystery:

The only way I can explain our failure to speak of it was that there must have been a cloud around that word like the cloud around the mention of sex. Worse, even. Sex was disgusting but there must be some gratification there—indeed we knew there was, though our mothers were not aware of it—while even the word cancer made you think of some dark rotting ill-smelling creature that you would not look at even while you kicked it out of the way. (“Night” 273)

This Gothic perception of the body—first and foremost, the female body—with its dark secrets and unmentionable ailments paints a vivid picture of the most typical sentiments of the time; however, it also marks a shift in the narrator’s own generation that takes a more relaxed and liberal approach to sexuality. The narrator only becomes aware of the change when she looks back on her childhood as an adult woman. In fact, her entire narrative is based on the opposition of “then” and “now,” as she reconstructs and interprets past events through the “double lens” of a child living inside the story and a grown-up dissecting it from the vantage point of her mature experiences.

This adult narrator, who deliberately puts herself above the storyline, cannot fail to notice how oddly limited the lives of girls and women were in those early years (with multiple references to the harsh war times, the main events of the story are set in the 1940s). When the narrator describes childish games she used to play with her baby sister, it becomes obvious that the girls’ games are both imitating and reinforcing the societal roles and expectations of women at that time:

These [games] tended towards domesticity rather than glamour. Dolls were taken for walks in their baby carriages, or sometimes kittens were dressed up and walked in the dolls' stead, always frantic to get out. Also there were play sessions when somebody got to be the teacher and could slap the others over the wrists and make them pretend to cry, for various infractions and stupidities. ("Night" 274)

With this slight shift of the narrator's perspective, Munro reveals how claustrophobic these pre-determined functions seem to the girls and how the lack of real options provokes their aggressive responses and cruel treatment of others.

By the time of the described events, the narrator had already outgrown these games, but had not yet started to settle into an adult woman's role clearly laid out before her. The transient state she experiences on the verge of adulthood and after her life-changing surgery is felt like a temporary reprieve from the lifetime of rules and obligations: "I was free of school and left on my own, as I don't remember being in quite the same way in any other time of my growing-up [...] It seems that the mysterious turkey egg must have given me some invalid status, so that I could spend part of the time wandering about like a visitor" ("Night" 275). While this new-found freedom comes as a direct consequence of the narrator's health scare, it also sets off her unsettled state in the zone of uncertainty and in-betweenness she inhabits as she leaves her childhood behind. With old societal scripts no longer applying to her and the new ones not completely in force, the young girl, for the first time in her life, finds herself open to multiple possibilities and decisions.

As Katrin Wanninger points out in her analysis of the story, the narrator is going through a "transition from child to adult in the process of which the feelings induced by the state of liminality trigger uneasiness and culminate in fantasies of violence" (Wanninger 119). These

fantasies mirror the transformation the narrator is undergoing, as she starts to experience anxiety and insomnia, and the world around her is changing from day to night, from the sunlit simplicity of childhood to the darker terrain of maturity. At night, when the family's home recedes into darkness and reveals an uncanny new face that is both familiar and eerily unreal, the narrator notices a similar change in herself signaled by a new, terrifying obsession:

Something was taking hold of me, and it was my business, my hope, to fight it off [...]

Whatever it was was trying to tell me to do things, not exactly for any reason but just to see if such acts were possible. It was informing me that motives were not necessary. [...]

The thought was there and hanging in my mind.

The thought that I could strangle my little sister, who was asleep in the bunk below me and whom I loved more than anybody in the world. ("Night" 276–77)

For the narrator, this threatening fantasy of hurting her beloved sister seemingly comes out of nowhere. However, its fixation on the fragile female body signifies how vulnerable and unsettled the narrator herself is feeling after her surgery and her cancer scare. This experience showed her a very real possibility of a bad thing happening for no apparent reason—a possibility that her compulsive fantasy pushes her to explore. She is feeling insecure, being traumatized by her taste of mortality—but, it can be argued, even more so by the silence around it, as her mother refuses to talk about the daughter's medical condition and shuts down any conversation about her body.

The narrator's obsessive thoughts and night terrors, therefore, reflect the silencing of her bodily experience and the impossibility to share her fears and insecurities, both about her health and the physical changes she is going through. Moreover, these disturbing fantasies also foreshadow the inevitable tragedy the family will have to face—deterioration of the mother's own health and the onset of her undisclosed fatal disease that everyone is aware of, although it is

never named or discussed by the family members. The “cloud” of silence around it completes the pattern of avoiding conversation about female bodies and ailments that is already affecting the daughter. The painful revelation of her mother’s decline is only mentioned vaguely in passing by the reminiscing adult narrator, but it always remains in the back of the young girl’s mind, defining and informing her negotiation of her own changing body.

What ultimately helps the narrator to break out of the pattern of silence is the helping hand offered by her father and his ability to listen. Munro describes a rare moment of understanding and acceptance between a parent and a child when the narrator’s suppressed and shameful secret is finally revealed:

If he had given the slightest intimation that he knew there was more, if he’d even hinted that he had come here intending to hear it, I don’t think he’d have got anything out of me at all. I had to break the silence out of my own will [...]

He let me wait to go on, he didn’t ask anything. I meant to back off but I kept talking.  
(“Night” 282)

When the daughter, although initially reluctant to speak, starts explaining herself, she realizes that her words are effecting an irreversible change in her, cementing the transformation that had already been going on for a while: “Now I could not unsay it, I could not go back to the person I had been before” (“Night” 283). For the narrator, acknowledging this change and breaking the silence around her experiences is terrifying because of the deep-seated shame and fear of judgement she has internalized. However, overcoming these fears is an important and liberating part of growing up.

Contrary to what she expects, the narrator finds reassurance in her father’s earnest and non-judgemental response. His unexpected validation of his daughter’s experiences as “normal”



and his willingness to accept her insecurities without judging relieve her of the guilt and shame she feels and help her get over her fears. This moment of connection bringing together the teenage narrator, who is “struggling with the feelings of liberation, freedom and strangeness, of *Entgrenzung* on the road to maturity” (Wanninger 127), and her despairing father offers some hope to the family that is trying to get through financial difficulties while processing the impending loss they will have to face.

Munro’s treatment of the harmful silences surrounding female bodily experiences provides a powerful subtext to this brief episode from the family’s dramatic story. It reads as an important, although subtle, social commentary on the censorship and self-censorship of women. At the same time, consistent juxtaposition of the narrator’s adolescent and mature perspectives brings to light the profound societal shift in women’s roles, lifestyles, and self-awareness that is quite obvious to the reminiscing adult protagonist who finds herself in a very different social and economic position, “a generation and an income further on” (“Night” 283). This intentional contrast of “then” and “now” points out historical significance of a seemingly trivial autobiographic experience.

### ***III. “Voices”***

The third “Finale” installment is the short story “Voices,” which takes the overall plotline a few years back, placing the recounted incident chronologically between the events of “The Eye” and “Night,” as seen through the eyes of a ten-year-old narrator. The version of the story published in *The Telegraph* in 2013 (after the publication in the *Dear Life* collection) deliberately stresses its autobiographical origin in the paratext, introducing it as “an experience she [Munro] had as a ten year-old child: a fleeting wartime encounter with a prostitute.” This concise description does, in fact, capture what happens in the story, although not its complexity.

Munro uses this simple incident to explore various issues surrounding it—the constraints of social class, society’s perception of femininity and non-conforming women, as well as growing alienation between mother and daughter—while building on multiple motifs already outlined in “The Eye” and “Night” and revealing the intertextual connections between different parts of “Finale.”

In the story, the young narrator accompanies her mother to a social dance hosted in their town, but they quickly have to leave when the scandalized mother notices a notorious prostitute (known as Mrs. Hutchison) among the guests. When leaving the house, the narrator sees a second prostitute, Peggy, that the infamous woman brought along—visibly distressed, Peggy is comforted by the young Air Force soldiers also invited to the dance, and their kind voices and polite manners make a lasting impression on the narrator, awakening her budding sensuality.

The narrative presents Mrs. Hutchison and the narrator’s mother as two opposing poles on the spectrum of femininity—a proper lady and a prostitute, two women that are so unlike each other that one cannot tolerate the presence of the other. As Vera Aumann remarks, “[t]he prostitute’s lifestyle did not conform to the normative, regulated rules of the dance or to the social representation the mother wanted to have and left her so insecure that she had to leave in order to keep her world intact” (132). It is obviously true that Mrs. Hutchison’s appearance and behaviour violated the societal norms and contradicted stereotypical gendered expectations; but the ten year-old narrator who did not have full understanding of the situation and, therefore, did not judge the woman she met from the position of normativity, saw these differences in a positive, rather than negative, light: “I would not have thought it possible that somebody could look both old and polished, both heavy and graceful, bold as brass and yet mightily dignified. You could have called her brazen, and perhaps my mother later did—that was her sort of word.

Someone better disposed might have said, stately” (“Voices” 292). The only negative judgement here (even if it is simply assumed) comes from the narrator’s mother who is positioning herself as the direct opposite of brazen or bold. However, as the narrator observes, her mother is no more accepted by the town society than Mrs. Hutchinson herself, although for very different reasons, relating, in this case, to class constraints rather than sexual impropriety.

As the narrator points out, her mother’s social aspirations were also a form of non-conformance to the commonly accepted standards of femininity that prevented her from fitting in in any social circle. Born in the country and aspiring to the upscale town lifestyle, she was desperate to leave her lower-class roots behind her, but instead ended up stuck in the uncertain zone of in-betweenness that defined her social non-belonging in the spatial terms: “[S]he was in an odd situation. We were. Our family was out of town but not really in the country” (“Voices” 287). The narrator concludes that her mother, despite striving for education and intellectual environment where she could stand out, was herself not tolerant and open-minded enough to accept the difference in others, and therefore her desire to cross the class boundary clashed with her own behaviour reinforcing the existing class differences, making her look ridiculous and unlikable: “I think people found her pushy and overly grammatical [...] She sounded as if she had grown up in some strange family who always talked that way. And she hadn’t. They didn’t. Out on their farms, my aunts and uncles talked the way everybody else did. And they didn’t like my mother very much, either” (“Voices” 287). While the mother’s ambitions motivated her to better herself and move forward in life, the same desires—underpinned by her own social prejudice—also brought her to the state of double rejection, by her working-class family and by the more prestigious town society she wanted to be a part of.

The daughter's awareness of her mother's failure to fit in adds to the growing estrangement between the two. The narrator readily acknowledges the hardships of her mother's everyday life; however, she also senses and resists her mother's attempts to appropriate the daughter's abilities and achievements for her own social-climbing purposes, in a never-ending quest for acceptance. This silent protest—already foreshadowed in "The Eye"—leaves the mother desperate, "enduring misery because I was not a credit to her" ("Voices" 297). The misunderstanding and sabotaging of each other's needs ultimately result in mutual disappointment and resentment.

In fact, at this point in her life the young narrator feels closer to her father, who is much better adjusted to his social environment and can give her a sense of belonging without having to manipulate or show off his daughter. He is more easily accepted in his social circle and knows nothing of his wife's anxiety to fit in, while constantly feeling out of place: "I wished then for my father to be there, always sounding perfectly right for the occasion [...]. My mother was just the opposite. With her everything was clear and ringing and served to call attention" ("Voices" 290). These polarizing views of her parents, by extension, affect the narrator's perception of masculinity and femininity, as well as her choice between the two sets of roles and qualities. As Aumann points out, "In 'Voices,' the description of women in general and the mother in particular is always ambivalent, whereas men are consistently portrayed in a positive light" (132). For the narrator, her father comes to represent order, stability, and safety, whereas her mother stands for everything that is unhinged, chaotic, and dangerous. Remarkably, when the girl sees the younger prostitute, Peggy, crying on the stairs, she immediately assumes that a woman must be at fault: "It must have been that orange-dressed woman who had been mean, I thought, for no particular reason. It had to have been a woman" ("Voices" 297). The true reason

of what happened remains unknown, yet the narrator's immediate assumption can be interpreted as a reflection of her conflicted feelings about her mother (Aumann 132).

The narrator's encounter with Peggy also reveals the other side of her ambivalence towards femininity—namely, the recognition of female vulnerability that she is aware of and can identify with based on her own experience. When she sees Peggy crying on the stairs, she does not question what happened (or, in fact, show any interest in the matter) because she knows well enough that insulting or attacking a girl does not always require a reason. She goes on to blame Peggy herself for not handling this situation more bravely—and, by doing this, reveals how similar both girls are:

What did I think had happened to make Peggy cry? The question did not much interest at the time. I was not a brave person myself. I cried when chased and beaten with shingles on the way home from my first school [...] It seemed as though some people were naturally brave and others weren't. Somebody must have said something to Peggy, and there she was snuffling, because like me she was not thick-skinned. ("Voices" 296–97)

Because of this similarity and her self-identification with Peggy, the narrator dismisses her as unimportant, focusing instead on the male presences in that scene who she believes to be more significant. What impresses the narrator most is the young soldiers' treatment of the crying girl—their caring demeanor and compassionate, soothing words are not something she is used to seeing from other people around her, and definitely not the customary way men treat women in her experience: "Such kindness. That anybody could be so kind" ("Voices" 297).

Transfixed by this unusual kindness, the narrator interprets it as something deeper and more powerful than what it probably was—as a sign of special affection, an expression of the unconditional love she has not received from either of her parents. Her longing for love elevates

the soldiers' comforting words to a form of a "blessing": "But to me they seemed to be unable to open their mouths without uttering some kind of blessing, a blessing on the moment [...]. I just thought of the blessing, how wonderful to get on the receiving end of it, how strangely lucky and undeserving was that Peggy" ("Voices" 297–98). In the narrator's eyes, this blessing, implying simultaneously spiritual and erotic undertones, amounts to the promise of warmth and unquestioning acceptance.

To satisfy this longing for love and acceptance and to fill the void left by her break away from her mother, the narrator keeps holding on to the scene she witnessed, eliminating Peggy from the picture in her fantasies and reorienting the men's warm and caring attitude towards herself: "And, for I don't know how long, I thought of them. In the cold dark of my bedroom they rocked me to sleep. I could turn them on, summon up their faces and their voices—but oh, far more, their voices were now directed to myself and not to any unnecessary third party. Their hands blessed my own skinny thighs and their voices assured me that I, too, was worthy of love" ("Voices" 298). These illusory voices, mythologized by the narrator's imagination, become her coping mechanism while growing up. The fantasy of comforting male voices becomes a stand-in for the lack of parental warmth and a compensatory device for the multiple rejections and insults the young girl has to face, helping her to deal with her own gendered vulnerability. At the same time, the narrator's long-lasting obsession with this minor episode and her insistence on reframing herself as the object of the men's erotic admiration reflect her belief that she has to derive her feeling of self-worth from male validation.

Munro overturns this belief at the very end of the story, when she takes a step back from her personal memories to de-mythologize the soldiers and their tragic fate at the fronts of the World War II, thus revealing their own vulnerability and helplessness in the face of global

historical forces: “And while they still inhabited my not yet quite erotic fantasies they were gone. Some, many, gone for good” (“Voices” 298). In the end, after exploring multiple issues of class and gender privilege, women’s limitations and non-conforming femininity, social isolation, rejection, the need for belonging, failing mother-daughter relationships, and healing fantasies of acceptance—all neatly packaged into one fleeting childhood memory—Munro concludes her story on the note of all-encompassing empathy.

#### *IV. “Dear Life”*

The last “Finale” piece, “Dear Life,” draws the overarching narrative to a close, completing the cycle of a turbulent mother-daughter relationship and offering a final, painfully realistic glimpse into Munro’s personal perspective on her mother’s life. Here, the author brings to the foreground the autobiographical nature of her story and deliberately erases the boundary between reality and fiction, insisting on her utter truthfulness and dropping all artistic pretences. This is particularly evident in the first version of “Dear Life” published in *The New Yorker* in September 2011, where it was introduced by a subheading, “A childhood visitation,” and preceded by a childhood photograph of the writer herself captioned: “Alice Munro, at the age of two or three, in her home town of Wingham, Ontario.” Therefore, the paratextual elements surrounding the magazine version emphasize Munro’s intention to frame the narrative as a retelling of her real-life experience, which is supported by the narrator’s consistent assurance that “this is not a story, only life” (“Dear Life” 307). The final paragraph of *The New Yorker* version accentuated the same perspective while dwelling on the mother’s death and its aftermath for the narrator: “When my mother was dying, she got out of the hospital somehow, at night, and wandered around town until someone who didn’t know her at all spotted her and took her in. If this were fiction, as I said, it would be too much, but it is true.” However, Munro’s insistence on

non-fictionality was mitigated in the later version of the story included in the *Dear Life* collection where the last paragraph was completely left out. This change shifted the balance towards viewing “Dear Life” as a fictional piece of writing placed among other, equally fictional, literary works. Nevertheless, what becomes obvious from comparing the two published versions is that in “Dear Life” Munro is deliberately blurring the distinction between truth and fiction, merging both into a deeply personal and meaningful—although not necessarily factually accurate—account.

Structurally, the story begins and ends with the narrator’s childhood home—a familiar space stuck in the undefined zone between town and country, and a place the narrator sees simultaneously from multiple temporal perspectives, as she intertwines the present with various past moments, digging deep into and beyond her family history’s timeline to reconstruct an unknowable past from uncertain memories. As a result, she superimposes temporal layers onto her spatial frame of reference, seeing her family home not as it is or was at any particular point, but in flux, simultaneously in all its states and with all the changes it has undergone, reflecting both her own and her mother’s memories.

The narrator tells her stories in the form of seemingly disparate fragments and insignificant incidents that only make sense when brought together in her overreaching attempt to articulate her past through storytelling: “Reconstructing and remembering past events and feelings, the protagonist rewrites the story of her life, as every fragment and every memory needs to be retold. In assessing the narrative of ‘her life,’ the narrator, herself a writer, becomes a meta-narrator/-writer” (Veith 140). The narrative she so painstakingly constructs is by no means simple or linear, with its proleptic and analeptic references, foreshadowings of the future and reminiscences about the past. In addition, Munro populates it with multiplicity of perspectives,



continuously switching between the narrator's childhood memories, her adult, constantly doubting and analyzing voice, and her mother's stories as remembered by the daughter, through which the author "creates a dualism or polarity between her narrator and the narrator's mother" (Veith 141). The added layers of local history, gossip, and character-authored documents construct an overwhelming polyphony undermining the very possibility of a singular conclusive version of the past.

Nevertheless, retrieving the memory of her mother from these unreliable bits and pieces remains the narrator's main motivation for engaging in storytelling. Driven by her impossible quest for the mother's true story, she repeatedly questions events as remembered by either of them, poking holes in the family legends, as she remarks that "Some things about this story were puzzling, though I didn't think about them at the time and neither did my mother" ("Dear Life" 311). Uncertainty becomes the recurrent motif in the narrator's engagement with her mother's figure. The truth that seems to emerge from her reframing of the past is complex and does not completely fit either the romanticized idealistic view of motherhood, or the antagonistic motherly presence evoked by the previous three stories of "Finale." In "Dear Life," the narrator revisits the entire course of her relationship with her mother, filling the gaps in her story and building on the previously outlined themes and motifs, such as the daughter's silent rebellion and the subsequent estrangement between the two. But now the narrator also offers a glimpse into a later phase of her mother's illness that has not been mentioned before—the time when the mother, weakened by disease, had to lean on her daughter to be able to communicate with the outside world: "I could always make out what she was saying, though often, after her voice got thick, other people couldn't. I was her interpreter" ("Dear Life" 315). By revealing this detail (in

itself, a metaphor for translation), the narrator acknowledges that the connection between mother and daughter has always been there, despite all their misunderstandings.

In fact, the protagonist of “Dear Life” seems to be searching for this very connection in her memories, delving into her mother’s backstory to find out who she truly was. Once again, returning to the motif of “Voices,” the daughter reflects on her mother’s social aspirations and her struggle for education and a better life, painting a picture of a strong, ambitious and determined woman who was not afraid to leave her old life behind in pursuit of her goals. At the same time, by revealing the rest of the story, the narrator shows how her mother’s pride and ambitions set her up for failure when her illusions of unimpeded social advancement faced the harsh reality of a rigid and impermeable class system: “She must have thought that she and my father were going to transform themselves into a different sort of people, people who enjoyed a degree of leisure. Golf. Dinner parties. Perhaps she had convinced herself that certain boundaries were not there” (“Dear Life” 304). Still, those boundaries existed and could not be easily crossed, as the narrator realized when she found a set of unused golf clubs in her parents’ living room—a symbolic manifestation of her mother’s shattered hopes.

The adult narrator, who also spent a lifetime away from her family home after moving with her husband to Vancouver, can certainly share her mother’s anxiety about fitting in and her fears of rejection and non-belonging; however, as a child, she showed a distinct preference for her father—a proud, hard-working man who persevered even in the face of failure and did not feel the need to be accepted by a higher social class: “My father had other ideas. It wasn’t that he thought that town people or any people were actually better than he was. But he believed perhaps that was what they were thinking. And he preferred never to give them a chance to show it” (“Dear Life” 304). In the daughter’s eyes, her father’s stubborn refusal to adjust to the

expectations of others becomes a manifestation of the inner freedom and power that her mother is lacking.

By registering these differences, the young narrator becomes aware of the conflict between her parents' opposing worldviews, but she also realizes that the two of them inhabit very different worlds. She notices how the use of space at home reflects the opposition of masculine and feminine, with her mother's functions confined to childcare and domesticity, which require her to stay in the house, while her father remains in the outside spaces signifying nature, freedom, and creativity. The protagonist, despite being aware of the hardships of farm living, with all its ugly and grotesque aspects, is still drawn to her father's world because it promises more possibilities for action and self-discovery. By contrast, she finds her mother's "inside" world, with all its domestic chores, too stifling and demanding: "In those days, I had to help my father sometimes, because my brother wasn't old enough yet. [...] I enjoyed this. The importance of the work, the frequent solitude were just what I liked. Later on, I had to stay in the house to help my mother, and I was full of resentment and quarrelsome remarks" ("Dear Life" 305–6). The young girl attaches her perception of masculinity and femininity to this gendered division of space between her father and mother. Faced with the inevitable choice between the two on the brink of her adolescence, she rejects feminine submissiveness and identifies with the masculine model of behaviour as the one offering more freedom and creative potential.

However, such self-identification, finding itself at odds with the societal expectations of proper feminine conduct, is immediately punished by both parents, when the narrator is violently forced back into the space and function reserved for her gender: "I hurt her [mother's] feelings, she said, and the outcome was that she would go to the barn to tell on me, to my father. Then he'd have to interrupt his work to give me a beating with his belt. (This was not an uncommon

punishment at the time). [...] But that phase also passed, and in my teens I became manageable, even jolly” (“Dear Life” 306). The parents feel the need to show a united front to protect their perception of normativity. For all her own history of non-conformance, the mother, when faced with her daughter’s rejection of a woman’s societal role and its limitations, responds with a harsh and unforgiving judgement rather than support. This lack of understanding reinforces the existing gender disparities and deepens the generational conflict between the two women.

Despite the complex feelings the narrator develops towards her mother, their relationship takes an unexpected and critical turn when the family has to deal with the inevitability of the mother’s incurable disease. The illness is for the first time directly addressed in “Dear Life,” although the previous three stories have already been building up tension towards it—and, as Robert Thacker remarks, the fictionalized account of the same traumatic experience has often been a central motif in Munro’s earlier stories, such as “The Peace of Utrecht,” “Home,” “The Ottawa Valley,” “Working for a Living,” “The Progress of Love,” “Friend of My Youth,” “Lying Under the Apple Tree,” and “Soon” (Thacker, “This is Not a Story” 25):

Something had come upon us that was even more unexpected and would become more devastating than the loss of income, though we didn’t know it yet. It was the early onset of Parkinson’s disease, which showed up when my mother was in her forties.

At first, it was not too bad [...] She held on to some strength in herself for a surprisingly long time. (“Dear Life” 308–09)

Reminiscing about that time in her life when her mother’s health took a turn for the worse and her father lost his fox farm business, the narrator ironically points out that such a quick and disastrous change could only happen in real life, because it would have seemed too far-fetched in a book: “You would think that this was just too much. The business gone, my mother’s health

going. It wouldn't do in fiction" ("Dear Life" 309). The shift in the family dynamic also deeply affected the narrator herself: for the family to be able to cope with her mother's illness and her inability to perform her domestic duties, the eldest daughter had to take over her role at home, becoming locked in inside the house, in the feminine sphere of responsibility and authority. At the same time, her father had to move away even deeper into the outside world, as he took a job at the local foundry: "I believe he was glad to get away, even to do this hard and risky work. To get out of the house and into the company of other men" ("Dear Life" 309). Thus, the mother's illness cements the existing gendered division of roles within the family, confining the daughter to the same domestic function that she initially resisted.

Yet spending time at home together in the early days of the mother's illness led to a partial reconciliation between the two, when the mother started opening up about her life and the daughter felt less compelled to rebel and sabotage the relationship. Years later, long after the mother had been gone, one of her stories—known as "the visitation of old Mrs. Netterfield" ("Dear Life" 315)—becomes key for the estranged daughter's attempt to make sense of her mother's legacy and their connection. The story focuses on the day when an elderly demented neighbour, Mrs. Netterfield, suddenly came to the narrator's house and tried to barge inside, after rummaging in the baby crib that stood on the porch, obviously searching for the baby. The narrator's mother, fearing for her daughter, snatched the baby out of the crib and hid in the house until the old woman left. This little incident turned out to be a painful and traumatic experience for the mother, then a young woman, who felt threatened and overwhelmed by the urge to protect her child from the unknown danger.

The Mrs. Netterfield story was apparently an important one for the narrator's mother, as she told it to her daughter multiple times, gradually shifting the narrative from a simple anecdote

to the tale of a miraculous escape. As the narrator remarks, over time noticeable changes in the mother's story amplified the factors of danger and fear, transporting it into the terrain of a dark, almost Gothic adventure: "I don't know when my mother first told me this story, but it seems to me that that was where the earlier versions stopped—with Mrs. Netterfield pressing her face and hands against the glass while my mother hid. But in later versions there was an end to just looking. Impatience or anger took hold and then the rattling and the banging came" ("Dear Life" 315). This visible evolution of the mother's story, be it true-to-life or embellished by time and fantasy, accentuates her courage and determination to save her baby from an imminent threat. What the mother was trying to convey, revisiting this strange incident over and over again, and what the narrator discovered rethinking the story years later, was a moment of selfless and unconditional motherly love, a deep and uncomplicated bond between mother and child. Their connection may have weakened in the numerous disappointments, dramas, and difficulties of subsequent years, but its all-encompassing force was obvious to the mother on that distant day when she held on to her daughter, "as she said, for dear life" ("Dear Life" 318).

The narrator returns to this episode to reconnect to the memory of her mother and to make sense of their flawed relationship prematurely cut short by illness and separation. Rewinding their history back to the beginning, to that moment of boundless love as remembered by her mother, she is able to reprocess her own memories, finally reconciling with her pain and seeing her mother's life in a different light. The mother's own turn of phrase—"dear life"—reused by the daughter as a title for her story, becomes a symbolic clue unlocking the intense emotional attachment between the two.

While reimagining the incident, the daughter focuses on the figure of Mrs. Netterfield—the other maternal figure in the story whose plotline portends the tragic fate of the narrator's own

mother. The old neighbour's downward spiral into insanity recounted as a piece of local gossip mirrors the mother's own gradual loss of consciousness and memory witnessed by her family. The unsettling parallels do not end there: as the narrator finds out, the two women inhabited the same space on different timelines, because the very house the protagonist grew up in used to belong to Mrs. Netterfield's family. Moreover, both women had daughters with a passion for writing, as the narrator learns from Mrs. Netterfield's daughter's poem published in the local newspaper. After all, the old woman's visitation that terrified the narrator's mother may have been less of a threatening attack and more of a desperate attempt to reconnect with her past life, slipping away and almost forgotten:

Is it possible that my mother never knew this, never knew that our house was where the Netterfield family had lived and that the old woman was looking in the windows of what had been her own home?

[...] Who knows? And who was it who came and took her away, as my mother said? Perhaps it was her daughter, the same woman who wrote poems and lived in Oregon. Perhaps that daughter, grown and distant, was the one she was looking for in the baby carriage. ("Dear Life" 318)

The raw and emotional stories of Mrs. Netterfield and the narrator's mother reveal Munro's original take on the "madwoman" as a feminist concept. A staple of feminist literary tradition, the "madwoman" was initially construed as "as a figure of rage, without power to alleviate her suffering or to express it in terms that make sense to society" (Goodman 116). Closely linked with the conditions of aphasia and amnesia and therefore devoid of speech and/or memory, the "madwoman" often served as a powerful representation of the suppressed female voice. Some feminist literary scholars, though, critiqued this image as a universal female

metaphor and “an example of a feminist monomyth” (Felski 70), pointing out its one-dimensionality, sweeping generalizations, and disregard of the class and race differences modifying various female experiences. Yet, Munro in “Dear Life” appropriates the figure of a “madwoman” for a very different purpose: for her, engagement with sickness and insanity signifies the final chapter in a woman’s life, with its primal loneliness and inability to share one’s story, because it has always been, and remains, untellable. Mrs. Netterfield’s visit—her last searching look at what used to be her life—is profoundly misunderstood by the narrator’s mother, who, in her turn, has to go through a painful journey of loss misunderstood and neglected by her own daughter.

The narrator herself starts exploring these connections only later in life, when it is already too late to hear what her mother had to say: “[Mrs. Netterfield’s] daughter lived not so far away from me for a while in my adult life. I could have written to her, maybe visited [...] But the person I would really have liked to talk to then was my mother, who was no longer available” (“Dear Life” 318). This final admission of her pain over the loss of her mother opens up the narrator’s pent-up guilt about abandoning her at the later stages of her disease. Unlike Mrs. Netterfield, who “wasn’t left to die alone” (“Dear Life” 316), the narrator’s mother was, in fact, left by her daughter, who chose to make a fresh start elsewhere and move on with her life away from her parents and her hometown. However, revisiting old memories helps the narrator to find a symbolic way back home, to recreate the connection with her mother she has long believed lost and to find ultimate reconciliation. And, by doing this, she finds the strength to forgive both her mother and herself: “We say of some things that they can’t be forgiven, or that we will never forgive ourselves. But we do—we do it all the time” (“Dear Life” 319). This last emotional



chord completes the cycle, giving a different, more hopeful ending to the complicated and imperfect mother-daughter relationship.

Thus, the daughter's lifelong journey of self-discovery—the narrator's fictional, as well as Munro's own real and deeply personal one—ultimately evolves into the discovery of the (m)other, as the narrator “makes peace with herself and her deceased mother and finds forgiveness through narrative commemoration” (Veith 138). Munro concludes the story—along with the “Finale” cycle, the short story collection, and her entire literary career—on a note of reconciliation and hope, as the stories of mother and daughter converge, revealing their undeniable oneness and the unbreakable bond that has always existed between them. The writer's raw and extremely honest, although fictionalized, account of her personal memories, with its unwavering focus on the mother-child dyad, transforms the narrative of the two women's intertwining lives into the most important love story of their lifetimes, elevating seemingly mundane observations to the level of universally intelligible human experience.

### *Conclusion*

As my analysis suggests, the six stories under consideration, while representing very different facets of Munro's literary talent and addressing various subjects, from historical to autobiographic to purely fictional, are nevertheless interconnected by a common theme of a woman's perspective on the structures of power. This motif, which can be deemed central for the writer's entire oeuvre, evolves in her layered narratives into a multidimensional study of women's constrained and heavily regulated societal experiences, their negotiation of gendered vulnerability, their silencing and self-censorship, and ultimately their rejection of similar vulnerability in others—from the standpoint of Munro's own generation, significantly impacted by the second-wave feminist struggles and ideas. The author's persistent engagement with

women's experiences and social implications of gender, which was largely shaped by the prolific wave of female and feminist writing in the Canadian literary scene of the 1970s and 1980s, makes it possible to offer a nuanced feminist reading for many of her stories. From a more contemporary intersectional perspective, this reading could include a glimpse into ethnicity- and class-based social inequities superimposed onto the system of gender discrimination, as well as colonial legacy and institutional whiteness as the categories underpinning the existing structures of authority.

I argue that such a reading would be essential for understanding Munro's oeuvre in its full complexity—even more so, considering the fact that Munro does not use feminism as a subject to write about, but rather as a lens to write through, as one of many starting points informing her world outlook and her self-positioning as a writer. Her personal feminist convictions, based on the experiences of her generation borne out of their temporal and spatial context, produce a powerful subtext to her entire body of work, which remains legible even if it is not deliberately obvious. Munro uses her personal interpretation of feminism as a default setting, introducing it to her readers, in a way, as a “normal” and mainstream, rather than radical, perspective.

This approach ties in seamlessly with the author's bigger project of writing into existence an alternative, sidelined version of history that can be classified as a variation of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of “minor literature.” Her fiction has been consistently engaging with women's personal stories as displaced, marginalized experiences contributing to the collective female narrative. Munro has been telling the “minor” story, taking the side of the silenced and the vulnerable, in every aspect of her writing—from her reinventing of the short prose form, breaking up the traditional plot structure, renouncing narrative authority, and challenging the

very ideas of originality and textual stability to her treatment of class, gender, and post-colonialism. These creative choices have marked all of the writer's work throughout her decades-long career, transforming the face of the contemporary literary canon along the way—and setting up the scene for the “afterlife” of Munro's “minor literature” in translation.

### Chapter 3. Translators' Projects: Representations of Femininity

On the basis of the proposed feminist interpretation of the selected Munro stories as outlined in Chapter 2, this chapter will explore the published translation projects in three target languages to show how individual translators respond to and realize the feminist potentiality of the respective source texts through their (re)construction of female identities and experiences. My discussion of the translators' personalities in the opening section will be largely informed by Berman's translation analysis concepts and terminology and will address the translators' specific cultural horizons, their personal backgrounds, known details of their involvement with their translating projects, and examples of translator-authored metatexts that elucidate their translating positions. Further, the central part of the chapter will be dedicated to the comparative textual analysis of signifying zones in the six short stories from *Too Much Happiness* and *Dear Life*, with emphasis on their key women-centred themes and images as potential sites of divergence in the respective translations. I intend to demonstrate how the translators' personal goals and self-positioning towards the task of literary translation in general and the source texts in particular correlate with their textual decision-making, how each individual decision both reflects the translator's initial orientation and contributes to the emergence of a consistent translation project, and how the resulting publications transform the representation of femininity in Munro's work.

#### ***Overview of Translators: Horizon, Position, Project***

To address the selected corpus texts from Munro's 2009 collection *Too Much Happiness* ("Child's Play" and the titular story), I will be looking at the target language versions produced by three translators: Andrei Stepanov (Russian), Ievheniia Kononenko (Ukrainian), and Heidi Zerning (German). The four *Dear Life* stories combined into the short-story cycle entitled

“Finale” will be represented within the framework of this study by two translation projects: the German version by Zerning and the Russian one by Tat’iana Borovikova.

From the point of view of Even-Zohar’s polysystem theory and especially Toury’s concept of translational norms, it has to be assumed that for each of these translators their initial orientation and approach were affected by the cultural, spatial and temporal context in which they are operating, including the specific nature of their respective literary polysystems and the dominant translational norms in them (Toury 205). In this framework, Ukrainian literature and literary translation may serve as an example of a relatively minor and evolving target polysystem, historically overshadowed by a bigger and more influential neighbour (Even-Zohar, “The Position of Translated Literature” 47). The overwhelming domination of Russian-language literary tradition has marked the development of the Ukrainian literary polysystem throughout its entire history. This factor has become particularly significant in the context of the country’s social and political upheaval following the 2013–2014 Euromaidan revolution, the annexation of Crimea and occupation of Donbas by Russian military forces in 2014, and Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022—all of which have further complicated the already complex dynamic between the two cultures, languages, and literatures. As a result, in Ukraine’s contemporary literary system, with its ongoing crisis brought about by both cultural and political shifts, translation of foreign literature into Ukrainian may be theorized as a stimulating and innovative factor, which indicates the nation’s choice of a cultural and political vector and provides models for the production of a new domestic literary repertoire.

The opposite case is of a well-established and conservative literary tradition that resists any innovations and marginalizes translating activity (Even-Zohar, “The Position of Translated

Literature” 49). This scenario lends itself to describing the position of the translated corpus in Russian literature, where the undisputed authority of the extensive and influential literary canon largely shapes the public perception of styles, genres, and authors, complicating the introduction of newer, different models to the centre of the polysystem. The canon’s heavy focus on novel-length (and predominantly male-authored) master narratives results in the perceptible sidelining of alternative repertoires that do not fit that description or are not modelled on the respective archetypal texts—which can affect both the translated literature’s systemic position and the translators’ strategic decision-making.

The literary translation into German represents a middle-ground scenario, since the German-language literary polysystem may be theorized as occupying an intermediate position between global core and periphery. As one of Europe’s most prestigious and established cultural traditions, German-language literature, with its centuries-long history and remarkably influential canon, enjoys a central status on a regional scale. It operates on the supranational level, spanning several distinctly separate national cultural spaces united by a shared language and characterized by various degrees of relative prominence (for instance, the GDR literary and translational models are perceived as more peripheral than West German ones). At the same time, the German-language tradition may be regarded as secondary compared to the English-language (and particularly North American) literary models. Consequently, various repertoires may be treated and assimilated differently when borrowed into German through translation. The status of English as a major global language has such an overwhelming impact that both domestically-produced writing and German translations of the foreign sources may be modelled on some of the English-language examples—and, conversely, the German-language tradition is authoritative

enough to modify foreign texts and imported repertoires according to its own tastes, preferences, and notions of acceptability.

While the above considerations do not completely predetermine the outcome of the translating process or the translators' self-positioning towards the existing translational norms, they do define the conditions under which the translators' agency is allowed to play out. For each of the Munro translators under consideration, their cultural horizons appear to have a significant impact on the formulation of their translating positions and their respective approaches to their projects.

Out of all four translators, Zerning has the most personal connection to Munro's work. As the *Tagesspiegel* article celebrating her translation career points out, Zerning, a self-taught literary translator, is known as the "German voice" of Alice Munro since she has translated most of the writer's published short story collections over the years (Kippenberger): from the 2000 publication of *Die Liebe einer Frau* (*The Love of a Good Woman*) to the 2013 appearance of *Liebes Leben* (*Dear Life*) and the 2016 retranslation of *Die Jupitermonde* (*The Moons of Jupiter*). Having spent decades rewriting Munro into the German language and consciousness, she has an intimate knowledge of the author's unique style, and her translation project focuses on the stylistic nuances of Munro's texts, their rhythm and musicality. Zerning describes Munro's style as "unauffällig" [unpretentious] and claims that the writer "benutzt keine besonderen Stilmittel, sondern breitet mit großer Feinheit Nuancen aus" [does not use any special stylistic devices, but rather unfolds nuanced narratives with utmost finesse] (Zerning in Kippenberger<sup>6</sup>). The reconstruction of this carefully crafted stylistic simplicity is one of the German translator's

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<sup>6</sup> Translations of German, Russian, and Ukrainian into English are my own unless otherwise noted.

main priorities, as is her commitment to faithfulness and invisibility. Zerning is known for her reticence and determination to avoid the spotlight and to stay out of the public eye (which, interestingly, mirrors Munro's own private and reclusive nature). However, despite her conscious choice to stay invisible in the text—an essential part of her translating position expressed in the virtual absence of any translator-authored comments, prefaces, or other types of paratext over her exceptionally long career—Zerning's translations do not stop at conveying the original. Rather, her subtle approach, with its emphasis on the poetic, enriches Munro's writing phonetically and stylistically, while maintaining the author's focus on the female perspective. As a translator, she is invariably sensitive to the issues of gender: Barbara Pausch, comparing Zerning's translation of "Boys and Girls" (2010) to an early version by Karl Heinrich (1974), remarks that the former's women-centredness reflects an important social and political shift towards more gender awareness and wider spread of feminism that took place in German society over these several decades (Pausch 299). The complex and nuanced representation of gender dynamics is one of the most important characteristics of Zerning's translating project.

Andrei Stepanov, the Russian translator of *Too Much Happiness* (*Слишком много счастья*), approaches his task from a very different position that has little to do with gender. Rather, it is marked by authority and prominence. As a historian of Russian literature and a professor at the Russian Literary History Department of Saint Petersburg State University specializing in the study of Anton Chekhov, he possesses a certain cultural capital that he brings into his work. Stepanov's interest in Munro, which to a significant extent shapes the nature of his translation project, originates primarily from her relationship with classical Russian literature and often-cited genre and stylistic parallels with Chekhov that have long become a cliché in any critical discussion of the Canadian writer's work and her "most ubiquitous publisher's blurb"



(Thacker, *Writing Her Lives* 443). In his article “Chekhov’s Themes in Alice Munro’s Stories,” Stepanov defines Munro as an author heavily influenced by the Russian literary tradition in her genre, style, and thematic motifs (85), and presents her as a new (although peripheral and distinctly secondary) “Chekhov” for the Russian readership. While discussing Munro’s humanism and focus on the depths of inner psychological life, he, nevertheless, substantially downplays the significance of gender and social conflict in her world (particularly as compared to Chekhov), explaining this view with a somewhat idealistic outlook on Canadian reality:

Канада — одна из самых благополучных стран в современном мире, de facto социалистическая, с отсутствием резкого разделения людей по уровню доходов, образования и культурных предпочтений, с твердыми социальными гарантиями, толерантная и спокойная. Здесь успешно преодолены расовые, сословные и гендерные предрассудки, и основанные на них сюжеты, которые часто разрабатывал Чехов [...] по-видимому, невозможны. В большинстве рассказов о современности Элис Манро пишет не столько о социальных, сколько о личных—индивидуально-психологических и семейных—конфликтах.

[Canada is one of the most advanced countries in the modern world, a de facto socialist state without any distinct stratification of income, education levels or cultural preferences; a country with a reliable social welfare system, known for its tolerance and stability. All racial, class, and gender biases have been successfully eliminated here, and typical Chekhovian plotlines based on such inequalities [...] are apparently impossible. In most of her stories set in present-day time, Alice Munro writes about personal conflicts—psychological and family-related—rather than social ones].

(“Chekhov’s Themes” 87)

Although Stepanov further acknowledges that some social themes are present in Munro's stories set in the 1940s–1950s, the above claim, as well as his comments about “отсутствие социальных перегородок” [absence of social barriers] in Canada and the lack of “труднопроницаемых перегородок между столицей и провинцией” [impermeable barriers between the capital city and the country] (“Chekhov's Themes” 86–87) in Munro's stories reveal his limited understanding of the Canadian cultural and social scene and his selective blindness to some of the key themes in the writer's work. This simplistic perception of the Canadian cultural context and somewhat patronizing view of Canadian literature in general seem problematic for the successful reconstruction of Munro's world through translation. At the same time, in Stepanov's case, it is symptomatic of the historical and cultural horizon within which the translator operates.

In the 2017 Ukrainian publication of *Too Much Happiness* [*Забазато щастя*], the first and so far only available collection of Munro's stories in Ukrainian, Ievheniia Kononenko offers a compelling perspective on the Canadian writer's work that—similar to Stepanov's case—relies on the translator's own cultural capital to introduce Munro to the Ukrainian-language reading audience. Kononenko is a prominent Ukrainian postmodernist writer and a prolific literary translator from English and French, who is also a self-identified feminist (see “Ievheniia Kononenko: ‘I Am All for Breaking Stereotypes’”). Ukrainian literary critics often discuss her writing primarily from the standpoint of politicized feminist discourse. Nila Zborovs'ka, while analyzing Kononenko's novel *Ностальгія* [*Nostalgia*] and essay “Без мужика” [“Without a Hubby”], claims that both works are based on “протиставленні двох світів: статичного чоловічого як тоталітарного й колоніального, пов'язаного із соціумом та одержавленням людини, й динамічного жіночого як приватного, бунтівного, тобто [...]

центральний і маргінальний елементи в структурі суспільства” [the opposition of the two worlds: the static male world as a totalitarian and colonial space closely linked to the society and the state’s pressures on personal life, and the dynamic female world as a private and rebellious space, i. e. [...] the central and marginal elements in the societal structure] (Zborovs’ka).

Kononenko’s feminist outlook also becomes evident in her translation philosophy: well aware of contemporary feminist translation theories, and particularly Canadian feminist writing on translation<sup>7</sup>, she consistently rejects the conventional notion of fidelity along with the gendered metaphors of translation that implies its inherent inferiority and the need for faithfulness. She asserts the importance of creativity in translation and justifies transtextualization as the approach aiming at “розширення й розвиток ідей оригіналу без їх спотворення” [enhancement and development of the original ideas without their distortion] (“On the Intimate Relationship”).

Importantly, Kononenko takes a clearly political stance on literary translation in the Ukrainian context, qualifying it as a “націєтворч[а]” [nation-building] activity (“On the Intimate Relationship”). She posits that in the environment of Russian linguistic domination in the Ukrainian publishing market<sup>8</sup>, the translation of fiction into Ukrainian is a political decolonizing

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<sup>7</sup> In particular, in her article “On the Intimate Relationship between Original and Translation” Kononenko quotes Linda Gaboriau’s translation of Nicole Brossard’s line “Ce soir j’entre dans l’histoire *sans relever ma jupe*” from the play *La Nef des sorcières* (*Clash of Symbols*), rendered as “tonight I shall step into history without opening my legs,” as a successful example of transtextualization. This translation was analyzed by Luise von Flotow in *Translation and Gender: Translating in the ‘Era of Feminism’* (19).

<sup>8</sup> This came as a result of the centuries-long suppression of the Ukrainian language by Russian political forces, from multiple bans to publish Ukrainian-language literature in the Russian Empire (Peter I’s royal decree in 1720, Valuev Circular in 1863, prohibition to translate books into Ukrainian in 1892, etc.) to the consistent Russification policy implemented by the Soviet Union authorities from 1930s to 1990s, and ongoing efforts to ban the use of Ukrainian and

mission: “[В]раховуючи реальну українську національну специфіку, коли навіть ті двомовні читачі, які охоче читають українську сучасну літературу, традиційно читають світову по-російськи, дуже важливо, щоб український переклад був *кращим* за переклад російський” [In the Ukrainian national reality, where even those bilingual readers who are willing to read contemporary Ukrainian literature traditionally access world literature through the Russian language, it is of utmost importance to make sure that Ukrainian translation is of *better quality* than Russian” (“Alchemy of Translation”). For Kononenko, this element of competition in translation is more than an attempt to win over readers—the choice to translate world literature into Ukrainian becomes a prerequisite for the development of national self-identity and cultural survival.

Thus, in translating Munro into Ukrainian Kononenko consciously pursues political goals, as well as cultural ones, and positions herself as an activist translator. She often chooses to radicalize the translated texts in terms of content and style, accentuating their social critique or political message. As a result, Kononenko’s take on the Canadian writer’s work occasionally veers into the territory of recontextualization or hijacking (as theorized by the feminist translation scholarship), offering not so much “Munro in Ukrainian” as “Munro for Ukrainians” and making her stories not only relatable, but relevant in the contemporary cultural and political climate. The unlikely success of this ambitious project is grounded in the three main factors involved in its conception and production: the fact that Kononenko’s version is effectively a retranslation of Stepanov’s earlier Russian-language effort that had previously been available to

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persecute its speakers in the occupied Crimea and in the unrecognized Luhansk People’s Republic and Donetsk People’s Republic since 2014. Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 continued the same genocidal and linguicidal pattern.

Ukrainian readers; the translator's openness about her goals and methods; and her combination of recontextualizing strategies with unwavering respect for the original material and its own cultural context, which precludes overt domestication or offhanded value judgments.

Tat'iana Borovikova, the Russian translator of *Dear Life* who is working with the same publisher as Stepanov (Saint-Petersburg-based Azbooka-Atticus Publishing Group), demonstrates an interesting contrast to his translating approach and some significant parallels with both Zerning and Kononenko. Whereas Stepanov was responsible for bringing only Munro's first short story collection (*Too Much Happiness*) to Russian-language readers—and, in so doing, was able to shape the critical reception of all her subsequent works to appear in Russian translation—Borovikova has made a longer-term commitment to the Canadian author with no fewer than four translated collections: *Dear Life* [*Дороже самой жизни*, 2014], *Open Secrets* [*Тайна, не скрытая никем*, 2017], *Who Do You Think You Are?/Beggar Maid* [*Ты кем себя воображаешь?*, 2018], and *Friend of My Youth* [*Друг моей юности*, 2019]. This consistency indicates the translator's sustained interest in and substantial familiarity with Munro's work, as well as the publisher's confidence in the quality of the translation (to compare, one of the previously published collections, *Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You* [*Давно хотела тебе сказать*, 2015] included contributions by six translators, resulting in a rather uneven and fragmentary representation of the author's writing).

Borovikova's personal background is also critically important for understanding her position as a literary translator. Unlike Stepanov, with his predominantly academic interest in the translation of Canadian fiction and heavy focus on the Russian classics, she has a closer personal connection to the Canadian cultural context. A Toronto-based programmer, technical writer, and

translator who has spent years living in Canada, Borovikova finds herself in a unique position that enables her to bring together her immersive experience of the Canadian literary scene and her knowledge of the Russian publishers' and readers' expectations. Best known for her translations of Munro, Margaret Atwood, Kate Atkinson, A.S. Byatt, and Joanne Harris, she invariably demonstrates profound appreciation and understanding of women's writing in both the Canadian and British literary traditions. This means that sometimes, like in the case of the Munro translations, she has to work against the models and preconceptions established by her predecessors or by her own culture's norms of acceptability. Borovikova's translations accentuate the "feminine" aspects of Munro's texts as well as her Canadianness, moving away from Stepanov's focus on Chekhovian parallels and similarities to highlight the author's difference and uniqueness instead. Where Zerning softens and elevates Munro's style to emphasize the poetic qualities of her work and resorts to domestication as a way to appeal to the universal experience, Borovikova dwells on the local and particular, exploring Munro's potential as a modern, edgy, and distinctly foreign writer.

The respective translating positions described above—along with the specific features of each translator's temporal and cultural horizon—affect the nature of each of the four translation projects, enabling the translators to approach and interpret Munro's work in their unique manner and for their personal purposes. These translation projects, to be discussed in more detail in the following textual analysis sections, serve to establish not only profound connections between the original work and its translation, but also an ongoing dialogue and, in some cases, confrontation between various translated versions.

### *Textual Analysis of Translations*

#### *“Child’s Play”*

The fluidity and uncertainty that epitomize Munro’s narrative in “Child’s Play” give rise to the diverging interpretations offered by the three translators in their respective versions: “Kinderspiel” by Zerning in German, “Детская игра” [“Children’s Play”] by Stepanov in Russian, and “Дитячі розваги” [“Children’s Amusements”<sup>9</sup>] by Kononenko in Ukrainian. As each translator approaches the same text from a different background and with different objectives, Munro’s complex and deliberately ambiguous tale becomes more defined, crystallizing into three related, but distinctly non-identical renditions. Each version interprets the same script, offering a new reading of the story’s central conflict, and each attains consistency and relatability for its target audience by inscribing its preferred meaning to the exclusion of others. The translators’ individual projects in dealing with the text become key to this transformation, and in all three cases the (re)construction of female identity—particularly of the murderous protagonist Marlene, her perception of self and of her mentally disabled victim Verna—becomes a critical point of departure.

The differences among the translators’ approaches become expressly obvious in the episode describing the first physical contact between Marlene and Verna, which is seen through the narrator’s eyes as an otherworldly encounter with a terrifying wild creature: “I was not wearing a cap, so the hairs of my head came in contact with the woolly coat or jacket she had on, and it seemed to me that I had actually touched bristling hairs on the skin of a gross hard belly”

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<sup>9</sup> Kononenko’s choice of the title here differs from the others in a way it places the emphasis on the authorial irony and foregrounds the translator’s bleak interpretation of the story’s narrator.

(“Child’s Play” 198). The German version clearly chooses the path of minimal translatorial intrusion (which, in this case, is also aided by linguistic similarities between the source and target languages); it stays as close to the original as possible, carefully preserving the ambiguity implied by the original that avoids naming the animal or even directly referring to it: “als hätte ich Borsten auf der Haut eines dicken, harten Bauches berührt” [as if I touched bristles on the skin of a fat, hard belly] (“Kinderspiel” 323). At the same time, the Ukrainian text resorts to the specification making the monstrous imagery more explicit through its use of the phrase “волохатого черева якоїсь потвори” [a hairy underbelly of an unknown monster] (“Дитячі розваги” 230). This deliberate juxtaposition of the two images, a child and a monster, while downplaying the elements of mystery and uncertainty, immediately challenges the narrator’s version of events revealing how far from reality her perception of Verna is. The Russian translator, conversely, makes sure to outline the connection between the two: the creature is not named, but the repetition of the “wool/hair” element in the phrases “шерстяным пальто” [woolen coat] and “колючей шерсти, растущей на огромном и твердом животе” [bristling wool/hair growing on the huge, hard belly] (“Детская игра”) ties in the images of a girl and a wild hairy beast, making Verna’s association with an animal more transparent—and unchallenged.

In other cases, translators specify or even completely alter Munro’s imagery to make it more expressive and emotionally loaded, particularly when referring to the parts of Verna’s body: “The worst was that her fingers had pressed my back. Through my coat, through my other clothing, her fingers like so many cold snouts” (“Child’s Play” 197). Here Verna’s touch once again is interpreted by the narrator as a disgusting and pervasive attack of an animal-like creature. The German translator picks up on the animalistic image implied in the original: “Das



Schlimmste war, dass ihre Finger sich in meinen Rücken bohrten. Durch meinen Mantel, durch meine übrigen Sachen, diese Finger wie viele kalte Rüssel. ” [The worst thing was that her fingers drilled into my back. Through my coat, through my other things, these fingers like many cold snouts] (“Kinderspiel” 321). This passage preserves the simile, which despite its vagueness clearly marks the connection the narrator makes between Verna’s “abnormal” body and the animal world. Zerning also makes sure to strengthen the association: her use of “*bohren*” [drill/gnaw] emphasizes intensity of the narrator’s feeling and hints at annoying stinging (or even burrowing) insects, implying a stronger degree of invasiveness than in the original. However, the Russian text has to clarify this image to make the simile understandable and explains it as “*хоботки насекомых*” [snouts of insects] (“Детская игра”), thus more directly conveying the narrator’s disgust. The Ukrainian version goes even further to replace the insects with “slimy reptiles” by using the phrase “слизькі плазуни” (“Дитячі розваги” 229). This transformation highlights and intensifies the narrator’s repulsion and fear—which, again, gives away the ridiculousness of her claims about Verna. In all three cases, specification (in varying degrees) is the main strategy the translators resort to in order to make the narrator’s fixation on Verna’s body parts and her perception of Verna’s body as monstrous more obvious.

As the narrative unfolds, Munro complicates the central conflict of the story by revealing the true nature of this unhealthy obsession with “monstrosity.” Marlene acknowledges her abhorrence of Verna’s “abnormal” body while framing it as a habitual and justifiable attitude—thus demonstrating how the ingrained notions of ableism and normativity lead to consistent rejection of non-conforming bodies up to the point of their exclusion from any forms of social existence. This unquestioning denial of personhood is particularly noticeable in the children’s reactions to the “Specials” that imitate and reproduce the adults’ behaviour. The

children actively justify the dominant perceptions of normativity, ascribing these views even to the people who refuse to openly support them—like the narrator’s mother: “But I certainly did blame her [Verna]. I did not question that it was somehow her fault. And in this, whatever my mother might say, I was in tune to some degree with an unspoken verdict of the time and place I lived in [...]. [T]here was some irrepressible gratification and taken-for-granted superiority [...]. And I believed my mother must be really like this, underneath” (“Child’s Play” 196). Here the adult narrator is explaining and rationalizing the way she felt about Verna, at the same time trying to appear distant and objective. She makes sure to leave space for some doubt about past events, which is expressed through her frequent use of uncertainty markers (“somehow,” “might say,” “to some degree,” “some,” “must be”). In a paradoxical way, this seeming non-insistence on a particular version of the story emphasizes the main character’s honesty and makes the unreliable narrator more reliable in the readers’ eyes—while still allowing her to construct a convincing narrative.

The German translator realizes the significance of this strategy and carefully keeps these elements in her text. However, almost all of them are omitted in the Russian and Ukrainian versions. As a result, the narrator’s speech becomes more direct (although, it can be argued, less sincere), and her emotions and intentions seem not quite as complex. The use of straightforward, uncontested phrases indicating inferiority of the “Specials,” such as “абсолютно природна зверхність” [absolutely natural condescension] (“Дитячі розваги” 228) and “безусловное чувство превосходства” [unconditional feeling of superiority] (“Детская игра”) serves to “normalize” and even vindicate the narrator’s feelings and the socially perpetuated prejudice against the “special” children. But the translators achieve this effect in different ways: the Ukrainian text remains bluntly clear about the narrator’s emotions, using concise brusque

statements and portraying her as hateful and unrepentant: “Але, звісно ж, я їй дорікала. Я не вважала, що то її провина. Але в моїй поведінці стосовно неї втілювався не сформульований настрій тієї епохи [...]. І я переконана, моя мати була така сама.” [But of course I blamed her. I did not think it was her fault. But my behaviour towards her embodied the not-openly-formulated attitude of that era [...]. And I am convinced that my mother was the same] (“Дитячі розваги” 228). The Russian translation, nevertheless, softens Marlene’s image and makes her sound almost compassionate, carefully glossing over the evident inconsistencies in her story as she simultaneously acknowledges Verna’s innocence, admits blaming her for her difference, and offhandedly reinforces this difference, labelling Verna as being “that way”: “Но я ее винила, хотя и понимала: да, она такой родилась. И в этом отношении, что бы там ни говорила мама о моей злобе, я была дитя своего времени [...]. И мне казалось, что и моя мама в душе точно такая же.” [But I did blame her, although I understood: yes, she was born that way. And in this respect, whatever my mother might have said about my malice, I was the child of my time [...]. And it seemed to me that deep in her soul my mother was exactly the same] (“Детская игра”). While a certain degree of simplification can be detected in both cases (and can partially be explained by the conventions of good literary style in both Slavic languages), the translators’ diverging approaches to Munro’s complex, self-contradictory tale become clear: Stepanov empathizes with the narrator and is almost willing to acquit her, while Kononenko remains unconvinced and masterfully uses the narrator’s own words to point to the holes in her story and to turn the reader against her.

As Marlene continues to hide her personal malice behind the narrative of societal prejudice, her musings about the social acceptability of the terms describing intellectual

disabilities betray the complexity of her real feelings where her profound insensitivity and lack of empathy contrast with her deliberate attempt to seem understanding and sympathetic:

The words “deficient,” “handicapped,” “retarded” being of course also consigned to the dustbin and probably for good reason—not simply because such words may indicate a superior attitude and habitual unkindness but because they are not truly descriptive. Those words push aside a good deal that is remarkable, even awesome—or at any rate peculiarly powerful, in such people. And what was interesting was to discover a certain amount of veneration as well as persecution, and the ascribing—not entirely inaccurately—of quite a range of abilities, seen as sacred, magical, dangerous, or valuable. (“Child’s Play” 210)

The frequent use of dashes in this passage reveals the narrator’s disjointed thinking, her attempt to reconcile two conflicting worldviews. The narrative intonation is somewhat changed in the Russian and Ukrainian versions, which leave out several pauses, making the narrator’s speech less fragmented and more coherent. Omission of some of the narrator’s meaningful comments (“and probably for good reason” in Ukrainian, “or at any rate” in Russian, “not entirely inaccurately” in both versions) also takes away from the original’s complexity. At the same time, all three translations increase the intensity of the narrator’s emotions, either through the use of stylistically charged words when speaking about the prejudiced and aggressive response to disabilities (“зверхність” [condescension], “презирство” [contempt], “цькували” [harass] in Ukrainian) or through additions that focus on fear: “bemerkenswert und sogar beängstigend” [remarkable and even frightening] (“Kinderspiel” 342) in German; “примечательного, пугающего или просто впечатляющего” [remarkable, frightening or simply impressive]

(“Детская игра”) in Russian. Here, again, Kononenko’s concise, expressive phrasing accentuates the rejection and persecution of the “Specials” and the narrator’s lack of sympathy towards them, while Stepanov tones down and rationalizes this attitude in the narrator’s deliberately impassive monologue. As for the German translation, it closely follows Munro’s narrative intonation and simultaneously elevates poetic qualities of the text by relying on alliteration and phonetic parallelism: “gewöhnheitsmäßige Voreingenommenheit” [habitual prejudice] (“Kinderspiel” 342); “ein gewisses Maß an Verehrung ebenso wie an Verfolgung” [a certain amount of veneration as well as persecution] (342). Zerning uses similar techniques throughout the text to draw attention to Verna’s body or behaviour and to the narrator’s view of the “special” children: “wegen meines Mangels an Mitgefühl” [because of my lack of compassion] (“Kinderspiel” 342); “wegen ihrer Unsicherheit oder Ungeschicklichkeit” [because of their insecurity or unskillfulness] (322); “verdrossen oder verwirrt zu sein” [to be irritated or confused] (331). In all these examples, phonetic effects are used to intensify Marlene’s aversion—or to point out typical socially acceptable reactions to intellectual disability. In doing this, the translator builds up emotional tension around Verna and the “Specials” to amplify depth and complexity of the protagonist’s affective responses.

In the original text, Marlene’s feelings, well-hidden in the adult narrator’s purposefully distant account, break to the surface when she remembers her childhood experience through “an enfolded perspective, as the child and adult perspectives fold into and over one another” (Sutherland 161). Talking about her prejudice against people with disabilities, she is trying to justify it as society’s fault; but she thus inadvertently exposes “normal” children as real monsters in these interactions: “Children of course are monstrously conventional, repelled at once by whatever is off-centre, out of whack, unmanageable” (“Child’s Play” 195). Here the narrator’s

genuine emotions become even more obvious through the translators' interpretations. Zerning focuses on the idea of monstrosity and disgust, once again alluding to the wild animalistic nature of the "Specials" (implied by the impossibility to "tame" them): "Kinder sind natürlich ungeheuer konventionell, sie werden sofort von allem abgestoßen, dass von der Norm abweicht, nicht ganz im Lot, nicht zu bändigen ist." [Children are, of course, monstrously/immensely conventional, they are instantly repelled by everything that deviates from the norm, is not completely balanced, is not to be tamed] ("Kinderspiel" 318). However, both Russian and Ukrainian texts move on to the justification of hostile actions rather than feelings: the use of verbal forms "відганяючи" [chasing away] ("Дитячі розваги" 227) and "отвергают" [reject] ("Детская игра") indicates that the children do not simply detest, but actively push away the "Specials." Nevertheless, the translators highlight different reasons for this malevolent behaviour. Kononenko cites the inferiority and uncontrollability of the "Specials": "некерованих, неповносправних, які роблять усе не так" [unmanageable, incompetent, the ones who do everything wrong] ("Дитячі розваги" 227), whereas Stepanov suppresses the implied meaning of inequality and focuses entirely on unpredictability and difference: "выпадает из общих правил или совершает непредсказуемые поступки" [falls outside of general rules or performs unpredictable acts] ("Детская игра").

In the young narrator's eyes, the qualities she ascribes to Verna are translated into power—the "special" body's power to defy the society's normative expectations and be different. Marlene, who identifies as "normal", perceives this freedom as a personal threat: "But only adults would be so stupid as to believe she had no power. A power, moreover, that was specifically directed at me. I was the one she had her eye on. [...] As if we had an understanding between us that could not be described and was not to be disposed of. Something that clings, in

the way of love, though on my side it felt absolutely like hate” (“Child’s Play” 200). The power Verna holds over the narrator is mysterious and almost mystical, while remaining deliberately ambiguous. The translators once again minimize this ambiguity by using specification. Both the Russian and Ukrainian versions leave no doubt about Marlene’s hostility as they stress her hate for Verna: “Якесь притягання, що з’являється між тими, хто любить одне одного, хоча з мого боку була чиста ненависть” [A kind of gravitational pull, like between those who love each other, although on my side it was pure hatred] (“Дитячі розваги” 232); “Некое сцепление, как между возлюбленными, хотя с моей стороны это была чистейшая ненависть” [A kind of bond, like between lovers, although on my side it was the purest hatred] (“Детская игра”). At the same time, in both cases the connection between the two girls becomes burdensome and unavoidable, as “something that clings” is transformed into an obvious force of attraction or attachment. The German version prefers a heavier, technical metaphor: “Etwas, das sich verklammert, wie Liebe, obwohl es sich für mich wie Hass anfühlte” [Something that clamps/staples things together, like love, although for me it felt like hate] (“Kinderspiel” 326). The choice of the verb “verklammern” here implies a sense of danger as well as inevitability.

As can be seen from these examples, all three translators make an effort to clarify things that have only been vaguely outlined by the original, while building up for the central scene of the story—the narrator’s memory of Verna’s murder, which, “[c]ircling between and around the language of self and other, accident and intention, unconscious action and conscious decision, demand and injunction, goodness and wickedness, choice and necessity [...] is compelling in its evocation of the ethical struggle at the heart of our encounter with the Other” (Warwick 144). Here, Marlene’s fragmented and animalistic vision of Verna’s body is used as a thinly veiled pretense meant to dehumanize the murder victim and minimize the killers’ guilt:

“Verna’s head did not break the surface, though now she was not inert, but turning in a leisurely way, light as a jellyfish in the water. Charlene and I had our hands on her, on her rubber cap” (“Child’s Play” 221). The translations shift the focus, revealing the girls’ true intent, albeit to various degrees. Zerning allows only a hint of an intentional action: “Charlene und ich hielten die Hände auf ihr, auf ihre Gummibadekappe.” [Charlene and I held the hands on her, on her rubber bathing cap] (“Kinderspiel” 361). The verb “hielten” [held] used in German is hesitant, focusing on the fact but not the action itself, and, just like in the original, the narrator stumbles on the word “her,” immediately switching her attention from Verna herself to the part of her body as an inanimate object. In the Ukrainian version, the verb “намацували” [were groping for] implies acting, although in an undecided and perplexed way, and the narrator stresses that this action is directed at the object, not the person: “Ми з Шарлен намацували руками її голову в гумовій купальній шапочці.” [Charlene and I were groping for her head in the rubber bathing cap] (“Дитячі розваги” 254). This mirrors the change of focus introduced by the Russian translator, although Stepanov removes any signs of hesitation: “Мы с Шарлин протянули руки и схватили ее за резиновую купальную шапочку.” [Charlene and I held out our hands and grabbed her rubber bathing cap] (“Детская игра”). Both verbs chosen here unambiguously describe an instantaneous conscious action, leaving very little space for doubt about the characters’ real intentions.

The narrator is carefully constructing this scene in an attempt to deny the intentionality of her and Charlene’s actions and to question the truth of what happened, but her true self comes to light in a harsh, mocking change of tone that implies the opposite:



This could have been an accident. As if we, in trying to get our balance, grabbed on to this nearby large rubbery object, hardly realizing what it was or what we were doing. I have thought it all out. I think we would have been forgiven. Young children. Terrified.

Yes, yes. Hardly knew what they were doing. (“Child’s Play” 221–22)

Both the Russian and Ukrainian translations completely ignore this dramatic change with its sudden transition from “we” to “they”. In the German translation, as in the original text, this shift undermines the narrator’s honesty and reveals her callousness showing that she does not believe in her own innocence or any possibility of redemption:

Das kann ein Unfall gewesen sein. Als hätten wir uns, um unser Gleichgewicht zu finden, an diesem großen Gummiding ganz in unserer Nähe festgehalten, ohne dass uns klarwurde, was es war oder was wir taten. Ich habe alles genau bedacht. Ich glaube, man hätte uns vergeben. Kleine Kinder. In Panik.

Ja, ja. Wussten nicht, was sie taten.

[This could have been an accident. As if we, to find our balance, held on to this big rubber thing next to us, without it becoming clear to us, what it was or what we were doing. I have thought it all through thoroughly. I believe one would have forgiven us. Little children. In panic.

Yes, yes. They did not know what they were doing]. (“Kinderspiel” 361)

But in the other two translations Marlene remains determined to vindicate herself, even suggesting an actual possibility of forgiveness in Ukrainian:

Я все те обмірковувала. Гадаю, нас цілком може бути прощено. Ми були дітьми.

Були нажахані.

Так, так. Ми не відали, що творимо.

[I have thought it all through. I think we can easily be forgiven. We were children. Were terrified.

Yes, yes. We did not realize what we were doing]. (“Дитячі розваги” 255)

In the Russian text, this suggestion turns into insistence, almost a demand:

Я обдумала всю ситуацию в деталях и считаю, что нас следует простить. Мы были совсем дети. К тому же перепуганные.

Да-да. Вряд ли осознавая свои действия.

[I have thought out the whole situation in detail and believe that we should be forgiven.

We were very young children. Plus, quite terrified.

Yes, yes. Hardly aware of our actions]. (“Детская игра”)

Both versions minimize the doubt pervading the original by omitting most markers of uncertainty (“could have been,” “as if,” “hardly”). As a result, the narrator’s carefully worded assumptions are transformed into straightforward statements, which makes her account more coherent but less believable. In the Ukrainian text, conflation of her self-apologetic defensiveness with her emotionally charged, tense speech and brief elliptical sentences reveals the narrator as a shockingly callous villain. The Russian translation, on the other hand, uses careful phrasing combined with a confiding, persuasive, and emphatically sincere tone. As a result, Marlene is presented as a deeply flawed personality seeking forgiveness.

Remarkably, when the narrator stops to question her own story and admits that the girls' actions were conscious, the Russian translation omits and even partially negates this comment: "Is this in any way true? It is true in the sense that we did not decide anything, in the beginning. We did not look at each other and decide to do what we subsequently and consciously did. Consciously, because our eyes did meet as the head of Verna tried to rise up to the surface of the water" ("Child's Play" 222). Stepanov chooses to leave out the last sentence completely, along with its meaningful repetition of "consciously": "Правда ли это? Ну да, правда—в том смысле, что ничего не было решено изначально. Мы не взглянули друг на друга: мол, надо сделать то-то и то-то, а потом сознательно это сделали." [Is this true? Well yes, it is—in the sense that nothing was decided in the beginning. We did not look at each other: see, this and that needs to be done, and then consciously did it] ("Детская игра"). This significant intrusion into Munro's text marks the spot where the translator's project finds itself at odds with the author's meaning. As a result, the translator prioritizes his own interpretation by changing the text.

At the same time, both the Ukrainian and German translations emphasize the word "consciously" as an important confession of guilt that adds to the narrator's characterization and represents the complexity and ambiguity implied by the original: "Чи таки моя правда? Це правда в тому сенсі, що ми нічого не обдумували наперед. Ми не обмінялися поглядами, не планували того, що зробили свідомо. Свідомо, бо наші очі таки зустрілися, коли Вернина голова спробувала виборсатися з-під води." [Is what I am saying true? It is true in the sense that we did not think it through in advance. We did not exchange glances, did not plan what we consciously did. Consciously, because our eyes did meet when Verna's head tried to fight its way out of the water] ("Дитячі розваги" 255). Zerning makes the same choice in stressing Marlene's admission: "Ist das auch wirklich wahr? Es ist wahr in dem Sinn, dass wir

anfangs keinen Entschluss fassten. Uns nicht in den Augen sahen und beschlossen, das zu tun, was wir im Folgenden absichtlich taten. Absichtlich, denn unsere Blicke trafen sich, als Vernas Kopf versuchte, aus dem Wasser aufzutauchen.” [Is this also really true? It is true in the sense that we initially made no decision. Did not look each other in the eyes and decide to do what we then consciously did. Consciously, because our glances met when Verna’s head tried to emerge from the water] (“Kinderspiel” 361). Preserving deliberate uncertainty becomes the main focus of the German version here, whereas Kononenko concentrates on the narrator’s hatefulness and Stepanov on her need to vindicate herself.

As a result, the translators reimagine the story’s key climactic moment in different ways: “Charlene and I kept our eyes on each other, rather than looking down at what our hands were doing. [...] I don’t think we felt wicked, triumphing in our wickedness. More as if we were doing just what was—amazingly—demanded of us, as if this was the absolute high point, the culmination, in our lives, of our being ourselves” (“Child’s Play” 222). Zerning’s translation captures the duality and uncertainty implied in this paragraph, where murderous intentions are simultaneously described and negated, and where every part of the narrator’s account remains not a fact but only an assumption, a possibility: “Ich glaube nicht, dass wir das Gefühl hatten, etwas Böses zu tun, und darin triumphierten. Eher, als täten wir genau das, was—zu unserer eigenen Verblüffung—von uns verlangt wurde, als sei das der Gipfel, der absolute Höhepunkt unseres Lebens, unseres Ichbewusstseins.” [I do not believe that we had the feeling of doing something evil and triumphed in it. It was rather as if we were doing exactly what—to our own puzzlement—was demanded of us, as if it was the peak, the absolute highest point of our life, our self-awareness] (“Kinderspiel” 362). The Ukrainian version favours the opposite strategy, unambiguously stating that both girls were aware of their wrongdoing and indulged in it,

perceiving murder at that moment as the utmost expression of their will: “Ми почувалися не просто грішницями, які захоплені власним гріхом. Ми робили саме те—хоч як це дивно—в чому виявлялась наша воля, ніби то була наша найвища точка, кульмінація наших життів, нашого єства.” [We were feeling not just as sinners revelling in our own sin. We were doing exactly what—however strange—expressed our will, as if that was our highest point, the culmination of our lives, our being] (“Дитячі розваги” 255). The Russian text, on the other hand, continues to minimize the killers’ responsibility underlining that the girls did not see themselves as villains but rather as the tools of inevitable fate: “Вряд ли мы чувствовали себя злодейками, получающими радость от своего злодейства. Скорее, было такое чувство, что мы странным образом выполняем предначертанное, и этот момент—высшая точка, кульминация нашей жизни. Мы были собой.” [We were hardly feeling as villains enjoying our villainy. Rather, it was the feeling that we were strangely carrying out what was meant to be, and that moment was the highest point, the culmination of our life. We were ourselves] (“Детская игра”). The focus is thereby shifted from intention and free will to destiny.

As Sutherland comments on this pivotal scene, “[t]he state of affective ecstasy is simultaneously brief [...] and eternal for both Marlene and Charlene, always informing their negotiation of adult subjectivity. Nevertheless, the final surrender to a sense of guilt and reparation with which the story ends is ethically uncertain” (160). While Charlene is trying to come to terms with her guilt by seeking religious redemption, Marlene persists in denying any responsibility and eventually “finds no redemptive possibility there, or elsewhere” (Warwick 146). She briefly toys with the idea of confession before finally rejecting it once and for all: “Was I not tempted, during all this palaver? Not once? You’d think that I might break open, be wise to break open, glimpsing that vast though tricky forgiveness. But no. It’s not for me. What’s

done is done. Flocks of angels, tears of blood, notwithstanding” (“Child’s Play” 220). In translating this passage, Zerning recreates Marlene’s distrusting and sarcastic tone—but also her hesitation that is nevertheless resolved in an unambiguous and conscious refusal to repent:

“Geriet ich nicht in Versuchung, im Laufe dieses ganzen Palavers? Nicht ein einziges Mal? Man sollte meinen, ich hätte mich öffnen können, so klug sein können, mich zu öffnen, angesichts dieser ungeheuren, wenn auch trügerischen Vergebung. Doch nein. Sie ist mir nicht bestimmt. Was geschehen ist, ist geschehen. Trotz der Engelsscharen, der Tränen aus Blut.” [Did I not become tempted, in the course of this whole palaver? Not one single time? One would think that I could have opened up, could have been clever enough to open up, in the face of this monstrous/immense, even though treacherous forgiveness. But no. It is not meant for me. What happened did happen. Despite flocks of angels, tears of blood] (“Kinderspiel” 359). Kononenko, in turn, downplays Marlene’s bitter irony by omitting “palaver” and tones down the moment of hesitation expressed by the lexical repetition of “break open”—her narrator does not mock her own desire to be forgiven because deep down she has always known it to be impossible and irrelevant: “Чи не виникло і в мене бажання покаятися під час цієї розмови? Чи ще колись? Думаєте, я могла відкритися, стати такою мудрою, щоб відкритися й побачити крадькома це безмежне, хоча і підступне прощення? Ні. Це не для мене. Що було, те було. Сонми янголів, незважаючи на криваві сльози.” [Didn’t I, too, feel the desire to repent during that conversation? Or at any other time? Do you think I could open up, become wise enough to open up and glimpse that boundless, although treacherous forgiveness? No. It is not for me. What happened did happen. Flocks of angels, in spite of bloody tears] (“Дитячі розваги” 253). The change in the last phrase here—although it is not quite clear whether it resulted from the translator’s conscious decision or simply from misunderstanding—provides symbolic closure

asserting the narrator's readiness to accept her past without looking for forgiveness and to live with the consequences of her actions. The Russian text, nevertheless, paints a very different picture:

Вы спросите, было ли у меня искушение вдруг взять и все рассказать, прервав эту говорильню? И наверное, не единожды? Вы, должно быть, думаете, что я могла проявить мудрость и наконец открыться, понадеявшись на это великодушное, хоть и ненадежное прощение? Но нет, такое не для меня. Что сделано—то сделано. Сонмы ангелов, кровавые слезы—нет, это невыносимо.

[You might ask if I had the temptation to suddenly blurt it all out, interrupting this palaver? And, surely, more than once? You must be thinking that I could show some wisdom and finally open up, placing my hopes in this generous, although unreliable forgiveness? But no, this thing is not for me. What is done is done. Flocks of angels, bloody tears—no, this is unbearable]. (“Детская игра”)

The confessional tone adopted here by the narrator, with her direct appeals to the reader, indicates regret and guilty conscience, as do some additions seen in the translation. The phrase “наверное, не единожды” [surely, more than once] implies that Marlene has considered admitting the truth on multiple occasions, and her final quiet outburst “нет, это невыносимо” [no, this is unbearable] (which was absent in the original) signifies intensity of her suppressed, but overpowering guilt. In the end, instead of briefly considering and calmly rejecting the prospect of forgiveness, she is overwhelmed by remorse. This change introduced by the Russian translator re-focuses the narrative on Marlene and her personal journey, taking away from the underlying social problematics of the story and its implications.

As can be seen from the above, translational transformations lead to profound shifts in the intrinsic ethical and social meanings of the original text. Despite the author's downright refusal to offer the reader any generalized conclusions or provide a definitive plot resolution, Munro's portrayal of Verna's murder makes a strong point about the socially perpetuated perception of disability and the dangers of normative thinking that allow persistence of hatefulness in society. This narrative becomes particularly effective because the story is told through the perspective of the murderer and thus can disclose the mechanisms of hate and prejudice against mental disability. As Darroch points out, "Munro provides a careful elucidation of the nature and impact of stigma experienced by the characters with those disabilities, and in doing so she models the empathy and affect that vulnerable characters did not inspire in non-disabled protagonists in her fiction" (120). The empathy and affect are modelled by drawing attention to their conspicuous absence in the story, and the author's ethical message is implied rather than spelled out—however, its presence in the text is hard to ignore: "In referring to how people with cognitive disabilities experience ostracism, stigma, and dehumanization via animal analogies and repudiation of affiliation, Munro makes urgent ethical claims on her readers to reconsider their own complicity in upholding normative values about intelligence" (Darroch 121). The German translation attempts to recreate this effect by emphasizing the complexity and ambiguity of the narrator's story, escalating her emotions, and conflating her seemingly forthcoming and reasonable account with the hateful feelings boiling under the surface. The Ukrainian version somewhat simplifies the story by bringing Marlene's feelings and reactions to the extreme and portraying her as upfront but scornful, insensitive, and unforgiving. This rather exaggerated interpretation, nevertheless, draws attention to the victim of the murder, making an important point about disability and empathy and elevating the story to a subtle social critique.



The Russian text, in contrast, focuses entirely on the narrator, interpreting her self-justification as a sign of remorse and framing her confession, in the traditions of classical Russian literature<sup>10</sup>, as a quest for redemption—thus failing to grasp the deeper social significance of the story’s narrative. Accordingly, it can be argued that while Ukrainian and German translations reflect and reinforce the disability and gender-related problematics implied by the story and add new dimensions to Munro’s characterization of Marlene as a feminist antihero, the Russian version constructs the narrator’s figure in terms of a more conventional repenting perpetrator. At the same time, the translators’ approaches to the story’s protagonist represent differences in their projects’ priorities and levels of complexity. Whereas Zerning chooses to centre her creative project on Munro’s writing itself and its literary qualities, both Stepanov and Kononenko appropriate the text to use translation as an outlet for their personal views and to further their respective agendas—the former to assert the dominative influence of his own literary tradition, and the latter to challenge the social status quo.

### ***“Too Much Happiness”***

In “Too Much Happiness,” these differing perspectives undergo further development and transformation, as each of the translators finds their personal connection with the text and their own point of entry into Munro’s partly fictional, partly biographical narrative. The most remarkable difference between their approaches can be located in the translators’ self-positioning towards the story’s protagonist, Sophia Kovalevsky. The translating strategies and decisions pertaining to the representation of the story’s central figure reflect not only the degree of the

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<sup>10</sup> The motifs of sin, confession, and redemption, often with a religious subtext, are very common in the Russian literary tradition. Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* would be an obvious example, along with Leo Tolstoy’s *Resurrection*.

translators' willingness to engage with the feminist reading of Munro's text but also the unique culturally stipulated motivations and affiliations of their respective projects.

The oppositions start with the heroine's name itself. While all translators adapt the spelling of Sophia's name to the transliteration conventions of their languages ("Sofia Kowalewskaja" in German, "Софія Ковалевська" in Ukrainian), the Russian version uses a contracted form "Софья" that is common among Russian speakers, instead of its full European equivalent "София." This change, although perhaps inevitable in this case, as the translator was simply following an established tradition, nevertheless performs a symbolic function: it brings Munro's character back to her Russian roots, effectively erasing her international celebrity status. In fact, situating Sophia in the context of her Russianness and her femininity—metaphorically speaking, putting her back in her place—becomes a defining motif of Stepanov's translation, while both German and Ukrainian versions choose to focus on the conflicted, complicated woman at the heart of the story.

From the opening paragraph where Sophia is introduced to the readers, the narrative subtly foregrounds her inner tensions, conflating her astounding intelligence with persistent self-doubt, and picturing her simultaneously as an aging woman and a child: "The woman has a childishly large head, with a thicket of dark curls, and her expression is eager, faintly pleading. Her face has begun to look worn" ("Too Much Happiness" 246). Zerning captures this by highlighting Sophia's insecurity and her constant need for self-control—her emotions are so well-hidden they are barely readable: "sie schaut angespannt drein, fast ein wenig flehentlich" [she looks tense, almost a little pleading] ("Zu viel Glück" 402). Kononenko is also sensitive to the character's feelings, although she emphasizes Sophia's unruly temper in combination with

her forced submissiveness: “на обличчі вираз нетерпіння й ледь помітного прохання” [there is an expression of impatience and barely noticeable pleading on her face”] (“Забгато щастя” 282). Stepanov, on the other hand, misreads Sophia’s tenseness and reorients her pleading expression towards her male companion (Maxsim): “Выражение лица энергичное, но в то же время в разговоре с ним словно бы просящее” [Her face expression is energetic, but at the same time, while talking to him, almost pleading] (“Слишком много счастья”). This change of focus reveals the Russian translator’s tendency to remain oblivious to his protagonist’s inner complexities and to align himself—whether intentionally or not—with the male characters in the story or, more generally, with the male perspective.

In many cases, Stepanov demonstrates a condescending attitude towards Sophia as a protagonist, or an attempt to distance himself from her point of view, whereas the other two versions fully embrace the main character’s own voice. When Sophia blames Maxsim’s unexpected departure from Paris on her sudden fame, saying that he felt upstaged, it is clear that she has no illusions about his vanity or the transient nature of her own success. She thinks of herself in ironic terms, combining praising and disparaging language and conflating stereotypically masculine and feminine qualities in her comparison of her and Maxsim’s statuses: “A man of solid worth and negotiable reputation, with a certain bulk of frame and intellect, together with a lightness of wit, an adroit masculine charm. While she was an utter novelty, a delightful freak, the woman of mathematical gifts and female timidity, quite charming, yet with a mind most unconventionally furnished, under her curls” (“Too Much Happiness” 249–50). This description constructs a contradictory self-perspective that reveals the heroine’s inner conflict and growing disenchantment.

In the Russian text, the tension is no longer obvious because Sophia's description consistently becomes more patronizing and less sympathetic towards the protagonist:

Человек видный, с солидным состоянием, с серьезной репутацией, умный, светский, веселый, с несомненным мужским обаянием. А она была всего лишь любопытной чудачкой, новинкой сезона, дамой с математическими способностями, по-женски робкой, очаровательной, но с весьма странным устройством головного мозга — там, под кудряшками.

[A distinguished man, with a solid fortune, a serious reputation, intelligent, worldly, jovial, with an undeniable masculine charm. While she was only a curious freak, a seasonal novelty, a fine lady with mathematical aptitudes, timid in a feminine way, charming, but with a very strange setup of her brain—there, under the curls]. (“Слишком много счастья”)

In this passage, Stepanov not only downplays Sophia's positive characteristics by smoothing over the meaningful dissonance implied by “a delightful freak”—he adopts a decisively mocking tone with his use of sarcastically-sounding and clearly gendered descriptions “чудачка” [freak/odd woman] and “дама” [fine lady], while reducing Sophia's “gifts” to “aptitudes” and her fame to “a seasonal novelty.” But, most importantly, he distances himself from the protagonist, shifting the narrative point of view away from her own perspective. Although this episode focuses on Sophia trying to construct an unbiased picture of how Maxsim and she must be perceived by the members of Parisian society—which she does with a certain detached irony—the translator's sarcastic tone and use of deixis (“там” [there]), which locates the heroine away from the centre of narrative, reveal his unwillingness to side with her own point of view.

In contrast, the Ukrainian translator chooses to present Sophia in a much more positive light: “Людина помітна, непохитної заслуженої репутації, розумна, блискуча, дотепна, сповнена чоловічої привабливості. Натомість вона — це щось геть незвичне, якась дивовижа, жінка з математичним хистом, соромлива, проте не позбавлена жіночих чарів, і як улаштовано такий незвичний розум під її кучерями?” [An outstanding person with an unshakeable well-deserved reputation, clever, brilliant, witty, full of manly appeal. Whereas she was something truly unusual, a wonder, a woman with a mathematical talent, shy but not devoid of feminine charm, and how is her unusual mind rolling under her curls?] (“Забарато щастя” 286). Here, Sophia’s unconventional status is seen as a welcome distinction, with no signs of disillusionment or bitter irony, while the contrast between her and Maxsim is diminished. Kononenko uses the word “людина” [person/human being], a feminine noun, to talk about Maxsim, so all the epithets describing him take a feminine form as well, despite referring to a man. This conflation of feminine adjectives relating to both characters symbolically places Maxsim and Sophia on the same level, underlining their similarities rather than differences, and making the difference in the way they are treated particularly obvious. The Ukrainian text also ends the paragraph with a rhetorical question (absent in the original), which again brings Sophia’s distinctive status to the foreground, pointing to how she may be alienated and admired at the same time.

Zerning takes a similar approach, focusing first and foremost on the positive representation of Sophia:

Als ein Mann von soliden Verdiensten und beachtlichem Ruf, körperlich und intellektuell großzügig ausgestattet, dazu begabt mit flinkem Witz und gewandtem männlichen

Charme. Während sie ein völliges Novum war, eine entzückende Abnormität, eine Frau mit mathematischer Begabung und weiblicher Schüchternheit, ganz bezaubernd, dabei mit einem unter ihren Locken höchst unkonventionell ausgestatteten Hirnkasten.

[As a man of solid income and considerable reputation, generously endowed both physically and intellectually, with a quick wit and exquisite masculine charm. While she was a complete novelty, an enchanting abnormality, a woman with a mathematical gift and feminine timidity, quite charming, but under her locks a highly unconventionally rigged headbone]. (“Zu viel Glück” 407–08)

Although the German translator refrains from any visible changes, she does accentuate the subtle contrast implied by Munro’s text in her use of the almost oxymoronic phrase “entzückende Abnormität” [enchanting abnormality]. The change of the word order clearly highlights Sophia’s intellect as the translator’s main focus; however, the ironic use of “Hirnkasten” [headbone] betrays the protagonist’s doubts about the value of her talent.

What is important is that Zerning’s narrative position consistently remains aligned with Sophia’s perspective (and, more generally, with that of the author’s text itself), with all her uncertainties, contradictions, and weaknesses. When the main character is contemplating the prospect of her marriage to Maxsim, she implicitly acknowledges her deep dissatisfaction with their relationship, at the same time choosing to see her own expression of feelings as the problem: “To be comfortable with his wealth was of course a joke. To be comfortable with a tepid, courteous offering of feeling, ruling out the disappointments and scenes which had mostly originated with her—that was another matter altogether” (“Too Much Happiness” 252). Zerning sees the situation in exactly the same way: “Sich mit seinem Reichtum abzufinden war natürlich ein Witz. Sich mit einem lauwarmen, höflichen Gefühlsangebot abzufinden, ohne Erwähnung

der Enttäuschungen und Streitigkeiten, die meistens von ihr ausgegangen waren—das ließ sich ganz anders an“ [To settle for his wealth was of course a joke. To settle for a lukewarm, polite offer of feeling, without any mention of disappointments and quarrels, which mostly came from her—that was shaping up quite differently] (“Zu viel Glück” 411). A few noteworthy differences introduced here by the German translator elaborate on the meanings that were already present in Munro’s text. Zerning’s choice of the verb “sich abfinden” (instead of the more neutral “be comfortable”) hints at Sophia’s dissatisfaction and her need to compromise, to concede a part of her personality for the relationship to succeed (“sich abfinden” could also be translated as “to resign oneself” or “to give in”). At the same time, the German text foreshadows the character’s self-censorship tendencies: the phrase “ohne Erwähnung” [without any mention] points to Sophia’s instinctive response of silencing her feelings to protect herself.

The Russian version of the same passage differs from Zerning’s interpretation in some significant respects: “[В]опрос, устроит ли ее его богатство, был, конечно, шуткой. Но был и другой вопрос: устроит ли ее холодноватое, учтивое выражение чувств, совершенно исключающее скандалы и сцены, которые она, случалось, устраивала?” [The question whether she would be satisfied with his wealth was, of course, a joke. But there was another question: would she be satisfied with a coldish, courteous expression of feelings, completely ruling out scandals and scenes that she, as it sometimes happened, started?] (“Слишком много счастья”). First of all, Stepanov’s use of the active verb “устроивала” [started] instead of the vague “originated with her” clearly lays the blame on Sophia and her indiscretions, while erasing any indication of Maxim’s fault, as if he had no part in the couple’s disagreements. Moreover, the Russian translator replaces “disappointments” with “скандалы” [scandals], once again

overlooking any signs of the protagonist's inner tension and instead portraying her as simply melodramatic and unreasonable.

Kononenko, however, highlights “disappointments” as her main focus in the same passage, explicitly linking them to Sophia herself: “Коли це говорив, то йому ніби йшлося про гроші. Звісно ж, то був жарт. Він міг запропонувати стримані вияви почуттів, без сцен розчарування, що їх зазвичай улаштовувала вона, – ось про що йому йшлося.” [When he said that, he was seemingly talking about money. Of course, it was a joke. He could offer a reserved expression of feelings, without any scenes of disappointment that she usually started—that was what he was talking about] (“Забарато щастя” 288). Here, the translator's directness about Sophia's feelings is reinforced by the repetitive pattern of using the pronoun “he”: by shifting grammatical structures from impersonal sentences to multiple “he”-statements, the Ukrainian translator reveals the extent of Maxim's weight and power in their relationship and signals the protagonist's growing resentment.

The contradictory characterizations offered by the translators persist even after Sophia suddenly opens up about Maxim's selfishness and vanity—qualities that she has long been aware of but kept silent about, not daring to admit his imperfections:

Spoiled and envious, actually. A while ago he wrote to her that certain writings of his own had begun to be attributed to her, because of the accident of the names. He had received a letter from a literary agent in Paris, starting off by addressing him as Dear Madam.

Alas he had forgotten, he said, that she was a novelist as well as a mathematician. What a disappointment for the Parisian that he was neither. Merely a scholar, and a man.



Indeed a great joke. (“Too Much Happiness” 254)

Here, Sophia’s idealistic perception of Maxim turns to negative, as she realizes that his revolt against his fiancée’s fame, which he sees as taking away from his own privilege, borders on a personal accusation against her, thinly disguised as a joke. She can easily see through his pretenses and responds with habitual quiet bitterness, acknowledging his attempt at witticism at the end of the passage. The Ukrainian and German translators stay close to the source text here, recounting the incident in Sophia’s own voice via Munro’s trademark free indirect discourse:

Verwöhnt und sogar neidisch. Vor einer Weile hat er sie wissen lassen, dass einige seiner Schriften inzwischen ihr zugeschrieben werden, wegen der Namensgleichheit. Er erhielt einen Brief von einem Literaturagenten in Paris, der mit der Anrede begann: Verehrte gnädige Frau.

Leider habe er vergessen, dass sie nicht nur Mathematikerin, sondern auch Schriftstellerin sei. Welch eine Enttäuschung für die Pariser, dass er weder das eine noch das andere ist. Nur ein Gelehrter und ein Mann.

Wirklich ein Witz.

[Spoiled and even envious. A while ago he let her know that some of his writings were attributed to her, because of the identical names. He received a letter from a literary agent in Paris that started with a title: Dear Madam.

Unfortunately, he had forgotten that she is not only a mathematician, but also a writer.

What a disappointment for the Parisians that he is neither one nor the other. Just a scholar and a man.

Indeed a joke]. (“Zu viel Glück” 415)

Kononenko follows a very similar pattern in her version—however, Stepanov, while starting the paragraph from Sophia’s perspective, quickly reorients it towards the male character: [О]н получил письмо от ее литературного агента в Париже, начинающееся с обращения “мадам”. Ах да, — писал он, — я же совсем забыл, что Вы не только математик, но и нувеллистка. Как, наверное, был разочарован этот парижанин, узнав, что мсье Ковалевский не писатель. Всего лишь ученый, да к тому же мужчина. Очень смешно.” [He received a letter from her literary agent in Paris that started with addressing him as “Madam.” Ah yes,—he wrote,—I have completely forgotten that you are not only a mathematician, but also a (female) novelist. How disappointed that Parisian must have been to find out that monsieur Kovalevsky is not a writer. Just a scholar, and a man on top of that. Very funny] (“Слишком много счастья”). As the translator switches from free indirect discourse to direct speech (and from “he” to “I”), the narrative perspective shifts from Sophia to Maxim, giving him the voice to speak and silencing her in the process. Moreover, Stepanov reintroduces the contested name as Maxim’s own by referring to him as “monsieur Kovalevsky”; at the same time, his unusual, outdated spelling of the word “novelist” (“нувеллистка”)—combined with the deliberate use of the feminine form—implies derision, both towards Sophia herself and her literary aspirations as an inferior form of activity. Taken together, these seemingly minor changes indicate the translator’s bias against the female protagonist and his tendency to align his narrative voice with the male perspective in the story.

This aspect of the translator’s project finds its climax in the central episode on the train, when Sophia is contemplating the lives of women around her, thinking how (and whether) they could be changed by the burgeoning female liberation movement and the new opportunities she herself has been a part of: “How terrible it is, Sophia thinks. How terrible is the lot of women.

And what might this woman say if Sophia told her about the new struggles, women's battle for votes and places at the universities? She might say, But that is not as God wills" ("Too Much Happiness" 293–94). Here, Stepanov transforms the character's resentment about the limitations of female fate into her contempt of women themselves, contradicting Munro's original text: "Как все это ужасно, думает Софья. Как ужасно большинство женщин. Интересно, что ответила бы эта крестьянка, если бы Софья начала рассказывать ей про новые веяния, про борьбу женщин за право голоса, за работу в университетах? Наверное, сказала бы что-нибудь вроде "на все воля Божья, а это Ему не угодно." [How terrible all this is, Sophia thinks. How terrible are most women. She wonders what this peasant would say if Sophia started telling her about the new developments, about the women's fight for the right to vote, to work at universities? Probably, she would say something like 'Everything is God's will, and this is not what He wills'] ("Слишком много счастья"). The Russian translation of this passage, with its transition from the compassionate statement "How terrible is the lot of women" to the judgmental "How terrible are most women," distorts Sophia's perception of her gender, misrepresenting Munro's most feminist heroine as unsympathetic, backward-thinking, and snobbish—instead of sharing the unknown woman's pain, she shows only disgust. The translator's use of "крестьянка" [peasant] instead of "woman" also puts an unnecessary emphasis on social class, which makes the story's protagonist sound condescending and completely unaware of her own privilege. These transformations, while revealing the translator's project and position, undermine both the author's characterization of Sophia and the character's entire journey, and thus can only be seen as problematic.

In comparison, the other two translators demonstrate a significantly different approach—their versions are more supportive of Sophia and respectful towards her imaginary opponent:

“Як усе це жахливо, думає Софія. Яка жахлива жіноча доля. Щоб сказала ця жінка, якби заговорити з нею про новий етап боротьби за права жінок, за право голосу і право викладати в університеті? Ця жінка могла б сказати, що така воля Божа.” [How terrible all this is, Sophia thinks. How terrible is the fate of women. What would this woman say if someone talked to her about the new stage in the fight for women’s rights, the right to vote and the right to teach at universities? This woman might say that this is the will of God] (“Забарато щастя” 335). In Kononenko’s text, class distinctions play a less prominent role and gender comes to the foreground—as evidenced by multiple repetitions of “woman” and “women” in this short passage. The translator uses these repetitions to stress the connection between Sophia and her fellow passenger and their similarity through difference. Kononenko also makes a point of highlighting Sophia’s political views, expanding on the fight for women’s rights and specifying “places at universities” as “the right to teach at universities”; this choice puts women in the position of authority (at least in Sophia’s mind) more clearly than Stepanov’s translation or even Munro’s original did. Plus, the last sentence allows some ambiguity, as the statement about God’s will could be interpreted in two mutually exclusive ways—as a result, Sophia’s imaginary opponent may be seen as less docile and submissive than originally intended.

Zerning, in turn, avoids any visible additions or specifications while dealing with this passage; however, her tone while describing Sophia’s political passions is unambiguously positive—she substitutes “aspirations” for “struggles,” choosing to focus on the goals that Sophia shares rather than the challenges of the suffrage movement. The German version, although remaining reserved and to some extent deliberately vague, does side with the story’s protagonist: “Wie schrecklich ist das, denkt Sofia. Wie schrecklich ist das Los der Frauen. Und was würde wohl diese Frau sagen, wenn Sofia ihr von den neuen Bestrebungen erzählte, vom

Kampf der Frauen um das Wahlrecht und die Zulassung zu den Universitäten? Sie würde wohl sagen: Aber das ist nicht Gottes Wille.” [How terrible this is, Sophia thinks. How terrible is the fate of women. And what would this woman say if Sophia told her about the new aspirations, the women’s fight for the right to vote and admission to the universities? She would probably say: But this is not God’s will] (“Zu viel Glück” 480).

Similar translators’ choices can be traced in the episode where Sophia is thinking about her own acceptance by other women and her unusual social standing as a female professor:

She must stop this litany of resentment. The wives of Stockholm invited her into their houses, to the most important parties and intimate dinners. They praised her and showed her off. They welcomed her child. She might have been an oddity there, but she was an oddity that they approved of. Something like a multilingual parrot [...].

No, that was not fair. They had respect for what she did, and many of them believed that more women should do such things and someday they would. (“Too Much Happiness” 267)

In approaching this passage, Stepanov follows the same pattern of diminishing Sophia’s struggles and trivializing her feelings:

Впрочем, пора прекратить эту литанию обид. Жены ученых в Стокгольме приглашали ее к себе: и на лучшие званые вечера, и на ужины в узком кругу. Они хвалили ее и даже выставляли напоказ. Тепло приняли ее дочку. Может, Софья и для них была курьезом, но таким, который они приняли и одобрили? Что-то вроде попугая-полиглота [...].

Нет, это несправедливо. Они с уважением относились к тому, чем занималась Софья, и многие из них считали, что женщинам надо последовать ее примеру и когда-нибудь так и будет.

[Still, she must stop this litany of grievances. The wives of scientists in Stockholm invited her to their houses: both to the best soirees and private dinners. They praised her and even showed her off. Warmly welcomed her daughter. Maybe, Sophia was a curiosity for them, but the kind they accepted and endorsed? Something like a polyglot parrot [...].

No, this is unfair. They treated what Sophia did with respect and many of them thought that women should follow her example and that someday it would happen]. (“Слишком много счастья”)

Here, Sophia’s rightful indignation about the opportunities unavailable to her as a woman is reduced to an unsounded emotional complaint—Stepanov’s use of the word “обиды” [grievances] is not as strong as the original “resentment” and does not seem justified in comparison. Besides, the translator’s choice of “курьез” [curiosity/amusement/absurdity] to describe the character’s unusual status implies a stronger degree of contempt and “othering” than the original “oddity,” adding to the Russian text’s rather negative and limited portrayal of the great mathematician. Finally, the grammatical transformation introduced in the translated version casts doubt on the very fact of Sophia’s acceptance in her new country, as Stepanov changes her statement into a question. Overall, his approach plays up the protagonist’s uncertainties and self-negativity, at the same time undervaluing her inner complexity and significantly weakening the feminist message of her story.

In this respect, Kononenko’s translation is substantially different:

Вони хвалили її й пишалися знайомством із нею. Вони добре ставилися до її дитини. Вона була там дивовижею, але дивовижею, яку вітали. Як вітають папугу, що говорить багатьма мовами [...].

Ні, це несправедливо. Вони шанують її за працю, і чимало з них вірять, що колись значно більше жінок зможуть таке робити.

[They praised her and were proud of knowing her. They were good to her child. She was a rarity there, but a rarity that was welcomed. As a parrot speaking multiple languages would be welcomed [...].

No, this is unfair. They respect her for her work, and many of them believe that someday many more women will be able to do the same]. (“Забгато щастя” 305)

The translator uses shorter anaphoric sentences with strong, positive verbs (“welcome,” respect,” “believe”) that emphasize Sophia’s success and her importance as a role model for other women, despite the moments of bitterness and self-doubt she experiences (as expressed through her parallel with a trained parrot). The addition about the Stockholm wives being proud of their acquaintance with Sophia (which is absent in the original) serves the same purpose, as does Kononenko’s choice to convey the word “oddity” with “дивовижа” [rarity/wonder]—the decision that adds to the largely positive image of Sophia and her place in the Swedish society. Furthermore, the last sentence of the passage, with its shift from the past tense to the present, indicates more certainty about the future of women—the translator’s transformations here validate and support the character’s feelings, and Kononenko’s own voice blends in with those of the author and the protagonist.

Remarkably, some of these choices are also mirrored by the German translation:

Sie musste mit dieser Litanei des Grolls aufhören. Die Ehefrauen von Stockholm luden sie in ihre Häuser ein, zu den wichtigsten Festen und den Dinern im Familienkreis. Sie rühmten sie und brüsteten sich mit ihr. Sie nahmen ihr Kind freundlich bei sich auf. Sofia mochte dort eine Kuriosität sein, aber eine, die sie guthießen. So etwas wie ein vielsprachiger Papagei [...].

Nein, das war nicht gerecht. Sie hatten Achtung vor dem, was sie tat, und viele von ihnen waren der Überzeugung, dass mehr Frauen solche Dinge tun sollten und eines Tages tun würden.

[She had to stop this litany of rage/spite. The wives of Stockholm invited her to their houses, to the most important celebrations and to the dinners in the family circle. They praised her and took pride in her. They warmly received her child at their homes. Sophia might have been a curiosity there, but one that they welcomed. Something like a multilingual parrot [...].

No, this was not fair. They had respect for what she did, and many of them were of the conviction that more women should do such things and would do them one day]. (“Zu viel Glück” 436)

Just like Kononenko does in her version, Zerning focuses on the ideas of acceptance and approval here, with a similar addition about the women taking pride in Sophia’s acquaintance. However, the German translator also puts more emphasis on the character’s feelings of dissatisfaction: her use of “Kuriosität” [curiosity] is more ambiguous and less positive than Kononenko’s “дивовижа,” as it implies both extraordinariness and abnormality—something to be put on display rather than admired. At the same time, Zerning’s introduction of “Groll” [rage/spite] stresses and intensifies Sophia’s emotions, as compared to the “resentment” found in



the original or to Stepanov's softening approach with "grievances." As a result, what comes to the foreground is the contrast between the protagonist's substantial achievements and her self-image shaped by the societal limitations imposed on her. In the German translation, Sophia Kovalevsky appears as a more nuanced and conflicted figure than in the other two translations—although both Stepanov's and Kononenko's translation projects pursue their own (very different) goals, what they have in common is a certain tendency towards simplification.

The translators' personal responses to the representation of the main character's cultural affiliations in the text reveal another interesting aspect of the respective translation projects. For Stepanov, any reference to the Russian language or culture becomes a point of contention. He goes to great lengths to state (and overstate) Sophia's Russianness and to present this cultural connection in the best possible light, which results in a significant degree of domestication that can be traced in his text. For instance, when Sophia mentions her acquaintance with Fyodor Dostoevsky as a former suitor of her sister Aniuta, the Russian translator, after initially identifying the writer by his last name, subsequently refers to him only by a combination of his first name and patronymic ("Федор Михайлович" [Fyodor Mikhailovich]) in an attempt to re-appropriate Dostoevsky as a figure very well-known to the target text readers and a part of the Russian "cultural code." At the same time, Kononenko, in her Ukrainian-language version, refuses to invoke the same degree of familiarity—quite the opposite, she deliberately deviates from the conventional and commonly accepted Ukrainian spelling "Федір Достоевський" choosing to convey the name as "Фьодор Достоевскій" ("Забагато щастя" 287) instead. This unusual, although still recognizable, spelling is used to imitate a Russian speaker's pronunciation of the writer's name, and, as such, to foreignize it as a marker of the outside culture for Ukrainian-language readers.

This example illustrates the polar stands both translators take in respect of their texts' (and their readers') cultural orientation: if Stepanov is trying to emphasize the text's Russianness, bringing it closer to his audience, Kononenko insists on treating Munro's original as a foreign literary work and is carefully keeping some distance between the story's Russian cultural connections and its Ukrainian-speaking readers. In this respect, Sophia's nostalgic feelings about her childhood and her mother tongue become an important point of departure in translation, particularly when she rediscovers a piece of her long-lost homeland in speaking Russian to Maxim: "A torrent of jokes and questions followed, an immediate understanding, a rich gabble of Russian, as if the languages of Western Europe had been flimsy formal cages in which they had been too long confined, or paltry substitutes for true human speech" ("Too Much Happiness" 248). Stepanov does not stop at conveying Munro's metaphor of a foreign language as a constricting cage, but elaborates on it, equating the Russian language with freedom and happiness: "*Бесконечный* поток шуток и вопросов, понимание с полуслова, *а главное — свобода и счастье болтать по-русски*. Им показалось, что *все остальные европейские языки* были клетками, в которых они просидели *целую вечность*, жалкой заменой подлинной человеческой речи." [The *endless* torrent of jokes and questions, finishing each other's sentences, *but most importantly—the freedom and joy of chatting in Russian*. It seemed to them that *the rest of* European languages were cages where they had been kept *for eternity*, a pitiful substitute for real human speech] ("Слишком много счастья"; emphasis added). The additions introduced by the translator (italicized in the above quote) not only stress the special meaning of the Russian language for the story's characters, but also reflect Stepanov's personal perception of his language and culture as superior. Furthermore, the omission of Munro's colourful epithets transforms "flimsy formal cages" into very real and painful limitations. In

comparison, Kononenko's version of the same passage is more reserved and deliberately avoids mentioning the Russian language, referring to "рідна мова" [mother tongue] instead: "Полилися потоки запитань і жартів за допомоги всього багатства їхньої рідної мови, вони ніби нарешті вирвалися з умовного ув'язнення мов Західної Європи, що досить довго служили неповноцінним замінником справжнього людського спілкування." [There were torrents of questions and jokes, with all the richness of their mother tongue, as if they had finally broken free from the conditional confinement of the Western European languages, which had long served as an inadequate substitute for real human communication] ("Забагато щастя" 284). The use of "mother tongue" instead of "Russian" indicates the translator's unwillingness to talk about the Russian language or culture in a positive light. Although Sophia's perception of her language as a safe shelter is still very much present in the text, the Ukrainian translation frames it as a deeply personal connection devoid of any political connotations.

At the same time, Kononenko does not miss any opportunity to highlight critical intonations in Sophia's inner monologue about her long-lost home—as in the episode where the main character, thinking back to the memoir and the novel she had written, has to acknowledge her mixed feelings about the past: "She had written the recollections of her life at Palibino in a glow of love for everything lost, things once despaired of as well as things once treasured. [...] And *Nihilist Girl* came out of pain for her country, a burst of patriotism and perhaps a feeling that she had not been paying enough attention, with her mathematics and the tumults of her life" ("Too Much Happiness 281). Here Sophia reveals a painful mix of love, resentment, and nostalgia that comes from not being able to reconcile her powerful sense of belonging and her profound disappointment with her country's flaws. Kononenko picks on these notes of dissatisfaction and displacement, emphasizing the intensity of the character's emotions with her

“fire” metaphors (“жар любові” [heat of love] and “спалах патріотизму” [spark of patriotism]) and putting the emphasis on Sophia’s feelings of despair and alienation from her former home: “Вона написала спогади про своє життя в Палібіно, сповнені жару любові до всього, що зникло, від чого впадаєш у відчай, що свято бережеш у пам’яті. [...] А “Нігілістки” з’явилися від болю за її країну, від спалаху патріотизму і, можливо, від почуття, що вона забула про батьківщину, перейнята математикою та сум’яттям власного життя.” [She wrote the memoirs about her life in Palibino, filled with the heat of love for everything that disappeared, everything that made you desperate, everything you religiously commit to memory. [...] And *Nihilist Girls* came out of her pain for her country, a spark of patriotism and, possibly, out of the feeling that she had forgotten about her homeland, engulfed by mathematics and by the turmoil of her own life] (“Забагато щастя” 321).

However, Stepanov ignores this negative side of Sophia’s memories—in his version, there is no mention of her despair or frustration with the ways of her country, and her pain is only attributed to being away from home:

Она написала воспоминания о жизни в Палибино, поддавшись порыву ностальгии по всему бесконечно дорогому и безнадежно утраченному. [...] А “Нигилистка” родилась от боли за свою страну, от вспышки патриотизма и, наверное, еще от чувства вины за все, на что она не обращала внимания, вечно занятая математикой и перипетиями своей личной жизни.

[She wrote her memories about life in Palibino, succumbing to an outburst of nostalgia for everything endlessly precious and hopelessly lost. [...] And *Nihilist Girl* was born out of her pain for her country, the spark of patriotism and, probably, the feeling of guilt for

everything she had not paid attention to, always busy with mathematics and the entanglements of her personal life]. (“Слишком много счастья”)

In the Russian translation, the focus of attention is shifted towards the protagonist’s feeling of guilt for losing connection with her homeland. Moreover, the distractions that prevented her from staying in touch are described in a way that downplays the difficulties she had to overcome: the use of a slightly ironic and deliberately theatrical word “перипетии” [entanglements/adventures], combined with the addition of “personal life,” erases the negative connotations of “tumults” and reduces Sophia’s political, academic, and financial troubles to romantic affairs. As a result, the translator not only underestimates the depth of Sophia’s feeling of displacement in his attempt to embellish her (and the reader’s) perception of Russianness—he also sounds almost accusing of his character’s insufficient patriotism.

The translators’ cultural biases become particularly pronounced in their treatment of Russia’s discrimination against women, as described by Sophia when she tries to explain to Professor Weierstrass and his sisters that the only way she could leave her country to study in Germany was through a fictitious marriage:

Young people—young women—who wanted to study abroad were compelled to go through with this deception because no Russian woman who was unmarried could leave the country without her parents’ consent [...]

What a barbarous law.

Yes. Russian. (“Too Much Happiness” 275)

Although this passage utilizes free indirect discourse to relay the conversation between characters, it clearly combines two voices—Sophia’s careful and somewhat hesitant explanation

and her audience's incredulous response. When the listeners call the idea "barbarous," the protagonist unequivocally agrees, and her emphasis on the repeated word "Russian" sounds as a quiet accusation and a meaningful comment on the social injustice she herself has been subjected to. In the German version, Zerning treats Sophia's reaction in a very similar way—as a bitter, although reserved, confession of dissent:

Und junge Leute— Frauen—, die im Ausland studieren wollten, waren zu diesem Täuschungsmanöver gezwungen, denn keine russische Frau, die unverheiratet war, durfte ohne Einwilligung der Eltern das Land verlassen [...]

Was für ein barbarisches Gesetz.

Ja. Russisch.

[And young people—women—that wanted to study abroad were forced to resort to this deceptive maneuver because no Russian woman, who was unmarried, was allowed to leave the country without her parents' consent [...]

What a barbarous law.

Yes. Russian]. ("Zu viel Glück" 448)

However, Stepanov in his translation complicates things by refusing to convey Sophia's quiet but decisive judgement:

В России молодым людям, точнее, молодым женщинам, желающим учиться за границей, приходится прибегать к подобному обману, потому что незамужняя девица не имеет права покидать страну без согласия родителей [...]

Какой варварский закон!

Да-да. Русский закон.

[In Russia, young people, or to be more precise, young women, who wish to study abroad have to resort to this deception, because an unmarried maiden has no right to leave the country without her parents' consent [...]

What a barbarous law!

Yes, yes. A Russian law]. (“Слишком много счастья”)

Several changes that can be observed here seem to shift the narrative tone towards weakening the protagonist's resentment. Elimination of the pauses marked by dashes undermines the impression that Sophia is speaking emotionally, obviously torn between her national loyalty and her profound convictions but eager to explain her position. The use of the condescendingly-sounding word “девица” [maiden] finds itself in stark contrast to the original's consistent repetition of “woman”/“women” and somewhat distorts the character's individual manner of speech, making her sound less respectful of women and more accepting of the societal norms she is actually rebelling against. The double repetition “yes, yes” introduced by the translator sounds hasty and less confident than Sophia's unambiguous agreement in the original, and the addition of “закон” [law] redirects attention from “Russian” to “law,” to some extent normalizing the injustice faced by the heroine.

Unlike Stepanov, Kononenko uses this place in the text to both support her character and make a political statement of her own, making her personal position known through Sophia's words:

Так. І молоді люди—власне, молоді жінки, які хочуть навчатися за кордоном—мають вдаватися до таких хитрощів, бо незаміжні не можуть виїхати з Росії без дозволу своїх батьків [...]

Який варварський закон.

Так. Це Росія.

[Yes. And young people—particularly, young women who want to study abroad—have to resort to such machinations because unmarried women cannot get out of Russia without their parents’ consent [...]]

What a barbarous law.

Yes. This is Russia]. (“Забгато щастя” 313)

The translator’s use of the verb “виїхати” [depart/get out], which implies a stronger degree of determination than a possible alternative “залишити” [leave], and particularly the transformation of Sophia’s specific and matter-of-fact comment (“Russian”) into the generalized accusation (“This is Russia”) highlight the depth of the character’s resentment. Moreover, these changes illustrate Kononenko’s own tense and almost hostile attitude to the country and its culture, which she superimposes on Munro’s text. While it is clearly a personal choice and a deliberate intrusion into the text on the translator’s part, it seems relevant both in the context of the protagonist’s life story, with its distinct feminist undertones, and for the Ukrainian-language readers in the post-2014 cultural and political environment. Such instances of contextual meaning construction may be interpreted as a reflection of Kononenko’s progressive feminist outlook on translation and its cultural role—as well as on the work of other translators that came before her.

As can be seen from the above, for all three translators—but especially for Kononenko and Stepanov—their treatment of the story’s central character, the feminist significance of her narrative and her complex negotiation of her own Russianness is largely determined by their own cultural self-identification and political affiliations, as well as their perspectives on the nature and function of literary translation. Whereas both the German and Ukrainian-language versions



of the text blend the translators' voices with those of Munro's narrator and protagonist and consistently accentuate the feminist potential of her story, the Russian translator offers a more detached account that downplays the main character's complexity and shifts away from her female perspective, occasionally veering into male-oriented narration up to the point of demonstrating condescension towards women in general. The cultural aspect also comes to centre stage, as Stepanov is actively trying to construct a nostalgic image of Russia through Sophia's memories, thus enforcing a positive cultural connection on Munro's text at the expense of the story's integrity, and Kononenko is consistently undoing such efforts in her own version, keeping in mind her Ukrainian target audience and choosing to focus instead on the themes of the character's displacement and disappointment. As a result—taking into account the close ties and important intersections between the Russian and Ukrainian linguistic and cultural contexts in the current political climate—the Ukrainian translation of “Too Much Happiness” may be theorized as a resistant retranslation that places itself in the opposition not to the Canadian original, but to the previously existing Russian-language version in its attempt to counteract the latter's anti-feminist and imperialistic tendencies.

### ***“Finale”***

The four “Finale” stories concluding the *Dear Life* collection centre on Munro's reiterative theme of a mother-daughter dyad—the relationship dynamic summarized by Debora Heller as “a recurring situation [...] of a young daughter's failure, or inability, to meet the demands of a mother suffering from a progressively debilitating disease, the daughter's youthful shame at the bizarre symptoms of her mother's illness, and her subsequent guilt in later years” (7). For the two translators engaging with these deeply personal and largely autobiographic texts—Zerning in German and Borovikova in Russian—the (re)construction of both characters'

complex identities through their negotiation of femininity and motherhood comes to the forefront as the main focus, which to a great extent defines the nature of the respective translation projects.

### *I. "The Eye"*

The tensions between mother and daughter start unfolding from the first page of the cycle—long before any mention of the mother's disease. In fact, the signs of mutual misunderstanding and alienation are already evident at the beginning of the daughter's inner monologue about her childhood: "When I was five years old my parents all of a sudden produced a baby boy, which my mother said was what I had always wanted. Where she got this idea I did not know. She did quite a bit of elaborating on it, all fictitious but hard to counter" ("The Eye" 257). Zerning immediately picks up on these first indications of the daughter's negativity, resorting to multiple idioms ("aus der Luft greifen" [spin out of thin air], "sich lang und breit darüber auslassen" [go on and on about something]) to achieve a natural conversational intonation that hints at the hidden emotion while remaining calm and reserved: "Als ich fünf Jahre alt war, zeigten meine Eltern ganz plötzlich ein Baby vor, einen kleinen Jungen, genau das, sagte meine Mutter, was ich mir immer gewünscht hatte. Wie sie auf die Idee kam, war mir rätselhaft. Sie ließ sich lang und breit darüber aus, alles aus der Luft gegriffen, aber schwer zu widerlegen." [When I was five years old, my parents quite suddenly presented a baby, a little boy, exactly that, said my mother, what I always wanted. How she came to this idea was a mystery for me. She went on and on about it, all spun out of thin air but hard to rebut] ("Das Auge" 299). Borovikova, on the other hand, amplifies the narrator's disapproving tone with her use of colloquialisms ("распространялась" [made fuss/went on and on about it]), brief elliptical phrases, and generally harsher language: "Когда мне было пять лет, мои родители неожиданно произвели на свет мальчика, и мать сказала, что я всегда мечтала о братике.

Не знаю, с чего она это взяла. Она много распространялась на эту тему – все выдумки, но опровергнуть их было трудно.” [When I was five years old, my parents unexpectedly brought to the world a boy, and mother said that I had always dreamed about a little brother. No idea why she would think that. She made a lot of fuss about it – all fantasies/fibs but hard to disprove] (“Глаз” 259). Particularly, the use of “выдумки” [fantasies/fibs] is significant here, as it borders on an accusation, revealing the depth of the daughter’s growing resentment and setting the scene for the eventual confrontation between the two central figures. While the German text opens the narrative with a subtle hint of future tensions, the Russian version dives right into the heart of the conflict.

As the story unravels and the narrator discloses more details about her uneasiness around her mother, the Russian translator continues to focus on the daughter’s negative emotions, emphasizing her deep-seated discontent and silent defensiveness. When the narrator refers to her mother’s “powdery yet ominous smell” (“The Eye” 257) and stops herself to question her own childhood perceptions, she realizes that her resentment comes from a feeling of powerlessness in her mother’s presence: “Why do I say ominous? I didn’t feel frightened. It wasn’t that my mother actually told me what I was to feel about things. She was an authority on that without having to question a thing” (“The Eye” 258). In this context, Borovikova emphasizes the hierarchical relationship between mother and daughter and the former’s dominating position: “Почему я говорю ‘зловещий’? Я вовсе не боялась. Нельзя сказать, что мать диктовала, какие чувства я обязана испытывать. Она просто была высшей инстанцией в вопросе моих чувств – ей даже не нужно было меня спрашивать.” [Why do I say ‘ominous’? I wasn’t scared at all. I couldn’t say that mother dictated what feelings I ought to have. She was simply the highest authority as far as my feelings were concerned—she didn’t even need to ask me]

(“Глаз” 259). The Russian text highlights the uneven power dynamic by changing “told” to “диктовала” [dictated] and elevating the mother’s status from “an authority” to “высшая инстанция” [the highest authority]. The reconfigured sentence structure organized around the narrator’s emotional pause (indicated by the dash) also underlines the perceived tension between mother and daughter. The translator’s use of the adjective “зловещий” [ominous/sinister] in this passage serves a double purpose, creating a powerful sense of foreboding that the narrator associates with her mother’s overbearing presence—but which also signals the future loss, giving a tragic undertone to the daughter’s unsuspecting rebellion. The German translator demonstrates a slightly different approach to the situation, softening the picture: “Warum sage ich ‘nicht ganz geheuer’? Angst hatte ich nicht. Es war auch nicht so, dass meine Mutter mir ausdrücklich vorgab, was ich jeweils zu empfinden hatte. Sie wusste eben derart genau darüber Bescheid, dass sie nicht in Frage zu stellen brauchte.” [Why do I say ‘somewhat eerie’? I had no fear. It wasn’t that my mother expressly instructed me what I had to feel each time. She just knew so much about it exactly that she did not need to question it] (“Das Auge” 299). Here, the daughter’s perception of her mother as “ominous” is transformed into “nicht ganz geheuer,” which could be roughly translated as “somewhat eerie/uneasy”—although the general impression is still clearly negative and unsettling, the narrator’s perception of her mother’s presence as threatening and her sense of premonition are significantly weakened. At the same time, the mother’s figure is made to seem less domineering, as the mention of her “authority” is replaced with the reference to how well she “knew” (“wusste”) what was going on in her daughter’s mind.

With these transformations, both translators set the scene for the key moment of the narrator’s breakaway from her mother, as she “began to accept how largely my mother’s notions about me might differ from my own” (“The Eye” 258). Borovikova, in line with her chosen

strategy, puts an emphasis on the narrator's own feelings and on the idea of separation, as she switches from "acceptance" to "realization" of differences; moreover, the omission of "might" eliminates the element of uncertainty, shifting these differences from an assumption to the statement of fact: "я начала в полной мере осознавать, насколько представления матери обо мне расходятся с тем, что я сама знаю и чувствую" [I started to fully realize how much mother's ideas about me diverge from what I know and feel myself] ("Глаз" 260). Zerning, in turn, maintains the original's careful uncertainty with her use of "konnte" [could], although her change of "accept" to "begreifen" [understand], in a decision similar to that of the Russian translator, draws attention to the hidden conflict between the two heroines and to the irreversible changes that the daughter is going through: "begann ich zu begreifen, wie weitgehend das Bild, das meine Mutter von mir hatte, von meinem eigenen abweichen konnte" [I started to understand how significantly the picture that my mother had of me could deviate from my own] ("Das Auge" 300). As a result, while both translators choose to focus on the complex mother-daughter dynamic, the Russian text's interpretation of it initially seems harsher towards both central characters and more unforgiving of their respective faults in the relationship, while the German translation paints a rather mitigated picture, laying the groundwork for the eventual resolution of conflict.

Accordingly, when the narrator admits the extent of the transformation she is going through, both translators frame this confession differently. The daughter sees her silent rejection of the mother's authority and fascination with her new friend Sadie as a betrayal: "something in me was turning traitorous, though she [mother] didn't know why, and I didn't know why either" ("The Eye" 263). The Russian translation treats this change as a gradual development of a new side in the narrator's identity, where "предательская жилка" [traitorous streak] is simply a new

quality that the young girl acquires: “А во мне начала проступать предательская жилка, хотя мать не знала почему, и я сама тоже не знала.” [Inside of me, a traitorous streak started to emerge, although mother did not know why, and I did not know it either] (“Глаз” 264).

Zerning’s version, on the other hand, equates the narrator with a “Verräterin” [traitor]: “Und etwas in mir wandelte sich zur Verräterin, obwohl sie nicht wusste, warum, und ich wusste es auch nicht.” [And something in me turned into a traitor, although she did not know why, and I did not know it either] (“Das Auge” 305). This shift indicates a higher degree of guilt and self-doubt than the original text implies, serving the translator’s goal of portraying the narrator as self-reflective and vulnerable.

By the time the story reaches its climax in the scene where the mother and daughter arrive at Sadie’s wake, their mutual estrangement is already complete. The narrator’s reaction to the smallest details in her mother’s behaviour reveals the lack of trust or sympathy between the two:

“Come now,” she said to me. Her gentleness sounded hateful to me, triumphant.

She bent to look into my face, and this, I was sure, was to prevent me from doing what had just occurred to me—keeping my eyes squeezed shut. (“The Eye” 268).

In this passage, the daughter interprets every word and gesture as a sign of her mother’s hostility, while the mother herself is trying to exploit the situation to reinstate her power over her child. Borovikova focuses on the daughter’s silent protest here, amplifying her dislike of her mother’s voice to the point of disgust:

Идем, – сказала она. Эта мягкость казалась мне отвратительной, словно торжествующей.

Мать склонилась, чтобы заглянуть мне в лицо, – несомненно, чтобы помешать мне использовать только что изобретенный метод, то есть плотно зажмурить глаза.

[“Come,” she said. This gentleness seemed disgusting to me, as if triumphant.

Mother bent down to look into my face—no doubt, to prevent me from using my newly invented method, that is squeezing my eyes shut]. (“Глаз” 269)

The translator’s change of “I was sure” to “несомненно” [no doubt] eliminates any uncertainty about the mother’s intentions (and the perceived threat that she represents), while the reference to the “newly invented method” portrays the narrator’s resistance as more thought-out and systematic than spontaneous. As a result, the translator creates the impression of an ongoing conscious confrontation that is not limited to a single episode. Zerning’s interpretation, while staying closer to the original, is less direct:

„Komm jetzt“, sagte sie zu mir. Ihre Sanftheit klang für mich böse, triumphierend.

Sie beugte sich vor, um mir ins Gesicht zu schauen, und zwar, da war ich mir sicher, um mich daran zu hindern, das zu tun, was mir gerade eingefallen war—die Augen fest zuzukneifen.

[“Come now,” she said to me. Her gentleness sounded evil to me, triumphant.

She bent down to look into my face, and particularly, I was sure, to prevent me from doing what had just occurred to me—squeezing my eyes shut]. (“Das Auge” 311)

The German translator keeps the element of uncertainty with her use of the parenthetical phrase “da war ich mir sicher” [I was sure], and her choice of the adjective “böse” [evil/mean] to describe the mother’s voice, although still clearly antagonistic, conveys less negative affect than

the Russian text's focus on disgust. Therefore, it can be seen that both translators' approaches result in diverging portrayals of the two main characters and their relationship: whereas Zerning somewhat tones down the narrator's negativity towards her mother, leading up to the redeeming storyline of tragic loss and mutual forgiveness, Borovikova chooses to intensify the opposition between mother and daughter, even at the cost of making the narrator less likable and relatable. This translating strategy is meant to accentuate the young girl's choice between the two models of femininity represented by her mother and Sadie.

The translators' treatment of Sadie's story and especially her death reflect the same perspectives. When the narrator describes the circumstances of her friend's tragic accident, she assumes that Sadie's typically confident and defiant behaviour may have caused the fatality: "Sadie scurrying along without even a flashlight would behave as if it was everybody's business to get out of her way" ("The Eye" 267). Borovikova reinforces the narrator's notion of Sadie's fearlessness and independence in her version, presenting them as unambiguously positive, if dangerous, qualities: "Сэди спешила прочь даже без фонарика в руках, с твердой верой, что это обязанность водителей – ее объезжать." [Sadie hurried away even without a flashlight in her hands, with a firm belief that it was the drivers' duty to get around her] ("Глаз" 268). The additions of "с твердой верой" [with a firm belief] and "обязанность" [duty] emphasize Sadie's (and, by extension, the narrator's) righteous convictions, creating a stark contrast with the mother who at this point is seen in a much more negative light. The German translation, in turn, maintains neutrality while reimagining the scene as a probability rather than a fact: "Sadie, die rasch lief und nicht einmal eine Taschenlampe dabei hatte, verhielt sich bestimmt, als müssten alle anderen ihr Platz machen." [Sadie, who ran fast and did not even have a flashlight, surely behaved as if all the others had to make place for her/get out of her way] ("Das Auge" 310). As a



result, Zerning's version of the narrator's account seems less dramatic than Borovikova's emotional reconstruction of the scene.

Accordingly, the German translation downplays the violent details of Sadie's story. In the original, when the narrator explains what happened to her friend, she says that "Sadie had been killed when walking home from the Royal-T dance hall [...] She was hit from behind" ("The Eye" 266). In both sentences, the choice of verbs indicates a violent (if unpremeditated) action. Borovikova follows the same logic in her version: "Сэди погибла, возвращаясь домой из танцзала 'Рояль-Т' [...] Ее ударило сзади." [Sadie lost her life while returning home from the Royal-T dance hall [...] She was hit from behind] ("Глаз" 268). However, Zerning, while specifying the details of this tragic episode, seems to avoid any direct references to killing: "Sadie war tödlich verunglückt, als sie aus dem Royal-T nach Hause ging [...] Sie wurde von hinten überfahren." [Sadie had a fatal accident when she was walking from the Royal-T dance hall [...] She was run over from behind] ("Das Auge" 310). The translator's insistence on a "fatal accident" ("tödlich verunglückt") shifts the focus towards minimizing the driver's responsibility, leaving the unknown man who killed Sadie out of the equation and obscuring the symbolic significance of Sadie's death for the narrator.

The resulting toning-down of the motif of violence is particularly interesting if compared to Borovikova's consistent attempts to highlight it, whether in the context of Sadie's death, the mother pressuring her daughter into a specific kind of behaviour, or the daughter's own experiences outside of home. When the narrator recalls the boys' unfounded aggression that she was subjected to at school—which resonates with Sadie's concerns about getting "caught" ("The Eye" 262)—she acknowledges it as a real and palpable threat: "They [boys] hate me of course

[...] If I had to go near one I would stiffen and wonder what to do” (“The Eye” 265). Zerning stays close to the original, with its focus on hate and danger: “Sie hassen mich natürlich [...] Wenn ich in die Nähe eines Jungen geriet, wurde ich starr und wusste nicht, was tun” [They [boys] hate me, of course [...] Whenever I got close to a boy, I froze and did not know what to do] (“Das Auge” 308). Borovikova, however, heightens the perception of threat, making the narrator sound even more desperate than in Munro’s text or its German translation: “Разумеется, они меня ненавидят [...] Оказываясь рядом с мальчишкой, я застываю и начинаю лихорадочно соображать, как мне спастись.” [Needless to say, they hate me [...] Whenever I find myself close to a boy, I freeze and start to think frantically how I can save myself] (“Глаз” 266–67). The translator’s addition of “frantically” and especially the transition from “what to do” to “how I can save myself” put an emphasis on the narrator’s fear and helplessness in the face of violence, mapping out a clearer connection between her and Sadie and pointing out the congruence between their experiences.

Overall, the motif of gendered violence appears to be an important point of departure for the two translators. At the same time, Borovikova brings to the forefront the contrast between the two significant relationships in the narrator’s life—with her mother and Sadie—to accentuate the tension in the mother-daughter dynamic as a conflict between the two mutually exclusive notions of femininity. In the Russian translation, the daughter’s willful breakaway from her mother becomes the central event, whereas Zerning mitigates the narrator’s rebellion, treating it rather as a phase on the characters’ path towards eventual reconciliation.

## II. “Night”

In the next “Finale” chapter, “Night,” both translators continue to tell the story of the increasingly dysfunctional mother-daughter relationship. However, this time their translation projects diverge at the point of failed communication and habitual silencing of women’s bodily experiences, as the two main characters prove unable to talk about the irreversible physical changes their bodies are going through.

After the narrator’s surgery and removal of the mysterious tumour that she euphemistically calls “turkey egg” (“Night” 275), she contemplates her mother’s silence around the incident, coming to the conclusion that the hushing-up of the women’s health and body-related issues was typical at the time—although things changed significantly in subsequent decades:

The thought of cancer never entered my head and she never mentioned it. I don’t think there could be such a revelation today without some kind of questions, some probing about whether it was or it wasn’t. Cancerous or benign—we would want to know at once. The only way I can explain our failure to speak of it was that there must have been a cloud around that word like the cloud around the mention of sex. Worse, even. (“Night” 273)

The German translation, with its direct repetition of the word “Krebs” [cancer] seems to be less evasive of the topic than the original, where the narrator is trying to mention the word as little as possible. At the same time, Zerning underscores the mother’s silence with her addition of “mit keinem Wort” [with no word], while downplaying the significance of “failure to speak.” Instead, she uses a less direct phrase “unsere Hemmungen, darüber zu sprechen” [our inhibitions

to talk about it], which could be interpreted as the characters' unwillingness to discuss a certain subject rather than a complete failure of communication:

Der Gedanke an Krebs kam mir überhaupt nicht in den Sinn, und sie erwähnte ihn mit keinem Wort. Ich glaube nicht, dass eine solche Eröffnung heute ohne Fragen abging, ohne jede Erkundigung, ob es Krebs ist oder nicht. Bösartig oder gutartig—wir würden es sofort wissen wollen. Ich kann unsere Hemmungen, darüber zu sprechen, nur damit erklären, dass es um das Wort eine Wolke gegeben haben muss wie die Wolke um die Erwähnung von Sex. Schlimmer noch.

[The thought of cancer did not come to my mind at all, and she did not mention it with any single word. I do not believe that such a discovery would go without questions today, without every inquiry if it is cancer or not. Malignant or benign—we would want to know immediately. I can only explain our inhibitions to talk about it with the fact that there had to be a cloud around the word like the cloud around the mention of sex. Even worse].

(“Nacht” 316–17)

The Russian translation takes a slightly different approach by focusing on the silence around the body and the need for direct and immediate answers:

Мне ни разу не пришла в голову мысль о раке, и мать тоже ни разу о нем не упомянула. В наши дни, думаю, при обнаружении подобного непременно встал бы вопрос – он это или нет. Злокачественная или доброкачественная – сейчас этот вопрос возникает первым, и нам надо немедленно получить ответ. Почему тогда мы об этом молчали – не знаю; единственное объяснение, которое приходит мне в

голову, – что это слово окутывала пелена, примерно так же, как слово “секс”. Даже хуже.

[The thought of cancer did not come to my mind even once, and mother did not mention it even a single time. These days, I think, if a thing like that were discovered, the question would no doubt arise—whether it is or it isn’t. Malignant or benign—now this is the first question to arise, and we need to get the answer immediately. Why we were silent about it then—I do not know; the only explanation that comes to mind is—that this word was covered by a veil, just like the word “sex.” Even worse]. (“Ночь” 273)

The additions used by Borovikova in this passage, with her repeated emphasis on “questions” and “answers,” bring to the forefront the need for communication that did not happen between the main characters; at the same time, the translator’s choice to use the image of a “veil” [пелена] offers a more clearly negative interpretation to the theme of enveloping silence than in the German translation or even in the original text. Besides, changes at the sentence structure level, with multiple pauses introduced into the text, highlight the narrator’s tension and continuing uneasiness about the subjects of body and disease, to some extent foreshadowing her future response to her mother’s illness.

The same dark perception of the body is reflected in the protagonist’s interactions with her younger sister. Feeling powerless about her own physical changes, the narrator is trying to regain control by objectifying the little girl’s body and transforming her into a grotesque copy of the unavailable mother: “When I wasn’t tormenting her [...] I would dress her up in some of the old clothes [...] I would put my mother’s old caked rouge and powder on her face and tell her how pretty she looked. She was pretty, without a doubt, though the face I put on her gave her the look of a freakish foreign doll” (“Night” 274). Borovikova stresses the significance of this

episode in her translation by emphasizing the mother's presence in the story—her more direct reference to the mother points out what kind of resemblance the narrator is trying to achieve with her makeovers: “Когда я не мучила ее дурацкими дразнилками [...] Я одевала сестру в наряды, что завалились у матери в сундуке [...] Потом я размалевывала сестре лицо засохшими материнскими румянами и пудрой и говорила, что она очень хорошенькая. Сестра, безусловно, была хорошенькая, но после моих усилий становилась похожа на жутковатую заморскую куклу.” [When I didn't torment her with foolish teasings [...] I dressed my sister in the outfits that had been lying around in my mother's chest [...] Then I daubed her face with mother's dried-up rouge and powder and told her that she looked very pretty. My sister was pretty, no doubt, but after my efforts she looked like a creepy outlandish doll] (“Ночь” 274–75). The translator's choice of descriptive vocabulary (“жутковатая” [creepy] and “заморская” [foreign/outlandish]) strengthens the uncanny impression and accentuates the narrator's “double vision” of her sister as a beloved little playmate and a strange, unknown body to be subdued and brought under control. Zerning's version, on the other hand, tones down the little sister's grotesque resemblance to the mother and focuses on the unusual and exotic rather than uncanny: “Wenn ich sie nicht quälte [...] Ich zog ihr welche von den alten Sachen an... Ich tat ihr das alte, vertrocknete Rouge und den Puder meiner Mutter aufs Gesicht und sagte ihr, wie hübsch sie aussah. Sie war hübsch, kein Zweifel, obwohl sie mit meiner Gesichtsbemalung aussah wie eine fratzenhafte exotische Puppe.” [When I did not torment her [...] I put her in some of the old things [...] I put my mother's old, dried-up rouge and powder on her face and told her how pretty she looked. She was pretty, no doubt, although with my face painting she looked like a hideous exotic doll] (“Nacht” 318). Still, both translations do make a connection between the narrator's dress-up games with her younger sister, where she transforms a child into a bizarre likeness of an

older woman, and her confused feelings about the changing female body—her mother’s as well as her own.

When the protagonist, caught up in the middle of adolescent physical changes and traumatized by the experience of her vulnerability, is left alone to recover after her surgery, she experiences this time as a temporary reprieve from the usual requirements of everyday life. However, very soon this taste of freedom turns into an obsession, as her body-related insecurities make her question her sense of self, eventually giving rise to violent fantasies: “You might think this was a liberation. At first, perhaps it was. The freedom. The strangeness. But as my failure to fall asleep prolonged itself, and as it finally took hold altogether until it changed into the dawn, I became more and more disturbed by it [...]. I was mocking myself, as the words turned into absurdity, into the silliest random speech” (“Night” 276). Zerning accentuates this state of psychological confusion and in-betweenness with the intricate alliterative chain (“Befreiung” [liberation], “Freiheit” [freedom], and “Fremdheit” [strangeness]), which puts an emphasis on the girl’s sudden experience of freedom. But the idea of losing self-control and giving in to the obsession is largely obscured in this passage, as the translator omits the phrase “took hold altogether,” replaces “failure” with “Schwierigkeiten” [difficulties], and describes the onset of absurdity in almost poetic terms: “Man könnte denken, das war eine Befreiung. Anfangs war es das vielleicht. Die Freiheit. Die Fremdheit. Aber als meine Schwierigkeiten mit dem Einschlafen andauerten und sich schließlich bis zur Morgendämmerung hinzogen, verstörte mich das mehr und mehr [...]. Ich verhöhnte mich selbst, da die Worte ins Absurde abglitten, in sinnloses Wortgeklingel.” [One could think that was liberation. At first perhaps it was. The freedom. The strangeness. But as my difficulties with falling asleep continued and finally dragged on till daybreak, it unsettled me more and more [...]. I mocked myself, now that the words were sliding

down into absurdity, into meaningless palaver] (“Nacht” 320). Conversely, Borovikova chooses to centre her version on the narrator’s loss of self-control and her shifting sense of identity: “Вы можете счесть это освобождением. Поначалу, вероятно, так и было. Странность. Но сон не шел ко мне все дольше и дольше, и в конце концов, когда бессонница стала завладевать мною до рассвета, это беспокоило меня все сильнее [...] Я сама издевалась над собой – слова превращались в абсурд, в дурацкие бредовые речи. [You might think this is liberation. At first, probably, it was. The strangeness. But sleep did not come to me longer and longer, and finally, when insomnia started taking possession of me till the dawn, it worried me more and more [...]. I was torturing myself—the words turned into absurdity, into moronic raving speeches] (“Ночь” 276–77). Here, the translator omits the repeated reference to freedom, focusing instead on the ideas of violence and succumbing to the outside power, as signalled by her use of the words “завладевать” [take possession] and “издеваться” [torture/torment]. She also raises the degree of the narrator’s despair at discovering her decline into meaninglessness—the raw, emotional language describing the transformation of familiar words into absurdity (“дурацкие бредовые речи” [moronic raving speeches]), while being more colloquial than the original phrase, conveys the character’s heightened emotional state. Borovikova’s narrator sounds harsher and less stable than Munro’s or Zerning’s; however, it is exactly the translator’s emphasis on the protagonist’s volatile state between sense and senselessness that brings to centre stage an analogy between the daughter and her mother who is destined to undergo a similar—but permanent—transformation.

As the narrator’s insecure, in-between state evolves into an obsession with violent fantasies of hurting her sister—fueled by her realization of her own vulnerability—her feeling of losing control intensifies, resulting in an inner struggle that feels threatening and very real:



“Something was taking hold of me, and it was my business, my hope, to fight it off. I had the sense to do that, but only barely, as it seemed. Whatever it was was trying to tell me to do things, not exactly for any reason but just to see if such acts were possible” (“Night” 276). The German translation of this passage concentrates on the opposition between the narrator’s conscious reasoning and unconscious, violent urges that she perceives as an irresistible external force. The translator contrasts the protagonist’s logical and responsible thinking, accentuated by her use of “meine Aufgabe” [my task/purpose] and “ich war so vernünftig” [I was so sensible], with the seductive power of her dangerous fantasies, which, as the character wants to believe, are imposed on her from the outside, “whispered into her ear” (“einzuflüstern”): “Etwas ergriff von mir Besitz, und es war meine Aufgabe, meine Hoffnung, es abzuwehren. Ich war so vernünftig, das zu tun, aber ohne, dass es mir ganz gelang. Was immer es war, es versuchte mir einzuflüstern, Dinge zu tun, nicht aus einem bestimmten Grund, sondern einfach, um zu sehen, ob solche Taten möglich waren.” [Something took possession of me, and it was my task/purpose, my hope, to fight it off. I was so sensible to do it, but without quite succeeding at it. Whatever it was, it was trying to whisper into my ear to make me do things, not for any specific reason, but just to see if such actions were possible] (“Nacht” 321). Borovikova, in turn, emphasizes dramatic tension of the narrator’s experience and her desperate clinging to sanity by highlighting resistance as her “only hope”: “Что-то овладевало мной, и моей задачей и единственной моей надеждой было сопротивление этому чему-то. У меня хватило ума – хотя и едва-едва – сообразить, что надо сопротивляться. Это ‘оно,’ чем бы оно ни было, толкало меня на разные поступки – без причины, просто чтобы узнать, можно ли это сделать.” [Something possessed me, and my task and my only hope was to resist that something. I was smart enough—although barely—to realize that I had to resist it. That ‘it,’ whatever it was,

pushed me to do various things—without any reason, just to find out if that could be done] (“Ночь” 277). Moreover, when the narrator goes on to describe her obsession as “something like an utterly cold deep thought that was hardly an urging, more of a contemplation” (“Night” 277), the Russian translator’s expressive imagery transforms Munro’s simple epithets (“cold” and “deep”) into more complex metaphors that further dehumanize and mystify the character’s dream-like visions: “[М]ною завладевало что-то лежащее в глубинах, холодное как лед – не то чтобы тяга, скорее созерцаемая мысль.” [Something lying in the deep, cold as ice, took possession of me—not quite like an urging, rather a contemplated thought] (“Ночь” 277). The resulting additions serve to bring the heroine’s split personality to the forefront.

Therefore, as both translators construct their versions of the narrator’s story and personality, the Russian text portrays the main character in a more expressive and ruthless manner, accentuating her inner tensions and exploring the darker, Gothic undertones of her adolescent experiences. At the same time, Zerning remains more reserved, maintaining the protagonist’s likability even as she engages with the character’s dangerous obsessions and the details of her emotional alienation from her family.

The reasons behind the narrator’s responses to the body-related issues and her difficulties in opening up to her parents become clearer at the end of the story. As the narrator remembers her momentous night-time conversation with her father, she off-handedly acknowledges that he—the same person who helped her get over her violent fixations—was also responsible for the most routine and methodical acts of violence in her life, administered as a physical punishment for being “too smart”:

Those strappings, then, would have stayed in his mind, if they stayed at all, as no more than the necessary and adequate curbing of a mouthy child's imagining that she could rule the roost.

[...] [I]ndeed you heard that often in those times, with the smartness figuring as an obnoxious imp that had to have the sass beaten out of him. Otherwise there was the risk of him growing up thinking he was smart. Or her, as the case might be. ("Night" 284)

Although it is stated that this kind of discipline was applied to any child, male or female, the use of the pronoun "she" and the ending of the passage suggest a special connection between punishable "smartness" and femininity. Thus, the narrator's memories of gendered vulnerability and violated bodily autonomy are presented as distinctly female experiences. However, Zerning's translation to some extent obscures this connection:

Diese Züchtigungen wären ihm also, wenn überhaupt, nur als etwas im Gedächtnis geblieben, das notwendig und angemessen war, um ein vorlautes Kind zu bändigen, das sich einbildete, Herr im Haus spielen zu können.

[...] [D]as hörte man zu jener Zeit häufig, wobei diese freche Altklugheit als lästiger Kobold galt, der ausgeprügelt werden musste. Denn sonst bestand die Gefahr, dass er erwachsen wurde und sich weiter für besonders schlau hielt. Oder eben sie.

[These punishments would stay in his memory, if they ever did, only as something that was necessary and appropriate to tame a cheeky child who imagined being able to play the master in the house.

[...] One heard that often in those times, where this brazen precocity was regarded as a bothersome kobold/evil sprite that had to be beaten out. Because otherwise there was the

danger that he would grow up and still think of himself as especially cunning. Or even she]. (“Nacht” 329–30)

Here, the translator’s reference to “Herr im Haus” [master of the house], combined with the use of the neuter noun “das Kind” [child] and the masculine “Kobold” [evil sprite] effectively erase any mention of femininity. The pronoun “she” first appears only at the very end of the paragraph. Borovikova follows a similar pattern using the masculine nouns “ребенок” [child] and “чертенок” [little devil]—however, at the end she reinforces Munro’s focus on particularly female experiences by adding the last sentence with an unambiguously gendered adjective:

Таким образом, если он вообще помнил эти порки, то лишь как необходимый и соответствующий случаю метод объяснить обнаглевшему ребенку, что он в семье не главный.

[...] “Слишком умный” ребенок был зловредным чертенком, из которого эту зловредность полагалось немедленно выбить. А то, чего доброго, он так и вырастет в уверенности, что он самый умный. Или она. Самая умная.

[So, if he ever remembered these beatings, then only as a necessary and appropriate method to explain to the brazen child that he was not the main one in the family.

[...] A child that was “too smart” was a malicious little devil, which had to have that maliciousness beaten out immediately. Otherwise, he might grow up feeling certain that he was the smartest. Or she. The smartest (*feminine form*)]. (“Ночь” 284)

Overall, it can be argued that in the second instalment of “Finale,” Zerning remains more neutral and sympathetic towards both the narrator and her mother, somewhat smoothing over their opposition and the themes of silence, violence, and miscommunication. Borovikova, on the other hand, chooses to dramatize and intensify the implied conflicts, heightening the

protagonist's emotional tension and accentuating Munro's focus on female bodily experiences and vulnerability.

### *III. "Voices"*

After taking a thematic detour in "Night," in "Voices" the cycle returns to the theme of a failing mother-daughter relationship that is closely linked with the motif of acceptance/non-acceptance of (non)-conforming femininity. In this story, the portrayal of the narrator's mother centres on her ambition to become accepted by the wealthier and more educated town society, which makes her an outsider in her own social circle:

She had risen from her farm girl's life to become a schoolteacher, but this was not enough, it had not given her the position she would have liked, or the friends she would have liked to have in town. She was living in the wrong place and had not enough money, but she was not equipped anyway. [...] She was affronted by the sight of a woman smoking. I think people found her pushy and overly grammatical. ("Voices" 287)

This description, while acknowledging the mother's determination and achievement in overcoming the limitations of her gender and class, also points out her own social prejudice and unwillingness to show sympathy and acceptance to other women.

In the Russian version, Borovikova gives the mother's aspirations a slightly ironic treatment, as she specifies her desire to "mix in society" [вращаться в свете] and highlights the idea of mutual non-acceptance by emphasizing both other people's dislike of the mother and her own reaction to what she considers unacceptable behaviour:

Она поднялась от деревенской девушки до учительницы, но этого было недостаточно — это не дало ей ни желанного положения в обществе, ни городских друзей. Она жила в неправильном месте, и у нее было слишком мало денег, но даже и без этого она не смогла бы вращаться в свете. [...] Ее возмущал вид курящей женщины. Я думаю, что людей отталкивала ее чрезмерная напористость и ее чересчур книжная речь.

[She rose from a country girl to a schoolteacher, but this was not enough—it did not give her the desirable social position or town friends. She lived in the wrong place and had too little money, but even without all that she would not be able to mix in society. [...] She was outraged at the sight of a smoking woman. I think people were put off by her excessive pushiness and too bookish way of speaking]. (“Голоса” 286–87)

Here, the translator intensifies negative reactions by using stronger, more emotionally charged verbs as compared to the original (“возмущал” [was outraged] vs. “was affronted” and “отталкивала” [were put off] vs. “found”); at the same time, she exaggerates the mother’s unpleasant qualities, portraying her in an unsympathetic light and thus shifting the focus of attention to the daughter’s feelings of frustration and resentment.

In comparison, Zerning’s description in the German version uses less negative language, even omitting the narrator’s comment about the mother’s unnaturally grammatical manner of speech:

Sie war von ihrem Leben als Farmerstochter aufgestiegen und Lehrerin geworden, aber das war nicht genug, es hatte ihr nicht die gesellschaftliche Stellung oder die Freundinnen gebracht, die sie gerne in der Stadt gehabt hätte. Sie wohnte am falschen Platz und hatte

nicht genug Geld, und sie eignete sich ohnehin nicht dafür. [...] Sie war entsetzt, wenn sie eine Frau rauchen sah. Ich glaube, die Leute fanden sie streberhaft und gespreizt. [She rose from her life as a farmer's daughter and became a teacher, but this was not enough, it did not bring her the social position or the friends that she would like to have in the town. She lived in the wrong place and did not have enough money, and she was not fit for that anyway. [...] She was appalled when she saw a woman smoke. I believe people found her ambitious and stilted]. ("Stimmen" 332)

The translator's choice of the adjectives "streberhaft" [ambitious] and "gespreizt" [stilted] to describe the mother's disagreeable qualities reflects Zerning's overall project of softening the opposition between the mother and daughter—while still conveying the narrator's negativity, these epithets are less specific and emotionally loaded than the original's "pushy" and "overly grammatical." As a result, the narrator comes across as slightly less judgmental and more sympathetic towards her mother.

In Munro's text, the daughter's compassion rises to the surface when she thinks back to the difficult life her mother had to live—but even then the narrator eventually returns to the idea of mutual disappointment and non-acceptance: "I don't mean that she spent all her time wishing that things weren't as they were. Like any other woman with washtubs to haul into the kitchen and no running water [...] she was kept busy. She couldn't even devote as much time as she otherwise would have done in being disappointed with me" ("Voices" 287). The Russian translation highlights this short-lived outburst of sympathy by using specifications that emphasize the mother's hard work and contrast it with the idea of a different, more leisurely lifestyle: "Я не хочу сказать, что она просиживала целые дни, мечтая, чтобы жизнь была

не такой, какой она была на самом деле. У матери не было времени сидеть и бездельничать – как и у любой женщины, которая живет в доме без водопровода [...]. Мать даже свое разочарование во мне не успевала выразить как следует.” [I do not want to say that she spent whole days sitting and dreaming for her life to be different than it was in reality. Mother had no time to sit and lounge about—like any woman living in a house without running water [...]. Mother did not even have time to express her disappointment in me properly] (“Голоса” 287). Borovikova uses strong, expressive language to accentuate women’s obligations and hard work; nevertheless, her choice of vocabulary referring to the mother indicates a certain degree of disapproval, even as she describes the leisure activities the mother did not have a chance to engage in (“просиживала целые дни” [spent whole days sitting] and “бездельничать” [lounge about]). The translator also intensifies the mother’s feeling of disappointment, as the focus is shifted to “expressing” rather than experiencing dissatisfaction, and the addition of “properly” puts an ironic twist on the daughter’s account of the situation.

Zerning, however, paints a more neutral picture where the narrator concentrates on a few known details from her mother’s everyday life and makes only subtle assumptions about how the latter must have felt: “Ich meine damit nicht, dass sie ihre ganze Zeit damit zubachte, sich zu wünschen, alles wäre anders. Wie jede andere Frau mit Waschubern, die in die Küche geschleppt werden mussten, ohne fließendes Wasser [...] hatte sie viel zu tun. Sie hatte nicht einmal genug Zeit dafür, wie sie sonst gehabt hätte, von mir enttäuscht zu sein.” [I do not mean that she spent all her time wishing that everything were different. Like every other woman with washtubs that had to be dragged into the kitchen, without running water [...] she had a lot to do. She did not even have enough time, that she otherwise would have, for being disappointed in me] (“Stimmen” 332). The use of the conditional (Konjunktiv) verbal forms in this passage (“wäre”



and “hätte”) lends an undertone of uncertainty to the narrator’s memories and speculations, making the daughter sound more distant and less emotionally invested in her mother’s story. The last sentence, with its emphasis on the negation, both asserts and softens the mother’s disappointment by focusing on her feelings alone and avoiding any reference to her purposeful actions (such as “devote time” in the original). The translator’s choices, therefore, consistently minimize the tension between the two female figures as compared to the original text or to the Russian-language version.

The theme of mutual non-acceptance, nevertheless, features prominently in both translations—particularly as the narrator’s failure to connect with her mother starts to shape her perceptions of herself and of femininity in general. Those perceptions come to light in the opposition between the mother and Mrs. Hutchison but become especially obvious during the narrator’s encounter with Peggy and the young Air Force men comforting her: “For a long time I remembered the voices [...] It was certainly true that I had never in my life heard a man speak in that way, treating a woman as if she was so fine and valued a creature that whatever it was, whatever unkindness had come near her, was somehow a breach of a law, a sin” (“Voices” 296). Deeply affected by this scene, the protagonist instinctively self-identifies with the vulnerable girl, revealing her own internalized gendered experiences of rejection and mistreatment.

The Russian translation puts a distinct emphasis on this revelation and on the narrator’s astonishment at her discovery: “Мне очень долго помнились их голоса [...] Я совершенно точно никогда в жизни не слышала, чтобы мужчина так разговаривал, чтобы с женщиной обращались как с утонченным и ценным созданием и любую грозящую ей невзгodu воспринимали как преступление против закона, грех.” [I remembered their voices for a very

long time [...] I am absolutely certain that never in my life had I heard a man talk like that, treat a woman as an exquisite and valued creature and see any misfortune threatening her as a violation of the law, a sin” (“Голоса” 295–96). Here, the translator strengthens the character’s statement by adding “совершенно точно” [absolutely certain], while equating a woman more clearly with an “exquisite and valued creature” [утонченное и ценимое создание] through the omission of “as if.” Moreover, the idea of mistreatment is supported by the introduction of a threat, as “unkindness” is replaced with “грозящая ей невзгода” [a misfortune threatening her]. Overall, Borovikova’s approach in this passage highlights the habitual injustice towards women and the narrator’s amazement at discovering a new side of femininity—all the more significant because such an unusual kindness is shown to an “undeserving” object, a non-conforming woman contemptuously rejected by the narrator’s own mother.

The German version, in turn, centres on the contrast between the narrator’s revelation about femininity and her previous experience of mistreatment, as the translator further elevates the epithets describing women and juxtaposes this new, positive perception with an act of routine injustice: “Lange Zeit erinnerte ich mich an die Stimmen [...] Jedenfalls hatte ich noch nie in meinem Leben einen Mann so reden hören, in einem Ton, als sei die Frau ein so edles und hochangesehenes Geschöpf, dass jedwede Kränkung irgendwie ein Verstoß gegen das Gesetz, eine Sünde war.” [For a long time I remembered the voices [...] Anyway, I had never in my life heard a man talk like that, in such a tone as if the woman were such a noble and highly respected creature that any insult was somehow a violation of the law, a sin] (“Stimmen” 342–43). Zerning highlights the idea of respect (or even deference) towards women as a new experience for the narrator with her use of the adjective “hochangesehenes” [highly respected/revered], which she further opposes to “Kränkung” [insult]. This choice of vocabulary, indicating a distinctly more

negative treatment than the original's "unkindness," reflects the translator's decision to bring the opposition to the extreme in order to draw attention to the theme of femininity and (non)-acceptance. Both translations, therefore, pursue similar goals in approaching this passage.

Accordingly, the German and Russian versions use the same amplifying strategy to describe the men's behaviour towards Peggy, which the narrator interprets as chivalrous courting: "So it wasn't Peggy I was interested in, not her tears, her crumpled looks. She reminded me too much of myself. It was her comforters I marvelled at. How they seemed to bow down and declare themselves in front of her" ("Voices" 297). Zerning develops this metaphor into an expression of submission to a woman's power, although her use of the verb "schienen" [seemed] suggests that the narrator's perception of the situation may be only an illusion—especially considering how weak and vulnerable the object of the men's attention is: "Es war also nicht Peggy, die mich interessierte, nicht ihre Tränen, ihr ramponiertes Aussehen. Sie erinnerte mich zu sehr an mich selbst. Es waren ihre Tröster, über die ich staunte. Wie sie ihr Füßen zu liegen schienen." [So it wasn't Peggy that interested me, not her tears, her tattered appearance. She reminded me too much of myself. It was her comforters that I marvelled at. How they seemed to lie at her feet] ("Stimmen" 343). In the Russian version, Borovikova takes the courting metaphor even further, elevating it to the level of devotion with an almost religious undertone: "Поэтому меня не интересовала Пегги – ее слезы, ее помятый вид. Она была слишком похожа на меня. Я дивилась ее утешителям. Как они словно склонялись перед ней, произнося обеты служения." [That is why I was not interested in Peggy—her tears, her crumpled appearance. She was too much like me. I admired her comforters. It was as though they bowed before her, pronouncing the vows of service] ("Голоса" 296). In both cases, the translators choose to focus on the motif of female power and vulnerability—and in both versions

the emphasis on the men's perceived deference ironically reveals the real meaning of the unfolding scene and the depth of Peggy's humiliation and helplessness.

However, at the very end of the story the narrator flips the situation, as she transforms Peggy's moment of weakness into the source of her own personal empowerment, relying on the memory of the men's comforting voices for reassurance: "And, for I don't know how long, I thought of them. In the cold dark of my bedroom they rocked me to sleep. I could turn them on, summon up their faces and their voices—but oh, far more, their voices were now directed to myself and not to any unnecessary third party. Their hands blessed my own skinny thighs and their voices assured me that I, too, was worthy of love" ("Voices" 298). For Borovikova, the focus of attention here is on memory and its healing properties, which help the protagonist compensate for the lack of a warm and loving relationship with her mother:

Потом я долго помнила этих молодых людей – не могу сказать, как долго. В холодной темноте спальни они укачивали меня, помогая заснуть. Я умела включать их по желанию, вызывать в памяти их лица и голоса – и много больше, теперь их голоса были обращены ко мне, а не к какому-то ненужному посреднику. Их руки благословляли мои собственные тощие бедра, их голоса убеждали меня, что я тоже достойна любви.

[Then I remembered these young men for a long time—I cannot say how long. In the cold darkness of my bedroom they rocked me, helping me fall asleep. I could turn them on at will, summon from memory their faces and voices—and much more, now their voices were directed to me and not some unnecessary intermediary. Their hands blessed

my own skinny thighs, their voices assured me that I am also worthy of love]. (“Голоса” 297)

The translator’s repeated references to memory (“помнила” [remembered], “в памяти” [from memory]) stress the significance of this experience for the narrator, at the same time creating a contrast between her actual recollections and her imaginary fantasies of adoration and acceptance. The use of the verb “благословляли” (matching the original’s “blessed”) takes these fantasies to a spiritual level, giving them an almost religious meaning in the protagonist’s eyes. Zerning, however, shifts the narrator’s perceptions towards physicality, accentuating the awakening of the young girl’s sensuality by transforming the verb “blessed” into “streichelten” [caressed/stroked]: “Ihre Hände streichelten jetzt meine mageren Schenkel, und ihre Stimmen versicherten mir, dass auch ich liebenswert war.” [Their hands now caressed my skinny thighs, and their voices assured me that I was also worthy of love] (“Stimmen” 344).

As can be deduced from these translating strategies and transformations, both translators centre their versions on the narrator’s negotiation of her own femininity along the lines of acceptance or rejection, where the distinction between the two is largely defined by her perception of her mother. However, while the Russian translation consistently highlights the mother’s notions of “acceptable” and “non-acceptable” modes of femininity, which significantly affect the main character’s self-image, the German text somewhat mitigates the narrator’s implied (self)-negativity and the intensity of her affective responses, portraying the problematic mother-daughter relationship in a more sympathetic light.

#### *IV. “Dear Life”*

The theme of acceptance and rejection resurfaces again in “Dear Life,” the last instalment of the short-story cycle, as the narrator continues to explore her mother’s story—this time through the lens of the latter’s disease—in an attempt to reconcile herself with the memory of their imperfect relationship and to rediscover the lost mother-daughter bond. The two translation projects diverge in their treatment of both central figures and their relationship trajectory from opposition to symbolic reunification, offering varying interpretations to the narrative’s resolution.

At the beginning of the story, Munro connects the narrator’s mother with the idea of non-acceptance, focusing both on the latter’s failure to fit in and her own inability to accept difference in others. The mother’s independence and ambition are, therefore, presented as a polarizing and alienating factor: “She had managed to get herself off a farm on the bare Canadian Shield—a farm much more hopeless than the one my father came from—and she had become a schoolteacher, who spoke in such a way that her own relatives were not easy around her. She might have got the idea that after such striving she would be welcomed anywhere” (“Dear Life” 304). In the Russian version, Borovikova stresses the mixture of compassion, admiration, and irony, which reflects the narrator’s conflicted feelings about her mother’s struggles: “Ей удалось сбежать с фермы на голых каменистых просторах Канадского щита – с фермы гораздо более унылой и безнадежной, чем та, где вырос мой отец. Она стала учительницей и говорила теперь так, что ее собственной родне было не по себе в ее обществе. Возможно, мать решила, что после таких усилий ее всюду примут с распростертыми объятьями.” [She managed to escape from the farm on the bare rocky expanse of the Canadian shield—from the farm much more gloomy and hopeless than the one where my father grew up. She became a

schoolteacher and now spoke in such a way that her own relatives felt ill at ease in her company. Probably, mother decided that after such efforts she would be received anywhere with a welcoming embrace] (“Дороже самой жизни” 303). Here, Borovikova supplements the description of the farm’s location with the adjectives “каменистый” [rocky] and “унылый” [gloomy] to emphasize the harsh conditions and adverse attitudes the narrator’s mother had to deal with from a very young age. These additions justify the translator’s use of “escape”—a stronger verb indicating a higher degree of purpose and determination than the original “get oneself off.” The respective translating choices suggest that the protagonist sympathizes with her mother’s experiences. The end of the same passage, however, reveals the narrator’s irony about the mother’s social aspirations, as the translation overstates her hopes of acceptance with the idiom “принимать с распростертыми объятьями” [receive with a welcoming embrace]. In the German text, Zerning achieves a similar effect with the idiomatic phrase “sich in den Kopf setzen” [to get something into one’s head], which highlights the daughter’s annoyance at her mother’s stubborn convictions: “Sie konnte sich in den Kopf gesetzt haben, dass sie nach solch erfolgreichem Bemühen überall willkommen sein würde.” [She might have gotten it into her head that she, after this successful effort, would be welcomed anywhere] (“Liebes Leben” 351). Still, Zerning adds a positive note even to this expression of disapproval: the introduction of the adjective “erfolgreich” [successful] here serves as a reminder of the mother’s actual achievements and the narrator’s appreciation of them, fitting in with the translator’s overall project of constructing a more positive dynamic between the two central characters.

In line with the same project, the German translation consistently uses the narrator’s irony to shift the narrative towards showcasing the two women’s solidarity rather than their silent opposition. When contemplating the mother’s rejection by her community and her family, the

narrator sarcastically remarks: “Her fault was that she did not look like what she was. She did not look as if she had been brought up on a farm, or as if she intended to remain on one” (“Dear Life” 312). Zerning, in translating this passage, amplifies the daughter’s sarcasm by switching from “fault” to a “Fehler” [mistake/defect]: “Ihr Fehler war, dass sie nicht aussah wie das, was sie war. Sie sah nicht aus, als wäre sie auf einer Farm aufgewachsen oder als hätte sie vor, auf einer zu bleiben.” [Her mistake/defect was that she did not look as something that she was. She did not look as if she had grown up on a farm or as if she had planned to stay on one] (“Liebes Leben” 360). This transformation emphasizes the narrator’s implied disagreement with the expressed judgment and her compassion towards her mother, indirectly bringing the two characters closer to each other. The Russian translation, on the other hand, brings to the foreground the motif of social rejection, referring to the mother’s class status as a key attribute determining what is expected of her and how she is treated by others: “Мать была виновата тем, что выглядела не как ей положено по статусу. Она не выглядела как человек, выросший на ферме и намеренный там же оставаться.” [Mother was guilty of not looking the way she was supposed to considering her status. She did not look like a person that grew up on a farm and intended to stay there] (“Дороже самой жизни” 311). The interpretation of “fault” as “виновата” [guilty] also frames the character’s non-acceptance as a result of her own refusal to conform. Accordingly, the social aspect of the mother’s isolation and of the two central figures’ mutual misunderstanding acquires a special meaning in the Russian text.

The theme of gendered social expectations and the respective division of space—which largely underlies the mother-daughter conflict in the story—is another important focus for both translators. In “Dear Life,” Munro explicitly contrasts her protagonist’s perceptions of her father’s exciting “outside” world on the farm and her mother’s mundane living inside the house,



with its multiple chores and obligations. These perceptions actively clash with what is stereotypically expected of a young girl in a rural community, and the daughter's rebellion against the female role predetermined for her meets with both parents' violent response as an attempt to "fix" her transgressions and bring her under control: "In those days, I had to help my father sometimes [...] I enjoyed this. The importance of the work, the frequent solitude were just what I liked. Later on, I had to stay in the house to help my mother, and I was full of resentment and quarrelsome remarks [...]. But that phase also passed, and in my teens I became manageable, even jolly" ("Dear Life" 305–06). The Russian translation primarily emphasizes the narrator's initial rebellious outbursts and her eventual transformation, as she settles into a more acceptable model of feminine behaviour:

В те дни мне иногда приходилось помогать отцу [...]. Это занятие мне нравилось. Важность работы и возможность уединиться были мне приятны. Позже меня заставляли сидеть дома и помогать матери – я на это злилась и все время грубила [...]. Но эта фаза прошла – в подростковом возрасте я стала управляемой, даже приобрела покладистый и ровный характер.

[In those days sometimes I had to help my father [...]. I liked doing that. The importance of the work and the chance to be alone were pleasant. Later they forced me to stay at home and help mother—that made me angry and I was rude all the time [...]. But that phase passed—in my teens I became manageable and even acquired a compliant and easy disposition]. ("Дороже самой жизни" 304–05)

The translator's addition about "покладистый и ровный характер" [compliant and easy disposition] accentuates the character's transition to the state of manageability and compliance with the gendered expectations that she was initially challenging; at the same time, the omission

of “jolly” is a deliberate choice indicating that the narrator is less than happy with the outcome and conceals her continuing dissatisfaction. For Borovikova, the focus is not on the protagonist’s new-found agreeability but rather on the power and control she has been subjected to—and the use of the verb “заставляли” [forced] (instead of the more neutral “I had to”) underlines the violent nature of her transformation.

Conversely, Zerning minimizes the implied confrontation between the narrator and her parents—in the German translation, the centre of attention shifts away from the parents’ controlling authority, and the daughter’s protests seem less justified:

In jener Zeit musste ich meinem Vater manchmal helfen [...]. Ich machte das gerne. Die Wichtigkeit der Arbeit, das einsame Tun, so etwas gefiel mir. Später musste ich im Haus bleiben und meiner Mutter helfen, was bei mir Widerwillen und trotzigte Bemerkungen auslöste [...]. Aber diese Phase ging auch vorbei, und nach meinem zehnten Geburtstag wurde ich verträglicher und sogar lustig.

[At that time I had to help my father [...]. I did that willingly. The importance of work, the lonely activity, I liked something like that. Later I had to stay in the house and help my mother, which provoked my aversion and defiant remarks [...]. But this phase also passed, and after my tenth birthday I became more tolerable and even jolly]. (“Liebes Leben” 353)

The German translation follows the original in repeating the verb “musste” [had to]—there is no explicit mention of the narrator’s parents forcing her to change her occupations, and the transition is rather presented as a necessity caused by a natural course of events. Moreover, the replacement of “resentment” with “Widerwille” [aversion/reluctance] and “quarrelsome

remarks” with “trotzige Bemerkungen” [defiant remarks] mitigates the intensity of the daughter’s resistance, making it seem less emotional and intentional. The transformation of “manageable” into “verträglich” [tolerable] also serves to obscure the extent of pressure and control experienced by the main character.

Although the narrator does not dwell too much on the violent aspects of her relationship with her parents, some of her passing comments make it clear how routine parental pressures and physical punishments were in the family, and how deeply they affected the dynamic between mother and daughter, eventually resulting in mutual dislike and disappointment. Thus, recalling her first attempts at poetry writing, the narrator places them “around the time that I was being so intolerant of my mother, and my father was whaling the unkindness out of me” (“Dear Life” 317). Zerning, again, attempts to lessen the daughter’s negativity towards her mother by changing “intolerant” into “renitent” [disobedient] (which to some extent places the blame on the daughter herself) and by eliminating “unkindness” altogether: “als ich so renitent gegen meine Mutter war und mein Vater mich nach Strich und Faden versohlte” [when I was so disobedient towards my mother and my father beat me thoroughly/properly (*literally*: “after stitch and thread”)] (“Liebes Leben” 366). Borovikova makes the opposite choice by highlighting the narrator’s negative feelings with her repetition of “нетерпимо”/“нетерпимость” [intolerantly/intolerance]: “в том же возрасте, когда [я] так нетерпимо относилась к матери, а отец делал все, чтобы выколотить из меня эту нетерпимость” [at the same age when I treated mother so intolerantly, and father did everything to beat that intolerance out of me] (“Дороже самой жизни” 316). These differing interpretations mean that the German text portrays its protagonist as a more distant, ironic, and self-reflective narrator, whereas in the

Russian version she seems more impulsive and still strongly emotionally invested in the past events she is describing.

At the end of the story, the narrator, contemplating her conflicted feelings in light of her mother's debilitating illness and eventual passing, attempts to overcome her accumulated negativity towards her mother and to find closure through redefining their complex relationship. To get over the long history of the mother's and daughter's mutual non-acceptance, the protagonist uncovers a memory of their perfect unity and unconditional love in her mother's account of Mrs. Netterfield's visitation—an episode where the mother protected her daughter, then a baby, from an apparent stranger.

To reconstruct the memory, the main character, who has no recollection of the event, tries to adopt her mother's perspective, ultimately questioning it as incomplete and unreliable:

Did my mother think of any weapon [...]?

Did it cross her mind that the old woman might just be paying a neighborly visit? I don't think so. [...]

It is possible that my mother prayed, but never mentioned it.

She knew that there was an investigation of the blankets in the carriage, because just before she pulled down the kitchen-door blind, she saw one of those blankets being flung out to land on the ground. ("Dear Life" 313–14)

While Munro's text in this key scene focuses primarily on the uncertainty and unknowability of the characters' experiences, both translators choose to support the mother's version of the story, amplifying her perception of Mrs. Netterfield as an immediate danger. Thus, Borovikova rewrites the episode in a way that leaves no doubt about the old woman's hostile intentions:

[В]спомнила ли она [мать] об оружии? [...]

Приходило ли ей в голову, что старуха, может быть, просто зашла по-соседски? Не думаю. [...]

Может быть, мать молилась, но мне она об этом не сказала.

Она знала, что пришедшая роется в коляске: за долю секунды до того, как мать опустила жалюзи на кухонной двери, она увидела, как взлетело и упало на землю отброшенное одеяльце.

[Did she [mother] remember a weapon? [...]

Did it occur to her that perhaps the old woman just stopped by in a neighbourly way? I don't think so. [...]

Maybe she was praying, but she never told me that.

She knew that the visitor was rummaging in the carriage: a fraction of a second before mother pulled down the blinds on the kitchen door, she saw the tossed-aside blanket fly up and land on the ground]. (“Дороже самой жизни” 312)

The translator's choice to replace an impersonal grammatical structure obscuring both the acting subject and the nature of the action (“there was an investigation of the blankets”) with a more straightforward description of the situation (“пришедшая роется в коляске” [the visitor was rummaging in the carriage]) explicitly reveals the old woman as a threat to the child, justifying the mother's interpretation of the episode and her subsequent affective response. The German translator makes a similar decision, directly naming the intruder and specifying her threatening behaviour:

Dachte meine Mutter an irgendeine Waffe? [...]

Kam ihr der Gedanke, dass die alte Frau womöglich nur einen nachbarlichen Besuch abstatten wollte? Ich glaube nicht. [...]

Möglich, dass meine Mutter betete, aber sie erwähnte es nie.

Sie wusste, dass Mrs. Netterfield die Decken im Kinderwagen durchwühlte, denn unmittelbar, bevor sie das Rouleau an der Küchentür herunterzog, sah sie eine dieser Decken durch die Luft fliegen und auf dem Boden landen.

[Did my mother think of any weapon? [...]

Did a thought occur to her that maybe the old woman only wanted to pay a neighbourly visit? I don't think so. [...]

It is possible that she was praying, but she never mentioned that.

She knew that Mrs. Netterfield ransacked the blankets in the baby carriage because immediately before she pulled down the blinds on the kitchen door, she saw one of those blankets fly through the air and land on the ground]. ("Liebes Leben" 361–62)

Both transformations, by clarifying the circumstances that are only implied by the original, heighten the mother's perception of danger and her fear for her daughter, thus elevating the importance of this particular episode both in the mother's and in the narrator's eyes and adding dramatic tension to the moment.

As the narrator continues to explore the story through her mother's recollections and her own fragmented knowledge, she gradually discovers the uncanny resemblances between her mother's and Mrs. Netterfield's life trajectories. As a result, the protagonist's perception of the latter shifts from fear to compassion, as the menacing villain is revealed to be another maternal figure—a demented old woman clinging to the last remaining memories of her home and motherhood. This revelation makes the narrator question everything she knows about Mrs.

Netterfield, leading her to a brief but significant moment of epiphany: “And who was it who came and took her away, as my mother said? Perhaps it was her daughter [...] Perhaps that daughter, grown and distant, was the one she was looking for in the baby carriage. Just after my mother had grabbed me up, as she said, for dear life” (“Dear Life” 318). The analogy with another troubled mother-daughter relationship that the main character discovers in Mrs. Netterfield’s story helps her realize the significance of her mother’s phrase “for dear life” as a marker of complete motherly devotion and unconditional acceptance she has always been seeking from her mother. This phrase, which gave the title both to the story itself and to the entire collection, becomes symbolic of the loving bond between mother and daughter that persevered despite all later conflicts and mutual rejections. Going back to the very beginning, to this initial moment of all-encompassing love and uncomplicated unity, the daughter finally finds the strength to reassess the entire relationship and to accept the memory of her mother, with all her flaws and contradictions.

The translators find different ways to accentuate the importance of this pivotal moment. Zerning uses the expression “ums liebe Leben” [for dear life] as a direct equivalent of the key phrase, while adding the verb “rennen” [run] to intensify the dramatic effect: “Und wer kam und brachte sie fort, wie meine Mutter sagte? Vielleicht war es ihre Tochter [...] Vielleicht war es diese Tochter, groß geworden und weit fort, nach der sie in dem Kinderwagen gesucht hatte. Direkt nachdem meine Mutter mich gepackt hatte und, wie sie sagte, ums liebe Leben gerannt war.” [And who came and took her away, as my mother said? Maybe it was her daughter [...] Maybe it was this daughter, grown up and far away, that she was looking for in the baby carriage. Right after my mother grabbed me and, as she said, ran for dear life] (“Liebes Leben” 367). Borovikova, however, takes this scene to the extreme with her additions detailing the

mother's feelings and reactions: "А кто же "приехал и увез ее", по словам моей матери? Может, дочь? [...] Может, именно эту дочь, уже выросшую, отдалившуюся, искала старуха в детской коляске. Всего через несколько секунд после того, как мать выхватила меня оттуда, цепляясь за меня с такой силой, по ее словам, словно я была ей дороже самой жизни." [So who "came and took her away," as my mother said? Maybe her daughter? Maybe it was this daughter, already grown up, estranged, that the old woman was looking for in the baby carriage. Just several seconds after my mother snatched me out of there, clinging to me with such force, as though, as she said, I was dearer to her than life itself] ("Дороже самой жизни" 316). In this version, "for dear life" is rendered as "дороже самой жизни" [dearer than life itself]—the change that is also reflected in the Russian title of the short story and the entire collection—and this translating decision marks the point of the maximum emotional intensity in the text, as the mother's words are transformed into a powerful and open declaration of love.

The translators' treatment of this defining moment in the story determines their wider approaches to the entire history of the two central characters and their relationship. For Zerning, with her overall project aiming at a more positive representation of the mother-daughter dynamic (especially considering the autobiographical nature of "Finale"), the revelation of motherly love becomes an inevitable resolution of the two women's long-standing opposition, allowing the narrator to find forgiveness and to make her peace with her mother's imperfections. However, in Borovikova's version, with its focus on the protagonist's raw and bitter account of a flawed but inescapable bond, the daughter's discovery of a devoted mother in her past comes as a shattering epiphany that leaves her guilt-ridden, even as she is trying to navigate her path towards reconciliation.



### *Conclusion*

These close readings and comparative textual analyses of the selected source and target texts—corresponding to the “confrontation” stage of Berman’s translation criticism model—reveal the (re)construction of female identities and experiences as the main point of departure for each of the examined translations. Based on the in-depth linguistic and stylistic study of the respective “signifying zones” and combined with the overview of the translators’ positions and cultural horizons, the comparative framework shows that, for each of the four translators, the representation of femininity becomes the key underlying factor determining the nature of their wider translation projects.

Zerning’s German translations can be characterized by her utmost sensitivity to the centrality of a female perspective in Munro’s work; her purposefully “invisible” but invariably respectful textual intrusions address uncertainty and unknowability of female experience. At the same time, Zerning is concerned with elevating literary qualities of Munro’s texts and with positive representation of female narrators in the author’s autobiographic stories, leading to a certain degree of softening and stylistic refinement as a central translating strategy. In her treatment of the original material, the German translator relies significantly on Munro’s popularity and recognition among the German-speaking reading audiences that prioritize the writer’s women-centredness over her Canadianness or regionalism.

Stepanov’s interpretations, conversely, obscure or downplay Munro’s use of the feminine narrative lens, attempting to appropriate her writing into the (largely androcentric) master narrative tradition of classical Russian literature. On the other hand, both Kononenko and Borovikova resolve the gender representation dilemma by refusing to treat femininity in a

stereotypical way, choosing to focus instead on the complexity, contrariness, and vulnerability of Munro's female characters. In both cases, it can be argued that the translators resist the initially established perception of the Canadian writer in their linguistic and cultural contexts. Kononenko rewrites Munro's stories from the perspective of an activist feminist translator and with her present-day Ukrainian readership in mind, positioning her project (in an almost political act) as a counterbalance to Stepanov's domesticating attempt. As Munro's translator, she focuses as much on establishing a Ukrainian-Canadian cultural connection as on dismantling the dominance of Russian translational imperialism in the Ukrainian cultural space. Borovikova's approach, in turn, opposes the one-sided representation of Munro as an essentially "Chekhovian" author notable exclusively for her indebtedness to the Russian literary influences; her translation focuses on reproducing the writer's individual style and cultural difference rather than imposed similarities. The contrast between the two Russian-language translating projects reflects the difference between the two translators' backgrounds and personal priorities; but it may also be indicative of a gradually shifting translational norm in their respective cultural horizon.

Overall, it is important to note that all the examined translated versions of Munro's stories bear the signs of a consistent and purposeful textual intervention (albeit to various degrees) that allows each translator's personal agency to shine through and transform the text—along with the idea of its author—in unique ways. Moreover, some of the target texts, apart from revealing themselves as the sites of author-translator collaboration, demonstrate characteristics of retranslations or resistant translations for reasons outside of the scope of the direct source-target relationship. The nature of such confrontations, which are largely predetermined by the wider cultural context of textual production, consumption, and reception, raises important questions

about the impact of the translator's visibility and personal vs. collective nature of creative translation practices.

## **Chapter 4. Translators' Visibility in Collaborative Textual Production: Paratextual Analysis**

The view of (literary) translation as collaboration has long become prevalent in translation studies, where the concept of a collaborative translating effort is typically interpreted as the merging of the author's and translator's creative voices in the process of target text production. However, real-life translation and publication dynamics may be more complex and involve more contributors than initially appears, resulting in additional constraints—or potential avenues—for the translator's autonomy and agency. Luise von Flotow touches on these complexities as she argues that “No translation is the production of only the translator [...] publishers and editors are involved; so are patrons willing to pay for the work, and finally, even book designers and typesetters who create the final product, and can change a text. Never is a translation the responsibility of only the translator; it is a collaboration” (“Translating Women” 129). This collective aspect may be interpreted as an attribute of any textual production but becomes particularly relevant for the translating activity, which is already seen as essentially derivative. Emmerich further accentuates the collaborative structure of authority by adding a dimension of textual dissemination where “authors, translators, rights holders, agents, editors, publishers, scholars, and so on [...] negotiate and further the textual instability” and where the translators find themselves “in collaboration, or contestation, with other individuals” (13). Finally, Berman's cultural transfer model requires that the production and dissemination of translations should be considered in conjunction with their critical reception in the target culture: “This transfer does not only occur with translation alone. It also occurs through criticism and many forms of textual (or even nontextual) transformations that are not strictly translation

related. *All of them taken together constitute the transfer [la translation] of an oeuvre*” (*Towards a Translation Criticism* 7). In this paradigm, the visibility of the translators through the paratextual framing of the target texts—including text-adjacent and extratextual elements as well as variously authored metatexts—becomes an important signifier of the translator’s place in the structure of shared narrative authority, which can provide significant insights into the production, dissemination, and reception of the translated works.

While Chapter 3 focused exclusively on the translators’ projects as manifested in the final translated texts, this chapter will factor in the considerations of visibility, collaboration, and reception through the study of paratext. Proceeding from the concept of collaborative authorship and collective textual authority as part of the cultural transfer process, I will examine the available paratexts surrounding the target-language publications of *Too Much Happiness* and *Dear Life* to explore how visible markers of the translators’ presence (or lack thereof) reflect their translating projects, delineate the limits of their discursive authority, and impact (or, in turn, are affected by) the author’s reception in the target culture. Starting with preliminary remarks about Genette’s paratext theory and its applicability for translation research, I will move on to the paratextual analysis of the case studies, bringing together peritextual elements of the respective publications, the translator-authored materials, the Translators’ Questionnaires collected specifically for this study, their published interviews, and the critical reviews addressing the translated texts to contextualize each translator’s project in light of their visible status in the collaborative/hierarchical structure of authority, limits in exercising their creative agency, and the outcomes of the respective cultural transfer processes.

### ***Translation and Paratext***

The idea of paratext as the space for the translator's self-expression goes back to its initial conceptualization by Gérard Genette, who defined paratextual accompaniment as "the means by which a text makes a book of itself and proposes itself as such to its readers" ("Introduction" 261). As a threshold between the inside and the outside of a certain text, the paratext constitutes "a zone not just of transition, but of *transaction*; the privileged site of a pragmatics and of a strategy, of an action on the public" (Genette, "Introduction" 261). Both of these definitions share an underlying notion of intentionality, and particularly the intention of influence: any paratextual element, be it a preface, a title, a biographical entry, a footnote, an endnote, an interview, etc., functions as a textual (or extratextual) commentary on the text it frames and exists for the purpose of presenting it from an author's or publisher's perspective, advancing the kind of reception and interpretation that such parties would consider appropriate or preferable.

For this very reason, the paratext can be extremely unstable and highly variable depending, among other things, on the cultural, temporal, and spatial context of a publication. Genette argues that "[the] ways and means of the paratext are modified unceasingly according to periods, cultures, genres, authors, works, editions of the same work, with sometimes considerable differences of pressure" ("Introduction" 262). Moreover, he points out the illocutionary potential of such changeable paratextual elements consisting in their ability to impose the authorial or editorial reading on the text's audience or to make particular assertions or decisions about the text itself ("Introduction" 268). These aspects of paratext mirror such characteristics of translation as its non-definitiveness, contextuality, and performativity; thus,

both translations and paratextual additions have the power to influence and even actively shape the reader's understanding or perception.

From this perspective, translator-authored or translation-centred paratext may be seen as an especially effective tool of the translator's self-positioning. In Genette's typology, which classifies paratexts based on a number of spatial, temporal, substantial, pragmatic, and functional variables, the translator's paratextual message would be categorized as allographic, i.e. written by a third person who was authorized either by the author or by the publisher to do so ("Introduction" 266). This definition would apply to both spatial categories of (translator-authored) paratext: peritext (i.e. paratextual elements located in the same volume as the text itself) and epitext (i.e. elements located outside of the same volume and therefore at a greater distance from the text) (Genette, *Paratexts* 4-5). The very existence of such allographic paratexts points to the situation of shared authority and responsibility, with the translator engaged as an active and authoritative contributor to the final published product.

Yet, such a proposition, however valid it may be, may be found at variance with Genette's conceptualization of the link between paratext and authorial intention. Genette insists that paratextual material is always a "bearer of an authorial commentary either more or less legitimated by the author" ("Introduction" 261) and is meant to "ensure for the text a destiny consistent with the author's purpose" (Genette, *Paratexts* 407), as well as "a better reception of the text and a more pertinent reading—more pertinent, naturally, in the eyes of the author and his allies" ("Introduction" 262). This argument may prove problematic for the paratext theory, as it is based on the assumption that the author's intention can be definitively established; in addition, to equate a translator with an author's "ally" for all intents and purposes means oversimplifying a

complex dynamic of collaboration and rewriting in the translation process. Such a narrow definition undermines the possibility of the translator's resistance theorized by feminist scholars (see Simon, Lotbinière-Harwood, and Flotow, in *Translation and Gender*). Furthermore, this interpretation limits the definition of paratext itself, overlooking some of its important functions and potentialities—most importantly, its ability to foster and enable dialogue in the text-adjacent/extratextual spaces.

Kathryn Batchelor offers another criticism of Genette's categorization of translation itself as a practice that has "paratextual relevance" (Genette, *Paratexts* 405). Batchelor contends that Genette's implied interpretation of translation as a paratextual commentary on the original is problematic, as it is grounded in the conventional concept of translation as subordinated to the primary source text (Batchelor 20). An alternative view that proceeds from some of Genette's own case studies is that translations can be seen as texts with their own paratext because they essentially constitute "later" versions of the originals and thus are "synonymous" with them (Batchelor 21). As a result, Batchelor concludes that Genette's typology of paratext, while not completely negating the decision-making powers of translators, "nevertheless adopts a conservative view of the changes wrought through translation, viewing translations as synonymous with later editions of an original text and involving no change to authorship. Needless to say, such a view runs counter to the understanding of translation that currently holds sway in the discipline of translation studies" (Batchelor 22). Therefore, despite its substantial scholarly significance, Genette's paratext theory cannot be considered adequate in the context of translation analysis without expanding to include the updated notion of translation as a creative meaning-building process and the translator's autonomous (albeit partial) authority over the final translation product.



Batchelor claims that translation scholars' engagement with the concept of paratext has largely overlooked or deliberately glossed over Genette's insistence on the alignment between the paratextual message and authorial intention (Batchelor 28). In this respect, Şehnaz Tahir-Gürçağlar's position on the subject presents a rare exception as a direct attempt to address the problematic nature of Genette's reasoning for translation research and to challenge the posited connection between the two concepts. In "What Texts Don't Tell: The Uses of Paratexts in Translation Research," Tahir-Gürçağlar asserts that interpreting translation as an extension of the author's intent and a sort of paratextual commentary on the original "will serve translation research little, firstly because it leads to a de-problematization of a number of issues that have surfaced in translation studies in recent years and, secondly, because it offers a restricted view of translation" (46). The reasons for such a criticism are that the view of translation as a form of paratext reinforces the implied hierarchy between the source and target texts, while ignoring the considerations of cultural impact and personal agency; at the same time, it cannot be reconciled with the postcolonial studies' approach to translation as a vehicle of ideological influence; and finally, it fails to consider "how paratexts may enter into a dialogical relationship with their main text and alter it" (Tahir-Gürçağlar 46). Although Tahir-Gürçağlar does not fully explore how such a dialogic relationship may shift the dynamics of authorship and authority in the translation and publication process, her argument successfully modifies the definition of paratext through outlining its actual functions and its potential significance for translation research.

Sharon Deane-Cox, in *Retranslation: Translation, Literature and Reinterpretation*, continues the same line of reasoning, deliberately disrupting the idea of translation as paratext and attempting to expand the functionality of paratext analysis in translation studies. Going back to Genette's initial concepts, she criticizes Tahir-Gürçağlar for overlooking an important

condition placed by Genette on the paratextual relevance of translation—namely, that the relationship between the two has to be “predicated specifically on a correspondence between authorized or self-translation and paratext” (Deane-Cox 28). What follows is that “[o]nce any process of rewriting occurs beyond authorized or self-translation, the parallels between paratext and translation necessarily collapse” (Deane-Cox 28). Where the translation is not directly legitimized by the author’s approval or involvement—the scenario which appears to be fairly common, particularly in the case of later translations or retranslations—the requirement of its alignment with the authorial intention can no longer be met, and thus Genette’s narrow understanding of paratext ceases to be applicable.

In response, Deane-Cox suggests the concept of “translatorial paratext” (29) as an attempt to broaden and refine Genette’s paradigm to account for the translator’s presence and agency. This additional category is supposed to help “to discern the extent to which the translator plays an active role in the cultural mediation of their (re)translation and to identify whether or not they have engaged, positively or negatively, with versions of the text which have gone before” (Deane-Cox 29). The introduction of translatorial paratext as a theoretical category means that translators are awarded a more distinct position in the structure of authority; Deane-Cox’s argument may be extended to assert that translators can (and should) be viewed as the authors of the paratextual message in their own right, as well as co-authors of the text itself—regardless of the original author’s legitimization or even knowledge.

This broader perspective on the nature and functions of paratext offers better compatibility with the translation studies’ current views of authorship and translators’ agency and is generally more useful in the context of translation-related research. However, it is by no

means an entirely new proposition: to be fair, translatorial paratext (though it may not have been termed as such) has long been a substantial part of the feminist translation scholarship. Simon, Lotbinière-Harwood, and Flotow have all written about paratext as the space for making the translators' presence known and/or their dissenting voices heard (see Simon, Lotbinière-Harwood, and Flotow's *Translation and Gender*). While their respective positions on paratext were formulated rather as practical strategies of feminist translation informing their theoretical approaches—meaning that feminist scholars' engagement with translators' visibility did not specifically address the origins and complexities of Genette's paratext theory—they consistently treated the translator's right to appropriate paratextual spaces as self-evident.

In this respect, feminist scholars' insistence on the usefulness of paratext for the translators' visibility and self-expression mirrors Lawrence Venuti's "call for action" for the translators to "revise the individualistic concept of authorship that has banished translation to the fringes of British and American cultures, not only by developing innovative translation practices in which their work becomes visible to readers, but also by presenting incisive rationales for these practices in prefaces and essays, lectures and interviews" (Venuti 273). Such "innovative practices" and "incisive rationales" constitute a substantial part of feminist scholarship on translation as the way for the translators to assert their identity as the author's collaborators and to claim their own responsibility for the text. However, the same scholarship demonstrates that the extent to which a translator's personal responsibility or collaborative approach would be deemed acceptable and openly disclosed is largely dependent on the target cultural context. Flotow argues that "In Canada, the feminist translator's self is reinforced by other paratextual items such as translator/author photographs and translator/author bio-bibliographies, which in no way make a difference between the importance of the author's and translator's respective

contributions or positions” (*Translation and Gender* 36). But, even though this may be the case in the context of Canadian feminist translations, it still has to be interpreted as a rare exception rather than a tendency, since “paratextual equality” can hardly be achieved in the cultural traditions viewing the translator as inferior and subordinate—or in the settings where translators are not persistently demanding such an equal status.

Continuing the same logic of the translators’ empowerment through paratext, Valerie Henitiuk, in “Prefacing Gender: Framing Sei Shônagon for a Western Audience, 1875–2006,” highlights the connection between paratext and gender as one of the central aspects in the translators’ decision-making on how to “frame” the author’s figure. Primarily interested in female authors’ representation through the translators’ paratext, Henitiuk notes that “paratextual materials provide evidence of the central role gender continues to play in the framing of a woman writer by her (predominantly male) translators” (240). Further, she argues that in the case of canonical women-authored texts, such as Sei Shônagon’s *The Pillow Book*, “awareness of and engagement with gender, particularly as evidenced by translators’ prefaces, has been and remains closely bound up with the reception” (240). Paratext is therefore revealed as a powerful tool of reader influence that may have distinctly gendered implications for the target text reception; whether the translator may be willing (or allowed) to exercise such influence, the presence or absence of paratextual framing is indicative of the intended degree of the translator’s (in)visibility in the respective project.

Henitiuk’s case studies demonstrate that full invisibility is rarely possible or attainable for a literary translator and that the translator-authored paratext can function “implicitly if not explicitly to reveal their [the translators’] aims and objectives as well as their biases” (257).

Accordingly, it follows that paratext can operate separately not only from the author's original intentions, but also from the translators' own objectives regarding their presentation of the translated text, as even purposeful shaping of the readers' perceptions may sometimes have unintended consequences. On the one hand, this argument once again points to the limitations of Genette's approach and strengthens the feminist scholars' position on the practical use of translatorial paratext. However, it becomes increasingly clear that the translators choosing to appropriate paratextual spaces for their own self-expression, while exercising their personal agency, put themselves in a vulnerable position by opening their decision-making process to scrutiny and criticism.

As a result, paratext may be seen as an extratextual space that both enables and curtails the translator's discursive authority. Mona Baker, in *Translation and Conflict*, offers a similar argument in her discussion of the translators' "frame space"—the site of pre-determined expectations that outlines the boundaries of acceptability for any translating actions or decisions: "translators and interpreters act within a frame space that encourages others to scrutinize every aspect of their linguistic and—in the case of interpreters—non-linguistic behaviour. Their frame space also circumscribes the limits of their discursive agency, although as with any type of constraint it is almost always possible to evade or challenge these limits" (110). For Baker, paratextual intrusions obviously fall within the category of the translators' "frame space" and their sphere of control—regardless of any link with the author's intentions or approvals: "Introductions, prefaces, footnotes, glossaries and—to a lesser extent, since translators do not normally control these—cover design and blurbs are among the numerous sites available to translators for repositioning themselves, their readers and other participants in time and space" (133). At the same time, these intrusions, while starting from the site of a "normal" and socially

acceptable translator's role, offer an effective way to shift and reframe the narrative for the target audience—and to subvert the normative expectations of the translators' transparency and neutrality.

The resulting changes in textual reception and the degree of power that translators are able to exert through such paratextual interventions are not always straightforward, being highly dependent on multiple contextual factors—including the translators' own goals and motivations. Be these motivations political, cultural, or economic—and whether final creative decisions are left to the translators or imposed on them—the translators' visibility and (self-)representation in their translating projects are invariably “linked with questions of power dynamics in intercultural relations” (Batchelor 34). For Baker—as for the Canadian feminist scholars—the translator's ideological self-positioning vs. the author or the source text takes centre stage in their discussion of translator-authored paratext or other textual and extratextual translating strategies (Baker 105). Yet, visibility does not necessarily equal power: even where a translator chooses to take a stance, their position can still be subsumed under the existing structures of authority or superseded by other, less visible but more authoritative agents of the publication process.

Barbara Pausch, in her doctoral dissertation, provides insightful examples that also reveal the inner workings of ideology and cultural politics in the translation and publication process. She explores paratext as a way to shape the source culture's image in the eyes of target language readers by means of deliberate peritextual framing of the translated narratives—in this case, Canadian short stories translated into German in both the GDR and FRG before and after German Reunification (255–57). Pausch's case studies demonstrate significant shifts in the presentation of Canadian authors and Canadian culture to German readers, depending on the

spatial and temporal context of the publication—particularly, the dominant political ideologies and cultural discourses of the respective time and place of textual production. Remarkably, the researcher considers relevant paratextual materials regardless of their authorship: out of nine paratextual elements included in the study corpus, only two were authored by the translators (also acting as editors), with the rest provided by the editors of the respective anthologies (Pausch 14–16). This observation shows that, even though translators may be visible as the authors of the translated textual versions (with their names habitually appearing under the author’s own), their input is rarely prioritized as far as the actual narrative framing from an ideological or cultural standpoint is concerned. Priority is given to other contributors who occupy a higher position in the publication hierarchy and can effectively represent and broadcast the publisher’s opinions and motivations; translators are more likely to enjoy a higher status when they are also involved in a second, more authoritative role (in this case, editors). On the other hand, Pausch’s study shows that paratext’s ability to frame the narrative and shape readers’ perceptions does not hinge entirely on its authorship—in the case of a translated publication, any type of available paratext will contribute to the reader’s understanding of translation as such, and is therefore meaningful for the translation analysis.

Another factor to consider is that translators are often marginalized in the decision-making process regarding paratext-related decisions for economic reasons. As Siri Nergaard argues in “The (In)visible Publisher in Translations,” any publisher’s primary motivation is to sell their books; accordingly, “[s]ingle translation choices may [...] be conditioned by the economics of the market: the publisher may consider one translation strategy more suited for selling than another [...], or other paratextual elements considered as less reader friendly and therefore difficult to sell” (183–84). It has become the norm in the publishing industry that the

publisher makes all final decisions regarding the acceptability of translations or particular translating strategies. The translator's involvement is typically limited to their engagement with the text alone—in many cases, the translators have no say in the process after the completion of proofreading and no authority over such creative decisions as cover design or even the selection of titles (Nergaard 187). As the prevalence of marketing-related considerations may further prevent the translators from exercising their agency through paratext, the absence or presence of any paratextual elements relating to the translation becomes particularly significant in analyzing the complex dynamics of the translation and publication process.

As we have seen before, translatorial paratext is invaluable, as it provides a direct glimpse into the translator's personal agenda or creative process, indicating how they may have informed the final translated product; however, the absence of such paratextual accompaniment may be just as telling. I argue that any type of paratext accompanying a translated publication—regardless of its authorship, type, length, or location—can play a role in shaping the readers' reception of the text and, as such, should be treated as relevant for the translation analysis. Both translator-centred and translation-related paratexts can provide unique insights into the contextual circumstances of the translating process, its intended or realized outcomes, as well as its collective nature. Exploration of the translators' agency requires understanding how, where, and by what parties such agency may be constrained or negotiated; paratext, with its focus on influence and intentionality, offers a way of addressing these issues, which makes it an indispensable part of the suggested translation analysis methodology—but only if the available paratextual framing can be treated as a result of conscious authoritative decisions approved by the most powerful parties in the process, rather than a direct reflection of any contributor's unmediated personal position.



With this in mind, I will base my paratextual analysis of the selected Munro publications on all types of available paratexts as products of collective decision-making, while prioritizing any translator-authored, translation-centred, or translation-related elements. In particular, I will consider any relevant peritextual materials accompanying the translated short stories as a reflection of the translator's role and visibility in the translating process—and of the publisher's goals in framing the translated narratives for the target-language audiences. Further, I will be looking at the available epitexts that may be deemed pertinent for an in-depth understanding of the respective translating process, its realized outcome, and the resulting reception (including any translator-authored commentaries, publisher's materials, critical reviews, etc.). Finally, where possible, I will present and analyze the translators' first-hand comments collected specifically for this study as a way to verify and support my findings—and to give voice to the translators themselves in reclaiming their narrative authority.

### **I. Stepanov's *Слишком много счастья* (*Too Much Happiness*)**

In terms of collaborative creative decisions and the translator's visibility, *Too Much Happiness*, the first Russian-language publication of a Munro collection, allows significant peritextual presence to the translator but does not demonstrate a cohesive vision of how it wants to present its author's work. Moreover, as the book's paratext shows, the publisher's view of the collection's prospective readers can be interpreted as simplistic and essentializing.

At first glance, the translator's involvement does not seem particularly prominent. The book cover itself has no indication of the translator or the fact that it is a translated text; instead, in addition to the title and the author's name, it contains a note labelling Munro as the winner of the 2013 Nobel Prize in Literature, presumably to appeal to an intellectual reader. The suggestive

image on the cover, however, seems to clash with this intention. It shows the body of a woman floating on her back in the water, with her head flung back, her gaze turned upwards and away from the viewer, and her lips seductively half-open. The image has no obvious connection with any story in the book (unlike the Canadian edition's cover, where a dark figure walking away through the falling snow symbolizes the titular story's protagonist). The photo itself is reminiscent simultaneously of romance novel covers and fashion magazine editorials. Both these visual associations devalue the publisher's claim that the author is an internationally renowned award-winning literary figure. At the same time, this choice of cover art is used to target female readers, specifically assigning Munro as a yet-unknown writer to a distinct market niche of (pseudo)intellectual feminine easy reading.

Neither the flyleaf nor the inside front cover page provides any more information about the author or the translator. The translator's name first appears on the publisher's imprint page, which simply states "Translation from English by Andrei Stepanov" before going on to indicate the publisher, the publication year, and the readers' intended age group (16+). The next page contains a short introductory paragraph, which is meant to present Munro to Russian-language readers; this note checks all the standard boxes, referring to Munro as the short story writer, the Nobel Prize winner, the follower of Chekhov's literary tradition, and an adept explorer of women's psychology. The authorship of this reductive introduction is unclear; however, the same page contains a small print note indicating the translator as the copyright holder for the translated text and the accompanying end notes. In the absence of any other clearly named contributors, the presence of this paratextual element in close proximity to the translator's name adds to the translator's visibility, whether or not this was the intended effect.

Nevertheless, the most important paratextual spaces highlighting the translator's presence and contribution in the Russian-language edition of *Too Much Happiness* are the translator's notes at the end of the book. Following the order of the short stories in the collection, Stepanov provides ample commentary on every single text in the volume. He indicates the American edition of *Too Much Happiness* on which his own translation was based; he refers to the most significant reviews of the collection that appeared in the US, British, and Canadian press following its publication (including the *New York Times Book Review*, *Globe and Mail*, and *Times Literary Supplement* pieces); and finally, he provides full citations for the earliest published versions of every story (see Stepanov, "Translator's Notes"). The number of translator's notes referring to particular stories varies between 3 and 48 entries (in the case of "Too Much Happiness," which the translator obviously finds most interesting). The nature of such comments is also diverse; in most cases, Stepanov provides detailed explanations of the Canadian (or generally Western) realia or cultural facts that he believes may not be familiar to Russian-language readers. While in some cases these decisions may be justifiable—the mentions of U-Haul, La Leche League, or halfway house might require a brief explanatory remark to be understood by the target audience—the need to include many other notes seems questionable. In certain instances, the concepts that Stepanov engages with appear to be self-evident (for example, the Children's Aid Society, the United Church of Canada, or Stockholm University hardly require additional explications); in other cases, their meanings can be understood from the context; and some—like references to Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* or Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, or the traditions of college fraternities/sororities, Thanksgiving celebrations, and Halloween trick-or-treating, to name just a few (see Stepanov, "Translator's Notes")—are so

commonly known that introducing them as new information is excessive and genuinely unnecessary.

Yet the translator goes to great lengths to comment on most proper names, quotes, and both implied and explicit references that come up in Munro's stories throughout the collection. He provides extensive geographical, biographical, and historical facts, explains biblical and literary allusions or scientific details, points out hidden quotations, comments on the choice of words and their connotations, etc. For instance, in the case of "Child's Play," Stepanov outlines the colonial history and shifting meaning of the word "coolie" used in the story and lays out the detailed factual background for every British or Canadian patriotic song referred to in the text (see Stepanov, "Translator's Notes"). In his comments relating to "Too Much Happiness," he offers a substantial amount of biographical and genealogical data concerning every historic figure appearing in the narrative and contextualizes every historical fact or event, including the ones mentioned in passing—with clear prioritization of Russian cultural references (see Stepanov, "Translator's Notes").

Typically, Stepanov's notes limit themselves to offering factual information that he believes his readers will find useful (as evidenced by his own admission in the Translator's Questionnaire—see Appendix 1, p. 322). This commitment to historical and literary detail creates the impression that the translator's goal is to remain completely neutral and impartial while educating his reading audience. However, occasionally his end notes veer into the territory of personal opinion or value judgment, revealing more about the translator's self-positioning. For instance, Stepanov's comment on the song "The Maple Leaf Forever," which is briefly mentioned in "Child's Play," characterizes the song's lyrics as marked by "Anglo-Saxon

chauvinism”; on a different occasion, he sums up Barbara Tuchman’s book *The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World before the War* (discussed in “Free Radicals”) as the depiction of “постепенной деградации Запада, его устремления к мировой войне” [the gradual degradation of the West, its striving for the global war] (see Stepanov, “Translator’s Notes”). Such statements—though they may not be entirely inaccurate—speak rather to the translator’s interpretations of facts than the author’s treatment of her material. Careful comparison reveals that such paratextual criticisms, though few and far between, usually refer—in the most vague and general manner—to the translator’s view of Western culture and are never levelled at the facts pertaining to the Russian history or cultural setting. This finding reinforces the conclusion that the translator is fully affiliated with the dominant narratives of his domestic culture and prioritizes the target side of the cultural exchange; despite seeming objectivity, he is not a neutral participant in the translating process.

It has to be pointed out that Stepanov’s paratextual notes focusing on facts from Russian history and literature are particularly lengthy, detailed, and numerous. Furthermore, this category of end notes demonstrates a significant shift in the translator’s approach: out of the 48 translator’s notes accompanying the collection’s titular story “Too Much Happiness,” at least four do not stop at simply commenting or providing additional information but move on to correcting what Stepanov believes are the author’s factual inaccuracies. In two of those instances, the translator interferes with Munro’s semi-fictional narrative timeline by providing the exact dates and circumstances of Sophia’s and Maxsim’s first meeting and of Sophia’s last university lecture before her fatal illness (see Stepanov, “Translator’s Notes”). The other two significant corrections refer to the contents of Sophia’s and her sister Aniuta’s literary works: Stepanov challenges Munro’s interpretation of storylines in Sophia’s novel *The Nihilist Girl* and

in Aniuta's short story "Dream," offering a more accurate synopsis for each piece (see Stepanov, "Translator's Notes"). Interestingly, in both cases Munro's focus in retelling those meta-fictional plotlines is on the female protagonists' feelings and motivations relating to marriage rather than on the stories themselves, while the translator's corrections take the readers' attention away from the heroines' embedded perspectives and from the importance of implied parallels between Sophia's and Aniuta's writings and their personal lives. Stepanov's interventions assert his expert authority in the area where the author's expertise seems to be lacking—in fact, he justifies his choice by stating that Munro most probably never read either of the mentioned texts (see Appendix 1, p. 320). However, his insistence on factual accuracy detracts from Munro's deliberately ambiguous projection of feminine consciousness and from her project of crossing over between fictional and biographical genres.

The translator's choice to position himself as an expert challenging the author's narrative authority is interesting because it upsets—or rather, reverses—the traditional implicit author-translator hierarchy. It is clear that, at least as regards the titular story and its Russia-centred cultural context, Stepanov (and, by extension, his publisher) sees his role as more of an editor correcting the author's factual errors, which places him above the writer herself in the publication hierarchy. The same could be said about the translator's project of improving the author's style: in his article on thematic parallels between Chekhov and Munro (already quoted in Chapter 3), Stepanov declares that the markers of ambiguity (such as "probably," "seemingly," "may have been," etc.) abundant in Munro's texts have to be at least partially eliminated in the process of translating into Russian to make the target texts legible (Stepanov, "Chekhov's Themes" 86). Although I do not question the translator's authority to make such decisions and to express his agency through similar transformations, it has to be noted that in this

particular case the translator's stepping up into the empowered "editing" role is problematic because it fails to result in a genuine collaborative effort. The reversal of the author's and translator's roles in the hierarchical structure of textual (re)production, rather than undermining or transforming the overall structure of authority, still leaves it intact. The translator may no longer be seen as the inferior imitator of the author's work—in fact, in this framework, the author herself is framed as a poor imitator of the Russian historical reality and literary models—but the implied confrontation between the original and copy still persists without being resolved in a mutually enriching exchange.

Moreover, the translator's use of paratextual notes—while allowing him to exert his agency and assert his creative autonomy—leads to a lack of coherence in the presentation of Munro's stories in the Russian version of *Too Much Happiness*. First, the explanatory tendency of Stepanov's peritexts, with their focus on broadcasting the text-related encyclopedic knowledge to the collection's Russian-language readership, clashes with the deliberate "unspokenness" as an inherent quality of Munro's authorial style. When accompanied by abundant factual commentaries—including multiple corrections—the stories can no longer be read as deliberately ambiguous; instead, their ambiguity comes across as a stylistic fault in translation. Accordingly, the translator's intrusions challenge the author's command of her own narrative structure and material, undercutting the effectiveness of her creative strategies in the eyes of the target-language readers.

In addition to stylistic incoherence, Stepanov's excessive reliance on the end notes as a tool for communicating contextually relevant information has unintended cultural implications. It results in othering the source culture through overexplaining and assuming the readers' complete

ignorance—even where sufficient background knowledge can be reasonably assumed; but it also overlooks the very context of textual consumption, forgetting that present-day readers have access to any culturally specific information literally at their fingertips. Ultimately, the content and amount of the translator-authored paratexts in *Too Much Happiness* appear simultaneously overwhelming and alienating. As a result, the translator's approach to the paratextual framing of the target texts undermines its own implicit acculturating function by patronizing and infantilizing its readers.

This effect can be further aggravated by the fact that, judging by the publisher's selection of other paratextual elements, the publication's intended audience is supposed to be predominantly—if not exclusively—composed of women. As shown above, the cover design targets female readers by invoking distinctly gendered visual associations that present Munro's work as a form of uncomplicated “chick lit.” The same impression of easy reading for pleasure—guilty pleasure, even—is strengthened by the presence of advertising materials that directly follow the translator's notes. Those materials include cover art images and synopses meant to promote the publisher's other translated editions, ranging from Richard Yates's *Eleven Kinds of Loneliness* to a collection of short stories by the Hollywood star Tom Hanks. However, most of the featured publications represent such popular genres as romance novels, mystery/crime novels, and thrillers, which are not typically associated with intellectual literature. Such paratextual accompaniment reflects on Munro's texts themselves in a certain way, contributing to their framing as an easy entertaining read intended for (predominantly female) mass readers—an interpretation that, to some extent, comes into conflict with the educational motivations of Stepanov's translator's notes and with the academically-minded nature of some of his comments. The overall impression is that the publisher and the translator are undecided whether to promote



Munro's fiction to the intellectual/scholarly readership or to target a wider demographic of (female) mass readers; at the same time, the publisher is trying to take advantage of the author's new-found fame as a Nobel Prize winner to maximize the sales of other, unrelated translated works. The resulting presentation of Munro (who until the publication of *Too Much Happiness* remained virtually unknown to the Russian-language audience) is incoherent at best.

The same incoherence marks the translator's extratextual engagement with Munro's writing. In many respects, Stepanov is distinctly ambivalent about Munro as an author and his own translating project, both in his academic article and in his Translator's Questionnaire. His comments on Munro range from praising her nuanced literary style and psychological acumen and reducing her to a second-rate position by claiming that "she is a housewife who writes about housewives and for housewives" (Appendix 1, p. 317). In his scholarly analysis, he concentrates on the close parallels and affinities between Munro and Chekhov—which is in itself the greatest compliment from Stepanov's perspective—however, the same argument frames Munro's fiction as secondary and derivative. Such inconsistencies further spill over into the translator's position regarding his project: as a translator, Stepanov does not wish to be visible via a preface or a biographical note, believing it to be excessive and unnecessary (Appendix 1, p. 322). Yet, he claims ample paratextual space to educate his readers and to correct the author—on multiple occasions—from a position of authority. In terms of his own translating strategies, Stepanov posits that he is guided by the requirements of accuracy and fidelity to the original, at the same time admitting that he freely made changes to achieve the desired stylistic or pragmatic effects in the target text, such as good literary style (largely modelled on Chekhov's own writing) and natural-sounding Russian (Appendix 1, p. 319). The result creates a confusing impression: it is a beautifully phrased, meticulously crafted, and carefully edited Russian target text that to a

significant extent erases any roughness, irregularity, or incompleteness pertaining to Munro's style, taking away from the pointed unspokenness that makes her authorial voice distinctly different.

The inconsistencies observed in the translator's strategies and in the publisher's presentation of Munro are closely intertwined with her reception in the Russian-language cultural context, which was polarizing from the moment the writer's name first hit the headlines in connection with her 2013 Nobel Prize announcement. It appears that Munro's gender, her preferred genre, and her nationality were the key points of contention for the Russian literary critics, as was the ubiquitous Chekhov analogy. Aleksandr Livergant, the chief editor of the reputable literary journal *Inostrannaya Literatura*, in his comment to the news agency *RIA Novosti* called Munro "крепкий, но небольшой писатель" [a solid but minor writer], suggesting that any comparison with Chekhov is baseless and preposterous: "Чехов тут совершенно не при чем. У Манро, конечно, совсем другой, несравненно низкий уровень. Но она крепкая западная писательница, хороший психолог, отличный стилист" [Chekhov has absolutely nothing to do with it. Munro is obviously at a completely different, incomparably inferior level. But she is a solid Western writer, a good psychologist, and an excellent stylist] ("Livergant: The Nobel Laureate"). In his other interview, also given shortly after the Nobel Prize news (in October 2013), Livergant went on to elaborate on his critical position:

Ее хоть и сравнивают с Чеховым, но это, конечно, сравнение смешное. Такой крепкий середняк. [...] Это психологическая проза: как правило, описания далекой канадской провинции, внутренние семейные проблемы, проблемы брака (как правило, несчастливое), разводов, сложных отношений [...]. У нее нет, насколько

я знаю, ни одного романа, у нее нет путевых заметок, нет дневников. Она вот пишет всю жизнь такие вот небольшие повести, более или менее одинакового психологического рисунка, немного с феминистическим уклоном. Может быть, вот этот феминизм как-то сыграл свою роль.

[Although she is compared to Chekhov, the comparison is certainly ludicrous. Such solid mediocrity. [...] This is psychological prose: as a rule, descriptions of a faraway Canadian province, family problems, marriages (usually unhappy ones), divorces, complicated relationships [...] As far as I know, she does not have a single novel, no travel notes, no diaries. All her life she has been writing these small novelettes, with more or less the same psychological pattern and a slightly feminist touch. Perhaps this feminism played a role somehow]. (Livergant in Sharyi and Volchek)

Livergant's comment encapsulates all the key objections that Russian critics and literary scholars raised against Munro's recognition as the Nobel Prize winner: the "feminine" nature of her prose dealing with what they believe to be trivial (and clearly gendered) themes; her focus on Canadian reality, which, in the critics' eyes, makes her writing irrelevant for Russian readers; her chosen genre that is seen as less prestigious or award-deserving than a novel; and, finally, her relationship with feminism, which is simultaneously oversimplified, alienated, and reduced to the "trendy" political agenda of the day.

Similar positions were also voiced by other critics and reviewers: Dmitrii Kosyrev interpreted Munro's win as the Nobel Committee's "анти-провокация" [anti-provocation] deliberately lacking in individuality, celebrating the mundane, and glorifying the "старые, добрые, уютные ценности провинциального, почти сельского англо-саксонского мира" [old, good, cozy values of the provincial, almost rural Anglo-Saxon world] (Kosyrev). The

unnamed reviewer of the *Prochtenie* literary web portal even went so far as to assume (albeit half-jokingly) that the prize was awarded to mark the author's "долголетие" [old age] rather than real achievement (see "Hateship, Friendship, Courtship"), while Pavel Matveev questioned whether Munro received it for being a woman and a feminist (Matveev). These and many similar comments were openly condescending to Munro on a personal as well as a professional level (with every single reviewer invariably branding the writer as an "elderly housewife"), pointedly sexist in their interpretation of feminism or women-centred literature, and consistent in presenting Canada as the global cultural periphery vs. Russia as the undisputed centre.

These initial responses set the scene for all subsequent Munro translations and further critical engagement with the author's works in the Russian-language cultural space. Moreover, such judgmental and borderline aggressive comments turned out to be alarmingly persistent—as evidenced by Nikolai Anastas'ev's 2019 article, in which he offhandedly referred to Munro as a mediocre writer, claiming that she never reached the high standard set by the regionalist literature of the American South (see Anastas'ev). Positive reactions were and remain few and far between—and, curiously, many of them present similar arguments and echo the same sentiments voiced in the harshest critical statements. In fact, one of the first favourable critical comments came from within Canada itself—from Mikhail Iossel, a Montreal-based Russian-born writer and literary scholar who labelled Munro a "литературны[й] интуитивны[й] талант[т]" [intuitive literary talent] and a Canadian "национальны[й] геро[й]" [national hero]—without, however, failing to invoke her contribution to the Chekhov literary tradition or her "housewife" status (see Iossel in Sharyi and Volchek).

The same typical labels come up in the positive reviews offered by Anatolii Ukhandeev and Dmitrii Babil'skii, although they were written six years apart: the former (published in October 2013) focuses on the “first impressions” of Munro’s writing and concludes that she is a “мастер” [master], while lamenting the absence of available Russian translations and deferring to Livergant as the most reputable authority on the writer’s work (see Ukhandeev). At the same time, the latter (produced in May 2019) mentions the “overabundance” of translations and aims to subvert the ubiquitous Chekhov analogy, drawing attention to the existentialism, postmodernism, and the problematics of gender in Munro’s fiction:

Необъяснимая притягательность Манро, кажется, и состоит в том, что по форме она писатель новой формации и не писатель даже, но писательница, однако по силе и содержанию—вполне традиционный и даже классицистический человек, сочиняющий одну бесконечную книгу. [...] Хотя если думать о том, как же все-таки устроена нынешняя современность, понимаешь, что вот так она и устроена—постоянным ускользанием от определений и фиксации, противоборством в искусстве “женского” и “мужского”, нарастанием ускоренности и одновременного становления всяческих переходных периодов.

[It seems that the inexplicable appeal of Munro consists in the fact that in terms of form she is a writer of the new formation, and not even an author but an authoress; however, in terms of power and content she is a rather traditional and even classicist personality writing a single never-ending book [...] Although, if you think about present-day modernity, you realize that this is how it operates—through continuous evasion of any definitions or fixations, artistic opposition of the “feminine” and the “masculine,” ever-

increasing acceleration and simultaneous establishment of various transitional phases.

(Bavil'skii, "All of Munro")

Bavil'skii's focus on the significance of gender and femininity in Munro's writing, combined with his largely favourable perspective on her work, indicates a certain shift in the Russian critics' engagement with her as a literary phenomenon—which to some extent can be attributed to the existence of multiple translations that were not available in 2013. However, the critic's very acknowledgement of the writer's centredness on female experience and identity serves the purpose of assigning Munro to a specific niche of women's writing as an "authoress" (implicitly perceived as less than an "author"). Accordingly, Bavil'skii rejects the analogy with Chekhov, instead suggesting Liudmila Ulitskaia as Munro's possible counterpart in the Russian literary scene and offering a tentative opinion that the Canadian writer's literary success may be as problematic as that of another female Nobel Prize winner, Svetlana Alexievich (see Bavil'skii, "All of Munro"). Despite a seeming difference in this later and better-informed critical approach to Munro's work, it is marked by the same ambivalence, condescension, and cultural bias as the majority of earlier Russian-language critical reactions.

The analysis of these critical responses shows that even the most favourable of them consistently perpetuate the same clichés based on Munro's gender, genre, and nationality and attempt to construct the author's reception in the Russian-language cultural context in terms of her correspondence (or relation) to the prominent Russian literary figures or available domestic cultural models. Any critical comments where a reviewer avoids such a Russia-centred position or refuses to rely on ready-made labels in their characterization of the writer's work—such as Galina Iuzefovich's unapologetic praise of Munro as the world's greatest living short-story

author (see Iuzefovich)—are extremely rare and can only be seen as outliers<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, it appears that the trite analogies and descriptions that characterize virtually all Russian-language critical engagement with Munro's writing have also affected the work of her first Russian translator. Thus, Stepanov's insistence on referring to Munro as a "housewife" in his Translator's Questionnaire (Appendix 1, p. 317) is aligned with the critics' tendency to present the writer almost exclusively in terms of her gender, age, and occupation. Similarly, his reliance on the Chekhov analogy in defining and recreating Munro's authorial style is marked by the critics' reluctance to consider the writer's work on her own terms, outside of her ties to the Russian literary tradition.

At the same time, Stepanov's project and translating position, while showing signs of outside influence, made an impact on further critical reception of Munro's writing in the Russian-speaking world. Whereas the initial critical reactions were not backed up by any available translated texts and thus relied on the knowledge and understanding of English-language originals by a small circle of literary critics, the publication of *Too Much Happiness* in Stepanov's translation became a milestone that opened up a new level of access to and familiarity with Munro's texts in Russian—and, by doing so, modelled the treatment and presentation of the writer's work for all subsequent translators and reviewers alike. The collection was met with only a few critical reviews, which for the most part failed to mention the translator and completely overlooked the fact of translation itself. As Stepanov stated in his Translator's Questionnaire, this is a usual practice with translated publications (Appendix 1, p.

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<sup>11</sup> In fact, Iuzefovich's statement regarding Munro was subjected to harsh and aggressive criticism in which a fellow literary scholar attacked both the writer and the critic herself (see Anastas'ev).

323). Still, it was the reviewers' responses to the translator's choices and decisions that resulted either in reinforcing or shifting public perceptions established by earlier critical statements.

In this respect, Liza Birger's review of *Too Much Happiness* seems particularly interesting. While refraining from discussing translation as such, her piece touches on some important aspects of the text selection, publication, and reception process. Birger admits that *Too Much Happiness* is not the most typical Munro collection and questions its choice for the first-ever Russian translation of the author's collected works; she conjectures that the publisher who chose the text "не очень представлял, кто такая эта Манро и как ее читать" [did not have a very clear idea who Munro is and how to read her] (see Birger). Further, the reviewer acknowledges the existing biases, stating that "в отечественных высоких литературных кругах Манро, ставшую за сорок лет карьеры абсолютной звездой англоязычного мира, игнорировали вполне сознательно" [our higher literary circles were quite consciously ignoring Munro, who over forty years of her career had become an absolute star of the English-speaking world] (see Birger). Finally, she posits that both these factors have set up the Russian reader to approach Munro's fiction with a pre-conditioned expectation of disappointment, in part due to the widespread notion that the Nobel Committee's decisions are more often than not motivated by political or ideological considerations rather than purely literary merits of the considered authors (see Birger). Birger's approach both recognizes and criticizes the issues with the presentation of Munro to Russian-speaking readers that were created by the critics' initial resistance to the writer's work and personality; the reviewer even goes as far as to imply that institutional sexism has been a big part of such resistance (see Birger). However, in the same breath Birger rushes to reassure her readers that the critics' initial perception of Munro as a feminist writer may have been exaggerated: "И какая она феминистка, если из текста в текст



самым главным для ее героинь остаются дети и мужчины” [And how can she be a feminist, if, from one text to another, her heroines’ most important priorities are children and men] (see Birger). This remark reveals a certain confusion (if not misinformation) about what can or cannot be considered feminist literature; yet it also indicates Birger’s understanding that branding a writer “feminist” in the Russian-language publishing market would be off-putting to the mass readers and would result in declining book sales. Birger’s statement, therefore, may be interpreted as a signal to the author’s potential reading audience that—despite appearances—Munro is “harmless.”

In part, this shift in perception may have been motivated by the publisher’s desire to boost the sales of a yet-unknown to the domestic readers but already controversial writer. But, to a much greater extent, it came as a direct consequence of the translator’s own decisions—particularly, Stepanov’s tendency to de-centre the female perspective and lean into the male viewpoint in his translations. As shown in Chapter 3 (and as he himself confirms in his Translator’s Questionnaire, see Appendix 1), Stepanov’s translating position is less than sensitive to the centrality of women’s experiences in Munro’s work, and his textual intrusions tend to downplay or overwrite any potential of a feminist interpretation, reflecting the translator’s (and his culture’s) biases. This transformation results in a significantly different reading experience—one that may be more acceptable for the publisher and more palatable for the target-language readers (including literary critics) and thus leads to a certain softening in the overall critical response to the author’s work.

The fact that this change was brought about by the translation itself is illustrated by Ol’ga Fedosiuk’s review of *Слишком много счастья*, *Дороже самой жизни*, and *Беглянка* (the first

three collections of Munro stories to appear in Russian—*Too Much Happiness*, *Dear Life*, and *Runaway*, respectively). In the review, Fedosiuk—completely in line with Stepanov’s translating strategies—overlooks the gender problematics of Munro’s work or the author’s feminist leanings, focusing instead on the Russian connections and influences in her writing, including Leo Tolstoy and the Russian novel in a wider sense (Fedosiuk 141). The reviewer’s evaluation of Munro as a writer is generally positive, apart from references to her regionalism and triviality of chosen themes (Fedosiuk 141), as well as the statement that the literary quality of her oeuvre is “весьма неравноценно” [rather uneven] (139). These opinions largely coincide with the ones expressed by Stepanov himself, which indicates a certain degree of impact that his translating position has had on the critical response. In addition, of the three translators, Fedosiuk singles out Stepanov as the author of the most “adequate” translation (Fedosiuk 142); the reviewer praises his fine sensitivity to the writer’s style and excellent command of the Russian language (143), putting the emphasis on literariness and linguistic richness of the target text as the most important translation quality criteria. As a matter of fact, the critic’s response to Stepanov’s translation is much more favourable than her view of Munro’s original work itself—the perspective that privileges the target side of the cultural exchange, perpetuating the literary system’s distinctive Russia-centred outlook.

As is evidenced by the study of Stepanov’s translating project, the initial negativity to Munro as an author (and what was perceived as her feminist agenda) in Russian-speaking literary circles had a profound impact on the translator’s strategies and decision-making and to a significant extent shaped up the resulting textual product. Combined with the rather incoherent presentation of the author through paratextual means—in part due to the commercial considerations and the decision to market the book to a specific audience, and in part due to the

uncoordinated visions of the publisher and the translator—Stepanov’s approach in translating *Too Much Happiness* resulted in a well-crafted Russian text that nevertheless largely disrupts the integrity of Munro’s creative project. Although its literary quality is sufficient to let the target text stand on its own and secure its readership, Stepanov’s translation constructs the version of the authorial figure that is inherently imitative and secondary as compared to the target culture’s literary models. This means that the translator’s autonomy is employed to reproduce the biases and stereotypes prevalent in his domestic culture. His translation, therefore, fails at effecting the original’s cultural transfer; moreover, it undermines the target literary system’s further perception of Munro as a literary authority and negatively affects the reception of all her subsequent translations into Russian—even the ones produced with a vastly different mindset and motivations.

## II. Borovikova’s *Дороже самой жизни* (*Dear Life*)

Whereas Stepanov’s translation of *Too Much Happiness* aligns itself unquestioningly with the values and traditions of the translator’s domestic culture and thus results in a discordant and contradictory presentation of the author’s work, Tat’iana Borovikova’s version of *Dear Life* demonstrates an attempt to reconcile her personal views and loyalties with local publishing market considerations and to effect cultural mediation without leaning into the target culture’s dominant narratives. The resulting publication is still marked by significant incoherencies; however, it shifts the focus towards reading and interpreting Munro on the writer’s own terms rather than exclusively through a Russia-centred cultural paradigm.

In terms of the translator’s visibility in the paratextual elements, the Russian version of *Dear Life* is not essentially different from the previous collection: the translator’s name is not

found on the cover, which only mentions the title, the author's name, and her 2013 Nobel Prize—complete with an image of the Nobel medal. The inside front cover contains the same information (this time without the Nobel reference), and the flyleaf simply lists all three Munro collections now available in Russian (*Too Much Happiness*, *Runaway*, and *Dear Life*) without mentioning the translators. The publisher's imprint page only indicates that the text is “translated from English by Tat'iana Borovikova”; this brief statement is immediately followed by the name of the book designer—the choice that indirectly defines the translator's status as one of the key contributors to the final published product but nevertheless makes it clear that the translator is nowhere near to being acknowledged as a co-author or the author's collaborator. Borovikova's special status is signalled by the copyright notice at the bottom of the same page, but it is printed in very small font and adds little to her overall visibility.

On the other hand, the book's back endpaper listing the remaining publication contributors (such as the editor, editor-in-chief, art editor, layout editor, typographer, and proofreaders) does not mention the translator at all. The book features no preface or endnotes; a one-paragraph note on the very last page following the table of contents is essentially a reworked version of the introductory paragraph from the previous publication of *Too Much Happiness* (possibly written by Stepanov), with only slight modifications meant to introduce the new collection, *Dear Life*, to the readers. Essentially, in all the paratextual materials surrounding the text the translator's presence is minimal.

Furthermore, some of the paratextual spaces that could have been made available to the translator were used to showcase more authoritative perspectives on Munro's writing—those of literary critics and reviewers. In lieu of a preface, the publisher included multiple excerpts from

critical reviews—addressing both Munro’s fiction in general and *Dear Life* in particular—that fill no fewer than six pages. Some of the excerpts were also reused as blurbs on the back cover and on the flaps of the book jacket. The selection and arrangement of these short critical texts reflect the publisher’s goals and motivations regarding the publication and the translator’s place in it. The review quotes start with the statements made by renowned British and American writers, such as Jonathan Franzen, Elizabeth Strout, Jeffrey Eugenides, Julian Barnes, Salman Rushdie, Joyce Carol Oates, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Francine Prose. By relying on these literary celebrities and their praise of Munro, the publisher aims to raise the author’s prestige in the eyes of her prospective readers—and perhaps undo the damage caused by her initial critical reception in the Russian-speaking world. The publisher’s exclusive focus on British and US authors in selecting these critical responses is meant to downplay Munro’s regionalism and peripherality, framing her rather as a part of the Anglophone literary world than a Canadian regional writer. The same logic can be traced in the next section comprising the quoted unsigned excerpts from reviews that appeared in major literary publications or media outlets (including *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Boston Globe*, *The New Republic*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The Washington Post*, etc.). Here, again, the predominant focus on US-based publications (with only two Canadian ones included) speaks to the publisher’s perception of the global cultural centre vs. periphery; this selection of critical comments serves a double purpose of awarding authority and centrality to Munro’s literary status, emphasizing her international renown and largely overlooking her Canadianness (in all of these critical excerpts, Canada is mentioned only three times—twice parenthetically, as an afterthought, and once within a reference to the “Canadian Chekhov”).

The Chekhov analogies become even more prominent in the last category of comments, which focuses on the review excerpts taken from well-known and/or reputed Russian publications, such as *Izvestiya*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, *Afisha*, *Vedomosti*, and *Gazeta.ru*. Three out of the nine entries penned by Russian reviewers refer to Chekhov as Munro's literary precursor; this consistent focus on the author's indebtedness to the legacy of the Russian classic once again posits the centrality and superiority of the Russian cultural tradition in the eyes of domestic readers. At the same time, other unnamed Russian reviewers stress the affinity of Munro's writing style to common gossip and her fixation on violence, eroticism, and the tragedy of the mundane. These comments range from unabated praise of the writer's work to cautious approval and therefore (in no small part due to their fragmentary form) are significantly less critical than the disparaging statements marking Munro's early reception. It is clear that the publisher's decision to include them in place of a preface serves the purpose of capturing the readers' attention—either with the promise of literary mastery or a glimpse into the shocking and exciting content—and convincing prospective book buyers that Munro as a literary phenomenon is worth exploring, despite all the frenzy and negativity of the Russian media during the first few post-Nobel weeks.

The publisher's motivation to redeem Munro for Russian readers and to undo the damage caused by the initial critical responses may have been accounted for by commercial factors, i.e. the need to sell books and make a profit. To a large extent, this meant the need to refute or counter the literary critics' insistent references to the writer's perceived feminism. Accordingly, most reviews included in the publication of *Dear Life* completely overlook this aspect of Munro's work or its critical discussion and largely ignore the author's prevalent focus on female perspectives in her writing ("Reviews" 5–10). The only exception is the *Afisha* excerpt, which—

although the reviewer's name is never mentioned—is in fact taken from Birger's piece. The selected section is the one in which Birger engages with the “feminine” nature of Munro's prose while denying the author's ties to feminism (as quoted above; also see “Reviews” 10). As a result, it can be argued that the selected reviews preceding the text of *Dear Life* function as a sort of an allographic (multiply-authored) preface that is used to construct the authorial figure in milder, less “radical” terms than initial literary criticism did; at the same time, they are relying on recognized literary authorities (both international and domestic) to play up Munro's cultural capital—which was heavily belittled by early critical feedback—with an ultimate goal of making her more acceptable to prospective Russian-language readers.

Despite this shift in the author's presentation, the publisher's approach to defining the book's target audience is largely the same as with *Too Much Happiness*. The publication is intended for predominantly female readers, which is reflected in the choice of cover art and in certain editorial decisions. The book cover shows a young woman in a red dress who is posing, with demurely downcast eyes, against the backdrop of a collapsing house. The image has no traceable connection to the content of the collected short stories; moreover, the glossy, airbrushed quality of the photo makes the woman's skin and clothing appear flat and one-tone, focusing on an idealized rather than realistic presentation of a female body. This choice of cover art seems more appropriate for a fashion magazine than a literary work—and it evokes such stereotypical attributes of femininity as seductiveness, frailty, and sentimentality, therefore clashing with Munro's consistent focus on complex and multidimensional female characters. The decision was probably made without (or contrary to) the translator's input—as Borovikova states in her Translator's Questionnaire, she usually has no say in the matter, so the cover art typically ends up being “either horrible or copied from the original English edition” and sometimes has

“nothing to do with the actual contents of the book” (see Appendix 2, p. 329). The same focus on the presumed needs and preferences of female readers, along with disregard for the translator’s opinion, determines the publisher’s editorial policies. As Borovikova claims, she has experienced multiple occasions of editorial censorship where Munro editors insisted on removing expletives and profanities from the translations, justifying this requirement with the fact that “obscene words cannot appear in the books positioned on the market as ‘books for women’” (see Appendix 2, p. 329). Although the translator disagreed, the publisher’s gendered preconceptions about the book’s prospective audience were deemed more important than any considerations of the translator’s agency; ultimately, the final editing decisions were dictated by the publisher’s vision of how the book would be marketed to readers—a vision that had very little to do either with the text’s author or its translator (or, it has to be argued, the actual readers themselves).

As a rule, when similar tensions arise, the translators do not possess sufficient cultural capital, and their status in the publication hierarchy is not considered authoritative enough to help them make a convincing case; in the majority of such editorial debates—as was the case with Borovikova—the translator is bound to lose. In the case of *Dear Life*, the translator’s low hierarchical status and limited creative autonomy were reflected not only in her inability to define her target audience through textual and visual decisions, but also in her virtual absence in the paratextual materials. This appears to be typical: in her Translator’s Questionnaire, Borovikova mentions that translators’ prefaces are a rarity; the only time she succeeded in convincing the publisher to include an interpretative preface (not in a Munro publication but for a different female author), it was written by not the translator herself but a literary historian (see Appendix 2, p. 329). At the same time, Borovikova states that in many cases she has no say in selecting the titles of Russian translations—which is confirmed by the fact that the title of the



“Dear Life” story (and the entire collection) was changed at the editors’ insistence from “Из всех сил” [“With All One’s Might”] to “Дороже самой жизни” [“Dearer Than Life Itself”]<sup>12</sup> (see Appendix 2, p. 329). Overall, the publication’s paratext and the translator’s own comments provide multiple indications that her creative agency in translating *Dear Life* (and in other similar projects) was substantially constrained by higher-level publisher-imposed concerns.

On the other hand, Borovikova believes that she still enjoys creative freedom to a substantial degree that is only limited by the requirement of fidelity—which she defines as being “true to the author”: “As I understand it, I have all the freedom in the world as long as the resulting translation says the same to the Russian reader as the source text, to the best of my knowledge and belief, says to me. I can do anything to achieve that” (see Appendix 2, p. 328). It is interesting that this definition of fidelity hinges on the matter of the translator’s personal interpretation, reframing it as the source of creative power and justifying a wide range of translating interventions; nevertheless, visible intrusions in Borovikova’s actual translations are few and far between.

The most significant paratextual interventions in *Dear Life* are the translator’s footnotes. Borovikova uses them sparingly (typically no more than 1–3 times per story) to provide comments or explanations on textual aspects that may not be familiar to Russian-speaking readers. In *Dear Life*, and particularly in the “Finale” stories, the translator’s comments fall under one of the two categories: clarifications of certain aspects of Canadian (and to a lesser extent, European) culture and history or indications of other translation contributors. In the

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<sup>12</sup> The title change was briefly addressed in the translator’s journal blog post here: <https://odin-moy-den.livejournal.com/1593442.html>.

former case, the translator is educating her readers about some lesser-known facts—for instance, the personality of Lucy Maud Montgomery (Munro, “Дороже самой жизни” 304) or popular music in Canada in the 1930s–1940s (Munro, “Глаз” 260). In these cases, Borovikova’s motivations are similar to those of Stepanov, the most significant difference being that her comments strictly refrain from expressing any judgments and thus cannot be clearly aligned with either side of the cultural exchange; rather, the translator is trying to reconcile her loyalties to the source and target cultures, both of which she knows from within. The second type of comments focuses on showcasing the authors of various poetic translations used in the texts (Munro, “Глаз” 261)—meaning that the translator is using her paratextual presence to acknowledge her colleagues’ contributions and to alert the readers to the importance of the translators’ mediation.

To a certain extent, Borovikova’s translating approach is resisting the totalizing narratives imposed by the editorial policies. Her focus on the centrality of female experience and her sensitive treatment of gender-related themes in Munro’s writing can be interpreted as subtle resistance to the way the publisher’s intrusions tend to define both the female author and her female readers—as evidenced by the translator’s attempts to fight for more authentic language and more appropriate cover art (see Appendix 2, pp. 329–30). Furthermore, Borovikova readily acknowledges the importance of the feminist aspect in Munro’s work, although—like the writer herself—she is wary of fully committing to any ideological reading: “Feminism is such a polysemic word that it is impossible to give an unambiguous answer to the question whether Alice Munro is a feminist author. [...] But if we proceed from the assumption that feminism defends women’s right to have their own opinions about the world, then Munro is undoubtedly a feminist writer” (Appendix 2, p. 326). At the same time, she understands that a translation prioritizing the feminist reading would harm rather than improve Munro’s chances of positive

critical reception and commercial success in the Russian-speaking cultural space (and could likely be rejected by the publisher); therefore, her resistance remains quiet, typically taking the form of a compromise instead of manifest antagonism. The translator is aware of the publishing industry's biases and limitations but does not possess sufficient authority or cultural capital (and, quite probably, sufficient motivation) to openly challenge them.

In relation to her translating projects, Borovikova consciously positions herself as an insider-outsider, and this double perspective, while enabling deeper insights into both Canadian and Russian cultures, undermines the translator's belonging in the target-language context. Her refusal to rely on overt domestication and her willingness to underscore the foreignness and "otherness" of Munro's texts initially earned her some criticisms on the part of literary scholars: Fedosiuk, while praising Stepanov's excellent command of the Russian language in her review, rebukes Borovikova for her "clumsy" phrasing and "излишн[ий] буквализ[м]" [excessive literalism] (Fedosiuk 143–44). Nevertheless, the translator's approach met with the readers' and critics' appreciation later, as Borovikova subsequently translated and published three more Munro collections—*Ты кем себя воображаешь? (Who Do You Think You Are?)* in 2014, *Тайна, не скрытая никем (Open Secrets)* in 2017, and *Друг моей юности (Friend of My Youth)* in 2019. Literary reviews still largely ignored the translator's contribution (see Baviľ'skii "The Novel"; Baviľ'skii "The Collection of Short Stories"; Baviľ'skii "The Alice Munro Collection"); however, Borovikova's achievement in bringing Munro to Russian-language readers was marked by a prestigious Nora Gal Prize awarded to her in 2020 for the translation of "Meneseteung" (see "The Nora Gal Prize"). In addition, the translator has been consistently claiming her share of the narrative authority in her personal blog where she has been posting

excerpts from her translations, promoting new publications, and objecting to discriminatory or poorly-informed comments of the Russian literary critics (see Borovikova, *Oryx-and-Crake*).

Overall, Borovikova's engagement with translating Munro into Russian illustrates a scenario where a translator finds subtle ways to express her agency in a less than favourable environment and under multiple constraints. Despite significant compromises in the process and the fact that the resulting publications (particularly *Dear Life*) are still characterized by substantial incoherencies and raise serious issues regarding their representation of both the author herself and their target audience, Borovikova's translating project signifies an important step in overcoming the initial prejudiced critical responses to Munro's writing, contributing to the "normalization" of women-centred prose in the eyes of Russian-language readers.

### III. Kononenko's *Забгато щастя* (*Too Much Happiness*)

Unlike both Russian translations, Kononenko's Ukrainian version of *Too Much Happiness* demonstrates a combination of very limited translator's visibility with a clearer vision of translation as a collaborative effort, which is reflected in the book's paratext. Careful analysis of the publication's peritextual materials, along with the translator's own comments and the publisher's epitext, shows that Kononenko's translating position and creative decisions were largely supported and represented in the final translated product. This collaborative approach results in a translating project that decidedly opposes itself to its Russian counterpart, constructing the target text and its representation of the authorial figure in terms of foreignness (rather than domestication) and focus on the authority of female perspective.

Compared to both Russian editions, the Ukrainian publication demonstrates minimal peritextual markers of the translator's presence. The book cover does not provide any

information on the translator—it only contains the title, the author’s name, and a reminder about Munro’s Nobel Prize. The flyleaf shows the book title only, but the inside front cover, in addition to the title and the author’s name, indicates the publisher, the year of publication, and the fact that the book was translated from English by Ievheniia Kononenko. The same statement is repeated again on the publisher’s imprint page, making the translator’s role more visible; further, the list of copyright holders on the same page frames the translator as one of the key publication contributors, second only to the author herself: the inscription “Ievheniia Kononenko © translation, 2017” follows “Alice Munro © text, 2009” and is, in turn, followed by the copyright statements of the cover photo artist, the book designer, and the publisher itself. Similarly, the book’s back endpaper lists the translator as the first among the contributors, including the cover photo artist, the editor-in-chief, the executive editor, the literary editor, the art editor, and the proofreader. Overall, despite the total absence of the translator-authored peritextual materials, the publisher’s paratext in *Забазамо щастя* demonstrates more sensitivity to the translator’s role and input in the process of textual production than it does in either of the Russian-language publications.

Some of the other paratextual elements, without referring to the translator directly, still add to the visibility of Kononenko’s translating project—or find themselves in alignment with it. The one-paragraph introductory abstract on the imprint page (although it is not clear whether it was written by the translator or one of the editors) in many respects reflects Kononenko’s own position towards Munro and her writing. This short text engages with the aftermath of Munro’s initial negative reception—which is implicitly understood as the early Russian-language critical responses—while directly undermining and negating the most ubiquitous critical clichés about Munro as an author. The labels of the “housewife” and the short story writer “not worthy of

‘great literature’” are mentioned only as prejudiced descriptions erroneously applied to Munro by “certain critics”; moreover, the abstract outrightly denies any affinity between the author’s masterfully crafted texts and the stereotypical tear-jerking “chick lit.” The introductory abstract is supported by a back cover blurb (also of unspecified authorship), which outlines the most important milestones in Munro’s biography and the details of her literary success. Both of these paratextual elements are unambiguously praising the writer’s work up to the point of being defensive about it, which not only represents Kononenko’s own highly respectful attitude towards Munro’s literary authority, but also mirrors the translator’s personal response to similar criticisms she faced as a female writer and a short prose author (see Appendix 3, p. 332). The defence of the author in the paratext, therefore, simultaneously functions as defence of the translator’s experiences and of the authority of women’s writing in general—where gender acquires central significance.

However, neither of the above paratexts seeks to define the book’s prospective readership in gendered terms. While both texts consistently use feminine noun forms when talking about Munro’s characters and the author herself—such as “письменница,” “майстриня,” and “авторка,” which are the exact same forms Kononenko uses in her Translator’s Questionnaire (see Appendix 3)—it is never suggested that the readers are expected to be exclusively female. It can be argued that these paratextual elements, despite not being directly attributed to the translator herself, construct a version of the authorial figure and attempt to shape the readers’ response in a way that reflects the translator’s personal approach to the text. The conspicuous absence of any references to Chekhov is also in line with Kononenko’s tendency to distance her work from the imperialist perspectives of Russian-language literary criticism.

Yet, in all other respects the translator remains invisible. There is no translator-authored preface or end notes, and the remaining paratextual materials framing the short stories—the explanatory footnotes providing additional information to the readers—are clearly attributed to the editor rather than the translator. Compared to Stepanov’s Russian-language version, these comments are few and far between: there are no more than seven per short story, with only two used in “Child’s Play” and four in “Too Much Happiness.” In all cases, the editor’s footnotes are limited to providing culturally relevant factual information, such as explaining the culturally specific concepts (“coolie hats,” *Lions Club*, *Crelle’s Journal*, etc.), converting Imperial measurement units to the metric system, translating short expressions and titles found in the texts from European languages other than English (“Hausfrau,” “mein Lieber,” *Kindertotenlieder*, *I Promessi Sposi*, etc.), and—in rare cases—commenting on the puns that are not recreated in the translated text. Thus, most of the editor’s intrusions reflect the translator’s tendency to keep foreign elements in the text while minimizing required clarifications.

In the Translator’s Questionnaire, Kononenko notes that initially she intended to keep more of the original puns and word plays untranslated, the decision which the editors resisted (see Appendix 3, p. 338). Although there is no indication to what extent the translator relied on her readers’ prior cultural or linguistic knowledge, the available paratextual materials point to the fact that on the spectrum between the domestication and the foreignization of the source text Kononenko is leaning towards the latter. This means that, even though the translator did not enjoy significant paratextual visibility or full creative freedom and occasionally had to submit to the editors’ or publisher’s decisions (as in the case of the book cover design or her inability to contact the author directly, as she would have preferred—see Appendix 3, pp. 335–37), Kononenko was still able to get her position across and implement her translating approach in a

sufficiently consistent way, with adequate support of the editorial team. The strength of her translating position (as she understands it herself) consists in her unwavering belief that the source texts are “worth translating”—and even more importantly, her willingness to go beyond the scope of her personal experience to gain a deeper understanding of Munro’s narratives and their context (see Appendix 3, p. 335–36). Consequently, Kononenko’s translating project, including its foreignization tendencies and reluctance to provide explanations, can be seen as grounded in self-reflexivity and respect, both for the source material and the target texts’ prospective readers.

The publisher’s epitext further supports the translator’s representation of the author’s figure and her work, with predominant focus on the significance of gender and on constructing an alternative narrative to the biased reception of Munro by Russian literary critics. The two reviews of *Too Much Happiness* that appeared on the publisher’s website after the book’s publication both take the same defensive position reflected in the book’s peritext to refute the critical clichés often applied to Munro’s work; at the same time, both only address the translation itself briefly, without engaging with its qualitative characteristics. The earlier review (of unspecified authorship) dated 17 July 2017 very closely repeats the main points of the book’s introductory note and its back cover blurb. Particularly, it asserts Munro’s status as a “неперевершен[а] майстрин[я] короткої прози” [unsurpassed master of short prose] despite working in the genre that “багато хто вважає недостойним ‘великої літератури’” [many believe to be unworthy of “great literature”] (“Nobel and Booker Laureate”); the same reviewer distances Munro from a “chick lit label” by stating that her stories “позбавлені щонайменшої сльозогінності, притаманної ‘дамській прозі,’ щонайменшого проповідництва чи повчальних висновків” [are not in the least tear-jerking, as “ladies’ prose” tends to be, they



have no preaching or didactic conclusions about them] (“Nobel and Booker Laureate”). The translator is mentioned by name, but no further comments pertaining to the translation are made. Oleksandr Kosovan’s review of 25 January 2020 (also made available on the publisher’s website) makes similar defensive claims about the author and her writing: “Можливо, в декого не виникне бажання читати цю книгу. Оповіді про жінок, домогосподарок і таке подібне, про трагедії і нерівність. Ні. Книга не є типовим прикладом ‘дамської прози’ або сльозогінної літератури” [Maybe someone will be reluctant to read this book. Stories about women, housewives and such, about tragedies and inequality. NO. This book is not your typical example of “ladies’ prose” or tear-jerking fiction]. The reviewer further emphasizes the centrality of women’s perspective in Munro’s “коліоритн[а] галере[я] жіночих образів” [colourful gallery of female characters] and even questions how the author’s portrayal of femininity may be similar to or different from conventional Ukrainian preconceptions (Kosovan). Interestingly, at the end the reviewer recommends the book “кожному, особливо, чоловікам” [to everyone, particularly to men], thus radically redefining the collection’s prospective readership as compared to the comments of the Russian literary critics. The translator of the collection is referred to but not named (Kosovan). All in all, it can be argued that both publisher-approved reviews largely refrain from any engagement with translation but are actively trying to shape the readers’ reception of the text in the manner aligned with the translator’s own position.

The only publisher-affiliated review that does address the quality of the translation is Marichka Udud’s entry based on the pre-publication reading of the translator’s manuscript. This review refers to the translator’s work as “перфектність” [perfection] and praises it for Kononenko’s rich language and masterful command of Ukrainian (Udud). However, the fact of it

being the first Munro publication in Ukrainian (which is mentioned several times throughout the piece) is treated as even more significant than the translation's quality or the translator's persona.

Outside of the affiliation with the publisher, the Ukrainian version of *Too Much Happiness* did not enjoy significant critical attention—as noted by Kononenko herself (Appendix 3, p. 339), and the translation as such was mostly overlooked. One of the few exceptions was a publication by the *Ukrainska Literaturna Hazeta* that included *Too Much Happiness* in the list of the best Ukrainian translations of foreign authors in 2017 (see “Best Translations”)—without, however, providing any argumentation for such a decision or even naming the translator. In other cases, as in Tymofii Havryliv's review, the translator receives minimal attention. Havryliv's response is the only one that is taking a clearly unfavourable stance towards Munro's writing in general and the Ukrainian publication of *Too Much Happiness*; yet the foundations of his critique are essentially different from those of Russian literary critics, and his comments are deliberately distanced from the translation as such. The reviewer compares Munro to such prominent literary authorities as William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Toni Morrison, and Jane Austen, while arguing that her stories are lacking in depth, fail to touch the reader, and occasionally appear unbelievable or banal (Havryliv). Despite these harsh criticisms, the absence of any references to Chekhov or any other Russian literary analogies points to the fact that Havryliv is considering Munro's oeuvre in the context of the Western, rather than Russian, literary tradition, without following in the footsteps of Russian-language critics. Furthermore, he takes issue with the author's portrayal of femininity, claiming that Munro's heroines are depicted as too weak and dependent on men; that her perspective on female experiences does not live up to the ideals of “жіночого руху, емансипації і власної гідності” [the women's movement, emancipation, and personal decency]; and that the writer fails to undermine conventions in the way that could be

expected of her (Havryliv). These arguments, paradoxically, sound like blaming Munro for not being feminist enough; nevertheless, they contribute to shaping the critical reception of her work in the Ukrainian cultural context in the manner that purposefully opposes itself to the previous Russian-language reception. At the same time, the reviewer denies that any alleged shortcomings of the texts could be attributed to the translation, which can be interpreted as a statement supporting the translator's work and the authority of Kononenko's position.

As a result, it becomes evident that, although critical engagement with the first Ukrainian Munro translation was scarce and did not pay substantial attention to the translator's personality or agency, the existence of the translation itself was welcomed and treated with respect by most reviewers as a culturally significant event. On the other hand, Kononenko's resistant translating approach found its further expression in the critics' defensiveness about the writer's work and their refusal to frame their critical responses along the lines previously charted by the Russian literary establishment. One translated collection may not be enough to draw any generalized conclusions about the prospects of Munro's translation and reception into the Ukrainian cultural context; however, it appears that Kononenko's translating project, with its reliance on feminist translation theories and its focus on culturally relevant recontextualization of literary texts, opens up avenues for a more successful cultural transfer of the Canadian author's work in the future.

#### **IV. Zerning's *Zu viel Glück (Too Much Happiness)* and *Liebes Leben (Dear Life)***

Compared to the Russian and Ukrainian cultural representations of Munro's work as discussed above, the German-language cultural transfer process is located in and affected by a substantially different context. The German translations of Munro's literary texts (which constitute a larger share of Heidi Zerning's lifetime's work), along with their peritextual and

epitextual accompaniment and the respective elements of critical reception, point to a higher degree of the translator's extratextual visibility and, more generally, her more prominent creative status in the eyes of domestic readership—in part, despite the translator's own preferences.

A significant factor in this cultural outcome is the translator's personality and consistent engagement with the author's work over the years. Zerning has been a steady presence in the process of bringing Munro's fiction to German-language readers: the first translated collection that appeared under her name was the 2000 publication of *Die Liebe einer Frau* (*The Love of a Good Woman*)<sup>13</sup>, followed by *Der Traum meiner Mutter* (composed of four previously untranslated stories from *The Love of a Good Woman*) in 2002, *Himmel und Hölle* (*Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*) in 2004, *Tricks* (*Runaway*) in 2006, *Wozu wollen Sie das wissen?* (*The View from Castle Rock*) in 2008, *Tanz der seligen Geister* (*Dance of the Happy Shades*) in 2010, *Zu viel Glück* (*Too Much Happiness*) in 2011, *Was ich dir schon immer sagen wollte* (*Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You*) in 2012, *Liebes Leben* (*Dear Life*) in 2013, the retranslation of *Die Jupitermonde* (*The Moons of Jupiter*) in 2016, and finally the German "Best of Munro" collection *Ferne Verabredungen: Die schönsten Erzählungen*, also in 2016. Zerning's unwavering commitment has earned her recognition as "Munros deutsche Stimme" [Munro's German voice] (Kippenberger); both S. Fischer Verlage and Dörlemann publishing houses list her in their translator directories as a renowned translator of both British and North American authors, including Virginia Woolf, Truman Capote, Steve Tesich, and, first and foremost, Alice

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<sup>13</sup> Earlier publications of *Das Bettlermädchen* (*Who Do You Think You Are? / Beggar Maid*) in 1981 and *Kleine Aussichten* (*Lives of Girls and Women*) in 1983 were translated by Hildegard Petry; later, Helga Huisgen translated *Der Mond über der Eisbahn* (*The Progress of Love*) published in 1989; Manfred Ohl and Hans Sartorius translated *Die Jupitermonde* (*The Moons of Jupiter*) in 1986; *Glaubst du, es war Liebe?* (*Friend of My Youth*) and *Offene Geheimnisse* (*Open Secrets*) came out in translations by Karen Nölle in 1991 and 1996, respectively.

Munro (“Heidi Zerning” [S. Fischer Verlage]; “Heidi Zerning” [Dörlemann]). The fact that she has been working primarily as a literary translator since 1990 (“Heidi Zerning” [S. Fischer Verlage]) also speaks to her respected status in the field. In comparison, none of the other three translators has been able to rely on literary translation as their main source of income, and none of them is featured on the respective publishers’ websites—with the exception of Kononenko, who is nevertheless listed as a writer first and as a translator second (“Ievheniia Kononenko” [The Old Lion Publishing House]).

It can be argued that Zerning’s involvement has contributed significantly to the rise of Munro’s literary fame in German-speaking countries, as the translator was at least partially responsible for making the author a household name among German-language readers. Zerning’s translating approach, with its sharp precision and acute sensitivity to the gender dynamics in Munro’s texts, has also been a factor in shaping the domestic reception of the writer’s work as a form of “quiet” and less-than-explicit feminist writing that focuses primarily on portraying “women’s life as it is” and offering “authentic descriptions of their daily struggles for independence and individuality” (Oeding and Flotow 89). A brief overview of German-language critical responses to the 2013 Nobel Prize announcement reveals that Munro is treated as a well-known and respected literary authority, her writing is praised, and the news of her Nobel win is met with enthusiastic and supportive messages of literary critics and publishers (“Sensationelle Wahl”). Most of these award-time reactions address Munro’s complex negotiation of femininity and focus on the specifically feminine lens through which she dissects the precarious everyday experiences of her characters. At the same time, these articles almost invariably mention Zerning’s contribution or, at the very least, refer to the fact or quality of her German-language translations, which the reviewer Thomas Steinfeld describes as “ausgezeichnet” [excellent]

(Steinfeld; see also Müller; Staude “Literatur-Nobelpreis”). The content and tone of these entries make it clear that Munro as a writer requires no introduction—she is widely “gelesen und geschätzt” [read and appreciated] (Steinfeld), and her Nobel triumph is never questioned or challenged by the German-speaking literary establishment (a fact that can be accounted for by the German readership’s familiarity with Munro’s work as well as by the German polysystem’s established tradition of feminist and women-centred literature). The critics’ respectful treatment of the translator also points to the fact that Zerning’s and Munro’s names are at least to some extent linked in public consciousness.

The author’s (and the translator’s) established reputation is reflected in some of the publisher’s paratextual decisions regarding the German versions of *Too Much Happiness* and *Dear Life* collections. Unlike in the case of the Russian and Ukrainian publications, the German publisher (S. Fischer) does not rely on Munro’s Nobel Prize fame to the same extent: the information about the award only comes up on the back covers of both books, along with a few endorsements of prominent literary authorities, such as *The New York Review of Books*, Bernhard Schlink, Jonathan Franzen, Joyce Carol Oates, or the Nobel Committee itself. The front covers are reserved for the book title and the author’s name exclusively; in both cases, the translator’s name (“Aus dem Englischen von Heidi Zerning” [Translated from English by Heidi Zerning]) only appears on the inside front cover in a smaller font under the writer’s own name and the title. Neither of the two publications has a preface (whether written by the translator, the editor, or someone else). The dust jacket of the *Liebes Leben* edition contains a short introductory note of unspecified authorship (on the front inside flap); the publication of *Zu viel Glück* has a similar short paratext (of similarly unclear authorship) located on the book’s flyleaf paper and immediately followed by the author’s brief bio and a list of Munro’s previously published

collections. Neither of these paratextual elements is significant in terms of the translator's visibility or the publisher's engagement with the translating process; but the fact that the previous titles made available by the same publisher are indicated in German alone may indirectly draw the reader's attention to the fact of translation.

Even more importantly, a similar list of previous Munro publications at the back of the second book (*Liebes Leben*) is followed by an inscription "Alle Bände aus dem Englischen von Heidi Zerning" [All volumes translated from English by Heidi Zerning], which underscores the translator's systematic involvement and creative mediation in the production of German-language target texts. Finally, the dust jacket of *Liebes Leben* (the back inside flap), along with Munro's picture and biographical note, contains a similar note for Zerning—an important choice that speaks to the publisher's decision to draw attention to the translator's own contribution, considering that inclusion of both paratextual elements pointing to the translator's presence was by no means necessary. The author's and the translator's bios are organized in a similar manner, indicating both women's personal background and listing their professional achievements; the two notes are printed in an almost identical font—which is only slightly smaller in Zerning's case. The translator's bio is also visibly shorter and has no image attached to it, but in all other respects it appears very similar to the author's one. This layout clearly distances Zerning from other contributors, such as cover art designers whose names are indicated at the bottom of the same page in a much smaller font and paler colour. These paratextual decisions clearly support and promote the idea of the translator's visibility, while conveying a hierarchical view of the relationships inherent in textual production. The translator is presented here not only as a key contributor but as the author's highly respected collaborator; nevertheless, her role still remains distinctly secondary to the author herself.

The decision to include the translator's bio does not appear to be typical and may be ascribed to the translator's established reputation and long-term involvement with the author's work, as well as to the perception that *Liebes Leben* may have become the last of Munro/Zerning publications. In any case, this paratextual framing not only outlines a clear connection between the author and translator as creative collaborators, but also signals a potential shift in editorial practices regarding the author/translator relationships and the translator's status in the production of literary texts.

In light of this significant development that appears to have occurred between the publication dates of *Zu viel Glück* and *Liebes Leben*, it may seem surprising that no other paratextual spaces were made available to the translator—neither of the two books contains any footnotes, endnotes, or commentaries. However, the decision to refrain from comments or clarifications is, in fact, aligned with Zerning's translating position that prioritizes the translator's right to stay invisible. In part, the translator relies on her readership's previously established familiarity both with Munro's writing and with Canadian culture to avoid the need to provide a commentary. Yet to a greater extent, Zerning's unwillingness to insert herself into the text or to address the reader from the margins should be interpreted as expression, rather than suppression, of her agency. Precisely because of her established reputation as a translator and the degree of recognition awarded to her by the publisher—as demonstrated by the study of the paratextual accompaniment—it has to be assumed that Zerning's reluctance to draw attention to her textual presence is a conscious choice consistent with her overall translating strategy.

This assumption is further confirmed by the relevant epitext—the translator's interviews, which, in the absence of translator-authored paratext or direct commentaries, may serve as the



closest possible counterpart. Zerning gave three interviews (to Susanne Kippenberger, Matthias Hanselmann, and Friederike Schilbach) in the wake of Munro's Nobel Prize announcement in 2013, and the fact that she was insistently approached for comments—her phone was overwhelmed with reporters' calls on the day of the announcement—once again confirms the assumption that in the German public consciousness the translator's figure came to function as a stand-in for the author herself. The two of them do share certain personal affinities: both Munro and Zerning are reserved, extremely protective of their private lives, and reluctant to talk to the press. Both lead secluded lifestyles away from the limelight—up to the point that they were never in contact with each other: as Zerning notes, “Ich weiß, dass sie sehr zurückgezogen lebt und auf ihre ungestörte Privatsphäre großen Wert legt. Und ich käme mir sehr aufdringlich vor, da sie persönlich behelligen zu wollen” [I know that she lives a very secluded life and values her undisturbed privacy. And I would think of myself as intrusive if I were going to bother her personally] (Hanselmann). Zerning stresses that she prefers to know the writer through her work alone; moreover, she admits that she does not maintain contact with any other Munro translators and has never visited Canada to explore the real-life setting of Munro's stories—instead, she chooses to base her translations on book research and multiple dictionaries (Schilbach; Hanselmann). Essentially, this means that the translator trusts her own interpretation of the target texts and knowledge of their cultural context, without feeling the need to defer to the author's or anyone else's authority.

In terms of the translating process, Zerning's methods are rather peculiar: she always relies on pencil and paper to work on her translations and uses her computer only at the editing stage when she already has a complete draft; she also has no email account and zero online presence (Hanselmann), which eliminates distractions but also limits personal exposure, proving

that—in Zerning’s case—inaccessibility and invisibility are a deliberate choice. This tendency towards self-effacement also finds its expression in her translating position: Zerning states that she never reads Munro’s stories in full before translating them for fear of discovering or revealing a significant detail too soon (Kippenberger; Hanselmann); in her view, particularly because of the short stories’ condensed form and unexpected plot twists, it is extremely important to stay unbiased and keep a fresh perspective: “Das heißt, ich gehe genauso naiv und spannungsgeladen heran wie jeder Leser” [This means that I approach it as naively and excitedly as any reader] (Hanselmann). Her self-identification with the reader means that the translator refuses to insert herself into the text or infuse it with new, outside meanings and prefers to be guided by it. However, this position does not appear to be unchangeable: in the same interview, Zerning mentions that translating novels “ist natürlich eine ganz andere Herangehensweise” [is naturally a completely different approach] (Hanselmann). Consequently, it can be deduced that for Zerning the translator’s invisibility is not only a choice but also a decision that is highly context-dependent.

A similar point can be made about Zerning’s tendency towards domestication in translating Munro, which is expressed through generalization or even erasure of certain culturally-specific textual elements and simultaneous infusion of the target texts with German idiomatic expressions and phonetic effects rooted in the nature of the target language. The translator sees these strategies as a way to emphasize the universal dimension of Munro’s writing while ensuring high quality and natural flow of the translated texts. The translator insists that “Die Geschichten sollen klingen, als seien sie auf Deutsch verfasst” [The stories should sound as if they were written in German] (Kippenberger). However, this is the approach she is taking with Munro specifically rather than a permanent translating position: “Bei Woolf war es anders, da

wollte sie ‘das Fremde, Gedrechselte der Sprache’ bewahren” [With Woolf it was different, there she wanted to preserve “the strange, the elaborate of the language”] (Kippenberger). Therefore, the translator’s position is shifting between domestication and focus on cultural difference, depending on the text she is working with, and this volatility represents variation between obscuring the fact of intercultural mediation and accentuating it. Zerning presents both options as valid and justified—a contextual decision made from the position of authority.

The fact that this authority is not absolute is clear from the translator’s comments about her collaboration with her editors who work through the texts thoroughly to catch any errors or discrepancies (Hanselmann), as well as from her remark that she does not always have decision-making powers when it comes to selecting the book titles: “Der Titel eines Buches hängt nicht allein von mir ab, sondern der wird im Grunde genommen vom Verlag vorgegeben. Also das ist eine Verlagsentscheidung, die auch natürlich entscheidend mit Ansprechgründen – wie spricht dieser Titel die Leute an, wie verkauft sich dieser Titel –, mit solchen Gründen zu tun hat” [The title of a book does not come down to me alone but as a rule is determined by the publisher. So this is a publisher’s decision, which also naturally has to do with reasons relating to the audience—how that title appeals to the public, how that title is going to sell—with reasons like that] (Hanselmann). It appears that marketing factors and executive hierarchies do play a significant role in the publication process, which could result in constraining the translator’s agency; still, Zerning never expresses any discomfort or dissatisfaction about it. On the contrary, her description of her editorial collaboration while working on “Liebes Leben” points to a stable and mutually friendly relationship with her editor: “Intensive Tage lang ist sie mit ihrer Lektorin Friederike Schilbach Zeile für Zeile, Wort für Wort durchgegangen, manchmal haben sie um einzelne Ausdrücke gerungen und hinterher im Café Einstein gefeiert” [She worked intensively

for days with her editor Friederike Schilbach, line by line, word by word, sometimes they fought over particular expressions and then celebrated together in Café Einstein] (Kippenberger).

Despite certain limitations pertaining to the literary translator's occupation and status, it can be stated with certainty that Zerning enjoys sufficient professional recognition and possesses the authority and cultural capital that allow her to develop a consistent creative vision and invariably see it through.

An overview of critical responses to the publications of *Zu viel Glück* and *Liebes Leben* suggests that Zerning's authority is, in fact, seen and acknowledged by literary critics. Although none of the available reviews engages with translation quality as such, most of them do mention the translator (Schader, "Die höhere Mathematik"; Mayer; Fessmann; Staude, "Alice Munros Finale") or at least the fact of translation into German (Staude, "Der doppelte Triumph"; Schäfer, "Lass die Dämonen"; Friedrich-Freksa, "Seht her"; and others). Both Angela Schader and Meike Fessmann refer to Zerning as Munro's "bewährte Übersetzerin" ["well-reputed/reliable translator"] (Schader, "Die höhere Mathematik"; Fessmann), while Mayer describes her work as "schöne Übersetzung" ["beautiful translation"]. Most critics also share the imprint data of the books they review (including the translator's name), thus adding to Zerning's overall visibility.

The tone and content of these critical commentaries appear to be overwhelmingly appreciative of Munro's writing—and, by extension, Zerning's translations, which many of these entries quote extensively. Markus Gasser praises the "unnachgiebig[e] existentiell[e] Spannung und Komplexität" [relentless existential tension and complexity] of Munro's later stories in *Zu viel Glück*; Dorothea Hans, while addressing the same collection, describes each story as "eine Lektion über das Leben und dessen Wege" [a lesson about life and its ways], complemented by

Munro's unique authorial style, which "in aller Einfachheit in einer anrührenden, bedächtigen und gleichzeitig exakten, nüchternen Weise den Zugang zum Innenleben ihrer Figuren erlaubt" [in all simplicity in its touching, thoughtful, and simultaneously precise and sober manner allows access to the inner life of her characters]. As for *Liebes Leben*, most critics agree that the collection demonstrates Munro's talent "ganz auf der Höhe ihrer Kunst" [at the peak of her art] (Fessmann); Fessmann goes on to eulogize the author's final stories for the fact that they "einen ganzen Lebensbogen spannen, prägende Details herausgreifend, in denen sich die Fülle eines Lebens zur Essenz verdichtet" [span an entire life arc, seizing upon defining details, in which the fullness of life condenses into its essence]. Sylvia Staude voices a similar opinion, describing the *Liebes Leben* narratives as "konzentrierte [...], sprachschlanke, trügerisch schlichte Short Stories" [concentrated [...], linguistically lean, deceptively plain short stories] in which the author herself appears to be "leise" [quiet] but "schonungslos" [ruthless] ("Alice Munros Finale"). The only (partial) exception to the chorus of celebratory reactions is Simone Frieling's review, which criticizes the four "Finale" stories in the collection for being disappointingly "richtungslos" [directionless]. On the other hand, the ubiquitous critical labels that mark the bulk of Russian-language critical engagement with Munro's oeuvre—such as the "writing housewife" stereotype or the Chekhov analogy—are only mentioned in these reviews to be immediately disrupted or overturned (see Mayer; Schäfer, "Kinderspiele"; Friedrich-Frekša, "Seht her"; Schader, "Die höhere Mathematik"; and others).

Furthermore, the majority of these German-language critical reviews consistently centre on Munro's treatment of gender, foregrounding the writer's feminine narrative lens as a key attribute of her thematic range and authorial style. Some critics draw attention to the abundance of female figures and protagonists populating Munro's stories, focusing on the invariable

vulnerability in the “lives of girls and women” and their striving for a different kind of life (see Staude, “Der doppelte Triumph”; Friedrich-Frekxa, “Verwandelndes Glas”; Schader, “Die höhere Mathematik”; Schäfer, “Lass die Dämonen”). Staude underscores the theme of marginalized female experiences as a leitmotif in Munro’s work, which is continuously present in her narratives, if only as a backdrop against which her storylines unfold: “Der allgegenwärtige Sexismus, die Nickeligkeiten und Missachtungen, die gravierenden und winzigen Benachteiligungen sind—aber wie nebenbei, wie ein Nachsatz—Ihr Thema” [The omnipresent sexism, the acts of maliciousness and disrespect, the aggravating and trivial discriminations are—though as if incidentally, as a postscript—her subject] (“Alice Munros Finale“). Schäfer, on the other hand, focuses on Munro’s female characters’ split consciousness between their desire to lead a sheltered and conforming lifestyle and their incessant “Freiheitsdrang” [urge for freedom], often seen and treated as “Verrat” [betrayal] (“Kinderspiele”). Schader, in her review of *Liebes Leben*, develops a similar argument as she examines the stories’ female protagonists as “Frauen, die sich ihrer vorgeschriebenen Rolle entziehen” [women that break away from their prescribed role] and ponders the price they eventually pay for their newfound freedom (“Die ersten”). From Schader’s perspective, the collection comprises a series of “Momentaufnahmen der Frauenemanzipation im 20. Jahrhundert” [snapshots of women’s emancipation in the 20th century], with four autobiographical stories in particular centring on the complex negotiation of a woman’s place in society through the figures of mother and daughter (“Die ersten”)—a viewpoint that enables and justifies a feminist interpretation of Munro’s writing.

Although some reviewers seem reluctant to subscribe to a definitive reading or classification of Munro’s work, the possibility of a feminist reading features prominently—if not always explicitly—in the majority of critical comments. Interestingly, some of the reviewers

challenge the relevance of the “women’s writing” label when applied to Munro. Mayer suggests that “Weil ihre Charaktere häufig Frauen sind, wurden Kritiker verleitet, von Frauenliteratur zu sprechen, was so plausibel ist, wie das Werk von Philip Roth oder Michel Houellebecq oder Martin Amis unter Männerliteratur abzuheften” [Because her characters are often women, critics were tempted to speak of “women’s literature,” which is as plausible as classifying the work of Philip Roth or Michel Houellebecq or Martin Amis as men’s literature]. Friedrich-Freksa, while reviewing *Liebes Leben*, similarly rejects the label of “Frauenliteratur”; she points out that generally Munro’s stories are “nicht explizit feministisch” [not explicitly feminist] but indicates that *Liebes Leben* may be more directly so in its treatment of female experiences and gendered roles (“Seht her”). She then moves on to problematize all historical critical engagement with Munro’s fiction through the gendered lens: “Viele Leserinnen und Kritikerinnen lieben Alice Munros Geschichten, viele männliche Buchkenner und Literaturkritiker haben sich nie mit ihrem Werk befasst, obwohl Munro seit Langem als herausragende Autorin gilt” [Many female readers and critics love Alice Munro’s stories, many male book connoisseurs and literary critics have never engaged with her work, although Munro has long been regarded as an outstanding author] (“Seht her”). These comments demonstrate a distinct trend towards more acknowledgment of feminist potential in Munro’s later works and map out possible pathways for their gender-aware critical recontextualization; at the same time, reception of these later collections in the German-speaking cultural context reflects and builds on the decades-long history of Munro translations—most of them authored by Zerning.

While multiple critical challenges and disagreements outlined in the German-language reviews of *Zu viel Glück* and *Liebes Leben* speak to the ongoing process of critical re-evaluation of Munro’s work in light of her Nobel Prize fame and the presumed end of her literary career, it

is significant that the domestic reception marks these narratives as transplanted into the target language culture. The sheer number of critical responses and their in-depth perspectives on the author's work indicate sustained and consistent interest in Munro's writing; furthermore, the majority of reviewers' comments and analyses are informed by and find themselves in a dialogue with Zerning's translating approach. The figures of the author and the translator are inextricably intertwined in the eyes of the German-language readership, resulting in the translator's substantial (even though not entirely intended) extratextual visibility and the perception of Zerning as Munro's creative co-author.

### ***Conclusion***

The analysis of the translation-related peritextual and epitextual materials shows that all four translators had limited visibility in their respective translating and publication processes. In most respects, their peritextual presence was kept to a minimum, and their subordinated hierarchical positions precluded them from making some of their preferred creative choices, as many of the final publishing decisions—such as the book titles or cover art—were guided by marketing rather than creative considerations. (It also has to be noted that these constraints are not dissimilar to the limitations faced by authors in their publication processes). The examples of translator-authored peritexts were only found in the cases of the two Russian translators, with the most significant peritextual space claimed by Stepanov's detailed end notes. The most notable instance of the publisher's translator-centred peritext was Zerning's bio included in the publication of *Liebes Leben*, which markedly contributed to the translator's visibility and elevated her status. In the cases of Borovikova and, particularly, Kononenko, any markers of the translator's presence were either minimal, implicit, or lacking.



Yet, in all four cases the available peritextual framing of the target texts was found to be reflective of the translators' chosen strategies—even though those were not always consistent with the publishers' perspectives. Peritextual analysis revealed significant inconsistencies between the translator's and the publisher's visions of the texts, their prospective target audiences, and the authorial figure in the cases of Borovikova's *Dear Life* and, to an even greater extent, Stepanov's *Too Much Happiness*. Examination of the same peritextual elements, supported by the translators' epitexts (including the Translators' Questionnaires, translator-authored articles, and interviews), was able to confirm my initial findings relating to Stepanov's domestication tendency and personal alignment with the dominant narratives of the Russian literary establishment, Borovikova's subtle resistance to the normative editorial practices and doubly-oriented negotiation of cultural differences, Kononenko's reliance on feminist translation principles and ideologically charged resistant position in reframing the target culture's perspective on Munro's writing and authorial figure, and Zerning's deliberate invisibility coupled with nuanced approach to the representation of femininity. It is also of utmost significance that in all four cases paratext indicates the translators' (and publishers') treatment of gender and feminism-related themes as the key point of departure in framing the translated texts, defining prospective readerships, and shaping Munro's critical reception in the respective target cultures.

It is remarkable that for each of the four translators their limited paratextual visibility (whether forced or chosen) was at least in part compensated by their more prominent presence in the epitexts, such as Stepanov's academic paper, Borovikova's personal blog, Zerning's interviews, and Kononenko's articles (which were not directly connected to her project of translating Munro but nevertheless outlined her translating position and its theoretical

background). Despite their unwillingness to claim more peritextual spaces for their own comments or self-expression, three of the four translators showed initiative in authoring such translation-centred epitexts (with the exception of Zerning who was approached by her interviewers). Moreover, the same three translators agreed to detail their translating experiences in the Translators' Questionnaires submitted for this study; both facts suggest that these translators may not be entirely satisfied with their status in the hierarchical structure of authority or with the extent of creative freedom and agency they are allowed. The only translator who in some respects reaches the status close to that of the writer's co-author is Zerning, who owes this distinction and her personal cultural capital to her consistent decades-long engagement with Munro's literary legacy. Yet, as the other three examples show, in the absence of such recognition translators may still be able to find alternative ways to seek visibility and assert their creative authority.

The very existence of such attempts and motivations demonstrates how empowering the translators' visibility can be—particularly in the collaborative framework where authority is, by definition, shared. However, visibility cannot be unambiguously equated with power; rather, under certain circumstances, the translator's refusal to insert themselves into the target text (or paratext) may be an authoritative move constituting an expression of the translator's agency (as in Zerning's case). The significance of such agency and power can be illustrated by multiple correlations and interconnections observed between the translators' approaches, their paratextual presences, and the respective literary reception of their translations in their target cultures. As shown above, Stepanov's translating effort is informed by the Russian critics' early responses to Munro's work and, in turn, affects all subsequent translations and criticisms; Borovikova's and Kononenko's approaches seek to redefine the nature of such earlier critical engagement and

counteract its long-lasting impact in their cultural contexts; and Zerning, because of her unique translating positionality, is the one who has herself largely defined the nature of Munro's reception in the German-language cultural space. The strength of Zerning's position, supported by the available peritexts and epitexts—despite the translator's own preference for invisibility—is the reason why the German scenario demonstrates the only cultural transfer process among the three examined ones that so far may be deemed successful. In the framework of the collaborative translation model, recognition of the translator's unique positioning and personal authority may become the key factor deciding the translation's cultural outcome.

## Conclusion

From the very beginning, this study proceeded from the premise of translation as an empowered creative process centred on the translators' agency and autonomy—in the broadest understanding, “an act of power” (Pausch ii). While the conventional view of translation effectively denies that translators possess any power in the process, conceptualizing their role rather as that of a transparent and voiceless vessel, contemporary translation theories tend to emphasize the authority of the translating subject, often without due consideration of the practical institutional and/or hierarchical constraints the translators may be facing. My project, based on the case studies of Alice Munro translations into Russian (by Andrei Stepanov and Tat'iana Borovikova), Ukrainian (Ievheniia Kononenko), and German (Heidi Zerning), aimed to investigate the nature of literary translators' creative agency and any factors that may be potentially limiting it to determine how the translators' authority (or lack thereof) may be shaping the wider cultural transfer processes.

The results of the study indicate that a consistent and traceable translating project informed by the translators' agency was present in each of the scenarios, and that in each case the translators' choices, motivations, and strategies directly impacted the critical reception of the translated texts in their respective target cultures. At the same time, all four translators operated under significant (albeit to various degrees) cultural or policy-related constraints imposed on them by the hierarchical structures of authority prevalent in their publishing industries. This conclusion is supported by the multiple textual and extratextual presences and influences framing the target texts in specific ways and ultimately pointing to the collaborative nature of every translation project under consideration. My analysis of the four case studies also suggests that—

precisely because of this collaborative polyphony—open acknowledgement of the translators’ role and institutional recognition of their status may be an essential factor contributing to the success of the cultural transfer. The fact that the translators’ agency is invariably constrained by the context they operate in does not diminish their narrative authority; if anything, it calls for more visibility and empowerment of the translating subjects.

The overview of the most pertinent translation theories in Chapter 1 demonstrated that the transition towards acknowledgement and encouragement of the translators’ agency signals the general direction in which the discipline of Translation Studies has been evolving for decades—and indicates its current long-term outlook. Valerie Henitiuk posits that feminist translation theories have effectively and irrevocably transformed the field by demonstrating that “[f]eminist translation can function and indeed has functioned as both critique and creative innovation. [...] Feminist translators have paradoxically located their challenge to patriarchal oppression in aggressive appropriation of an otherwise recalcitrant text” (“Feminism” 259). The innovative and subversive theoretical perspectives of feminist scholars have left an indelible mark on the entire discipline, contributing to its profound re-orientation. The concepts of equivalence and fidelity requiring a transparent carryover of meaning and essentially erasing the translator’s presence are no longer dominating theoretical discussions of translation. However, they still function as expectations that translators encounter in their professional capacity—particularly in “minor” or “peripheral” cultural contexts that have been slower to adopt global theoretical advancements. From a practical point of view, justifying the translators’ creative autonomy and the right for textual intervention is still a challenge; at best, it is seen as an inevitable evil or an immanent flaw of the translation process rather than its valuable aspect. One of the key goals of my study was to explore this discrepancy and to contribute to normalizing the

view of the translators' agency as an essential part and the driving force of the transcultural literary process. My theoretical argument has indicated that these considerations need to be central in approaching translation analysis: any evaluation of a translation's quality should be reoriented towards the expectation of difference resulting from conscious and purposeful intercultural mediation, with the factors of context and ethics serving as the main quality criteria.

Building on this theoretical position, I have proposed a translation analysis methodology based on Antoine Berman's model of positive criticism that prioritizes translators' decision-making within the framework of textual "correspondence" (which combines the aspects of poeticity and the translator's ethics) over considerations of faithfulness. By combining textual and paratextual analytical strategies with the focus on target culture reception, my methodology demonstrated the importance of a consistent translator-centred approach to the translation analysis. The study of the translators' backgrounds, opinions, and motivations alongside the texts they produce and the implications of both their status and their decisions for the critical reception of the respective target texts is meant to foreground the possibilities and limitations of the translators' power. As my analysis has shown, this methodological model is able to visualize the translators' decision-making processes, multiple-sided negotiations of meaning production, and outcomes of the translating choices that may otherwise remain hidden. When applied to this study's corpus texts, it proved effective in uncovering non-transparent interconnections between the translations outside of their relationships with the source text, showcasing some non-conventional activist translation practices, and questioning the strategies that may turn out to be inherently problematic. It is also my hope that this revised methodology may be helpful in normalizing—and justifying—the concepts of the translators' interventionism and visibility in a wider sense, with due account for the associated risks and constraints.

The first step of my methodological model centred on Munro's source texts as the starting point for the translators' diverging projects and the baseline for further contrastive analysis. My close readings of the six short stories established the complex relationship between femininity and the societal structures of power as the central theme for the entire corpus. While showing significant variety in terms of storylines, style, and narrative strategies, the selected pieces are nevertheless united by their focus on the gendered perspectives of their female protagonists and/or narrators, their marginalized experiences, and negotiation of their vulnerability. After examining Munro's relationship with the ideas of feminism and the history of the feminist scholars' engagement with the writer's oeuvre, I demonstrated that her works, though not explicitly feminist, can be—and consistently have been—analyzed through a feminist critical lens. My interpretation of the author's overarching narrative project is rooted in her ties with the feminist ideologies of her time as much as in Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "minor literature" (as applied to Munro's work by Adrian Hunter): the proposition that Munro, in her writing, is constructing an alternative, deliberately "minor" and "peripheral" literary tradition finds its expression not only in her consistent privileging of women's storytelling perspectives, but also in her regionalism, commitment to the "non-prestigious" short prose genre, her insistence on disrupting linear narrative structures, her questioning and undermining of her own authorial voice, and her constant navigation of narrative omissions and silences. Without downplaying the fact that Munro's fiction, with all its intended "peripherality," still remains a part of the globally dominant (and largely white) English-language literary canon, I have argued that her version of "minor literature" is distinctly gendered as feminine, at the levels of both content and form, and profoundly subversive. This interpretation of Munro's narrative project allowed me to formulate and substantiate a feminist reading of the six corpus texts to serve as a

basis for the subsequent translation analysis. My findings suggest that such a reading constitutes an intelligible subtext to the selected short stories, framing and informing a reader's experience. In the context of literary translation, the translator's sensitivity to this subtext—or acknowledgement thereof—would be essential for their target-language representation of the literary work in its entirety, with all complexity of its explicit and embedded meanings and imagery.

The central part of my methodological process, focusing on a comparative analysis between the available Russian, Ukrainian, and German translations of the six selected Munro stories, indicated that precisely the translators' response to the feminist subtext of the corpus narratives and their resulting representations of femininity and women's identities in their respective target texts was the key point of divergence between the translated versions. Despite my initial assumption that at least in some scenarios the translators' agency may have been repressed by institutional influences, consistent translating projects informed by the translators' personal positions, as well as by their respective cultural horizons, were in fact present and traceable in all the case studies. However, the manner and degree of the translators' interventions revealed significant differences.

As my analysis has shown, in the case of Stepanov's translations of "Too Much Happiness" and "Child's Play" the feminist undertones of Munro's stories were consistently downplayed, and the representation of female characters in the target texts was often unsympathetic and condescending, with the translator's narrative voice typically leaning into the male perspective. I have attempted to demonstrate that this approach does not only reflect "the dangers of male translators being blind to feminocentric discourse systems" (Henitiuk, "Feminism" 266) but also speaks to the problematics of the gendered power differential between



the author's and the translator's projects as well as the existing cultural and ideological biases informing the translation. Stepanov's goal in presenting Munro's work to the Russian-language readership is to frame the Canadian writer as a loyal (though distinctly secondary in significance) follower of the Russian literary tradition represented first and foremost by Anton Chekhov, Leo Tolstoy, and Fyodor Dostoevsky. The translator's attempts to acculturate Munro's fiction in Russian based on these male-dominated literary models to a significant extent resulted in the re-gendering of the author's narrative strategies, while serving the imperialist project of asserting the cultural superiority and prevalence of the Russian literary canon. Within the framework of the source-target textual relationship, Stepanov clearly conceptualizes the Russian tradition as the global cultural core, with Canadian literature representing an inferior and imitative periphery—thus symbolically reversing the conventional dichotomy between the “original” and “copy” implied in the process of translation. While Stepanov's consistent accentuation of Russianness in his translations of Munro could be seen as an expression of his personal agency and the form of textual appropriation favoured by the feminist scholars of translation, his motivations are in fact opposite to those envisioned by the feminist translation theories. The translator's insensitivity to the nuances of the author's narrative project—as well as its cultural context—and his lack of self-reflexivity regarding his own cultural biases result both in the substantial obscuring of femininity and imposition of the Russian imperialist narratives in the target texts. This translating approach is problematic precisely because it leads to the erasure of essential embedded meanings and constitutes a form of overwriting, rather than rewriting, allowing the translator's agency to become co-opted by the target culture's dominant ideological values. Consequently, Stepanov's project, despite the high literary quality of the final translated texts, demonstrates an ethical failure that borders on misrepresentation.

Borovikova's approach to the "Finale" stories, on the contrary, shows more respect for the author's narrative strategies and sensitivity to the gendered aspects of Munro's source texts while attempting to balance her double allegiance to the source and target cultures. Positioning herself as an insider both in relation to the Canadian and Russian cultural contexts, the translator consistently highlights the centrality of women's perspectives and experiences in her target texts—without, however, emphasizing the feminist potentiality of Munro's writing to avoid causing any discomfort to her Russian readership. At the same time, Borovikova's translating project displays signs of resistance to Stepanov's tendency of subsuming Munro under the concept of Russian literary tradition to the exclusion of the writer's unique authorial identity.

The signs of a resistant translating approach are also present in Kononenko's project, which approaches Munro's texts from an openly feminist position and creates a powerful counter-narrative to Stepanov's Russian-language versions of "Too Much Happiness" and "Child's Play." Because of Ukraine's largely bilingual population and the long-term dominance of Russian-language publications in the country's book market, Stepanov's translations were the first ones to present Munro to the Ukrainian readership. Kononenko, in her Ukrainian-language versions, attempts to counteract the impact of that previous translation. She consistently reinstates Munro's gendered narrative strategies, accentuating women's perspective as the key characteristic of the source texts and aligning her own narrative voice with those of the author's female protagonists and narrators. As a result, the translator's interventions play up the feminist potentiality of the texts. Further, Kononenko dismantles any stylistic or cultural affinities with Russia constructed by Stepanov in his version. Drawing from her own cultural affiliations and ideological beliefs, she chooses to foreignize the markers of Russian culture in the eyes of her Ukrainian target audience, thus contextualizing Munro's writing in light of the political and

cultural climate of present-day Ukraine. On the basis of these considerations, I have concluded that Kononenko's project can be considered a resistant retranslation of Stepanov's earlier version. The fact that the translator's resistance in this scenario is oriented towards the Russian translation rather than the source text itself points to the unique precarity of literary translation into Ukrainian as a cultural practice—and also suggests how relevant activist translation practices, with their post-colonial connotations, can be in a similar context of a “minor” literature. The biggest difference between Stepanov's and Kononenko's recontextualizing interventions—apart from a substantial power differential between their respective target cultures—lies in the area of translating ethics. Whereas the former overwrites the embedded textual meanings and elements of the authorial style to frame the translated texts in a certain way, the latter visualizes the implicit subtext and overlays an additional layer of meaning that will only be legible to her specific target audience, without, however, attempting to erase or distort the author's own voice. This key divergence between the two translating projects allowed me to classify Stepanov's approach as problematic while viewing Kononenko's effort as a successful example of an activist translation practice.

By contrast, Zerning's project demonstrated the lowest degree of textual intrusions among all the translating approaches. Out of the four translators, Zerning is the one who has been most consistently engaged with Munro's writing and the only one able to rely on her readers' and domestic critics' familiarity with the writer's earlier works (most of which were previously translated by Zerning herself). An examination of her translating strategies indicates that maintaining the author's focus on women-centred perspectives and paying close attention to the gender-related aspects of the texts are the translator's main priorities. At the same time, Zerning tends to avoid any noticeable textual interventions, preferring to keep her presence largely

invisible. Her mediation appears to be more straightforward and less complicated by cultural and ideological factors than in the cases of Russian and Ukrainian translations—Zerning rather concentrates on the literary qualities of Munro's texts. She systematically (although subtly) elevates the author's style by infusing it with alliteration, idioms, and metaphoric language; her translating decisions also display some elements of domestication, which results in downplaying Munro's Canadianness and regionalism in the target texts. In both cases, the translator's choices can be explained by her commitment to maintaining and enhancing Munro's status as an important and globally renowned literary authority. If the author's recognition in the German-language literary polysystem is based on her international cultural capital, then domestic translations need to support and accommodate this established perception.

The intersections of the translators' positions, their visibility, and the resulting literary reception of the translated texts were the main focus at the last stage of my methodological process, which examined various types of the target texts' paratextual accompaniment. Building on Gérard Genette's paratextual theory—revised for its relevance for the translation analysis—I studied the available translator-centred and translation-related peritextual and epitextual materials as a way to highlight the translators' powers and limitations in the translating process and the links between their decision-making and the outcomes of the respective literary transfers. According to Henitiuk, "A close analysis of translators' attitudes as expressed in prefaces, introductions, and notes usefully reveals the gendered ways that readers have been led to understand and respond to female authors [...] Due attention to the mediation involved in a specific image of author and work [...] helps us bear in mind the inherently untransparent nature of the act of translation" ("Feminism" 262–263). I supplemented this approach by including the

translators' first-hand accounts and the critical reviews of their target texts into the scope of my study.

This methodological approach to paratext provided some important insights into the nature of the translators' agency in all the case studies. It revealed that all four translators operated under multiple hierarchical constraints imposed on them by their publishers and editors and were only awarded limited visibility—which, nevertheless, varied on a case-to-case basis. No translator was given an opportunity to write a preface or an introduction to the translated publications; however, Stepanov was allowed to include his lengthy and extremely detailed end notes—whereas the commentary space provided to Borovikova was much more limited. With both Russian translation projects, my analysis of the publisher's peritext demonstrated significant inconsistencies between the translators' visions of the author's work and the publisher's intentions in presenting it, which were mostly accounted for by commercial considerations. Conversely, in the cases of Kononenko and Zerning the translators' overall low visibility, manifested in the absence of any translator-authored notes or commentaries, was combined with peritextual accompaniment that reflected and supported their translating choices and approaches: the editor's footnotes, the introductory note, and the back cover material in the Ukrainian publication of *Too Much Happiness* and—as the most important demonstration of the translator's institutional recognition—Zerning's biographical note on the back cover of the German edition of *Dear Life*. In terms of the translators' hierarchical relationships with their editors, Stepanov, once again, found himself in the most comfortable position, as he was closely collaborating with his wife in the editorial role. At the same time, Borovikova's and, to a lesser extent, Kononenko's Translators' Questionnaires report significant pressures and limitations in the respective translator-editor relationships: both translators point to their lack of decision-making

power over the publications' cover design and, in some cases, editorial influences on the choice of titles (Borovikova) or textual decisions (Kononenko). While some of these tensions caused the translators to resist editorial requirements, most were not resolved in their favour. Zerning's interviews, on the other hand, point to a mutually respectful and friendly collaboration with her editors, with only minor disagreements involved. The differences among these four scenarios may to some extent be culture/policy-specific (as in the case of the Russian censorship tendencies noted by Borovikova), but they can also be attributed to the translators' personal statuses and culture capital—as well as the publishers' intentions regarding their presentation of the author and their respective commercial goals.

With regard to the translators' visibility, one of the most significant findings was the fact that three out of four translators, while navigating the creative limitations imposed on them, relied on various kinds of translator-authored epitexts as a way to counteract these constraints and, to some extent, the silencing of their voices. Their willingness to participate in the study and submit their Translators' Questionnaires already pointed to the fact that they appreciated an opportunity to speak out about their projects; in addition, Stepanov claimed that his academic article on Munro was written in lieu of a missing preface, and Borovikova used her personal blog as a platform to comment both on her translating process and the Russian critics' responses to her translations. Kononenko also detailed her translating position and experiences, as well as her general views on translation, in multiple think pieces and interviews (although not in connection with her Munro project specifically).

In this framework, Zerning presents an interesting exception as the only translator who consistently chooses invisibility (or at least minimum visibility) both at the textual and extratextual levels. As the translator herself admits, she prefers to lead a very private lifestyle

without sharing any personal opinions or professional experiences with the public; the few times when Zerning was compelled to comment on her work or participate in any public events in a professional capacity, it was done at the initiative of either her editors or media reporters (including the two interviews used in this study in lieu of the Translator's Questionnaire). At the same time, as I have demonstrated, the translator's long-term engagement with Munro's texts has earned her esteemed reputation both with her publisher and her readership, up to the point of creating a steady association between Zerning and Munro in the eyes of German-language readers. This established relationship of familiarity, along with the fact that Zerning's name has become synonymous with the highest standard of quality in literary translation, means that the translator has been awarded substantial recognition and respect—manifested in the fact that her comments are sought and that her bio appears both on her publisher's website and on her book's back cover—without having to take an activist stance or draw attention to her mediating presence. She can have the freedom of staying invisible precisely because she is already treated as an authority in her own right—a consideration that speaks in favour of furthering the institutional support of the translators and elevating their hierarchical status in the editorial relationships.

From the standpoint of the outcome of a literary transfer effected through translation, my methodological approach has led me to the conclusion that Zerning's translation project is the only one that can be considered successful in terms of transplanting foreign literary works into the target culture. My paratextual analysis suggested that in all four cases the translators' choices and visibility were closely interconnected with the resulting critical reception of their target texts. Thus, Stepanov's translating approach was initially informed by the early critical responses to Munro's writing, which were rather dismissive and condescending, and, in turn, his translations

later contributed to the one-sided and discriminatory perspective on the writer's work perpetuated by Russian literary critics. Borovikova's comments and translating decisions show that she resisted and attempted to reframe such critical reactions to Munro's fiction in the Russian cultural context, whereas Kononenko's resistance was oriented towards distancing her Ukrainian readership from the opinions and biases of the Russian literary establishment to create a space for an independent literary discussion and reception of Munro in Ukrainian. In the case of both Russian translations, the success of their cultural transfer was substantially undermined by the problematic translating approaches, questionable and inconsistent marketing strategies on the part of the publisher, and overwhelmingly disparaging critical responses (although such translating projects as Borovikova's could potentially effect some changes in the long term). Kononenko's project, despite marking a significant milestone in the presentation of Canadian women authors to Ukrainian readers and contributing to the emerging tradition of feminist and activist translation practices, did not yet attract enough attention to support the discussion of its cultural transfer or to enable any general conclusions about its prospects—partially, as Kononenko herself states, due to the publisher's insufficient support of the translator. However, Zerning's case study is completely different in this respect. For all intents and purposes, Zerning's decades-long engagement with Munro's work defined and shaped the writer's image in the eyes of the German-language audience, while also determining general directions for any critical reception of Munro's fiction in German. Zerning's commitment to the writer established Munro's reputation in the German-speaking world, while earning a reputation for the translator herself, and both processes were consistently supported by the publisher's involvement and by the reviewers' responses. As a result, Munro's wide recognition and prominent status in the



German literary polysystem can be theorized as a product of joint efforts of the translator, her publisher and editorial teams, and her critics.

This overview of the mutual connections and dependencies between the translators' projects and their literary reception illustrates the essential role of the translators' visibility and demonstrates that recognition and support of the translator is an important prerequisite of a successful cultural transfer. Such visibility may be more prominent and more easily attainable if a translator possesses their own substantial cultural capital or chooses to take an activist stance; however, reliance on the translator's name or activism alone may not be sufficient. A successful integration of a translated product into the target culture's literary polysystem requires consistent involvement and/or acknowledgement of the translator in the decision-making processes both at the levels of textual production and promotion, as well as public discussions and critical reception of the translated work.

My analytical approach to the reception and visibility has also shown that equating visibility with the translators' empowerment would be a simplistic proposition. While the translators' decision (or opportunity) to speak out and to draw attention to their mission of intercultural mediation does empower the translators and elevate their hierarchical status, Zerning's case study indicates that deliberate invisibility may be the product—or even the source—of a translator's power as well. Not all translators have to take an activist position, and visibility cannot be used as yet another normative requirement for the translators to meet. In fact, real empowerment for the translators would mean being able to decide at their own discretion what mode of engagement or degree of visibility they would be comfortable with. In certain political and cultural contexts, visibility might even mean dangerous exposure, making the

translators vulnerable to judgment or even persecution. Therefore, any discussion of the translators' visibility needs to take into account culturally specific and contextual factors.

However, the translators' visibility can also function as an important ethical consideration: making the translator's input visible means being honest with readers and literary critics alike by highlighting the subjective and non-transparent nature of the translating process. Visibility makes the translators accountable for their decisions, providing an essential ethical limitation for the translators' creative agency—and a key criterion of the translation quality. This study has consistently argued for the relevance of a justified ethical approach as an integral element in the process of literary translation; in the absence of such an obvious benchmark as the problematic concept of fidelity, adherence to the guiding principles of ethics, recognition, and accountability may open up an avenue towards the translators' empowerment while allowing the pitfalls of distortion and mistranslation to be avoided.

Yet this does not mean that such principles apply to the translators alone. As I have previously shown, any published translation is a product of a collective effort, where the translator takes the centre stage and bears the brunt of responsibility but typically does not have the power to actively shape the outcome in all the respects that matter. A translated literary work constitutes a polyphony of multiple contributing voices—besides those of the author and the translator themselves—and significant creative decisions are often made for other than creative reasons, or are left to the most authoritative, rather than most knowledgeable, parties. Precisely because of this powerful but uniquely constrained hierarchical position from which literary translators operate, their recognition and visibility cannot be their concern—or their responsibility—alone. To be truly empowered, translators need to be involved, consulted and acknowledged at all stages of the textual production and critical reception as well as at all levels

of the publication hierarchy, to the extent that it benefits their position and the goals of their projects. The conceptualization of translation as a multiple-sided collaboration may be seen as an additional infringement on the translator's powers, but in fact it opens an opportunity for multiple-sided institutional support, which is key to the successful realization of the translators' agency. The collaborations cannot remain unsigned by their key contributors; and in that sense, the entire evolution of the discipline of Translation Studies signifies that the translators' names truly belong on the covers.

It is my hope that this study makes a productive contribution to the field's transition towards more acknowledgement of the translators' authority and to the normalization of non-conventional translating practices. The scope of the project, although somewhat limited by the number of the texts and target languages involved, provided some interesting insights into the nature and role of the translators' engagement with their material within a comparative framework. Some other noteworthy limitations include the unavailability of one of the translators for direct comments, the fact that the information obtained from and about the other three translators was sometimes fragmented, and the lack of input from the publishers or editorial teams involved in their projects. The main difficulty with conducting translator-centred research is the need to take into account the considerations of privacy and confidentiality, as well as the translators' tendencies of self-silencing and self-censorship.

Nevertheless, I believe that the methodology of translation analysis proposed within the scope of my study can contribute to the development of the translator-centred analytical toolkit. Apart from combining both textual and extratextual research methods, it models the translators' own involvement in the process of translation analysis. Furthermore, it outlines various types of paratextual sources that can be used to gain a deeper understanding of the translators' projects

and their impact on the outcomes of cultural transfer. More generally, this methodological model has the potential to bridge the existing gaps between current theoretical conceptualizations of the translating process and its practical realizations by highlighting the role of the translators' personal agency, with its opportunities and its constraints, within the existing structures of authority, by indicating the culture-specific missions of literary translators as well as cultural implications of their visibility or activism, and by pointing out potential ways forward for the field's further reorientation towards translators' empowerment.

### Appendix 1. Andrei Stepanov's Questionnaire

**Q:** <sup>1415</sup>How familiar were you with Alice Munro's writing before you became involved in the translation of her short story collection *Too Much Happiness*? How did your opinion on Munro as a writer change in the process of translation (or did it)? Did her 2013 Nobel Prize win affect the decision to translate or the translating process in any way? [Насколько вы были знакомы с творчеством Элис Манро до начала работы над переводом сборника "Слишком много счастья"? Как изменилось (и изменилось ли) ваше мнение о писательнице в процессе работы над текстом? Повлияло ли присуждение ей Нобелевской премии в 2013 г. на решение о переводе или на процесс перевода?]

**A:** I had never read Munro before she received the Nobel Prize. After that, I read several of her collections at once, and, because I was working on Chekhov a lot, I could not help but develop an interest in her writing. The Azbuka publishing house accepted my proposal to translate *Too Much Happiness*, and it became the first Munro collection to be published in Russia. As far as my opinion of Munro is concerned, she is a housewife who writes about housewives and for housewives. But she does it with such stylistic and psychological finesse that it puts her on par with great writers, and first and foremost with Chekhov (who was an ordinary doctor and wrote (among other things) about ordinary doctors for ordinary doctors). [Я не читал Манро до вручения ей Нобелевской премии. После этого я сразу прочел несколько

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<sup>14</sup> The Appendices include the Translators' Questionnaires provided by Stepanov, Borovikova, and Kononenko. Zerning's questionnaire could not be included, as the translator was not available for comment.

<sup>15</sup> In each questionnaire, the questions were submitted in the respondent's language of choice. All responses in this questionnaire were initially given in Russian and translated into English by me. The original Russian text is provided after each question and response.

сборников и, поскольку я много занимался Чеховым, не мог не заинтересоваться ее творчеством. Мое предложение о переводе “Слишком много счастья” приняло издательство “Азбука”, и этот сборник первым из книг Манро вышел в России. Мое отношение к Манро такое: это домохозяйка, которая пишет о домохозяйках и для домохозяек. Но делает она это столь стилистически и психологически тонко, что встает в один ряд с великими писателями, и прежде всего с Чеховым (который был обычным врачом, писавшем (в том числе) об обычных врачах для обычных врачей)].

**Q:** What aspects of the texts did you find most challenging in the process of translation? (We are focusing mostly on the short stories “Child’s Play” and “Too Much Happiness,” but any information will be useful). Did you use an interlinear gloss? Did you consult any other translators/linguists/literary scholars to ensure better understanding of the texts? [Какие аспекты текста представляли наибольшую сложность в процессе перевода? (Нас интересуют в первую очередь рассказы “Детская игра” и “Слишком много счастья”, но полезной будет любая информация). Использовали ли вы подстрочник? Обращались ли за консультациями к другим переводчикам/лингвистам/литературоведам для лучшего понимания текста?]

**A:** I work on my own, and I have been responsible for translating more than 20 books on various topics. In this particular case, I did not have to ask any colleagues for help. As far as I remember, the novella “Too Much Happiness” posed the biggest difficulties. I had to make some minor corrections in the Russian realia, and making sure that the characters speak Russian in a natural manner also required certain efforts. Besides, the short story “Wood” had quite a bit of specialized terminology. As far as I can recall, I did not find “Child’s Play” challenging at all. [Я

работаю самостоятельно, на моем счету уже более 20 книг самой разной тематики, в данном случае обращаться за помощью к коллегам не приходилось. Насколько я помню, наибольшую сложность вызвала повесть “Слишком много счастья”, там пришлось сделать несколько мелких исправлений в русских реалиях и приложить некоторые усилия, чтобы герои заговорили по-русски естественно. Кроме того, в рассказе “Лес” оказалось довольно много специальной терминологии. “Детская игра”, насколько я помню, трудностей не вызвала].

**Q:** Would you say that fidelity/adequacy of translation was your main goal, or did you have any other quality criteria? Did you base your work on any specific translation theories (and if yes, then which ones in particular)? [Являлась ли точность/адекватность перевода основной целью или были выбраны иные критерии качества? Опирались ли вы в процессе работы на конкретные теории перевода (и если да, то какие)?]

**A:** My main translation criteria are “this has to sound natural in Russian” and “the most accurate word has to be selected at each specific moment.” I am a scholar of Russian Philology, I have never worked in Translation Theory, and my approach is purely intuitive. [Мои критерии перевода—“это должно звучать по-русски” и “выбор наиболее точного слова в каждый момент”. Я филолог-русист, никогда не занимался теорией перевода, работаю чисто интуитивно].

**Q:** How would you describe the degree of your creative freedom as a literary translator in the process of translation? Did you make any conscious or purposeful changes to the translated short stories, and if yes, then which ones and what were your objectives in making those decisions? [Как бы вы оценили степень своей творческой свободы как переводчика в

процессе работы над текстом? Вносили ли вы сознательно/целенаправленно какие-либо изменения в тексты рассказов, и если да, то какие и с какими целями?]

**A:** As I mentioned before, certain changes were introduced in “Too Much Happiness.” However, I preferred to comment on the author’s errors in the end notes: for instance, it is pretty clear that Munro never read the novella “Dream” by Anna Korvin-Krukovskaya, which was edited by Dostoevsky. I corrected her mistake not in the text itself, but in the end note. The same applies to the novella “The Nihilist Girl” by Sophia Kovalevsky herself. [Как я уже сказал выше, кое-что пришлось внести в повесть “Слишком много счастья”. Впрочем, я предпочитал отмечать ошибки в комментариях: так, Манро явно не читала повесть Анны Корвин-Круковской “Сон”, которая была отредактирована Достоевским. Я исправил ее ошибку не в тексте, а в комментарии. То же касается повести самой Софьи Ковалевской “Нигилистка”].

**Q:** How would you describe the editing process? How closely did you work together with the editor/publisher? Who made final decisions in case of disagreements? What were the editor’s most significant corrections/suggestions/requirements? To what extent is your initial textual version different from the final published product? [Как проходил процесс редактирования, насколько плотно вы сотрудничали с редактором/издательством в процессе, кто принимал окончательные решения в случае разногласий? Какими были наиболее существенные правки/корректировки/требования редактора? Насколько предложенная вами изначально версия отличается от окончательной опубликованной?]

**A:** My wife Alla Stepanova was the book’s editor, so we worked quite closely together. She has done a lot to make the book accessible and easy to read. I think this is a model editing



job. Throughout the entire book, you won't find instances of tautology or repetitions within several paragraphs of each other. We made all the decisions together after discussing them as a family. Stylistically, the published version is undoubtedly better than what I suggested initially. [Редактором книги была моя жена Алла Сергеевна Степанова, поэтому мы сотрудничали плотно. Она очень много сделала для легкости и читабельности книги, я считаю, что это образец редактуры. Во всей книге вы не найдете тавтологических повторов на расстоянии в несколько абзацев. Решения принимались после обсуждения на семейном совете. Стилистически опубликованный вариант несомненно лучше того, что предложил я изначально].

**Q:** Did you discuss with editors (or take into account in any respect) the social and gender themes of the short stories? How would you evaluate the significance of these themes for the translating and editing processes? [Обсуждалась ли с редакторами в каком-либо ключе (и принималась ли во внимание) гендерная и социальная тематика рассказов? Как бы вы оценили значимость этих тем в процессе перевода и редактирования?]

**A:** No, as far as I remember. For me, those issues are rather a subject for a study. As far as translation is concerned, only accuracy is important, and, since Munro does not use any specialized terminology, I did not have to rely on any theories. [Нет, насколько я помню. Для меня эти вопросы—предмет для исследования, в переводе важна только точность, а поскольку Манро не пользуется специальной терминологией, применять знания каких бы то ни было теорий мне не пришлось].

**Q:** Who suggested including the translator's end notes in the published collection? Why was this decision made? Did you discuss a possibility of including a translator-authored preface

or afterword, a translator's bio, etc.? [По чьей инициативе в сборник были включены примечания переводчика, почему было принято такое решение? Обсуждалась ли возможность сопроводить издание предисловием или послесловием переводчика, биографической справкой о переводчике и т.п.?]

**A:** It was my initiative. The purpose of the end notes is to explain to a potential reader what he may not know. The translator's bio seems excessive to me, this is not a common practice. Instead of a preface, I subsequently wrote an article on Munro and Chekhov. [По моей инициативе. Задача примечаний—разъяснить потенциальному читателю то, что он может не знать. Биографическая справка о переводчике мне представляется лишней, это не принято. Вместо предисловия я впоследствии написал статью о Манро и Чехове].

**Q:** How would you describe the response of Russian literary critics and scholars to the publication of *Too Much Happiness*? What was the role of translation for the critical reception? [Как бы вы оценили реакцию российских критиков/литературоведов на публикацию сборника “Слишком много счастья”? Какова была роль перевода в критических отзывах?]

**A:** I can hardly remember this. What stuck in my mind was an idea suggested by one of the female critics<sup>16</sup> that sometimes Munro goes off of newspaper headlines (instead of “painting from life”). In case of such short stories as “Dimensions,” it seems very probable. As a rule, critics do not notice the translator. Also, I would like to say in conclusion that, in addition to *Too Much Happiness*, I translated three more short stories, and there was one in particular (“Walking on Water”) that I believe is a genuine masterpiece. Overall, working with Munro's texts was a

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<sup>16</sup> The word originally used in Russian was “критикесса”—a distinctly gendered noun implying a certain degree of condescension.

great pleasure for me. I have never since got to translate another author that I would feel such a close affinity with. [Почти не помню этого. Мне запомнилась мысль одной критикессы о том, что Манро иногда отталкивается от газетной хроники происшествий (а не пишет "с натуры"). По отношению к таким рассказам, как "Измерения", это кажется весьма вероятным. Переводчика критики, как правило, не замечают. Еще хочу сказать в заключение, что я переводил не только сборник "Слишком много счастья", но и еще три рассказа, и там есть один ("Хождение по водам"), который представляется мне истинным шедевром. В целом работа над текстами Манро была большим удовольствием, столь близких мне авторов больше в моей переводческой практике пока не встречалось].

## Appendix 2. Tat'iana Borovikova's Questionnaire

**Q:** <sup>17</sup>Why were you initially interested in translating Munro's fiction and how did you become involved as a translator? How and why were particular texts/collections chosen for translation?

**A:** The editor of the publishing house I had been working with offered me Alice Munro's collection to translate. As far as I know, *Dear Life* was the first Munro collection that appeared in Russian translation<sup>18</sup>, and the decision to publish it was timed to the author's Nobel Prize in Literature win (2013), so it made sense to start with her latest collection (2012). The publisher knows that I live in Canada, and I am always asking for Canadian literature to translate, if at all possible, because knowing local realia makes a translator's life so much easier. [Сборник Элис Манро на перевод мне предложил редактор издательства, с которым я давно работала. "Dear Life", насколько мне известно, был первым сборником Манро, вышедшим в русском переводе, и выпустить его решили по случаю получения автором Нобелевской премии по литературе (2013), и потому логично было взять самый свежий ее сборник (2012). В издательстве знают, что я живу в Канаде, и я сама всегда прошу на перевод канадскую литературу, по возможности, так как знание местных реалий сильно облегчает жизнь переводчика].

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<sup>17</sup> All questions in this questionnaire were submitted in English; the first three responses were initially given in Russian and translated into English by me. The original Russian text is provided after each response. Halfway through the questionnaire, the translator switched to responding in English.

<sup>18</sup> According to the publisher's data, it was actually the third one after *Too Much Happiness* and *Runaway*.

**Q:** How familiar were you with Munro's work before you started translating it? Did you read any of her previously translated stories/collections in Russian? In your opinion, how well is Munro's writing represented in Russian translations?

**A:** Before I started working on Munro translations, I had read one or two of her stories in English, but nothing in Russian. As for how well Munro is represented in Russian translations, I cannot really say because I am not sufficiently familiar with them. Later, just out of curiosity, I read the Russian version of "A Real Life" translated by someone else; the quality of that translation left so much to be desired (the translator's lacking knowledge of Canadian rural realia let them down), but I do not know when that translation was done (perhaps, back at the time of the Iron Curtain), and besides, you can hardly judge by only one short story. As far as I know, current translations of Munro are done by good, knowledgeable translators. But again, without looking at a specific text, I cannot say anything. [До начала работы над переводом Манро я читала один или два ее рассказа на английском языке, на русском языке не читала ничего. Касательно того, насколько хорошо Манро представлена в русских переводах, не могу сказать, поскольку я с ними недостаточно знакома. Уже потом ради любопытства я прочла русский перевод рассказа "Настоящая жизнь", сделанного другим переводчиком; качество этого перевода оставляет желать лучшего (переводчика подвело именно незнание реалий канадской сельской жизни), но я не знаю, когда делался этот перевод (возможно, еще в эпоху железного занавеса), и кроме того, по одному рассказу делать выводы нельзя. Современные переводы Манро, насколько мне известно, делаются хорошими, знающими переводчиками. Но опять-таки, не глядя в конкретный текст, ничего сказать не могу.].

**Q:** Would you describe Alice Munro as a feminist author? Was feminism a factor in your understanding of Munro's work and your approach to translation? Were feminist themes or

imagery ever discussed with editors/publishers in the course of translation? In your opinion, how would/did a feminist interpretation of Munro's texts affect their chances of publication or their critical reception in Russia?

**A:** Feminism is such a polysemic word that it is impossible to give an unambiguous answer to the question whether Alice Munro is a feminist author. I think that she is just describing life as is, objectively, without relying on any ideology. But if we proceed from the assumption that feminism defends women's right to have their own opinions about the world, then Munro is undoubtedly a feminist writer. In almost all of her stories, we can see the unfolding events through the eyes of women (whether Munro herself, which happens less frequently, or one of her female characters). [Феминизм—слишком многозначное слово, чтобы можно было однозначно ответить на вопрос, является ли Элис Манро феминистическим автором. Мне кажется, она просто описывает жизнь как есть, объективно, не вдаваясь ни в какую идеологию. Но если считать, что феминизм отстаивает право женщин иметь собственный взгляд на мир, тогда, безусловно, Манро—феминистический автор. Почти во всех ее рассказах мы видим происходящее женскими глазами (либо самой Манро, что реже, либо одной из героинь)].

**Q:** What were the most interesting/memorable aspects of the texts (*Dear Life*) and the biggest challenges you encountered during the translation process? What strategies did you use to resolve these difficulties? Did you seek anyone's assistance to find solutions (the author herself, editors, critics, experts, etc.)? Did you rely on any particular translation theories or approaches?

**A:** <sup>19</sup>Munro's prose is extremely compact and concentrated. I felt that immediately when I started working on "To Reach Japan," the first story in the *Dear Life* collection. It is very similar to the actual Japanese poetry which may contain a treasure trove of images in just a few words. So, it took some time for me to "get into" her style to make sure that the text was not inflated as a result of the translation but at the same time no part of the meaning was lost. Not sure about strategies though. I usually just try to get a good grasp of the author's style and think in a way similar to hers but in Russian. Not sure if that makes sense, sorry. The problem is that sometimes I understand perfectly well what the English text means but I have no idea how to say that in Russian so it makes sense and does not sound clumsy, or I may know how to say it but when I do one sentence turns into two paragraphs of text, and this definitely won't do.

**Q:** Did you ever make any conscious changes to the text suggested by your personal preferences or your interpretation of the author's intentions? If yes, could you explain the reasons behind such changes and provide examples? Was fidelity a requirement/criterion in your translation project? Was fidelity ever sacrificed for a better-quality target text?

**A:** Fidelity is always a requirement with me. I corrected an author once, a little, but it was another writer, not Munro. With Munro, I had to choose the narrator's gender in "Gravel," as I have already mentioned, so yes, I tried to understand the author's intentions and act accordingly. In general, I always strive to convey the author's meaning, as I understand it myself, so the readers can see the text as I see it, only in Russian. Darina, my editor, sometimes complains that this leads to my translations being too literal and sounding awkward in Russian, so we usually

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<sup>19</sup> All responses up until this point were initially given in Russian. This is where the translator switched to responding in English; this and all subsequent responses in Borovikova's questionnaire have not been translated.

find some middle ground, but again without losing the original meaning if this is humanly possible at all.

**Q:** How much creative freedom did you have in the process? In your opinion, to what extent would a translator's intervention in the text be acceptable? How would you define your role and your goals as a translator?

**A:** As I understand it, I have all the freedom in the world as long as the resulting translation says the same to the Russian reader as the source text, to the best of my knowledge and belief, says to me. I can do anything to achieve that. For example, in "A Real Life" (*Open Secrets*) the character sings several excerpts from songs that would be familiar to a Canadian reader but sound completely out of context to a Russian one. I have used quotations from different places of the same songs in the translation, to make it clear to the reader why on Earth the character sings this particular song when she suffers from unrequited love.

Also (though this never happened with Munro specifically), I tend to correct factual errors made by the author, especially if it refers to Russian history or culture so that a Russian reader would notice the discrepancy immediately. I may also add a footnote saying that the author has made a mistake and this event actually happened in such-and-such a way.

Again, my goal as a translator is to be true to the author as much as possible. It does not mean word-by-word translation, God forbid, but conveying the author's meaning to the best of my abilities.

**Q:** Were your decisions during the translation process ever influenced by other parties (editors, publishers, etc.)? What were the editors' requirements, preferences, or most significant corrections? Were there any editorial policies you had to follow? Did other parties' inputs change your initial vision in any way?



**A:** Lately in Russia heavy censorship is imposed on publications. For example, in one of Munro's stories the character tries to say "fuck" but having been brought up as a "good girl" she cannot bring herself to say the word. This is important for the reader to better understand the character. I made her say "бля" in the translation, but the publisher removed that and put some neutral word instead, saying that obscene words cannot appear in the books positioned on the market as "books for women." This is ridiculous, because in that particular place if you remove the f-word the entire episode becomes totally meaningless. But such was the publisher's decision. In another case (not Munro and a different publisher) entire paragraphs were removed by censorship because they were related to drug-taking or child pornography. As a result, some places in the book no longer made any sense but apparently the publisher did not care about that.

**Q:** Did you have an opportunity to write a preface for the publication or to include translator's notes? Please comment on whether you chose to do so and why. How much influence (if any) did you have on other creative decisions pertaining to the publication? (Cover art design, illustrations, footnotes/endnotes, paratext, etc.). Finally, can you comment on the commercial success or critical reception of your translations (*Dear Life* or others)?

**A:** I usually add lots of footnotes to explain cultural or historical realities. Usually not a preface. Once, however, I insisted on adding a preface written by a literary historian because the book consisted mostly of literary games and allusions, and without that explanation it could be completely misunderstood. It also had about 40 pages of endnotes explaining the numerous allusions and quotations.

Cover art is usually either horrible or copied from the original English edition, and I have no say in that. Sometimes I also have no say in choosing the title of the Russian translation. Sometimes the cover art has nothing to do with the actual contents of the book.

Regarding illustrations, I once came across a photographer whose works would have made wonderful illustrations to one of the books I was working with. But when I talked to the publisher about that they said that they could not afford that—even extra 300 or 400 dollars would be an unacceptable overhead.

Cannot say anything about commercial success but seeing as most of my translations are reprinted several times (once in a while the publishers contact me to extend the copyright agreement or to make a new one for the existing translation) and the publisher is still in business it looks like they are successful commercially.

### Appendix 3. Ievheniia Kononenko's Questionnaire

**Q:** <sup>20</sup>Why and how did you become interested in Alice Munro's work and involved in translating the short story collection *Too Much Happiness*? Who initiated (or supported) translation and publication of the book (considering that a Russian-language translation had already been available)? Why was this particular collection chosen for the first-ever Ukrainian translation (rather than, say, a selection of Munro's best stories)? [Чому і як саме ви зацікавилися творчістю Еліс Манро та долучилися до перекладу збірки "Забагато щастя"? З чиєї ініціативи (або за чиєї підтримки) було вирішено перекласти та видати збірку (за наявності російського перекладу)? Чому саме ця збірка була обрана для першого перекладу українською (а не, наприклад, добірка найкращих оповідань)?]

**A:** I had never heard about Alice Munro before she won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2013. But she immediately interested me as a short story author. I am a short story author, too, and I have often heard that this genre is inferior and that real writers produce novels. The first Munro story I read was the Russian translation of "Face"—the only piece I was able to find online at that time—and it did impress me. It is really an extraordinary story. Later, many more texts became available online, both in English and Russian. I approached the Old Lion Publishing House with an offer to compile and translate a "Best Of" collection, with selected stories from various books, and the publisher agreed. But the Canadian copyright holders replied that they would only approve a translation of an entire collection, exactly how it was initially compiled in Canada. I decided to go with *Too Much Happiness* because of the titular story about

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<sup>20</sup> All responses in this questionnaire were initially given in Ukrainian and translated into English by me. The original Ukrainian text is provided after each question and response.

Sophia Kovalevsky whose personality I had always found fascinating. Actually, I earned a degree in mathematics years ago, so I do understand what an outstanding personality she was—perhaps I can appreciate that better than someone with a pure humanities background. [Я не чула про Еліс Манро до того, як вона отримала Нобелівську премію з літератури в 2013 році. Але ця письменниця відразу зацікавила мене як авторка короткої прози. Я сама є авторкою короткої прози і неодноразово чула про меншовартість цього жанру, мовляв, справжні письменники пишуть романи. Я прочитала в Інтернеті російською оповідання “Обличчя”, єдине, що на той час було в мережі, і воно таки вразило мене. Це справді дуже неординарне оповідання. Згодом в мережі стали з’являтися різні тексти Лауреатки, і російською, і англійською. Я запропонувала ВСЛ зробити вибране з різних збірок, на що видавництво погодилося. Але канадські правовласники відповіли, що дадуть згоду лише на відтворення тої чи іншої збірки, укладеної в Канаді. Я зупинилася саме на збірці “Забагато застя” через оповідання про Софію Ковалевську, особистість якої завжди цікавила мене, адже я колись подолала математичний факультет і трохи більше за чистих гуманітаріїв можу оцінити масштаби її особистості].

**Q:** What is your opinion about Munro’s fiction in general? Did you read any of her texts translated into other languages, whether before or after the Ukrainian version of *Too Much Happiness* was published? (I am mostly interested in the Russian-language translations). If yes, can you comment on the quality of such translations? [Якої ви загалом думки про творчість Манро? Чи були ви знайомі з її текстами до початку роботи над перекладом? Чи читали ви будь-які переклади її оповідань іншими мовами до або після публікації “Забагато щастя”? (Насамперед нас цікавлять російськомовні версії). Якщо так, можете прокоментувати якість таких перекладів?]

**A:** Apparently, I have partially addressed this question in my previous answer. Reading Munro in English is quite easy, her syntax is not very complex. Yes, I read her stories in Russian, but I did not try to analyze the translation quality specifically. To my cursory glance, the translation was not a failure, but I felt that 1) the translator was rushed; 2) he was not always familiar with the appropriate modern slang, I caught some errors in the drugs-related terminology. I did not read all of Munro's stories, but from what I know I would characterize her work as uneven: some texts are genuinely impressive, while others are quite banal. [Очевидно, я частково відповіла на це ваше питання у попередньому. Читати Еліс Манро англійською не важко, синтаксис її творів не важкий. Так, я читала її оповідання російською, але цілеспрямовано не аналізувала якість перекладу. На мою побіжну думку переклад не є провальним, але відчувається 1) перекладач поспішав; 2) не завжди знав сучасний сленг, я виловила помилки в "наркотичній" термінології наркоти. Я читала не всі оповідання Манро, але з того, що знаю, охарактеризувала б її творчість як нерівну: деякі оповідання справді вражають, а деякі—банальні].

**Q:** Do you think that Munro's work can be described as feminist fiction? Were feminist themes important to you in your interpretation of the texts? (If possible, please provide examples). Did you discuss the feminist/gendered aspect of the texts (themes, imagery, language, etc.) with your editors or with the publisher in the process of translation? How did you (and/or the publisher) envision the book's target audience? [Чи вважаєте ви, що оповідання Манро можна віднести до феміністичної літератури? Чи були феміністичні теми важливими для вашої інтерпретації текстів? (Якщо можливо, наведіть приклади). Чи обговорювали ви феміністичний/гендерний аспект текстів (теми, образи, вислови і т. ін.) з редакторами або

видавцем у процесі роботи? Як ви (та/або видавець) уявляли собі цільову аудиторію збірки?]

**A:** I would not say that all of Munro's writing is feminist, because the author raises many other issues alongside with the "women's question." But the elements of feminist sentiment are there—as in any honestly written fiction. Particularly, in the story "Too Much Happiness," which is focusing on Sophia Kovalevsky as the main character. [Всю творчість Манро я б не відносила до феміністичної, оскільки крім жіночого питання авторка ставить багато інших. Але, як в будь-якій чесній літературі елементи феміністичних настроїв наявні. Особливо саме в оповіданні "Забагато щастя", героїнею якого є Софія Ковалевська].

**Q:** What did you find most challenging or most interesting in the process of translation? What strategies did you use or what theories did you rely on? Did you make any conscious changes to the texts? If yes, which ones and for what purpose? (If possible, please provide examples). Do you consider fidelity to be the main criterion for the quality of translation, or do you define translation quality in a different way? To what extent do you believe the translator's intrusion in the text may be justified/acceptable? [Що було найскладнішим або найцікавішим у процесі перекладу? Які стратегії ви застосовували або якими теоріями керувалися? Чи вносили ви свідомо якісь зміни до текстів? Якщо так, то які та з якою метою? (Якщо можливо, наведіть приклади). Чи є для вас вірність перекладу критерієм якості, або як саме ви визначаєте для себе якісний переклад? Якою мірою "втручання" перекладача в текст може бути доцільним/допустимим?]

**A:** On the one hand, translating Munro's stories was interesting because this is quality literature. Even the pieces I liked less were much more pleasant to translate than the kind of mass fiction I translate to make money. You know, I wouldn't say that the texts of this outstanding

Canadian author really pose significant challenges for translation. They have no puns, no idioms, very little slang, and practically no obscure realia. I did not really understand the meaning of the story “Deep-Holes,” but even so, I think I translated it adequately. I even wanted to contact the author to ask her about it, she was still alive then. But, I guess, this was not possible because she was such a prominent figure. By the way, my own English translator is always asking me about the things he finds hard to understand... As for the translation quality, the same translator I just mentioned used to say that “A translator must have a strong feeling that original is worth translating.” I am sure I had this “strong feeling,” even in the case of the story “Wenlock Edge,” which is thematically not my thing at all. But the things that find themselves outside of the translator’s own experience also need to be recreated! I can say that I did not change any meanings in the process of translation, at least consciously I didn’t. [З одного боку оповідання Еліс Манро було перекладати цікаво, бо це добра література. І навіть ті оповідання, які мені сподобалися менше, як перекладати було значно приємніше, ніж ту масову літературу, яку я перекладаю заради заробітку. Ви знаєте, я б не сказала, що тексти цієї видатної канадійки містять аж такі виклики для перекладу. Тут нема каламбурів, ідіом, сленгу мало, незрозумілих реалій теж практично нема. Я так і не зрозуміла меседжу оповідання “Глибокі свердловини”, але, думаю, я його переклала адекватно. В мене навіть було бажання звернутися до авторки, вона тоді ще була жива. Але, це, певне було неможливо, бо авторка дуже видатна. Мій англійський перекладач, до речі, розпитує мене про все, що йому не зрозуміло... Щодо якості перекладу: вже згаданий перекладач говорив: A translator must have a strong feeling that original is worth translating. Це strong feeling в мене було, навіть і у випадку оповідання “Венлок Едж”, яке мені зовсім чуже

тематично. Але і те, що поза досвідом перекладачів, теж треба відтворювати! Смыслів у процесі перекладу я не змінювала, принаймні свідомо.].

**Q:** Do you think that any markers of the translator's presence in the translated texts (such as the translator's name on the cover, the translator's preface/afterword, footnotes/endnotes, etc.) are justified or necessary? Did you ever resort to such measures? Did you have any say in decision-making about paratextual or visual elements for the publication of *Too Much Happiness* (the publisher's abstract, the editor's notes, the cover design, etc.)? Do translators usually have any influence on such decisions? [Чи вважаєте ви доцільними або необхідними маркери «присутності» перекладача при публікації перекладів (зазначення перекладача на обкладинці, включення передмови/післямови або коментарів перекладача і т. ін.)? Чи вдавалися ви колись до подібних заходів? Чи мали ви якесь відношення до текстового або візуального оформлення збірки “Забагато щастя” (анотація, примітки редактора, оформлення обкладинки і т. ін.)? Чи мають перекладачі зазвичай якийсь вплив на такі рішення?]

**A:** Of course, the translator's name has to be indicated! This is creative work, highly-skilled work, and I would be insulted if the publisher paid me for my translation but did not put my name on it. As a rule, translators are rarely consulted about design-related decisions; in the case of Munro's book, no one asked my opinion. I wanted a blurred portrait of Sophia Kovalevsky on the cover. But the publishers invest their own money, so they get to decide. Sometimes the covers are approved by the original's publisher, that happens as well. [Звичайно ж, ім'я перекладача має бути зазначено! Це творча робота, кваліфікована, я була б ображена, якби лише заплатили за переклад, а імені не вказали. В оформленні книги перекладачі беруть участь рідко, у випадку Еліс Манро зі мною ніхто не радився. А я б



хотіла розмитий портрет Софії Ковалевської на обкладинці. Але видавець вкладає гроші, тож і вирішує. А іноді обкладинку затверджує видавець оригіналу, таке теж буває].

**Q:** How do you see the role and goals of literary translators in the present-day Ukrainian context? Is competition with Russian-language translations still a significant factor in winning over readers, developing cultural connections, etc.? [Якими ви бачите роль та цілі перекладача художньої літератури в сучасному українському контексті? Чи є конкуренція з російськими перекладами суттєвим чинником у боротьбі за читача, у розвитку культурних зв'язків і т. ін.?)]

**A:** Well, the Russian book market is gradually drifting away. I see that the most successful translated publications are the ones that reached a cult status in the Soviet times, and now people want to reread them in Ukrainian: Remarque, Cortázar... I probably won't remember everyone on the spot. Of course, translating foreign literature into Ukrainian is of utmost importance! This is not even a subject for discussion! However, the translators need to work directly with the originals rather than rip off from Russian-language versions. [Зараз російський книжковий ринок все-таки віддаляється. Я бачу, що найуспішнішими є публікації тих книг, які в радянські часи були культовими, а тепер їх хочуть перечитати українською: Ремарк, Кортасар, всіх араз не згадаю. Звичайно ж, переклад українською іноземної літератури є дуже важливим! Це навіть і не тема для обговорення! Аби перекладачі не передирали з російської, а перекладали з оригіналу].

**Q:** Can you comment on the process of your collaboration with the editors and/or with the publisher while working on Munro's collection? Did you have any differences or disagreements regarding any of the translating decisions? Were any such decisions critical for you and/or for the publisher? Can you provide examples of the most significant corrections or

requirements on the part of the editors? Do you think that you had full creative freedom as a translator in this project? [Можете прокоментувати процес співпраці з редакторами та/або видавцем під час роботи над збіркою? Чи мали місце якісь розбіжності або суперечки щодо будь-яких перекладацьких рішень? Чи були якісь рішення для вас та/або для видавця принциповими? Можете навести приклади найсуттєвіших виправлень або вимог із боку редакторів? Чи вважаєте ви, що мали як перекладач повну творчу свободу в цьому проєкті?]

**A:** The editor had some notes for me. I won't be able to recall everything any more because I have translated so many books since then. For instance, I really wanted to preserve English-language puns when Doree<sup>21</sup> automatically builds new words from the English word "coffee": fee, off, of, foe. But the editor found a similar "word play" in Ukrainian. If I had full creative freedom, I would have kept those textual inclusions of English, which I think would be justified in this case. [У редакторки були до мене претензії, я вже всього зараз не відтворю, дуже багато книжок було перекладено по тому. Наприклад, мені хотілося зберегти англійську мову, коли Дорі машинально будує слівця з англійського слова coffee: fee, off, of, foe. А редакторка підбрала якусь українську "гру в слова". Якби я мала повну свободу, я б залишила англійські вкраплювання, які в даному випадку вважаю мотивованими].

**Q:** How would you evaluate the final result of your translation project? Did you receive any comments from literary critics or readers regarding your translation? As far as you know, was the translated collection commercially successful? Do you know why no other Munro collection was subsequently translated into Ukrainian and published after 2017? Do you wish or

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<sup>21</sup> The main female character of the short story "Dimensions" (*Too Much Happiness*)

plan to translate any other of Munro's collections in the future? [Як ви оцінюєте кінцевий результат перекладу збірки? Чи отримували ви якісь коментарі від критиків або читачів щодо перекладу? Наскільки вам відомо, чи мала збірка комерційний успіх? Чи відомо вам, чому жодна інша збірка Манро не була видана українською мовою після 2017 р.? Чи маєте ви плани/бажання перекладати Манро й надалі?]

**A:** I did not feel that the book received any serious attention. One of my colleagues half-jokingly said that "Kononenko's own stories are better." This kind of reaction is both encouraging and discouraging. As for commercial success, this is rather a question for the publisher, not for me. I think that we should have had some presentations at the bookstores, and this would have drawn public attention to the book, but the Old Lion Publishing House did not hold any presentations. If I had a willing publisher, I would be happy to translate the *Runaway* collection—the one with the three short stories that Pedro Almodóvar used for his successful movie *Julieta* where he relocated the storyline from Canada to Spain. [Я не відчула великої уваги до цієї книги. Була несерйозна реакція колеги: "У Кононенко оповідання кращі". Така реакція водночас і радує, і ні. Щодо комерційного успіху, то питання до видавців, а не до мене. Мені здається, що мали б бути презентації в книгарнях, і це б привернуло увагу до книги, а жодної презентації ВСЛ не влаштовувало. Аби був видавець, я б залюбки переклала б збірку Runaway, звідки ті три оповідання, за якими Педро Альмодовар відзняв успішний фільм "Джульєта", перенісши дію з Канади до Іспанії].

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