

ROUTLEDGE ADVANCES IN TRANSLATION AND
INTERPRETING STUDIES

Translation in Russian Contexts

Culture, Politics, Identity

Edited by
Brian James Baer and
Susanna Witt



Translation in Russian Contexts

This volume represents the first large-scale effort to address topics of translation in Russian contexts across the disciplinary boundaries of Slavic studies and translation studies, thus opening up new perspectives for both fields. The volume brings together leading scholars from Russia and abroad to offer a comprehensive overview of Russian translation history from the medieval period to today, made possible in many cases by the opening of archives following the fall of the Soviet Union. An empire built on “external” as well as “internal” colonization, Russia has always been a site of multi-layered transcultural and translingual mediations, often accompanied by sophisticated theoretical reflection. Yet within the overall broadening of geographical perspectives that has been a prominent feature of translation studies over the last decade, Russia has been largely neglected. This geographical blind spot within translation studies has its counterpart in a theoretical blind spot within the field of Slavic studies in the West: Phenomena related to translation and their significance for cultural production are to date understudied. This volume demonstrates how theoretical perspectives developed within translation studies may help to conceptualize relevant problems in the Russian cultural context while highlighting valuable Russian contributions to the theory and practice of translation.

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Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	viii
Introduction: The Double Context of Translation BRIAN JAMES BAER AND SUSANNA WITT	1
PART I	
Pre-Soviet Contexts	17
1 Translation Strategies in Medieval Hagiography: Observations on the Slavic Reception of the Byzantine Vita of Saint Onuphrius KARINE ÅKERMAN SARKISIAN	19
2 Metatext Verbalization in Early and Modern Russian Translations TATIANA PENTKOVSKAYA AND ANASTASIA URZHA	37
3 “The Mother of All the Sciences and Arts”: Academic Philosophy in Eighteenth-Century Russia as Cultural Transfer KÅRE JOHAN MJØR	51
4 Translation as Appropriation: The Russian Operatic Repertoire in the Eighteenth Century ANNA GIUST	66
5 Eighteenth-Century Russian Women Translators in the History of Russian Women’s Writing OLGA DEMIDOVA	85

6	Expressing the Other, Translating the Self: Ivan Kozlov's Translation Genres	95
	YULIA TIKHOMIROVA	
7	Charles Dickens in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Literary Reputation and Transformations of Style	110
	MARINA KOSTIONOVA	
8	Translation as Experiment: Ivan Aksenov's <i>Pan Tadeusz</i> (1916)	125
	LARS KLEBERG	
PART II		
	Soviet Contexts	137
9	Translation and Transnationalism: Non-European Writers and Soviet Power in the 1920s and 1930s	139
	KATERINA CLARK	
10	Hemingway's Transformations in Soviet Russia: On the Translation of <i>For Whom the Bell Tolls</i> by Natalia Volzhina and Evgenia Kalashnikova	159
	EKATERINA KUZNETSOVA	
11	Soviet Folklore as Translation Project: The Case of <i>Tvorchestvo Narodov SSSR</i> , 1937	174
	ELENA ZEMSKOVA	
12	Western Monsters—Soviet Pets?: Translation and Transculturalism in Soviet Children's Literature	188
	VALERII VIUGIN	
13	"The Good Are Always the Merry": British Children's Literature in Soviet Russia	205
	ALEXANDRA BORISENKO	
14	"The Tenth Muse": Reconceptualizing Poetry Translation in the Soviet Era	220
	MARIA KHOTIMSKY	
15	Translating the Other, Confronting the Self: Soviet Poet Boris Slutskii's Translations of Bertolt Brecht	240
	KATHARINE HODGSON	

PART III

Late-Soviet and Post-Soviet Contexts 255

- 16 (Re)Translation, Ideology, and Business: The Fate of
Translated Adventure Fiction in Russia, Before
and After 1991 257

PIET VAN POUCKE

- 17 “Adieu, Remember Me”: The *Hamlet* Canon in
Post-Soviet Russia 276

ALEKSEI SEMENENKO

- 18 Poetic Translation and the Canon: The Case of the
Russian Auden 292

ELENA OSTROVSKAYA

- 19 Literary Translation, Queer Discourses, and Cultural
Transformation: Mogutin Translating/Translating
Mogutin 306

VITALY CHERNETSKY

- 20 Battling around the Exception: A Stateless “Russian”
Writer and His Translation in Today’s Estonia 321

DANIELE MONTICELLI AND ENEKEN LAANES

Notes on Contributors 337

Index 344

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Introduction

The Double Context of Translation

Brian James Baer and Susanna Witt

The etymology of the word context, from the Latin *contextus*, meaning ‘to weave together,’ suggests that context isn’t a simple add-on, something extra, but that it is, as the *Oxford Dictionary* makes clear, “the circumstances that form the setting of an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood and assessed.” A focus on context then challenges the traditional conception of translation as a simple ‘carrying over’ of a text for it also involves the weaving of that text into a different cultural fabric, or “web of signification.” This is a many-tendrilled process, one that is more complex and unpredictable than what is suggested by the concept of the remainder (see Venuti 2002), invoking something more akin to Derrida’s notion of the sheaf:

The word *sheaf* seems to mark more appropriately that the assemblage to be proposed [i.e. *différance*] has the complex structure of a weaving, an interlacing which permits the different threads and different lines of meaning—or of force—to go off again in different directions, just as it is always ready to tie itself up with others.

(qtd. in Globus 1995, 51)

So let us begin by conceptualizing the concept of context, which is the organizing principle of this volume.

Contextualizing Context

One could read the history of translation studies in the postwar period through the lens of context. Early linguistics-based models of translation, for example, were largely focused on the source text and its context, as evident in their concern with equivalence, fidelity, and accuracy. However, when Gideon Toury declared translations to be “facts of the target culture” in the 1980s, inaugurating the field of Descriptive Translation Studies, the focus was shifted to the role of the receiving or target context in shaping the translation, granting new agency to the translator as a “manipulator” (Lefevere 1992) of the source text and a “subversive

scribe" (Levine 1991). This attention to the context of the target culture in the study of translations eventually led in the 1990s to an increasing interest in sociological approaches, which embed translators and translations in specific socio-cultural contexts (see Inghilleri 2005; Wolf and Fukari 2007; and Angelelli 2012).

Moving away from the context of the original was an important stage in dismantling the model of translation as mimesis, which inevitably cast translations as pale copies of their originals. These target-oriented approaches liberated discussion of translation from a rhetoric of loss and distortion, allowing scholars to focus on the contributions of the translated texts to the receiving culture. In fact, scholars increasingly acknowledge the fact that, once embedded in a new discursive context, or web of signification, the translated work may in fact gain in translation. As Richard Watts argues in *Packaging Post/Coloniality*, translation may liberate a text from a narrow and confining original context. "The shifting significations of the translated book [. . .] can therefore also constitute a liberation from the restrictions imposed on it by the literary institution of the original *context* of publication" (2005, 162; italics added). David Damrosch makes a similar point in *What Is World Literature?*, where he writes: "As it moves into the sphere of world literature, far from inevitably suffering a loss of authenticity or essence, a work can gain in many ways" (2003, 6). And so Damrosch goes on to argue, "To understand the workings of world literature, we need more a phenomenology than an ontology of the work of art: a literary work *manifests* differently abroad than it does at home" (2003, 6). The context, then, represents the conditions for that manifestation.

Against the backdrop of Descriptive Translation Studies, however, with its focus on the context of reception, there have been consistent and urgent calls not to abandon the context of the source text altogether. During the Cold War period, which saw the popularization of linguistic relativity as represented in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, giving new importance to cultural context in communication. Later, under the influence of postcolonial studies, scholars began to acknowledge the asymmetries or power differentials between the source and target languages and cultures (Niranjana 1992), which make translation almost always an "unequal exchange" (Casanova 2010). This led to a concern with the violence involved in re-siting texts, uprooting them from their original cultural context. Within that conceptual framework, the desire to preserve something of the original context was conceived as an anti-hegemonic gesture, a caution against the universalization of (typically Western) concepts and theories, on the one hand, and the simple appropriation of foreign ones (often non-Western or minoritarian), on the other. This gave rise to various strategies and approaches, ranging from thick translation (Appiah 1993) and foreignization (Venuti 1995) to untranslatables (Cassin 2004) and untranslatability (Apter 2013). The primary role of

context is especially evident in Appiah's definition of thick translation as a "richer contextualization," or "translation that seeks with its annotations and its accompanying glosses to locate the text in a rich cultural and linguistic context" (1993, 812, 817). (Indeed, Appiah uses some form of the word *context* 16 times.) For Appiah, such an approach to translation stands at the ethical core of teaching literature, as

a thick description of the context of literary production, a translation that draws on and creates that sort of understanding, meets the need to challenge ourselves and our students to go further, to undertake the harder project of a genuinely informed respect for others.

(1993, 818)

More descriptive studies of translation that take into account the uneven distribution of cultural capital have noted a somewhat different phenomenon—that texts translated from outside the orbit of the developed West or Global North tend to be valued primarily, one might say, for their context. In other words, translations from dominated languages, to use Pascale Casanova's terminology, are typically valued for their insight into the socio-political context of the source text; crudely put, they are read for their ethnographic value. Consider Susan Harris's comments on the value of reading translations for the context:

Literature, with its crucial insight into world events from a human perspective, provides an incomparable line to culture from within, and is ever more valuable in establishing *context* and filling the lacunae in news reports. And in our largely monolingual country, where foreign-language fluency is the exception rather than the rule, that link, and that *context*, are accessible only through translation.

(2014, 57; italics added)

But reading literary works *for the context* may in fact be a symptom of the "first-world problem" of "insularity and isolation" rather than, as Harris suggests, a solution to it (Harris 2014, 57), especially when we consider that literature from dominating languages is allowed to transcend its socio-political context to be read for its "universal" aesthetic value.

The priority of context drives not only the reading of literary works from dominated languages, but also the selection of works for translation. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, for example, when Russian was a dominated language, Russian literary works translated into English were selected largely for their exotic depictions of Russian life and customs. In other words, works were chosen less for their literary or aesthetic merit, and more for the local color they offered (May 2000, 1205).¹ This was also true of the Soviet period, when works, especially

of dissident authors, were translated for their (negative) depiction of life under communism, reflected in the tendency of some translators to ignore or downplay aesthetic devices (see Baer 2000, II, 1423–1425).

The same could be said of the circulation of ideas—that dominating languages have the right to produce theory while dominated languages are consigned to applying it, a major argument of Dipesh Chakrabarty's work. In *Provincializing Europe*, for example, Chakrabarty questions why some texts—typically, Western—get universalized and acquire transcendent status as theory. Naoki Sakai makes a similar point when he questions the oddness of the collocation “Asian theorist”:

If not completely oxymoronic, the pairing of theory and Asia may strike many readers as a sort of quirk or defamiliarizing trick. At best, it can have the effect of exposing the presumption often taken for granted in fields dealing with certain aspects of what we understand as Asia: namely, that theory is something we do not normally expect of Asia.

(2010, 441)

Seeing this right to universalization and abstraction—and its denial—as central to the workings of Western cultural hegemony, Chakrabarty calls on scholars to interrogate it by re-siting the original work—Marxism, in his case—in its specific socio-political context, a process he describes as *provincializing*:

To “provincialize” Europe was precisely to find out how and in what sense European ideas that were universal were also, at one and the same time, drawn from very particular intellectual and historical traditions that could not claim any universal validity. It was to ask a question about how thought was related to place. Can thought transcend places of their origin? Or do places leave their imprint on thought in such a way as to call into question the idea of purely abstract categories?

(2007, xiii)

In focusing attention on the context of the original as well as the context of the target text, Chakrabarty introduces a necessary correction to exclusively target-centered approaches, which puts his work in line with the transfer-oriented approach of the Göttingen School. As Kurt Mueller-Vollmer and Michael Irmscher note,

Unlike [polysystem theory], which focuses primarily on the translated text within the target literary system, the Göttingen school considered both source language and target language text in their respective environments. This is indeed necessary if one is to study

the processes of literary and cultural transfer in their specific historical settings.

(Mueller-Vollmer and Irmischer 1998, xii)

It is precisely the dual context of translated texts, that is, their capacity to connect or juxtapose two contexts, that makes them especially interesting from a cultural studies point of view. Consider Vladimir Nabokov's controversial translation of Pushkin's *Evgenii Onegin* with its "footnotes reaching up like skyscrapers to the top of this or that page so as to leave only the gleam of one textual line between commentary and eternity" (1955, 512). While the exiled writer's desire to document the original Russian context of this foundational work of Russian literature produced a volume of commentary that dwarfed the translation itself, his use of "skyscrapers" to describe those footnotes acknowledges, perhaps unwittingly, the dual context of translation, connecting early nineteenth-century Russia with a postwar United States.² With a foot in two contexts, translated texts therefore represent "less a set of works than a network" (Damrosch 2003, 3), so that "even a single work of world literature is the locus of a negotiation between two different cultures" (283). Olivia E. Sears evokes the generative capacity of this negotiation when she describes her reading of translations of tales from the island of Buru:

Like the hunter in the Buru tale, it seemed, this translation took me on an unexpected journey: I had entered a forest cave in Buru and emerged in the labyrinth of a Dada poem, following the threads left behind by the great storytellers of twentieth-century world literature. (Sears 2014, 43)

For scholars, it is the ability of translated texts to lay bare these negotiations between foreign and domestic, or global and local contexts that constitute their particular value in any attempt to write a transnational history of a national literary tradition, as this volume aspires to do. And so, the double context of translated texts, once seen through a Romantic nationalist lens as a mark of inauthenticity and contamination, is now seen as providing unique insights into what Goethe called the "traffic in ideas between peoples" (qtd. in Damrosch 2003, 3). That revaluation of translation as a "creative and authentic activity" (Cho 2016, ix), argues Heekyong Cho, is a necessary step in fashioning a methodology for the integration of translation into literary studies that "allows us to better understand literature as a process with inherent intercultural aspects" (182).

Russian Context(s)

The dual focus provided by translated texts is especially relevant in the case of Russian literature, as the relationship between Russia and the

West has for centuries now been more or less fraught—and mutually defining. As Martin Malia comments,

Russia has at different times been demonized or divinized by Western opinion less because of her real role in Europe than because of the fears and frustrations, or the hopes and aspirations, generated within European society by its own domestic problems.

(Malia 1999, 8)

This was only exacerbated in the Cold War period, when Russia and the United States became adversarial superpowers, each with its own distinct hegemonic claims. The effect of this ideologically charged transnational context was that much of the literature and art produced in that era—as well as the translations—was done with a “sideways glance” at the ideological foe, thoroughly entangling domestic and foreign concerns. The charged political context of the Cold War produced not only state-sponsored translations, on the production side, but also a hermeneutics of suspicion, on the reception side, where the meaning of (and in) literary works—as well as other texts—was unavoidably overdetermined on both sides of the iron curtain.

Nevertheless, Russian contexts of translation have, until recently, received little attention in Western scholarship, in spite of the overall broadening of geographical perspectives within translation studies that has been challenging the traditionally Eurocentric priorities of the discipline for almost over a decade (Tak-hung Chan 2004; Hermans 2006; Inngs and Meintjes 2009; Wakabayashi and Kothari 2009; Sato-Rossberg and Wakabayashi 2012). This is not to say that Russia is not part of a European context, rather that, as “Europe’s internal other” (Baer 2011), it has been affected by a certain far-sightedness on the part of translation scholars in the European West, while at the same time the rich legacy of indigenous Russian translation scholarship represented by Andrei Fedorov, Mikhail Alekseev, Efim Etkind, and Iurii Levin, to mention but a few, has had its own closed system of circulation and, ironically, for reasons of language has been accessible mainly to Slavists alone. With the pioneering studies of Maurice Friedberg (1977, 1997) and Lauren Leighton (1991) as notable exceptions, it is only during the last decade that the situation has begun to change with the appearance of individual studies as well as collected volumes devoted to translation practice and theory in this part of the world (Baer 2011; Tyulenev 2012; Burnett and Lygo 2013; Menzel and Alekseeva 2013; Baer 2015; Sherry 2015; Ceccherelli, Constantino, and Diddi 2015; and Schippel and Zwischenberger 2017). Bringing together twenty leading scholars from Eastern and Western Europe, the current volume represents the first large-scale effort to address topics of translation in Russian contexts from the earliest periods to the present day across the disciplinary boundaries of Slavic

Studies and Translation Studies, thus opening up new perspectives for both fields.

The book is divided into three parts—"pre-Soviet," "Soviet," and "post-Soviet." The use of the attribute "Soviet" as the organizing principle of the book may at first glance seem controversial, but it is based on the fact that translation in the Soviet Union represents one of the most ambitious state-sponsored programs to promote the translation and dissemination of foreign literature in the history of the world. The attribute "Soviet," therefore functions to underscore the commonalities across these time periods, as opposed to seeing them as autonomous and unrelated cultural systems, making visible the contours of a tradition stretching across enormous political and cultural upheavals.

Part I spans a period of approximately 1000 years during which translation activities were at the heart of large culture-building projects such as the Christianization of Rus' in the early Middle Ages, the Westernization of the Russian society promoted by Peter the Great (begun already in the mid-seventeenth century), the development of a Russian literary language in the eighteenth century and a modern competitive literature in the nineteenth.

While translation was indeed the main semiotic mechanism at work in the transfer of Christian culture from Byzantium to the Eastern Slavs—a process described by the distinguished philologist Dmitrii Likhachev as a "transplantation," foregrounding the further growth and evolution of the literary monuments transferred (Likhachev 1987, 43)—it is only with some reservations that this early context could be called "Russian" as neither Russia as a state nor Russian as a standardized language was yet in existence. Initially, translation in this context was not merely a transfer of a certain body of texts from the Greek language into an existing target language—the translating language *itself* (what is now referred to as Old Church Slavonic) was one of the imported entities. Eastern Orthodoxy "arrived in pre-packaged Slavonic translation" (Franklin 2002, 13). This language had originally been created in the ninth century for missionary purposes by the "the apostles of the Slavs," the Greek brothers Cyril and Methodius, on the basis of South Slavic dialects. When Grand Prince Vladimir, ruler of Kievan Rus', accepted Christianity for himself and his people in 988, the South and East Slavic dialects were still mutually intelligible. The body of religious texts now introduced (liturgical, hagiographical and homiletic), many of them translated in the already converted regions of Bulgaria and Serbia, could therefore be read and understood without great difficulty in Rus', where the vernacular, moreover, was not yet differentiated into the specific languages referred to today as Russian, Belorussian, and Ukrainian. Under Yaroslav the Wise (980–1054), translation was increasingly being carried out locally, and specific Russian norms for Church Slavonic were gradually established. The relationship

between this originally imported language and the developing Russian vernacular was functionally defined, leaving the sacred or spiritual sphere (and hence most of the literature) the domain of the former, while the latter was used primarily in administrative, commercial, legal, and everyday writing.³ The modern Russian literary (standard) language that emerged over the course of the eighteenth century was characterized by an integration of elements rooted in these different languages.

Two chapters in the volume are dedicated to the earliest period in Russian translation history. **Karine Åkerman Sarkisian** provides an alternative approach to traditional text-critical research on early Slavic translations. As shown in this chapter, applying theoretical perspectives developed within contemporary translation studies may contribute to a more nuanced picture of the work carried out by medieval translators in the Slavic context, revealing their creative role even during a period when literalist principles were dominant. **Tatiana Pentkovskaya** and **Ansastasia Urzha** also explore the agency of medieval translators in their chapter, which focuses on the translation of metatextual operators, discourse markers that express the speaker's attitude toward the reported information. Challenging traditional disciplinary boundaries, the authors juxtapose the translation of such metatextual elements in early Church Slavonic and modern Russian texts.

Following Peter the Great's policy of forced Westernization in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, translation assumed a central role in transforming every aspect of Russian culture (see Tyulenev 2012 and Coudenys 2016). **Kåre Johan Mjør's** chapter documents translation's role in the establishment of secular philosophy in eighteenth-century Russia, while **Anna Giust's** chapter explores the function of translation in the creation of the Russian operatic repertoire. **Olga Demidova** provides an overview of the opportunities translation offered to women at this time, as a way to participate in the world of letters, establishing a tradition of great woman translators that would continue throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and into today. Translation, primarily from French, played a vital role in the development of the Russian literary language, as demonstrated in the practice (and translational self-reflection) of Mikhail Lomonosov, Vasilii Trediakovskii, and Aleksandr Sumarokov. By the early nineteenth-century translation had become an issue in the quest for a Russian national literature, providing new generic and stylistic forms (Cooper 2011). Vasilii Zhukovskii, a "genius of translation" in the words of Pushkin, came to occupy a central position in the development of a distinctly Russian national literature by introducing samples of European Romanticism.

While in the early years of the nineteenth-century translation still served to a large extent as a vehicle for introducing types of literature, genres and aesthetic sensibilities that were lacking in the Russian target system (thus neatly adhering to the model proposed by Even-Zohar 1990),

over the course of the century, Russian writers showed greater agency in interpreting and adapting foreign forms. **Yulia Tikhomirova** and **Marina Kostionova** demonstrate the intricate play between the evolution of original Russian writing and translations in their contributions. Focusing on the context of Russian Romanticism, Tikhomirova analyzes the translation practices of the poet Ivan Kozlov, a disciple and friend of Zhukovskii. While the latter was a mediator of principally German poetic culture, Kozlov introduced British poetry to Russian readers, privileging lyric pieces and fragments of narrative poems. As argued by Tikhomirova, Kozlov's approach is best described in terms of "translation genres," embodying the worldview of the translator and affecting the image of the authors being introduced. Kostionova, in her chapter, explores the shifting reputation of Charles Dickens in the Russian context, demonstrating how it was both reflected in and formed by translations. On the basis of successive Russian renditions of *The Pickwick Papers*, Kostionova sketches the evolution of the writer's image in Russia from a fashionable entertainer in the 1830s to a revered classic author toward the end of the century.

On a general level, the trajectory of Russian literature in the nineteenth century could be described as a transition from the status of a *target* literature to that of a *source* literature, catering to the needs of other cultural contexts, as demonstrated by the boom in translations of the "great Russians" into the major European languages in the latter half of the century (May 1994). As shown by Heekyong Cho (2016), in the East Asian context of the turn of the century, Russian literature, here explicitly viewed as "Western," was the part of "world literature" most eagerly appropriated. This was of course true mainly for prose, the principal literary mode of the Realist period. The epoch of Russian modernism, generally referred to as the "Silver Age" (roughly 1890–1920), was intimately linked with renewed and intensified translational activities, mostly in the field of poetry and drama. Leading Symbolist figures introduced not only their immediate Western inspirations but also representatives of a variety of other traditions. Thus Valerii Briusov, who was also a perceptive critic and theorist of translation (see Baer and Olshanskaya 2013, 67–74) rendered the poetry of kindred spirits such as Paul Verlaine and Émile Verhaeren, as well as samples of Armenian poetry (included in his landmark anthology of 1916). Alongside his translations of European classics from Calderon to Heine and a contemporary such as Wilde, Konstantin Bal'mont introduced Georgian and Japanese literature to Russian pre-revolutionary readers. A "longing for world culture" was a prominent feature in the outlook and poetics of the Acmeists, emerging in the early 1910s in opposition to the Symbolists but in this respect actually continuing the cosmopolitan orientation of their predecessors as demonstrated by the translational activities and meta-reflection on translation of the prominent poets Nikolai Gumilev and Osip Mandelstam. During this period of

aesthetic experimentation in all spheres of the arts, translation provided yet another field of possibilities, an issue explored in Lars Kleberg's chapter on the practices of avant-garde poet and translator Ivan Aksenov.

From the point of view of literary translation, the Soviet epoch, covered in Part II, did not represent so much a break with the past as an extrapolation of tendencies already at work, albeit in a significantly intensified and centralized form. Notable changes were the increasing instrumentalization of literary imports, a reinstitution of censorship, which had been significantly loosened in the pre-revolutionary years, and, above all, the utopian spirit and aspirations inherent in the grand projects of the time. This period also marked, one could argue, the birth of modern translation studies, with the publication in 1919 of the manual *Printsipy khudozhestvennogo perevoda* [Principles of literary translation], coauthored by Kornei Chukovskii and Nikolai Gumilev, inaugurating a tradition of sophisticated reflection on the nature and practice of translation (Chukovskii and Gumilev 1919).

Launching the publishing enterprise *Vsemirnaia literatura* [World literature] in 1918, Maksim Gorky declared,

Stepping resolutely onto the path of spiritual unification with the peoples of Europe and Asia, the Russian nation in all its mass must know the historical, sociological and psychological characteristics of those nations with which it is now striving towards the construction of new forms of social life.

(Baer and Olshanskaya 2013, 66)

Literature, he argued, had a “planetary role,” “strongly and profoundly uniting nations from within through a consciousness of a communion with their sufferings and desires, a consciousness of the unity of their strivings toward the improvement of a free and beautiful life” (ibid.). Gorky's vision represented a “curious crossover between Goethe's *Weltliteratur* and the Marxian commodity of universal literature,” at once Romantic and political (Khotimsky 2013, 120). This was a blend that was to inform all subsequent undertakings in the field of literary translation until the end of the Soviet era. Thus, although the *Vsemirnaia literatura* project was aborted in 1924, having issued about 10% of the originally planned 2800 editions, a similarly large-scale ambition of creating a progressive world literature *à la russe* (or, more specifically, *soviétique*) characterized subsequent projects, such as the publishing house Academia in the 1920s and 1930s, the journals *Internatsional'naia literatura* [International literature, 1933–1944] and *Inostrannaia literatura* [Foreign literature, 1955–], and, in the late-Soviet period, the Library of World Literature book series (1967–1977).⁴ Building cultural alliances and enrolling foreign authors for the Soviet cause was a primary concern for the cultural apparatus in the 1930s and 40s, as shown in recent studies by Katerina Clark (2011)

and Michael David-Fox (2012). In her chapter in the current volume **Katerina Clark** explores the Soviet-sponsored engagement through translation of non-European writers with socialist realism, revealing the complex and multidirectional processes involved, while **Ekaterina Kuznetsova** examines the case of the potential Soviet ally Ernest Hemingway and his ill-fated (in the Russian context) novel *For whom the Bell Tolls*.

If the 1920s were marked by the effort to accrue Western cultural capital for the young Soviet state, the 1930s saw translation assuming a vital role in the domestic context as well, serving as a major vehicle for Stalin's nationalities policies. Within the Soviet empire translation emerged as an important "channel for colonization" (Robinson 1997), disseminating central works of Russian and Soviet literature as well as the classics of Marxism-Leninism and select works of world literature (generally rendered from Russian) into the many languages of the USSR. At the same time, however, translation was being carried out on a massive scale in the *opposite* direction with the aim of creating a Russophone canon of Soviet literature. Works of the "peoples of the USSR" were an indispensable part of this paradoxical project, which amalgamated national and imperial aspirations in complex and sometimes unpredictable ways. Translation practices themselves became indices of colonialist attitudes as testified by the ubiquitous use of crude Russian intermediates (*podstrochniki*) in the translation from most of the "languages of the peoples of the USSR" and oftentimes in translation between these languages as well (Witt 2013, 2017). This process is elucidated and problematized in **Elena Zemskova's** chapter on the much-vaunted project *Tvorchestvo narodov SSSR* [Works of the Peoples of the USSR] (an anthology to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the October revolution), pointing out the unstable meaning in this context of concepts such as "original," "imitation" and "counterfeit." As for intra-Union translation, its significance as an official ideological project was somewhat overshadowed as priorities during the post-Stalinist Thaw period moved to new source contexts in emerging socialist countries in the Third World, giving visibility to works from Africa, Latin America, and the Far East (Baer 2016).

The distinct shift in Soviet culture following the death of Stalin in 1953 affected literary translation to no less a degree than original writing. One of the first signs of the Thaw was the reinstitution, in 1955, of a journal devoted to literary translations, *Inostrannaia literatura* [Foreign literature], which has retained its status as a relevant publication even in today's Russia. Changes in the country's cultural climate could be measured against translational facts such as the introduction of foreign works previously banned by Soviet authorities (e.g., the first Soviet edition of Franz Kafka in 1965) and the introduction of contemporary foreign authors who were not necessarily aligned with the Communist Party (see Friedberg 1977).

Restrictions on travel (and even on interaction with foreign tourists) that obtained to the end of the Soviet era added to the value of translated works as a source of information about societal and cultural phenomena in countries out of reach for ordinary readers. Thus the Russian context of reception in a way paralleled the situation in the early Western reception of Russian works, which, as discussed earlier, was informed by an ethnographic approach. During the 1960s, as in the eighteenth century, translation provided models for forms of culture not yet developed in the Russian target context, such as a specific youth culture. Here it is hard to overestimate the role played by the reintroduction of Ernest Hemingway in 1959 and the introduction of contemporary American authors such as Salinger and Vonnegut (Burak 2013; Leighton 1991; and Semenenko 2016). For the “last Soviet generation,” translations of Western fiction contributed to the creation of an “imaginary West” to no less a degree than rock music and film, as described by Aleksei Yurchak (2006).

Nonetheless, due to the political aspect present as an *a priori* condition and, in particular, the prescriptions imposed by the doctrine of socialist realism, the Soviet import of Western literary works actualized problems of censorship on all levels of literary production, involving complex negotiations on the part of translators, editors and other censorial agents (Sherry 2015). Explored by **Kuznetsova** in the case of Hemingway, this is further addressed in the chapters by **Alexandra Borisenko** and **Valerii Viugin** with reference to the field of children’s literature. While Borisenko focuses on the Soviet appropriation of British children’s literature and various strategies of managing proscribed adaptive conventions, Viugin explores the specific challenge of handling cruelty, violence, and fear in imported and original children’s literature. These chapters foreground the crucial role played by two figures active across the dual contexts of children’s literature and translation (both generally considered “safe havens” for troubled authors)—namely, the writer, critic, and translator Kornei Chukovskii and the poet-translator Samuil Marshak. Their contribution to what has been labeled the “Soviet school of translation” (theoretical and discursive in the case of the former, practical in the case of the latter) is further elucidated by **Maria Khotimsky** in her chapter on tradition, subjectivity, and resistance to norm in Soviet poetry translation. The creative possibilities provided by translation in a context marked by stylistic as well as thematic taboos, illustrated in Khotimsky’s chapter with the case of the poet Mariia Petrovykh, are mapped out in greater detail by **Katharine Hodgson** in her chapter on Boris Slutskii’s translations from Bertolt Brecht as a dialogue with his deceased fellow poet-cum-translator Boris Pasternak. The work of the poet-translators discussed by Khotimsky and Hodgson are situated in the specific climate of post-Stalinist culture.

The late-Soviet and post-Soviet contexts featured in Part III were marked by the increasingly relaxed censorship during the period of glasnost and

the evolution of a commercial book market inaugurated by the reforms of perestroika in the late 1980s. Both factors in conjunction produced a flood of popular fiction in genres previously lacking in the Russian target system as well as foreign works on taboo topics. Several of the chapters in Part III trace shifts in the value of translated Western literature—from works of popular culture to established classics—before and after the fall of the Soviet Union. These shifts are addressed in **Piet Van Poucke**'s chapter, which maps peculiarities in the Russian reception of Western adventure fiction and its transformations over a period covering the fall of the USSR, while **Aleksei Semenenko** explores the boom in *Hamlet* translations that marked the first post-Soviet decades. **Elena Ostrovskaya** provides a case study of the various stages in the Russian reception of W. H. Auden through the lens of canonization, foregrounding the role of Joseph Brodsky both as translator and cultural broker. Ostrovskaya demonstrates how the rendering of foreign modernist authors sparked discussions of new forms in translation that had repercussions for Russian original literature as well (cf. Lygo 2013).

The final two chapters of this volume challenge in fundamental ways the very concept of a “national” context. **Vitaly Chernetsky** analyzes the contributions of the versatile emigré poet Slava Mogutin across Russian and American cultural contexts, focusing on his search for Russian expressions of queer culture, again filling a gap in the target literature. In their concluding chapter, **Daniele Monticelli** and **Eneken Laanes** problematize the notion of context in a post-Soviet reality of restructured national space and within the new diasporas that have emerged as a consequence.

Notes

- 1 The same tendency has been observed for other contexts of reception, e.g., the Swedish one (see Håkanson 2012).
- 2 Consider Marijeta Bozovic's monograph *Nabokov's Canon: From Onegin to Ada* (Bozovic 2016), which provides a contextualization/conceptualization of Nabokov's own enterprise: “to reimagine a canon of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western masterpieces with Russian literature as a central, rather than marginal, strain”, a canon which is “pointedly translingual and transnational and serves to legitimize his own literary practice” (blurb).
- 3 The evolution of the relationship between Church Slavonic and Russian has been defined as a trajectory from an initial diglossia to bilingualism, beginning in the fourteenth century, and to the eventual merging of elements from both languages in the modern Russian literary language that emerged in the early nineteenth century (Uspenskii 1994).
- 4 This flagship project, instituted to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the October revolution and represented as an heir to the Gorky initiative of the 1920s, provided Soviet readers with a 200-volume version of world literature, issued in 300,000 copies (after 1973, in 303,000 copies). Large print runs were also a feature distinguishing Soviet practices, rendering 50,000 to 100,000 copies a normal figure for translated fiction literature and not uncommon even for poetry.

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Part I

Pre-Soviet Contexts



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1 Translation Strategies in Medieval Hagiography

Observations on the Slavic Reception of the Byzantine Vita of Saint Onuphrius

Karine Åkerman Sarkisian

In the Saami version of the canonical account of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (beginning in Mark xi 2, Bible of 1713), the donkey on which Jesus rides into the city is replaced by a calf of a reindeer—a more familiar animal to the Saami audience (see Wilson 2008, 75). This can be seen as an instance of domesticating translation (Venuti 2008) or dynamic equivalence (according to Nida 1964), a practice that has been questioned by some scholars. Debating the issue, some critics claim that such an approach results in violations of historicity (see Zogbo, 2011, 25).¹ Nevertheless, similar examples and other evidence of conscious text manipulation suggest this to be a widespread practice among medieval translators. The object of this study, consisting of a hagiographic story of Byzantine provenance in several linguistic traditions, also contains such deviations from the source text, which are often explained as translation errors. The chapter argues that certain deviations can be considered as deliberate choices on part of the medieval translator. Unheeded or neglected translation behaviors become apparent only when collating translations of the same text in different cultural contexts. The study focuses on translation features of the Byzantine Vita (Life) of St. Onuphrius at the time of its reception by medieval Slavs. The main question that will be addressed is whether lexical discrepancies can be considered translation strategies within the transmission of this text into a new cultural context.²

It should be noted that the study of the translation of medieval manuscripts presents a whole set of challenges specific to the period, partly because it is only in exceptionally rare cases that the protograph—i.e., the specific source text of the translation—can be identified and partly because researchers can never be certain that the full range of material is available and that every significant manuscript has been taken into account. Indeed, this is impossible in most cases. Within the Slavic tradition knowing when, where, or by whom a medieval translation was made is the exception rather than the rule. It is also known that a significant number of works were translated more than once, which is the case with the text under investigation. The very nature of manuscripts, which are

copied, recopied, and redacted by several anonymous scribes, each of whom leaves subtle clues as to his own linguistic individuality, occasionally contaminating versions of the text by consulting multiple versions of the account, is yet another factor that makes it difficult to determine the archetype (or the “ideal source text”) of a redaction or the original of a translation. This complicates the common notion of a simple opposition between original and translation. In addition, it is not always possible to distinguish clearly between a translation and a redaction of a medieval Slavic text, especially when one takes into consideration the fact that the scribe or editor of the text might have consulted a Greek original for reference. Thus, for the purposes of the present study, a distinction between translation and redaction is not very helpful with regard to medieval manuscripts, in particular within the confines of a specific text tradition.

Since the distinction between a translation and a redaction is often debatable, this study offers a methodological approach that views text reception as a continuous process and translation as a collective and coherent series of manipulations of a certain text with the aim of bringing the narrative to a new audience. Accordingly, the study identifies and explicates lexical features that unify and distinguish manuscript branches at various stages in the cultural appropriation of the Onuphrius narrative up to the seventeenth century. It is important, therefore, to distinguish cases of conscious manipulation from pure misspellings and mistakes. Instead of comparing the source texts’ single representation in a concrete manuscript in the target language, the study takes into consideration evidences of text manipulation on the part of an editor or a translator within groups of text witnesses. The suggested approach is by no means indisputable, but it is a way of identifying features of text adaptation at the various stages of transmission to a new cultural environment.

Several scholars have shown that medieval translators actually did reflect on and articulate the challenges of their work, taking as their starting point different approaches to the *word* and its dichotomy *aisthéon* ‘signans’—*noéton* ‘signatum’ and later *glagol* ‘word’—*razum* ‘sense’ (Matkhauzerova 1976; Bulanin 1995, 27; Franklin 2002). In the context of translation this opposition concerned *form* and *sense* (i.e., *meaning*), with the sense being primary. Nevertheless, the greater importance attributed to sense did not contradict the prescriptive word-by-word approach within the ambiance of a prevailing idea of the word as a primordial and eternal concept (Vereshchagin 1997, 37). John the Exarch emphasized that principle in the tenth century:

[. . .] if the striving for an exact translation of the word leads to a distortion of the meaning of the text, then an exact, literal translation should not be used, but, on the contrary, equivalence of meaning should be preferred to the sameness of the form.

(Matkhauzerova 1976, 33)³

Since the ideal of preserving both form and sense when bringing an utterance to another culture is unattainable, medieval translators were constrained to the practical aim of semantic equivalence, “focusing on how to render individual words, or, at best, small syntactic units” (Franklin 2002, 210, 215).

Within this context, semantic rather than formal equivalence became the central issue in early translating activity. Given the codifying nature of the first renderings from the Greek to the Slavic context, the very first translators had an ambiguous mission: in addition to conveying the true word, Cyril and Methodius had a “term making” assignment (*terminotvorchestvo*, according to Vereshchagin, 1997). Their followers and subsequent writers, while rendering hagiographic texts, continued this foundational work. Medieval translators encountered a full range of translating challenges: from the rendering of sacred names and abstract concepts to mundane attributes of the source culture, which sometimes did not have an equivalent in the target language.⁴ How did they approach this kind of translation challenge? Can the material studied give the present-day reader any clue to the decision making of a medieval translator?

In studying early Slavic translations, a synthesis of text-critical methods and linguistic analysis has become *de rigueur* and is considered the most reliable way of resolving complex questions of historical philology regarding the dating and lineage of early translations. Thus questions of attribution—establishing the authorship, authenticity, place, and linguistic affiliation of a translation—have come to dominate Slavic historical philology and to predetermine researchers’ priorities. Mapping linguistic features of a particular region and identifying local vocabulary and the area over which specific lexemes were current provides scholars with lexical data that serves as a reliable tool in the attribution of translations. Taking as its starting point theoretical perspectives developed within contemporary translation studies and based on a previous text-critical study of the Slavic tradition of the Life of Onuphrius, this study focuses on medieval translation in its own right, discussing puzzling textual elements, which may have been overlooked or dismissed in the past as mistakes or occasionalisms.

The Life of the Byzantine St. Onuphrius the Hermit was probably first written in the fourth century, and certainly no later than the first half of the fifth, and was subsequently transferred to all cultures of early Christianity.⁵ “The Life,” which became highly popular throughout the Christian world, probably reached the Slavs in the eleventh or twelfth centuries within the body of hagiographic literature adopted from Byzantium.⁶ The story was obviously very well-liked by the Slavs, as it was copied and recopied as late as the nineteenth century. It takes the form of travel notes made by a certain monk Paphnutius, who recorded his pilgrimage to the desert. His account of Onuphrius is only one of the

episodes contained in “The Life,” and Onuphrius himself is one of eight hermits and ascetics whom Paphnutius encountered in the desert. Thus, the Vita hardly corresponds to the established canons of the hagiographical genre; rather, it resembles a sequence of edifying stories from the *Skitskii Paterik* (*The Scete Paterikon*).⁷ Indeed, the scholarly literature on the *Life of Onuphrius the Hermit* repeatedly points out the close connection between certain episodes in it and the stories in the *Scete Paterikon*. Moreover, it is claimed that one chapter from the *Paterikon* was interpolated into the *Life of Onuphrius*. This conclusion, drawn by specialists in the Greek and Latin traditions of St. Onuphrius (Nau 1905; William 1926), is confirmed by the Slavic material (Pak 2001; Åkerman Sarkisian 2007) and is significant for the exposition that follows.

Three narratives of Onuphrius’ Life are known among Slavs: (a) the pilgrimage of Paphnutius (*Peregrinatio Paphnutiana*)—the primary and the most widespread tale of the saint, (b) the history of his birth and childhood (*Legenda*)—a secondary and rare construction, and (c) a hybridized version of the previous two, which does not seem to have been preserved in Greek. Unless otherwise stated, reference in this chapter is to the *Peregrinatio*. To date, over a hundred Slavic manuscripts of the Vita have been identified, representing at least three South Slav translations (two Serbian from the fourteenth century and one Bulgarian from the fifteenth century). Even more redactions, including East Slav (Russian, sixteenth-century) revisions, have been established.⁸

Scholars who studied early Slavic translations confirm that the current practice of medieval translations from Greek into Church Slavonic may be characterized as verbatim, producing a text as close as possible to the original (Uspenskii 2002, 56–58). The approach of literal translation is known as *kata poda* (in Greek ‘following in the footsteps’), *verbum verbo*, *fidus interpres*, *metaphrase* (in John Dryden’s sense), *formal equivalence* (Nida 1964), or *gloss translation*, and is, moreover, characteristic not only of Slavic translations. According to Vereshchagin (1997, 22), it is the main translation technique in 98% of cases referring to Gospel translations. He proposes the term *poslovnnyi* relating to single word correspondence—i.e., one word in the target text corresponds to one word in the source text. Such reverence toward the original text was the norm for translations of the scriptures. Simon Franklin argues instead for a distinction based “on the balance of choices between ‘true words’ and ‘equivalence’ within the word-by-word (or small unit by small unit) sequence” rather than the conventional distinction between “free” and “literal” translation (Franklin 2002, 215). Indeed, Eugene Nida (1964, 22) stated the “basic conflict in translation theory” as a fundamental difference between “two conflicting ‘poles’: (1) literal vs. free translating, and (2) emphasis on form vs. concentration on content.”

Referring to early Slavic translations, literal translation was, however, a general norm, and therefore applicable to the translation of liturgical and hagiographical texts, as well. This strategy preserves as far as possible the structure of the Greek language, not only at the syntactic level, but even at the level of derivational morphology, which sometimes allows for the reconstruction of the text of a lost Greek original by means of the reverse translation of a text that has been preserved, for example, only in the Slavic tradition.⁹ This principle of literal translation was applied also in the translation of the Vita of St. Onuphrius. The example that follows (Table 1.1) represents a small segment of the Vita that clearly illustrates the basic—*verbum verbo*—practice of the translation used in “The Life.”¹⁰

Table 1.1 Excerpt from Life of St. Onuphrius illustrating literal translation practice.

Greek	<i>kai</i>	<i>anastas</i>	<i>eporeuthēn</i>	<i>epi</i>	<i>tessarās</i>	<i>hēmeras</i>	<i>eis</i>	<i>tēn</i>	<i>endoteran</i>	<i>erēmon</i>
ChSl	and <i>i</i> and	after getting up <i>v"stav"</i> after getting up	[I] walked <i>idokh"</i> [I] walked	for	four <i>chētŷri</i> four	days <i>dni</i> days	into <i>v"</i> into	the inner <i>vniūtr'niūū</i> the inner	desert <i>pustŷniū</i> desert	
Greek		<i>mēte</i>	<i>artou</i>		<i>mēte</i>		<i>hydatos</i>		<i>metalebōn</i>	
ChSl		neither <i>ni</i> neither	bread <i>chlēba</i> bread		nor <i>ni</i> nor		water <i>vody</i> water		ingesting <i>vkusiv"</i> ingesting	
Greek	<i>tē</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>tetartē</i>		<i>hēmera</i>	<i>epistas</i>	<i>spēlaiōi</i>	<i>semmōi</i>		
ChSl	the <i>v"</i> on	[enclitic]	fourth <i>chētŷvērŷŷi</i> fourth	<i>zhē</i> [enclitic]	day <i>dn'</i> day	reaching <i>doidokh"</i> [I] reached	cave <i>vēr'tpa</i> cave	large <i>vēlika</i> large		
Greek	<i>emeina</i>	<i>pros</i>	<i>tēn thyrida</i>		<i>krouōn</i>	<i>epi</i>	<i>hōran</i>	<i>mian</i>		
ChSl	[I] abode <i>prēbykh"</i> [I] abode	at <i>u</i> at	the window <i>okontsa</i> the window		knocking <i>tl"ky</i> knocking	for <i>iāko</i> about	hour <i>chas'</i> hour	one <i>edin"</i> one		
Greek	<i>ep' elpidi tou</i>	<i>kata</i>		<i>tēn synētheian</i>	<i>tōn adelphōn</i>					
ChSl	in the hope that <i>nadēiāsīā</i> hoping		in accordance with <i>po</i> in accordance with		the custom <i>obŷchaiū</i> custom		of the brethren <i>mnish'skomu</i> monastic			
Greek	<i>monachon tina</i>	<i>exelthein</i>	<i>kai</i>	<i>aspasasthai</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>auton</i>				
ChSl	a monk <i>chērn'tsiū</i> monk		come out <i>izŷiti</i> come out	and <i>i</i> and	greet <i>tšēlovaniē dati</i> kiss (greeting)		me <i>mi</i> me	he		

(Continued)

Table 1.1 (Continued)

Greek	<i>krousantos</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>mou</i>	<i>kai</i>	<i>mēdenos</i>	<i>apokrinomenou</i>
ChSl	when knocked <i>tl'knuvshu</i> when knocked	[enclitic] <i>zhē</i> [enclitic]	I <i>mně</i> I	and <i>i</i> and	nobody <i>nikomuzhē</i> nobody	answered <i>otvēshtaiūshtu</i> answered
Greek	<i>aneōxas</i>		<i>tēn thyran,</i>		<i>eisēlthon</i>	
ChSl	opening <i>otvērz'</i> opening		the door <i>dvēri,</i> the door		[I] entered <i>vnidokh</i> [I] entered	

[And after getting up I walked four days to the inner desert without ingesting bread or water. On the fourth day, I reached a reverent cave. I abode at the window knocking about one hour hoping that a monk might come out and give me a greet according to the monastic custom. When I knocked and no one answered me, I opened the door and went inside].

On the whole, the Slavic text shows a translation technique aimed at rendering the Greek original in a maximally exact manner, with only consideration of grammatical idiosyncrasies, such as the absence of the category of definiteness and the fixed syntactic position of clitics¹¹ in Church Slavonic. Greek syntactic constructions in the last two sequences are rendered with a high degree of precision but not uncritically, thus, accusativus cum infinitivo in *monachon tina exelthein kai aspasasthai* corresponds to dativus cum infinitivo in the Slavic translation: *chēr'n'tsiū izyiti*, and the genitive construction *krousantos de mou kai mēdenos apokrinomenou* of the Greek text to dativus absolutus *tl'knuvshu zhē mně i nikomuzhē otvēshtaiūshtu* of the Slavic text.

At the same time, deviations from that norm are occasionally observed in the Vita, some of which might be seen as mistakes made by the translators.¹² The following example reveals the problem of distinguishing errors committed by translators from errors by copyists:

Greek: *En mia tōn hēmerōn spoudēn epoiēsamen eis tēn esōteran genesthai erēmōn*

[One day I (1 sg.) felt willingness to go to the inner desert]

ChSl: *Vēdin ot dnii potshtanie s'tvorikhom" v" vnutr'niūiu iti pustyniū*

[One day we (1 pl.) felt willingness to go to the inner desert]

This case of number disagreement of the verb in a story narrated by one person about his journey to the desert—the first-person plural of the Slavic instead of the first-person singular of the Greek text—can be found in a large number of manuscripts. Despite this fact, it is not possible with any certainty to claim it as an error of translation. Since several earlier

manuscripts contain the correct form of the verb, the error could have originated from the pen of a copyist.

On the other hand, errors committed by a copyist, such as omissions, insertions, misspellings and misunderstandings, are more common and relatively easier to identify. For instance, depicting the death of Onuphrius, Paphnutius narrates how he entombed the body of the saint in a rock, which was like a cistern: *iakozhe rov* (in Greek: *heurōn petran epikoilon hōsei lakkon*). A group of East Slav (Russian) manuscripts (early sixteenth century) renders the same section by inserting the letter *n*: *iako zhernov*, distorting the meaning of this phrase to ‘like a millstone.’ It is clear that this mishap arose while the text was being copied as this reading appears in later Slavic (Russian) manuscripts. The hypercorrection is perfectly understandable bearing in mind the current practice of *scriptura continua*, a way of writing without spacing between the lexical units of the text. The Russian copyist may have erroneously segmented the sequence *iakozherov* in *iako *zherov* (instead of the perfectly correct *iakozhe rov*), amending it with the *n* to *iako zhernov*.¹³

A clear case of corrupt readings of a toponym from the Greek text is found in the episode recounting Paphnutius’s meeting with Onuphrius.¹⁴ In his account of his withdrawal into the desert, Onuphrius names the coenobitic monastery (of communal living) where he was educated among a hundred monks, which is actually the only biographical data recorded in the Vita. It refers to the ancient city of Hermopolis Magna (the largest city of Upper Egypt), known as Heremoupolis, where the monastery in question, Erete, was located (Timm 1984–1992, 1, 208). The Slavic translation of that passage represents variants of: *v” manastyři narit’saēmēm” ereti erim opolitov ermolita zakona fivait’skyā stranȳ*.

The name of the monastery, Eriti, can be easily identified, while the geographical information regarding the location of the monastery, containing a chain of non-existent words followed by “law” and “land of Thebaion,” is stylistically cumbersome and is difficult to understand: *erim opolitov ermolita zakona fivait’skyā stranȳ*. All Slavic manuscripts (except one South Slavic) reflect vain attempts to render the place name.

Actually, it turns out that this toponym, common in monastic literature, is rendered in a distorted form already in the Greek tradition.¹⁵ Moreover, the meaning is corrupted in several ways, and the distortions seem to have occurred in four stages:

- a) A loss of the syllable -po- in *Heremolitou*, instead of Heremopolitou (the genitive of Eremopolis). Bios 1940–41: *en . . . monastēriō kaloumenō Eriti tou Hermolytou nómou tēs Thēbaïōn chōras*.
- b) The incorrectly segmented *Erem-o(po)letou*. Divided binomial variants of possessives, such as *erim opolitov/lipolitov ermolita* (also

relative adjective *opolit'ste*) of Slavic manuscripts could reflect a line break *Herem-opolitou* in certain Greek manuscripts. Thus, it seems that the divided form occurs initially in Greek copies, and from there is conveyed into the Slavic translations.

- c) The corrupt double toponym *erim opolitov ermolita* might reflect the practice of correcting remarks; here the gloss *Heremopolitou* (referring to the defective *Hermolitou*) of a Greek or a Slavic manuscript may have been interpolated into the text later by the copyist.
- d) The incorrect interpretation of the noun *nó mou* (here in the genitive: *nó mou tēs Thēbaïōn chōras*) led to the meaningless Slavic translation *zakona fivait'skyā stranȳ* in the latter part of the phrase under discussion. The problem here probably arose as a result of the graphical similarity of the two Greek nouns *ho nó mos* (genitive *nó mou*—‘law’) and *ho nomós* (genitive *nomoû*, which refers to a district in Egypt—i.e., nome),¹⁶ due to an inaccurately placed or incorrectly interpreted accent mark. The noun *nomós*, as a term denoting province-division in Egypt, was apparently unfamiliar to the Slavic translator, which led to the incorrect *zakona fivait'skyā stranȳ*. It is even more likely that the incorrectly rendered Greek genitive (*nó mou* instead of *nomoû*) resulted from the inattentiveness of the scribes of the Greek copies and was thus translated by the Slavic translator, who had no reason to doubt the text of the Greek original. This assumption, however, needs to be verified by comparing a considerably larger number of Greek copies.¹⁷

There is another place name in the Vita called the Scete desert, corresponding to *tēn Skētin* (in the accusative case) in the Greek manuscripts. In the Slavic manuscripts it is rendered in two ways: as the proper name *Scete* in Serbian copies¹⁸ (in full accordance with several of the Greek sources), and as the common noun *scete*, turned into the plural *sk'tȳ* in Bulgarian as well as in East Slavic¹⁹ copies.²⁰ Thus, the examples bear witness to a division of the meaning of the toponym, which probably took place already by the time of the Bulgarian translation. The earliest records of the toponym Scetis as a proper name date from the fourteenth century (SRIa, 200).

A dubious gloss is found in one of the initial sections of the Vita. The noun *tharsikarios* appears only once and is thus a *hapax legomenon*, used by the desert hermit Timothy, when he tells Paphnutius about his occupation as a weaver in his secular life. This form represents the untranslated Greek word *tharsēkarios*, which might be unknown to the Slavic translators. In fact, it is still difficult to find an explanation of this noun in modern dictionaries. However, the Greek edition Bios 1940–41 explains the noun, stating that “another Greek manuscript has registered *linuphikos*” instead of *tharsēkarios*, which means some kind of woven fabric, tissue, or flax.

The list of all unintentional errors, misspellings, blunders, omissions, misunderstandings, and failures could be extended, but this is not the aim of this survey. It is much more interesting for the purposes of this study to consider instances of conscious strategies applied by translators or editors in their effort to convey a story to a new audience.

Thus, the Vita translations sometimes exhibit deviations from the source text that cannot be explained linguistically. However, a lexical examination of the hagiographical corpus formed by the *Life of Saint Onuphrius* reveals a few variants that, at first sight, appear unmotivated, and that are difficult to explain as translation mistakes. Instead, translational phenomena of this type can, most likely, be considered as conscious translation strategies and explained with the help of concepts from contemporary translation studies.

A comparison of several target texts of the Vita reveals puzzling lexical transformations. In an initial passage of the narrative, the pilgrim Paphnutius meets a desert hermit, a man covered in long hair as if wearing a garment, who appears at sunset among a herd of animals. He turns out to be the hermit Timothy mentioned earlier. The Greek text of “The Life” describes Timothy’s appearance in the midst of a herd of buffaloes: *Plēroumenēs de tēs hēmeras ekeinēs, etheasamēn agelēn boubalōn erchomenēn kai adelphon en mesōi autōn peripatounta*. The Coptic text, published in English translation, contains not buffaloes, but antelopes: “Afterwards, when the sun was setting, I looked up and I saw a herd of antelopes coming from a distance—with the brother running with them, naked” (Vivian 1996, 173), while the Slavic tradition reveals two readings: one of buffaloes of the Greek text (in the absolute majority of manuscripts), and another of camels, which is found only in two manuscripts. Considering that the episode is borrowed from the stories of the Egyptian hermits in the *Scete Paterikon*, it is logical to compare these translations with the corresponding piece in the *Paterikon*. The *Paterikon*²¹ describes the weaver (though unnamed here) surrounded by camels. This appears to be an example of the principle of adaptation or *domesticating translation*,²² replacing text elements that are exotic for the receiving culture with more familiar notions. Thus, assuming that the *Paterikon* represents an earlier composition, a chain of domestications may be suggested beginning with the original herd of camels of Egypt being eventually transformed into buffaloes within the Greek hagiographical discourse and scattered throughout neighboring communities.²³

Nevertheless, irrespective of this fact, as we find both camels and buffaloes in the same linguistic tradition it is obvious that domesticating is not applied consistently, which might be a matter of various translations made at different points of time. In its turn, if that is the case and keeping in mind that camels reflect a primary stage of the narrative (from earlier camels in the *Paterikon* to subsequent camels and buffaloes in “The Life”), one can presumably suppose that domesticating is a later