

Introduction

Julie Hansen and Susanna Witt

The practice and theory of translation have always been influenced and shaped by a variety of contexts — social and historical, literary and linguistic, political and ideological. The implications of this insight are increasingly being recognized within Translation Studies. Thanks in part to a general broadening of geographical perspectives in this discipline, Russia has recently come to be viewed as a distinct translation zone.¹ This special issue seeks to contribute to understandings of this zone, including the region's own long-standing tradition of theoretical reflection on translation. Due to Russia's heritage as a multinational empire with diasporic communities, the topic of translation into and from the Russian language presents specific challenges to scholars.

The current issue addresses some of these challenges by focusing on interactions between translation and its many contexts in Russia, from the nineteenth century through the present day. The articles included here analyze modern Russian translations of several anglophone literary works: Shakespeare's sonnets, Lord Byron's *Don Juan*, J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, and Olga Grushin's *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*. All of these texts put translators — and, by extension, theoretical conceptions of translation — to the test. Thus, in addition to close readings, the articles presented here elucidate aspects of the development of translation theory both within and beyond the Russian context.

Maria Khotimsky considers metaphors as means of thinking about translation in Western translation theory, comparing them to those found in theoretical texts and poetry written in the Soviet Union from the 1930s through the 1960s. She demonstrates that prevalent metaphors in the critical discourse of the Soviet school of translation were typically drawn from the fields of science, technology, and politics and reflected the ideological biases of the era. By contrast, Khotimsky's analysis of poetry on the subject of translation reveals that Soviet poet-translators

1. See, for example, Baer (2011), Burak (2013), Burnett and Lygo (2013), and Tyulenev (2012).

sometimes expressed more complex, ambivalent, and even dissenting views about translation in their own poems.

Susanna Witt's article further illuminates the ideological context of translation during the Soviet era. Drawing on archival sources, she offers a reconsideration of the 'Soviet school of translation' as a construct and shows how this ideological context was partly shaped and negotiated by translators themselves. Against the background of the development of the 'school' concept, Witt explores the two Russian translations of Lord Byron's *Don Juan* from the period — by Georgii Shengeli (1947) and Tatiana Gnedich (1959). Problematizing Toury's concept of 'translational fact,' she pinpoints the process by which these translations were ascribed a different symbolical value, influencing the reception of Byron as well as the formation of a Soviet translational canon.

Elena Rassokhina's article considers how social norms and censorship in the target culture can influence translation strategies. Comparing seven different Russian translations of Shakespeare's sonnets 135 and 136, published between 1880 and 2011, Rassokhina focuses on punning — a rhetorical device that poses particular challenges to the translator. The analysis examines how Shakespeare's puns on the word 'will' have been rendered into Russian. Rassokhina observes that the sexual connotations of these puns are absent from the earlier translations into Russian. By contrast, however, two post-Soviet translations indicate changing socio-cultural norms and attitudes toward sexuality in Russia.

The role of sexual taboos and censorship in translation is also the subject of Aleksei Semenenko's article, which analyzes the first Russian translation of J. D. Salinger's 1951 novel *The Catcher in the Rye*, produced by the renowned translator Rita Rait-Kovaleva in 1960. Semenenko considers Rait-Kovaleva's strategies for conveying the 'otherness' of the novel's American context, particularly teenage slang, profanities, and topics related to sexuality. He argues that Rait-Kovaleva's strategy of adaptation resulted in a translation that not only passed censorship and negotiated sexual taboos but also challenged official Soviet ideology. It offered a new cultural model for Russian readers, greatly influencing the generation of Khrushchev's Thaw.

Per Ambrosiani's article considers the role of paratexts in the publication history of Vladimir Nabokov's 1955 novel *Lolita*, which Nabokov self-translated into Russian. Ambrosiani compares the paratexts of English, Russian, Polish, German, Ukrainian, and French editions, revealing a surprising degree of variation. In particular, he examines various annotations, concluding that the most detailed ones are found in editions published in languages other than English and Russian. As Ambrosiani's analysis shows, a complete annotated edition, which takes into account both the Russian and English versions as constituent parts of *Lolita* in its totality, has yet to be produced.

Julie Hansen's article considers the challenges of translating literature written in a language that is not native to the author. The turn of the millennium has seen a number of such works by contemporary Russian authors who, like Nabokov, switched literary languages after emigrating. Hansen argues that translingual fiction poses particular challenges to translators, and also to long-held theoretical conceptualizations of translation, such as domestication and foreignization. An examination of translation strategies applied in selected passages of Elena Petrova's Russian rendering of Olga Grushin's novel *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* (2005) serves as a springboard for theoretical reflections on literary translingualism and translation.

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