TRANSLATION AS A MEANS OF REACHING THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY: THE UKRAINIAN VERSIONS OF SHAKESPEARE'S *JULIUS CAESAR*

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Abstract The paper explores the ways of transmitting connotations in translation. The study is based on the analytical approaches suggested by Fredric Jameson, Wilhelm Dilthey, Mikhail Bakhtin, H.-G. Gadamer, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Yuriy Lotman as well as ideas of modern translation theorists Lawrence Venuti, Gideon Toury, Emily Apter, André Lefevere, Susan Bassnett, Edith Grossman, and Maria Tymoczko. Two Ukrainian versions of William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* are in the focus of attention. Panteleimon Kulish's version exemplifies the brilliant conveying of culturally specific notions. Vasyl' Mysyk's creative attempt proves that political implications can be rendered on the level of the collective memory. Both translations can be treated as a kind of implicit ideological weapon employed to initiate the thought-provoking process in the colonial and totalitarian contexts.
Keywords William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, translation, interpretation, Ukrainian language.

One of the most important figures of the Ukrainian national revival of the early 20th century, Mykhailo Hrushevsky, aptly stressed that the cultural level of each nation is also determined by the level of the translation skills.[1] The Ukrainian language has been underestimated for quite a long period, nevertheless under the imperial ideological attacks and in spite of the unfavourable political atmosphere, the Ukrainian intellectual elite always responded decisively by using language as an active weapon. Being an awareness-raising tool and a means for self-expression and enrichment of the language capacities, translation plays a crucial role in the cultural life of every nation.

In Ukraine translation has become a powerful nation formation factor under subjugating circumstances, as it is clearly illustrated by the example of such an acute political play as Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (1599). This literary work always poses a certain danger for

interpreters as well as for stage and film directors, especially in times of suppressive totalitarian regimes. The subtle ambiguity of the Bard's view and anthropological essence of his characters open up almost endless perspectives for manipulating the attitude and sympathies of the audience in accordance with the translator's ideological intentions. One can fully agree with the words of the modern American translation theorist Lawrence Venuti: "Translating is always ideological because it releases a domestic remainder, an inscription of values, beliefs, and representations linked to historical moments and social positions in the receiving situation. In serving domestic interests, a translation provides an ideological resolution for the linguistic and cultural differences of the source text."[2]

In the Ukrainian discourse on Shakespeare the playwright's Roman plays are traditionally much less staged and translated than his great tragedies. However, this fact is fairly eloquent in itself. It implicates the power of censorship under the Tsar and the Soviet regimes when all cultural actions that challenged the authority were severely punished. Such texts like *Julius Caesar* and its translations can be effectively used for shaping what Fredric Jameson called "the political unconscious."[3] So, the reader response to the literary works that bear the marks of a certain ideology should always take into account the author's support of or resistance to the socio-political contexts. In terms of translation other issues arise: the usage of the political collective memory that was formed in different cultural and historical dimensions, as well as the social motives behind the choice of texts to be interpreted. Venuti points out certain circumscriptions of translation: "Every step in the translation process from the selection of foreign texts to the implementation of translation strategies to the editing, reviewing and reading of translations is mediated by the diverse cultural values that circulate in the target language, always in some hierarchical order."[4]

Translation is a kind of collision between two national worlds and two spheres of collective memory. In the case of "Julius Caesar" this dyad is expanded, as it is a well-known fact that Shakespeare drew his inspiration from Plutarch's "Parallel lives". So here we have a Roman reality intermingled with British implications and reflected through the prism of the Ukrainian national specifics.

A famous German philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey stressed the historical dimension of the interpretation by claiming that each encounter with the text is simultaneously a plunge in history. It is an encounter with oneself and with the Other. By comprehending the historical past and comparing oneself to the Other, penetrating the psychological and historical integrity of the text, one is capable of enriching one's own individuality. But by getting to know the Other, the perceiving subject can comprehend nothing which is absent in himself.[5] So,

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[2] Lawrence Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything. Theory and Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 28.

[3] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Social Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 246.

[4] Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 308.

[5] Wilhelm Dilthey, "The Understanding of Other People and their Expressions," in *Selected Writings*, ed. and trans. Hans Peter Rickman (Cambridge: CUP, 1976), 218–231.

literature as a whole and translation in particular (Emily Apter calls it "a significant medium of subject re-formation and political change"[6]) is a powerful tool for self-identification and self-expression, especially in the case of political texts, such as "Julius Caesar" that are full of culture-specific implications.

By considering the text as an utterance, both Mikhail Bakhtin[7] and Hans-Georg Gadamer[8] claim that it demands not only comprehension, but also a certain response. This dialogue has some creative power as new questions and possible answers arise throughout its unfolding. Several translations of the same text become the participants of this dialogue and thus form a polyphonic field. Each recipient is offered the chance to understand himself through the Other.

W. Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar" has a broad receptive potential, and its perception in different socio-cultural contexts can vary. For instance, the play was effectively used by the stage directors in the totalitarian times either for promoting the image of the ruler (like it was in Italy) or for defaming it (like it was in Latvia, Czech Republic, Romania and the USA). The Ukrainian audience could surely have their own insights into this ambiguous Roman play.

Forced into an unequal competition with the long established Russian translation tradition, the Ukrainian interpreters had to fearlessly struggle for their own place under the Sun, overcoming the national minority complex together with the postcolonial syndrome. In comparison with the 13 Russian versions of "Julius Caesar", there are only 2 Ukrainian ones, both of which were published in crucial moments in the history of Ukraine.

The first translation of "Julius Caesar" was created at the end of the 19th century by the Ukrainian writer, critic, poet and folklorist Panteleimon Kulish (1819–1897)[9] whose ambitious endeavour was to translate 27 of Shakespeare's plays at the time when the "rustic" Ukrainian language was considered an unworthy southern dialect of Russian, incapable of reflecting all the depth of the world-renowned genius.

The translator explained his aim in his two poems of his own.[10] The first one is addressed to Shakespeare. Here Kulish calls the Bard "the celestial body of creativity," "Homer of the new world" and "the greatest warrior in culture." He appeals to the Renaissance playwright to take the Ukrainians under his wing and help them rid themselves of barbarism and of the destiny of wild Cossacks. In the second verse, which is addressed to the nation itself, the poet praises the treasures of the Ukrainian language and urges the people to "look up to

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[6] Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone. A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 6.

[7] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Estetika Slovesnogo Tvorchestva* (Aesthetics of Verbal Creation) (Moscow: Ripol Classic, 1979), 268.

[8] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinscheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 362–379.

[9] Wil'yam Shekspir, *Yuliy Tsezar*, trans. Panteleimon Kulish (Lviv: Drukarnya Naukovoho Tovarystva im. Shevchenka, 1900).

[10] Panteleimon Kulish, "Do Shekspira," in *Tvory ta Lysty* (Kyiv: Typografiya T.G. Meinandera, 1908), 2, 22; Panteleimon Kulish, "Do ridnoho narodu," in *Tvory ta Lysty* (Kyiv: Typografiya T.G. Meinandera, 1908), 2, 23–24.

the universal mirror," to cease their violent ways and to become members of the cultural family.

Despite the extensive criticism with which Kulish was faced right after the publication of his first Shakespeare translations, his impact on the development of the national literary language is quite obvious. The audience could relate to his versions of the Bard's works more than with any other translations, since he employed a unique ethnocentric approach to the "language of time" and "language of space" (terms introduced by Edward Hall[11]). The interpreter did not substitute one ethno-code for the other, which Venuti metaphorically calls "ethnocentric violence" ;[12] he invented the language commonality by conveying the images in the form that was organic for the social consciousness. It was not simply a word for word translation; it was a transition from culture to culture, from epoch to epoch, from one symbolic system to the other, though it did break the majority of the translational norms described in Gideon Toury's study.[13]

Through the implementation of a unique interpretive approach, the English text was raised to the level of collective memory, which was not limited to one nationality, but on the contrary, was open for the whole humanity and adapted to the needs of a particular socio-political environment. Thus, a counter current was created and demonstrated the productiveness of absorbing the ideas and messages on "alien" soil.

According to the comparative literature theorist Alexandr Veselovskiy, in the case of the translation of a literary work and its reception in a different environment, the similarity or historical correspondence of both nations involved in this process is of primary importance. If a literature or a culture that perceives a certain phenomenon from the outside has an appropriate ground for the reception of similar ideas, thoughts, views, images etc., it enables the emergence of a peculiar counter current, which promotes this process.[14]

By echoing the deep-rooted psychological structures hidden in the matrix of the collective memory, Kulish managed to find what Claude Levi-Strauss called "universal subconscious structures"[15] corresponding to the primal meanings implied by Shakespeare in the original.

The Ukrainian translator offered a kind of ethno-centric reduction to adapt the text to the particular target culture. This approach can be explained by the fact that "the domestic inscription in the translation extends the appeal of the source text to a mass audience in another culture."[16] He did not neglect the semantic adequacy; he simply embraced the

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[11] Edward Hall, *The Silent Language* (New York: Doubleday, 1973).

[12] Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, 22.

[13] Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1995), 53–69.

[14] Alexandr Veselovskiy, *Razyskaniya v Oblasti Russkogo Dukhovnogo Stikha* (Sankt-Peterburg, 1889), 115–116.

[15] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 65.

[16] Lawrence Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything. Theory and Practice*, 25.

strategy or organic translation. He neither omitted nor added storylines to the original, nor did he renounce his bright poetic individuality, which makes his works so recognizable.

Maria Tymoczko rightfully claims that "translation is frequently a source of formal experimentation in receptor cultures, as translators import or adapt the genres and formal strategies of the source text into the receptor system. Because translation is at times one locus in a literary system where formal experimentation is more easily tolerated, translation can even become an 'alibi' for challenges to the dominant poetics."[17] We see the truthfulness of this statement in the case of Kulish's translation. He conveyed the lexical nuances of the English text with the folk means. He blended two opposing languages: archaic-bookish and folk-colloquial. To preserve stylistic details and match the precision of poetic phrases skilfully, Kulish coined words and made various formal experiments with the Ukrainian language. His poetic language is somewhat distanced from the conventions existing in the recipient Ukrainian culture. The translator actually combined high style and an organic folk basis where opposite stylistic registers were synthesized to highlight and mutually benefit each other.

His language includes terms borrowed from Russian, oldRussian, old Ukrainian, Polish, biblical words, Church Slavonic words, local dialects and colloquialisms. Along with making the translation language strange through archaic and local elements, he also converted it into a more national one, which encompassed ethnographic, socio-political and socio-economical elements.

Moreover, the translator did not consider Russian and Church Slavonic borrowings alien to the Ukrainian language. In his opinion, in the particular stage of its historical development, the Ukrainian language was ahead of the neighbouring Slavic languages and they borrowed from it extensively.[18] Ivan Franko, who edited these translations, tried to clarify the meaning and make them more mellifluent.

The most original characteristic of Kulish's "Julius Caesar" is the abundance of nationally biased units. They can be categorized into notions defining military positions (for instance, Cossacks, hetmans, atamans, military scribes, haidamaks, *komminyks* – horse soldiers; *korogvas* – standard bearers), household related concepts (*yatka* – a light building for temporary use; *svitlytsya* – a bright room where guests are received; *koryak* – a kind of a goblet), items of clothing (*kobenyak*, *oponcha* – wide long men's coats) and other culture-specific notions (kleinody – symbols of military power in the times of Cossacks; *tsydulka* – a small note; *movnytsya*, *hovornytsya* – a kind of tribune or a platform; *maidan* – an open square; *tulumbas* – a kind of a drum; *bandura*, *kobza* – traditional folk musical instruments). All these realias aptly scattered throughout the translation bring alien phenomena closer to the recipient worldview. Besides, the interpreter employs Ukrainian specific idioms, substandard

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[17] Maria Tymoczko, "Post-colonial writing and literary translation," in *Post-colonial Translation. Theory and practice*, ed. by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 33.
[18] Ol'ha Luchuk, "Yevropejs'ky Tsentr Kulturnytstva Panteleimona Kulisha," in *Dialohichna Pryroda Literatury: Perekladoznavchi ta Literaturoznavchi Narysy* (L'viv: Vydavnytstvo L'visvs'koho Katolyts'koho Universytetu, 2004), 13–18.

phrases and colloquial addresses and hails, (for example, "*ой леле*", "*гой*", "*гайда*", "*гов*", "*ба ні*", "*еге*", "*гай*").

P. Kulish took on a cultural mission of developing the Ukrainian language and opening perspectives for its further development, and he succeeded indeed. He was one of the first representatives of the elite to bring the country closer to Europe. His orientation towards European civilization and fondness for the unique national folk culture brought about a burst of intellectual activity.

Being a creator of the Ukrainian literary language on the basis of the best classic examples, Kulish actually took a tremendous step towards the Europeanization of Ukraine, which at that time was treated as a backward area of the Russian empire. Through coining unique neologisms, Kulish – "a pioneer with a heavy hammer"[19] – gave his own version of the Ukrainian language development. He played a prominent role in shaping the cultural language of the epoch.

The second translation of *Julius Caesar* goes in the opposite direction (one can agree here with Toury's[20] observations on the novelty of each subsequent translation entering the target culture). It was masterfully executed by Vasyl' Mysyk (1907–1983) – a gifted follower of the famous neoclassic school of Ukrainian literature. This translation had not been presented to the public until it was included into the 6-volume complete works of Shakespeare, published in 1986.[21]

Having returned after his political imprisonment in the concentration camp in Solovky and then in one of the German concentration camps for Soviet prisoners of war, Mysyk chose this play for translation as the idea of resistance was close to his heart.

This conventionally neutral version of Shakespeare's play is centred around the source and corresponds to it on all levels of poetics: composition and structure, use of language, characters, rhythm and intonation are accurately bound with the English text (in Toury's terms[22] we witness here a source-oriented approach as opposed to a target-oriented one shown by Kulish; or foreignizing and domesticating methods as suggested by Schleiermacher[23]).

The verse is skilfully disciplined and all concepts are carefully selected. There are very few exceptions. One of them pertains to the Cossack times of the 15th–18th centuries – *kleinody* (II.2). The other bears a connotation to the Tsar rule – *prestol* (I.2), which is a seat occupied by a sovereign.

In general, the translation sounds natural and in tune with the original work. It is known that Vasyl' Mysyk, a masterful stylist, consciously strived to achieve objectiveness up to

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[19] Mykola Zerov and Oleh Bahan, *Ukrayins'ke pys'menstvo XIX st: vid Kulisha do Vynnychenka: narysy z novitn'oho ukrayins'koho pys'menstva* (Drohobych: Vydavnycha firma "Vidrodzhennia", 2007), 249.

[20] Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond,* 166.

[21] Wil'yam Shekspir, "Yuliy Tsezar," trans. Vasyl Mysyk in *Tvory: in 6 vols* (Kyiv: Dnipro, 1986), 4, 250–330.

[22] Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond,* 173.

[23] André Lefevere, *Translating Literature: The German Tradition from Luther to Rosenzweig* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1977), 74.

complete self-removal, thus creating the "illusion of transparency."[24] That is why his version is so close to the original and political implications emerge only if it is viewed in the socio-cultural and ideological context of Ukraine. This can be done through analogy, which Bassnett and Lefevere call "the easy way in negotiations between cultures, precisely because it slants the culture of origin toward the receiving culture."[25]

Such lines as "When Caesar says 'do this,' it is perform'd" (I.2) or "Marullus and Flavius, for pulling scarfs / off Caesar's images, are put to silence" (I.2) obviously resonate with the Ukrainian readers who are well aware of the flip side of the Soviet regime, with its severe intolerance towards any manifestation of freedom.

According to the idea expressed by the prominent literary scholar Yuri Lotman, "the text fulfils the function of the collective cultural memory. In this role, it shows, on the one hand, the capacity for uninterrupted replenishment, and on the other hand, for actualizing some aspects of information while temporarily or completely forgetting others."[26] This statement is particularly truthful for Mysyk's version, but this truthfulness is fully revealed only to those familiar with the translator's background and the repercussions he faced for his anti-totalitarian beliefs.

Vasyl' Mysyk's approach is quite different from that employed by Panteleimon Kulish. Through a skilful use of language, he depicts an alien image through the depth of the recipients' collective memory, thus unavoidably creating subconscious parallels to the Ukrainian reality of the past and present times. Here we have a hermeneutic dialogue between worldviews, a transition of thoughts from one national field to another, a synthesis of the giving and receiving of mentalities. This version of *Julius Caesar* is coherent in terms of artistic representation and cultural motivation.

William Shakespeare managed to create such a subtle political atmosphere in his play that it can be viewed in a different light in different countries and epochs. The interpreters here are completely free to experiment with the so called "blank spaces" and to fill them with culture-specific implications through actualization and specification. The text becomes similar to an atom with variable valence that acquires the abundance of senses under the influence of discourse. And as Grossman points out, "a translator's fidelity is not to lexical pairings but to context – the implications and echoes of the first author's tone, intention, and level of discourse."[27]

Each translation deserves attention, and its right to exist cannot be denied. The polyphony of various versions represents the blooming diversity of ideology, culture, aesthetics and so on. The associative field of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* is dynamic and changeable, and

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[24] Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, 1.

[25] André Lefevere and Susan Bassnett, "Introduction: Where Are We In Translation Studies?," in *Constructing Cultures: Essays On Literary Translation Topics in Translation* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998), 7.

[26] Yuri Lotman, "Semiotika Kultury i Ponyatiye Teksta," in *Stat'i po Semiotike Kultury i Iskusstva* (Sankt-Peterburg: Akademicheskiy proekt, 2002), 68.

[27] Edith Grossman, *Why Translation Matters* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 70–71.

diverse receptive perspectives account for its ongoing topicality both for readers and interpreters.