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Alluring translations after the Spanish-American War: A case study of *The Puerto-Rico Eagle*

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a case study of a Spanish-language newspaper, *The Puerto-Rico Eagle*, published in Puerto Rico after the Spanish-American War in order to identify the various ways in which the practice of translation manifests and to what ends these translations are used. This inquiry seeks to reconcile two approaches to translation history – first, to understand the history of translation practices in this colonial context and, second, to recognise the role that translation played in this colonial time and space. Bringing together these two approaches to translation history, this article provides preliminary insights into the multi-faceted nature of translation in Hispanophone newspapers, be it an unmarked effort to influence and persuade readers, a means to establish authority and inspire confidence, or a sensational act worthy of news coverage unto itself. In doing so, the article points toward potential avenues for future inquiry into translation in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean with newspapers as a site of translation activity.

Keywords: newspapers, Americanisation, translation history, unmarked translation, Puerto Rico

Privlačni prevodi po špansko-ameriški vojni: študija primera *The Puerto-Rico Eagle*

IZVLEČEK

V prispevku je predstavljena študija primera časopisa v španskem jeziku, *The Puerto-Rico Eagle*, ki je izhajal v Portoriku po špansko-ameriški vojni. Namen študije primera je identificirati, v kakšni obliki so se prevodi v tem časopisu pojavljali in zakaj so se uporabljali. Raziskava poskuša uskladiti dva pristopa k zgodovini prevajanja: prvi poskuša razumeti zgodovino prevajanja v navedenem kolonialnem kontekstu, drugi pa prepoznati vlogo, ki jo je prevod igral v omenjenem kolonialnem času in prostoru. Z združitvijo obeh pristopov k zgodovini prevajanja prinaša prispevek preliminarni vpogled v večstransko naravo prevajanja v hispanofonih časopisih, ki sega od nepoudarjene namere, da bi na bralce vplivali in jih prepričali, do sredstva za vzpostavljane avtoritete in dvigovanja samozavesti, pa tja do senzacionalističnega dejanja, ki bi bilo samo po sebi vredno medijske pozornosti. S tem prispevek podaja možne nove smeri nadaljnjega raziskovanja prevajanja na špansko govorečih Karibih, in sicer v časopisih kot prostorom prevajalske dejavnosti.

Ključne besede: časopisi, amerikanizacija, zgodovina prevajanja, nezaznamovan prevod, Portoriko

1. Introduction

As an instrument of colonial imposition and expansion, translation was a well-documented means by which the Spanish Empire exerted control and influence. Throughout the empire, translation served not only as a tool for diplomatic negotiation and the finalisation of treaties (Bowen 1994), but also as a means by which to create and shape texts in the service of religious and cultural ideals (e.g., Rafael 2005; Valdeón 2014). The power of translation was known to the Spanish crown, and its utility was well established with regard to justifying conquest and appropriating and circulating scientific knowledge as early as the twelfth century in the famed School of Toledo (for a discussion, see Pym 1994). The practice of translation was not centralised exclusively on the Iberian Peninsula, as the Spanish Empire relied on the production of translations and multilingual texts from across the continent, including the Southern Netherlands, to administer and manage an expansive, multilingual territory (Behiels, Thomas, and Pistor 2014). As the empire grew, the utility of translation crossed the Atlantic and Pacific with missionaries, advancing their efforts in terms of religious teaching and conversion alongside teaching the Spanish language (e.g., Rafael 2005, 2015; Zwartjes 2014). From its initial rise to its subsequent decline, the Spanish Empire relied on translation as an effective tool to influence multiple aspects of its reign, both explicitly and implicitly.

Yet the decline of the Spanish Empire at the end of the nineteenth century does not coincide with a disappearance of translation as a means of imperial imposition.¹ The end of the Spanish-American War in 1898 by means of the Treaty of Paris resulted in several Spanish territories – namely Cuba, Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico – being ceded to the United States. Much in the same way that translation had been used across the Spanish Empire for centuries prior to this transition, so too would translation be used to various ends in the new sociopolitical landscape. For instance, questions of nationhood arise from translation and its historicisation in the Philippines (e.g., Rafael 2005, 2016; Sales 2019), while the use of translation as a means to support US expansionist agendas and Americanisation efforts are described in Puerto Rico (e.g., Mellinger 2019) and Cuba (e.g., Foner 1972). Given the range of uses of translation, it is perhaps unsurprising that the sites of translation are equally varied. Research has documented the use of literary magazines and various forms of literature as a means to disseminate, serialise, and circulate translations in the Caribbean (e.g., Seligmann 2021; Saint-Loubert 2020), with intellectual communities relying on these spaces to engage in cultural and political debate (e.g., Guzmán 2020, 2021; Malena 2018).

1 While the Spanish Empire still held overseas territories into the twentieth century, the Spanish-American War marked a watershed, after which its influence waned.

In addition to literary spaces, considerable cultural and political discourse occurs in print media, particularly newspapers, in the Caribbean and diasporic immigrant communities. Kanellos (2000, 2005, 2007) recognises the importance of print culture, particularly in Hispanic and Spanish-speaking communities, as a site for intellectual discourse and dissent, allowing writers to leverage writing in periodicals and newspapers for political reasons and to voice support for independence movements. Newspapers founded in Latin America were also an important tool for colonialism, and scholars such as Ferreira (2006) have argued that presses were used by the Spanish and the US to impose structural censorship and ideological control.² More specifically, research has revealed how newspapers in Puerto Rico provided spaces for political activism and transnational engagement beyond the island's borders (Meléndez-Badillo 2021). Despite the importance of these textual spaces, researchers still note a relative dearth of scholarship on Hispanophone newspapers in scholarly research (Bonifacio 2021). A notable exception is Castañeda and Feu's (2019) edited volume that establishes newspapers and periodicals as a site of collaboration, connection, and organisation during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly in relation to anarchist ideologies and their circulation in the Spanish-speaking world.

In light of the importance of newspapers as textual spaces in which dissidence, influence, and collaboration are possible, translation studies researchers have sought to examine journalism in and through translation. Whereas previous reviews of the extant translation studies scholarship revealed limited attention to newspapers as sites of translation activity (see van Doorslaer 2011), the current translation studies research landscape suggests more robust attention is now being provided. Valdeón (2020) has outlined various points of intersection of translation studies and journalism studies, illustrating the remit of what constitutes translation in both areas of scholarly discourse. Comparative studies of different types of newspapers have illustrated how translation practices are varied and arise from the unique sociopolitical contexts in which these newspapers are situated (e.g., Baer and Pokorn 2018). Moreover, researchers have identified how the historical time period in which presses publish newspapers can result in unique configurations of languages and translations (Gasca Jiménez et al. 2019). The possibility of bilingual production occurs in some of these spaces, including immigrant, diasporic communities (Baer and Pokorn 2018), and in liminal spaces such as the US borderlands (Gasca Jiménez et al. 2019).

2 Similar arguments related to censorship and ideological mediation in newspapers and journalism have been made in translation studies. See, for instance, work by van Doorslaer (2010) and Lovett (2019). Questions have also been raised related to the press reporting on the Spanish-American War and censorship (Brown 1965) and various ideological representations (Rodríguez 1998).

As Valdeón (2020, 1647ff.) notes, the production of translation in periodicals often involves multiple actors and procedures, such as transediting and adaptation. As such, translations must be contextualised not only in the sociopolitical contexts in which they occur, but also within the publishing house and its associated ideologies and affiliations. Consequently, a direct comparison between source and target language versions is complicated, requiring careful attention to how translations are framed and positioned within the publication.

This article presents a case study that examines translations published in Puerto Rico during the transition from Spanish to US control, focusing primarily on how translations are used and positioned in a Spanish-language newspaper and to what end. In what follows, three case studies are presented which examine how the role of translation (and in some cases, interpreting) figures into publishing strategies to various extents and with various effects. These translations are drawn from *The Puerto-Rico Eagle / El Águila de Puerto Rico* during a relatively short time period in the early twentieth century. In each case, the analysis takes into account the foregoing considerations of sociopolitical context, placement, and publishing apparatus to reveal the various ends to which these translations were used. Based on these examples, the article draws tentative conclusions on how the presence and relative position of translation activity in this type of Spanish-language newspaper can be identified along with their utility in establishing influence or authority.

2. Unmarked translations

Puerto Rico during the early twentieth century was a site of significant change and transformation with respect to language use, and by extension, translation and interpreting. The Treaty of Paris had ended the Spanish-American War in 1898, transferring control of Spanish-held territories to the United States. After nearly 400 years of Spanish rule, Puerto Rico was now under the control and protection of an English-speaking country with significant aspirations of extending its global reach throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. During this transition, newspapers became a site of vigorous political and ideological activity, allowing communities of like-minded individuals to share a common textual space (e.g., Meléndez-Badillo 2021; Sánchez Collantes 2019) and establish transnational lines of communication (e.g., de la Torre 2019; Sueiro Seoane 2019).

As part of this transition to US rule, various Americanisation efforts sought to establish a continuous, common history with the United States (Schmidt-Nowara 2012),

and some initial research has documented the extent to which translation enabled this process (e.g., Mellinger 2019). Newspapers are another site in which translation was used in the service of Americanisation efforts. Such is the case on 4 July 1902, in which *The Puerto-Rico Eagle* / *El Águila de Puerto Rico* printed the following on the front page of the newspaper:

Example 1

Siendo hoy la fecha gloriosa en que se declaró la independencia de los Estados Unidos, reproducimos á continuación, la proclama que dirijiera al pueblo de Puerto Rico el General Nelson A. Miles al desembarcar en nuestras playas al frente del ejército americano.

[With today being the glorious date on which the United States declared its independence, we reproduce here the proclamation that General Nelson A. Miles directed to the Puerto Rican people upon disembarking on our shores ahead of the American army.]³

Landing in Guánica on the southwest side of the island, General Nelson A. Miles was the military leader responsible for leading the Puerto Rican campaign during the Spanish-American War, which lasted only a few months in 1898. These introductory comments situate his speech as one that should be celebrated – a harbinger of the arrival of US troops which would result in the overturn of Spanish colonial rule. The speech is then reproduced in Spanish, a translation of the speech that would have been delivered in English upon General Miles' arrival. In the newspaper, the text is not marked as a translation, but rather is presented as if it were originally uttered in Spanish. As the newspaper of the Puerto Rican Republican Party (*Partido Republicano Puertorriqueño*), the editorial decision to print the translation in this manner is consistent with its pro-annexation ideological leanings. This type of covert translation has been documented in other journalistic contexts, such as foreign-language immigrant newspapers for Russian and Slovene communities in diaspora, to varying effect (Baer and Pokorn 2018).

Including this proclamation in Spanish rather than English, and not marking the text as a translation, is reminiscent of the arrival of Napoleon in Egypt, when his French proclamation was rendered in Arabic without reference to its provenance (Tageldin 2011). This tactic results in the arrival of the occupying military forces “under the banner of equivalence, not difference”, creating what the author describes as an “alluring departure”

3 All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

from what might be considered a more traditional discourse of dominance (Tageldin 2011, 33). In the same way, General Miles' proclamation eschews the idea that the Spanish-American War is a destructive force, and instead characterises this bellicose intervention as spreading a "splendorous civilisation" within which all can live together. In doing so, the unmarked or covert translation becomes an alluring one that justifies this military action and entices readers to align themselves with the new US authority.

The conscious decision to print this text on American Independence Day extends beyond the sentiments it contains, since the relative position that the translation occupies with respect to other texts strengthens its impact. In the same column as the end of the proclamation, separated by two horizontal lines, a poem dedicated to José M. Torres Caicedo appears, written by Abigail Lozano, a Venezuelan poet known for patriotism and writing about Simón Bolívar and the liberation movement (Coester 1916, 310; Ramírez Vivas 2014). Originally written in 1855 and titled "La Libertad" [Liberty/Freedom], the poem evokes imagery of a free Latin America in line with Bolívar's vision of independence from the Spanish crown.⁴ The proximity of General Miles' proclamation and Lozano's poem already suggests a relationship between the two ideas, with the United States serving as a quasi-Bolivarian liberator of Puerto Rico. The interplay of both texts on the front page of the newspaper leaves little doubt of the pro-independence stance adopted by the publishers with respect to the Spanish Empire.

Yet, the status of General Miles' proclamation as an unmarked or covert translation allows for deeper reflection if we consider Sturrock's (1990) conceptualisation of *en face* translation. In Sturrock's words, *en face* translation "[...] is not a method of translation, it is merely an unusual format for it", one that confronts a source text with its corresponding target text and "represents iconically the act of translation, conceived of as the matching of one text to another" (Sturrock 1990, 994–5, emphasis in original). Although first proposed to discuss poetic and literary translations that invite comparison across the space dividing two texts, the concept of *en face* translation is a useful frame to consider the two texts in question. Much in the same way that Tageldin (2011) signals equivalence through an unmarked translation, Sturrock's invitation to consider both texts in juxtaposition provokes readers to liken the liberation of Latin America from Spanish rule with the assumption of US control of the island. These sentiments are equated by virtue of their positions on the page, linking disparate histories and, as Tageldin contends, seductively replacing and imposing a new empire in its stead.

4 Even the poem's title seemingly alludes to Bolívar's nickname, *El Libertador*, which has been rendered in English as the Liberator (of America). It should be noted that the dedication to Torres Caicedo does not appear in the newspaper reproduction; this dedication appears in a collection of Abigail Lozano's works edited by Torres Caicedo (1864, 193).

Such textual tactics continue by turning the page, with the newspaper continuing in its exaltations of an American empire with descriptions of moments in US history associated with independence and national pride. For instance, the following page includes columns related to the Declaration of Independence and the Battle of Ticonderoga. An obvious link to Americanisation, the Declaration of Independence would be of limited relevance unless the newspaper was positioning Puerto Rico as being part of the United States. Of course, the ambiguous relationship between Puerto Rico and the US continues into the present day (see Trías Monge 1997). However, the positioning of Miles' comments being supported by these sentiments in the pages that follow his initial statements is an instantiation of Americanisation efforts (Schmidt-Nowara 2012). The Battle of Ticonderoga may have been slightly less known to readers, allowing an extension of an American empire and history into the Puerto Rican sphere or readership. This battle during the Revolutionary War was the first offensive victory of the US army against the British military, again echoing the sentiments of independence from European control or influence.

These Americanisation efforts do not carry over to other newspapers published on the same day. If we look, for instance, at *La Democracia*, which bills itself as “the paper with the largest circulation in the island”, the front page dedicates the first three columns to a section called *Cuentos y narraciones* [Stories and narrations], printing a story originally written in Spanish by Cecilio Andino with a certain Puerto Rican flair and authenticity (*La Democracia*, 4 July 1902, no. 3238). This story recounts an attempt to hire a band for the July 4 celebrations by a government official, who by virtue of his job needed to celebrate Independence Day. The remainder of the story describes the festivities of the day, without any clear efforts at Americanisation. Moreover, there is no feigned original presented via translation, nor is there an effort to tie historical events to the date. The editorial decision not to address the historical relevance of the date with regard to US independence is perhaps unsurprising, given the affiliation of *La Democracia* with the Liberal Party, which favoured independence rather than annexation.

This extended example of an unmarked translation provides preliminary insights into the allure of translations and their ability to link ideas and histories through the seduction and replacement of empire. Rather than a more direct imposition of US ideals that explicitly recognises their provenance, a covert translation of this type allows newspapers to meaningfully insert political and ideological ideals into the news discourse, which is further strengthened by the relative positions of these texts. While a single observed case cannot be generalised to Spanish-language newspapers across the region, this type of unmarked translation has been documented in other contexts (e.g., Baer and Pokorn 2018), such that future work in this area ought to recognise the

potential for translations to appear in this manner. Unmarked or covert translations, though, represent only one use of translation, and other translation practices are described in the sections that follow.

3. Errata, credibility, and engagement

Current thinking on journalism situates credibility as one of the pillars of a journalistic ethics, in which credibility is a normative ethical principle that establishes a source as being reliable and trustworthy (Ward 2005). The means by which credibility is cultivated depend on a variety of factors, with previous scholarship examining specific rhetorical moves that appeal to the provenance of an idea to establish a news item as being credible (e.g., Soto-Escobar and Espejo-Cala 2019). Research has documented that, through translation, credibility can be eroded on the basis of misattribution of information (e.g., Hong 2021).

The question of credibility with respect to translation in newspapers extends beyond the attribution of sources. A short column from 14 July 1902 in *The Puerto-Rico Eagle* illustrates this point. On the front page, following its lead story of the day in the first column, the newspaper ran a column with the title “Es de lamentarse” [It is a pity]. These three words appear in large print and start the first sentence of the full text, which reads:

Example 2

Es de lamentarse que el “San Juan News” no tenga un traductor que conozca lo que tiene entre manos.

[It is a pity that *The San Juan News* does not have a translator who knows what he is working with.]

(*The Puerto-Rico Eagle*, vol. I, no. 159, 14 July 1902)

Signed only with the initials I.X.L., the text proceeds to document what the writer deems to be a translation error or news errata that requires correction from a competing newspaper, *The San Juan News*. As the column explains, the original text was written in English with a corresponding translation provided in Spanish. The text in *The Puerto-Rico Eagle* describes the correspondent’s visit to a hospital patient, in which the critiqued text describes the atmosphere as “the calm of a place of suffering has given way to a more harsh business-like [sic] air.” In translation, the Spanish version renders *business-like* using the adjective *comercial*, which approximates the denotative meaning of business. The purported translation error is that the correspondent fails to account for the connotative dimension of *comercial* which, in I.X.L.’s estimation,

relates to “el estilo moderno y hacendoso que allí prevalecía” [the modern and industrious style that was prevalent there]. This characterisation of what the author describes as a mistranslation perhaps imbues a sense of modernisation or technological advancement, casting the English version in a much more positive light than might be expected given the original’s inclusion of the adjective *harsh*.

Nevertheless, I.X.L. presents a competing interpretation of the source text as factual and credible, leaving little doubt to readers of *The Puerto-Rico Eagle* of how the translation in *The San Juan News* should have read. The author then ends the column with the following request to *The San Juan News*:

Example 3

que cuando viertan al castellano algún artículo ó correspondencia, que se le remita en inglés, que procuren no traducir literalmente sino dar el verdadero sentido de aquellos.

[that when translating an article or correspondence into Spanish that was written in English, to ensure that the translation is not done literally but rather gives its original sense.]

This claimed translation error illustrates the power of translation to establish credibility and authority. By writing a Spanish-language column in a predominantly Spanish-language newspaper, the author I.X.L. claims the position of an informed bilingual reader who is able to evaluate news sources from another publication and distil the most salient aspects for discussion in this new location. From this established vantage point, the author then makes a claim about the appropriateness of a rendition, using this established authority to evaluate how successful the translation is. The assumed authority provides the opportunity to then suggest that translations in the other venue cannot be trusted given the emphasis solely on a literal rendition rather than what the original text contains. In doing so, the author introduces a double-bind of trust: one in which translations cannot be trusted in some news sources – in this case, *The San Juan News* – while translations can be more definitively trusted by those who are in a position to evaluate them, such as I.X.L. in this news column.

What remains rather salient in this example is the possibility that the purported error is, in fact, not erroneous at all. In I.X.L.’s estimation, the term *comercial* is insufficient to capture the source language term ‘busines-like’ [sic]. Notwithstanding the typo, which adds a sense of irony to the entire column regarding what constitutes an appropriate rendition, the author suggests that there should be a connotation of a

modern, efficient environment in which patients are treated. This understanding of the English term perhaps reflects the author's presumed reality or ideology, but does not necessarily align with the various elements present in source text. In fact, the term 'harsh' seems to fall away in both translations – in *The San Juan News*, the term does not appear at all, while in I.X.L.'s suggested revision in *The Puerto-Rico Eagle* the translation is skewed in a much more positive light. Nevertheless, by insinuating that the translation in *The San Juan News* is somehow faulty, the author capitalises on a readership that may not have access to the source text or may lack the faculty to evaluate the translation, thereby claiming a potentially unearned or undeserved credibility.

The inclusion of this column regarding a translation error speaks to larger questions of credibility of the newspapers in question. The author's invocation of an identified translation 'error', a suggested revision, and an exhortation to translate based on meaning lends credibility to *The Puerto-Rico Eagle* while undermining that of the competing newspaper. I.X.L. explicitly marks and reveals translation as a means of sharing news in the other publication, while writing directly in Spanish for a Spanish-speaking readership. It remains unclear based on the column alone whether translation is seen as being somehow lesser than original writing, but the text does point to the mediated nature of news dissemination and the potential for changes to be introduced as a result of translation. If readers are looking for information that is unmediated or unaltered, then the nature of translation being explicitly addressed may alter how readers engage with various sources.

In addition, the act of publishing this column demonstrates how newspapers can use translation to establish their own trustworthiness as a news source. While the column or letter could be attributed solely to the author and not viewed as an endorsement of the content, the very fact that the newspaper has printed a letter that critiques a competing publication shows a willingness on the part of the newspaper to challenge the credibility or trustworthiness of their competitors. The alternative – i.e., not publishing the piece, particularly in light of its potentially erroneous claims – provides further evidence that translation was viewed as a device to establish credibility, while also revealing a specific ideological position regarding the topic at hand. Given the well-documented nature of newspapers to adopt a specific political and ideological bent, one could plausibly surmise that the intentional decision to publish a column that invokes translation as a credibility-establishing instrument is an effort to position the newspaper as a definitive source of information.

4. The spectacle of translation and interpreting

As a site of sustained engagement and collaboration, newspapers provide an opportunity to investigate events and interactions over a period of time. These encounters take various forms; within the same newspaper, letters to the editor or serialised instalments of a text can provide avenues for interaction while across multiple periodicals various texts may speak to the same topic on the same day or within a short span of time. This temporal dimension is important when considering how translations are used, particularly as a means to establish a consistent readership and audience. While serialised literary pieces are perhaps the most prominent example of this type of prolonged storytelling, another newsworthy case appears in *The Puerto-Rico Eagle* in which translation and interpreting were the objects of attention.

The example is drawn from a two-week-long court case that began 11 December 1902 in Mayagüez, a town on the western side of the island. Prior to US control of the Puerto Rico, legal proceedings would have roughly followed in the legal tradition of Spain, since the legal system and culture varied throughout New Spain given the vastness of the empire and the considerable distance from the metropole and Spanish capital, with practices being dependent on a broad range of factors (Cutter 2001). With the US assuming control of Puerto Rico only four years prior, the US legal system would have been US federal law, in which criminal trials guarantee certain rights for defendants, including an oral trial and judgment rendered by a jury of peers. This tradition of oral arguments during criminal proceedings was likely to attract attention on the island given its relative novelty, particularly since the Spanish legal system would have relied on, at least in some contexts, written arguments to be submitted for adjudication.

As a case in point, *The Puerto-Rico Eagle* printed the following three-line headline on the front page in the centre of the paper:

Example 4

EL CRIMEN DE LA CARRETERA DE AÑASCO

JUICIO ORAL EN MAYAGUEZ

Notas expresas para “El Aguila”

[THE CRIME ON THE AÑASCO HIGHWAY

ORAL HEARINGS IN MAYAGUEZ

Quick notes for “The Eagle”]

No other story receives a headline of the same size and placement throughout the two-week trial. While this news story is not an official transcript of the proceedings, the newspaper provides an abbreviated account for readers who were interested in these events. The newspaper frames the trial as an event worthy of attention, describing the excitement in the streets and squares of the town related to the upcoming trial. As the text reads, “De todos los pueblos limítrofes concurren á presenciar el juicio” [People from every neighbouring town have gathered to witness the trial]. In its opening discussion, the paper presents in essence a *dramatis personae*, noting the various parties who will be present in the trial along with a description of each. Of these, an interpreter is explicitly mentioned, William M. Falvo, who is described as follows:

Example 5

Mr. William M. Falvo es el intérprete, quien con gran precisión y ligereza expresa en español lo que dice el Fiscal y el Juez Herrim[?] y en inglés lo que dicen en español los demás señores del Tribunal y la defensa.

[Mr. William M. Falvo is the interpreter, who with great agility and precision, renders in Spanish what the Prosecutor and Judge Herrim[?] say, and states in English what the remainder of the Court and the Defence say in Spanish.]

(*The Puerto-Rico Eagle*, vol. I, no. 285, 11 December 1902)

As might be expected, the description of William M. Falvo positions the interpreter as an integral part of the trial. Little room is left to question the way in which the trial will proceed, since the interpreter is described as creating a transparent means of communication with great facility. Previous scholarship has documented through a range of historical sources the use of indigenous people with language abilities in Spanish and local languages (e.g., Yannakakis 2008); however, in this case, we find interpreting featured prominently in newspaper reporting of a newsworthy event. Despite the prominent nature of the interpreter on the first day of the trial, Mr. Falvo disappears for the remainder of the reporting over several weeks, fading into the background with the hearings proceeding as though they were being conducted exclusively in Spanish. As such, the original utterances in Spanish and English are rendered ephemeral and likely unrecoverable in their totality, although some of the record is preserved in the newspaper as the trial proceeds. Back-and-forth questioning is provided solely in Spanish, which ostensibly records the Spanish rendition of the interpreter as well as responses that are provided in Spanish.

Despite not expressly commenting on the interpreter or his work, clues remain about the interpreting in the trial, which appear under subheadings in the newspaper that mark curiosities or events that occur using the title “Incidente”. This heading can be rendered either as an *event* or a *mishap*, and its polysemous nature allows various communication challenges that occur in the trial to be documented. About a week into the trial, the newspaper presents what appears to be a verbatim record of a series of questions between the witness and defence. During the exchange, the question in Spanish is asked “Qué posición ocupaban los coches próximos al puente?”⁵ Rendering this question into a close translation into English is rather difficult given the lack of clarity in terms of grammar or terminology. The term *posición* is perhaps a calque from *position* in English, and the remainder of the question seems to syntactically follow English structures that are somewhat opaque in Spanish. One might surmise that the question is attempting to determine the location of the cars near a bridge, but this is purely conjecture.

Fortunately, hindsight is not required to solve this puzzle, since the newspaper relies on its marker of “Incidente” directly after the question is posed, which reads:

Example 6

Ni el testigo ni el Tribunal entienden la pregunta. El defensor aclara el motivo para que la hace y determina la forma.

[Neither the witness nor the Court understand the question. The defence attorney clarifies the rationale for asking the question and establishes its form.]

(*The Puerto-Rico Eagle*, vol. I, no. 291, 18 December 1902)

Based on this reporting, it may be possible to reconstruct whether the interpreter has made a newsworthy mistake. While there is no official language in the United States, English serves as the *de facto* official language, particularly since it is the language of the courts. In this case, the interpreter would have likely been necessary to allow English-speaking legal professionals, judges, and attorneys to communicate with Spanish-speaking parties or litigants. Given the strangely phrased question, one

5 The Spanish quotes from the trial are reproduced as they were originally printed in the newspaper, with any orthographic mistakes being maintained. For instance, one would likely expect an inverted question mark at the start of this question; however, none was printed in the newspaper. Diacritical marks, such as graphic accents, were not always included, either, as in Example 6.

could suspect that the interpreter has rendered an English question into Spanish in such a manner that the various parties were unsure of its meaning.

Notable here is that translation and interpreting are being used implicitly to tell the story of the trial, adding intrigue and points of contention to the series of events. Given the static nature of a newspaper and limited space, the newspaper could have easily ignored this “Incidente” in favour of another event or moment during the trial. Nevertheless, the breakdown in communication draws the attention of the correspondent, allowing readers to speculate alongside those in attendance regarding what occurred during the trial. The serialised nature of the trial provides prolonged engagement for readers who want to know the outcome of the case and how it unfolds. In some respects, translation and interpreting are a plot point in the story rather than the vehicle by which this story is told, illustrating the newsworthy nature of their inclusion in the trial. While this particular article does not rise to the level of other cases in which interpreters play a crucial role (see, for instance, Kelleher’s 2018 book-length treatment of *The Maamtrasna Murders*), its inclusion in this early Spanish-language newspaper suggests the potential for other cases that are similar in nature to exist and merit greater attention.

5. Conclusion

This study documents different types of translations present in the Spanish-speaking newspaper *The Puerto-Rico Eagle* during the early twentieth century in Puerto Rico, seeking to understand how these translations appear and the extent to which their utility can be examined. Three different types of translations are identified in a preliminary effort to understand the multi-faceted nature of translation in this type of newspaper. First, unmarked translations were used as a way to influence and persuade readers, linking ideas of neighbouring stories through their positioning on the page. These alluring translations seduce readers into a feeling of like-mindedness by suggesting a similar provenance and alignment of ideals while linking the texts to other ideas. In the example from *The Puerto-Rico Eagle*, the translation is an instantiation of Americanisation efforts that bridge similar anti-colonialist sentiments from European metropolises, supplanting previous Spanish history with a more US-centric account. Second, translation errors are interrogated to cultivate credibility and presume authority, establishing a hierarchy of trust between different newspapers based on translation practices and purported errors. Regardless of the veracity of the claims related to the translations, the authors can leverage knowledge of multiple languages and the suppressed source text to establish viable narratives about what constitutes the most appropriate translation. Third, translation and interpreting appear in this case study as sensational acts worthy of news coverage themselves. At times, such language

professionals figure prominently in the news stories, while in other instances a closer reading is required to identify traces of their presence. In either case, translation and interpreting figure into the historical record as notable practices of interest.

These different uses of translation are an initial step toward understanding the role that translation plays in newspapers in colonial and post-colonial contexts, particularly in cases in which colonial powers are substituted and replaced. While the documented examples in this case study cannot be generalised to Spanish-language newspapers across the region during the time period, the observed types of translation activity may serve as the foundation for future systematic studies. Moreover, the range of translation activity that is observed in the six-month time span from which these examples are drawn is suggestive of translation's multi-faceted role in this publishing space. The publication of literature alongside news items in Spanish-language newspapers in the Caribbean provides a unique opportunity to investigate the sociopolitical and ideological perspectives of the related authors, news correspondents, newspaper editors, and political figures. While the described categories of translation and the associated analyses are likely applicable in a broad range of journalistic settings, the multilingual and polycultural context that characterises the Caribbean suggests that newspapers are a rich site of translation activity that merits additional study.

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Translation and interpretation in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic: A case study from Slovakia

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly had a significant influence on the translating and interpreting industry. Even while certain tendencies are now apparent, it will take some time to fully understand how profound and transformative the years of pandemic measures and social isolation were. This paper summarises findings from two surveys conducted among translators and interpreters in Slovakia. The first was conducted during the first wave of the pandemic and focused on the immediate economic and psychological implications of the first lockdown measures on the translation community. Apart from measuring the changes in demand for services, the share of cancelled assignments and general mood among professionals, we have also enquired about the demand for remote interpreting. The proportion of those who encountered offers for remote interpreting nearly doubled in the six weeks after the introduction of the first lockdown measures in Slovakia (an increase from 18.75% to 39.69%). The second source of data is a survey of rates which already captures how much remote interpreting penetrated the structure of interpreting service one year after the onset of the pandemic. Based on our findings, the average number of remote interpreting days in 2021 was 67.53% of the total number of interpreting days. This rapid onset of remote interpreting recovered demand for interpreting services as the volume of work began to catch up with pre-pandemic levels, but also brought a greater psychological burden and stress resulting from the different nature of remote interpretation.

Keywords: pandemic, COVID-19, remote interpreting, demand for interpreting, demand for translation

Prevajanje in tolmačenje v času pandemije: študija na primeru Slovaške

IZVLEČEK

Epidemija COVID-19 je brez dvoma imela pomemben vpliv na prevajalsko in tolmaško dejavnost. Čeprav je danes že mogoče razbrati nekatere značilnosti, bo vseeno trajalo še nekaj časa, preden bo možno popolnoma razumeti, kako globok in transformativen je bil vpliv dvoletnih pandemskih ukrepov in izolacije. V prispevku so povzeti izsledki dveh anket, v katerih so sodelovali prevajalci in tolmači na Slovaškem. Prva anketa je bila izvedena v času prvega vala pandemije in se je osredotočala na neposredne ekonomske in psihološke implikacije ukrepov prvega zaprtja družbe na skupnost prevajalcev. Merili smo spremembe pri povpraševanju po storitvah, delež odpovedi naročil in

splošno razpoloženje med poklicnimi prevajalci, poleg tega pa smo spraševali tudi o povpraševanju po tolmačenju na daljavo. Delež tistih, ki so se srečali s ponudbami za tolmačenje na daljavo se je v obdobju šestih tednov od začetka veljavnosti ukrepov prvega zaprtja družbe na Slovaškem skoraj podvojil (povečal se je z 18,75 % na 39,69 %). Drugi vir podatkov pa je bila anketa o prevajalskih in tolmaških honorarjih, ki daje informacije o tem, kako globoko je tolmačenje na daljavo prodrlo v strukturo tolmaških storitev eno leto po začetku pandemije. Naši izsledki kažejo, da je leta 2021 tolmačenje na daljavo v povprečju predstavljalo 67,53 % vseh tolmaških dni. S tem skokovitim porastom tolmačenja na daljavo se je popravilo tudi povpraševanje po tolmaških storitvah, saj se je količina dela začela približevati tisti iz časov pred pandemijo. Ta praksa pa je s seboj prinesla tudi večje psihološko breme in več stresa, ki izhaja iz specifične narave tolmačenja na daljavo.

Ključne besede: pandemija, COVID-19, tolmačenje na daljavo, povpraševanje po tolmačenju, povpraševanje po prevajanju

1. Introduction

A global pandemic, with people trapped in isolation, with grounded planes, and all social and economic activity virtually frozen, was only the subject of dystopian movies until the beginning of 2020. Many of us will probably remember the first days, weeks and months of the COVID-19 pandemic, the new and utterly unfamiliar reality we suddenly found ourselves in. No one was prepared for it, and hardly anyone expected the scale of measures which were introduced in many parts of the world in the first months of 2020. Naturally, translators and interpreters were among the countless professions and vocations deeply affected by the anti-pandemic measures. Yet, given the natural, immanent differences between the nature of translators' and interpreters' work, we considered it important to understand and measure just how different the impacts were on both sides of the proverbial coin.

Based on our previous research mapping the sociological and economic characteristics of the market with translation and interpreting services in Slovakia (e.g. Djovčoš and Šveda 2017, 2021), we were interested in understanding how the pandemic affected the translation and interpreting market, both in terms of immediate impacts and in shaping long-term trends. In particular, we were interested in whether the effects of the pandemic and the various related social and economic measures would represent only a short-term deviation from the norm, or would have a long-term transformative impact on the Slovak translation and interpreting market.

2. Theoretical background

Naturally, the body of theoretical works written before the pandemic could hardly predict such a dramatic and unprecedented change in the socio-economic conditions of translators' work as the pandemic undoubtedly caused. Pre-pandemic research

relevant from the perspective of our paper is associated in particular with the advent of technological changes shaping the translation industry since the beginning of the millennium. These changes were dramatically enhanced and augmented during the onset of the pandemic. This trend has been most visible in interpreting. Fantinuoli (2018) signalled a technological turn in interpreting well before the pandemic, building on the work of pioneers in this field (e.g. Moser-Mercer 2005, 2011; Mozourakis 2006; Roziner and Schlesinger 2010; Braun 2015), and experiments with remote interpreting were emerging in research long before the pandemic, whether in community and court interpreting settings (Braun and Taylor 2012) or in the medical field (Jones et al. 2003). Not surprisingly, already before the full break-out of the pandemic Franz Pöchhacker (2020) claimed that interpreting had in large part moved to video. Indeed, as demonstrated by our research presented in this paper, this claim was very much to the point, although perhaps, it would be better to say that interpreting had gone remote. Within the broad range of formats of the remote provision of interpreting services, video applied only to some of the assignments.

Moreover, in 2021 the special issue of the journal *Bridge* was published, dedicated fully to the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic and its influence on the profession. Perez and Nikolić, in their introduction to the issue, claim that: “Going remote has revealed its pros and cons – work-wise, training-wise, but also socially” (Perez and Nikolić 2021). They continue to say that “as with nearly every other crisis, the pandemic has highlighted the crucial role of translation and interpreting services in the public-service sector, during acute crisis situations, as well as in providing general information to all, inviting translation and interpreting professionals and volunteers to step in and help when needed.” (Perez and Nikolić 2021) It seems that, as in the case of any crisis, the newly emerged situation can also be viewed as an opportunity, certainly a challenge.

The general tendencies among translators and interpreters and in the whole post-pandemic language industry remain to be identified. It is still rather too early to process the full impact of the pandemic in academic journals and papers, and a lot of research is currently ongoing (e.g. the AIIC supported research by AIIC by Heidi Salaets and Geert Brône in 2021 and by Nicoletta Spinolo and Agnieszka Chmiel in 2022). However, we already have detailed analyses of trends and tendencies in the language industry on the EU level mapped by the ELIS surveys (2021, 2022) and on the global level by industry observers such as Slator (2021) or Nimdzi (2022). The ELIS surveys note a positive outlook in 2021 and highlight that COVID-19 accelerated long-needed developments in the industry. The ELIS 2022 report singles out the growth in remote interpreting, noting that the fact, that “disruption can have beneficial effects, was proven by the explosive growth of remote interpreting (RSI), an existing technology

that struggled with strong resistance but turned into a life saver faced when a world-wide pandemic made all physical events impossible. In just 18 months' time, RSI has nearly completely filled its natural niche. It is now part of the new normal in interpreting..." (ELIS 2022, 40). Similarly, Nimdzi noted that much of the space filled by remote interpreting would continue to be serviced remotely; however, onsite events will return in the new post-pandemic normal (Nimdzi 2022). All of these industry surveys were not available in the first months of 2020, when the first part of our research was conducted, yet in hindsight they confirm the general trend that was observed and also recorded in Slovakia in the context of a relatively small language and a similarly closely-knit community of translators and interpreters.

3. Methodology

The data we have used in this paper comes from two sources. The first is a two-phase survey called *Translation and Interpretation in the Time of the Coronavirus*. We will refer to it as the 2020 Pandemic Survey to shorten and simplify the name. This survey was conducted online in two rounds in the spring of 2020, just as the first wave of the epidemic and the associated severe social and economic constraints were peaking.

To recall those months of 2020, we will try to outline a little of the context of events at the beginning of the pandemic. On 6 March, the first positive case of the COVID-19 virus was confirmed in Slovakia; on 30 March, the first fatality was reported. On 16 March, severe restrictions began to take effect, restricting the movement of people away from home, closing most businesses and other establishments, and shifting much of the work and education to the home. We were interested to find out how these measures affected the activities of translators and interpreters, how their professional activities were affected, and their expectations in terms of future developments in the field of translation and interpreting services.

The 2020 Pandemic Survey was conducted by means of an online questionnaire in two phases: from 20 to 29 March 2020, and from 20 May 2020 to 9 June 2020. We intended to map the dynamics of the impact of the anti-pandemic measures on interpreter communities shortly after the implementation of the emergency and strict measures (16 March 2020) and just before its end and the first easing of conditions (10 June 2020). For this reason, we decided to carry out the study in two phases. The study's first phase contained 24 items, and the second 25. We collected respondents' gender and age to correlate responses to survey items with basic demographics and determine the extent to which they might influence responses to survey items. The questionnaire contained 21 closed-ended questions and three open-ended questions. However, for each closed question, we also included an option to insert respondents'

own answers so that respondents could add information that was not included in one of the options offered. We were interested, among other things, in the length of their professional experience, the composition of professional activities (translation, interpreting, AVT, etc.), typology of clients, the share of income derived from translation and interpreting, the demand for translation and interpreting services and cancellation of assignments, pressure to decrease rates, the expectation of future demand for services, and experience with remote interpreting.

We asked them the same questions in the study's second phase, but we added one that specifically asked them about their participation in the first survey. This question was intended to ensure that the results from the first and second phases of the research were commensurable. In both stages of the study, we sent out the questionnaire to language service providers (LSPs), freelance translators and interpreters, university academics, and professional organisations. We promoted it on social media to ensure as diverse a sample of people involved in translation and interpreting as possible.

Let us now introduce the second source of data. To assess the pandemic's impacts on remote interpreting, we used data from the internal 2021 Rates Survey conducted online in the winter of 2022 by the Slovak Association of Translators and Interpreters (SAPT). SAPT is the largest Slovak group of professional translators and interpreters, with 217 members in 2022. This survey captured the responses of 66 respondents (all SAPT members). This survey was co-designed by one of the authors of the present paper and included 20 questions covering the rates charged in 2021 for translation and interpreting services, typology of clients, the composition of professional activities, the share of income derived from translation and interpreting, the overall number of pages translated, and days interpreted in 2021 and the experience with remote interpreting as well as the share of days interpreted remotely.

4. Findings from the 2020 Pandemic Survey

4.1 Length and fields of professional experience

A total of 371 respondents, 264 women and 107 men took part in the first phase of the survey. The sex ratio is, therefore, approximately 70:30, confirming the gender distribution as we measured it in 2015. The average age of the respondents was 42.5 years. In the second phase, 240 respondents responded to our questionnaire, of whom 174 were female and 66 were male (again, approximately 70:30). The average age of the respondents was 43.8 years. A total of 156 respondents (65%) also answered the questions in the first survey – we can therefore consider the samples to be relatively comparable.

Table 1 summarises the situation in terms of professional experience.

Table 1. The composition of respondents in the first and second phases of the survey in terms of length of professional experience in T&I.

Length of professional experience in T&I	Studying	1–5 years	5–10 years	10–15 years	15–20 years	20+ years
First phase (N=371)	0.8%	10.8%	19.6%	17.9%	20.4%	30.4%
Second phase (N=240)	1.3%	15.1%	17.3%	19.4%	19.9%	27%

This information also indicates the distribution of translators and interpreters in the market at the beginning of 2020 in terms of their professional experience. We can see that people with more than twenty years of experience make up the largest share in both phases. They, therefore, have experience of various different market transitions. In contrast, at the opposite pole were newcomers to the market with one to five years of experience. The main age structure of translators and interpreters thus seems to be in the higher band, with new younger members entering at a relatively slow pace.

In terms of the proportion of total income accounted for by each activity, we obtained the results shown in Figure 1.

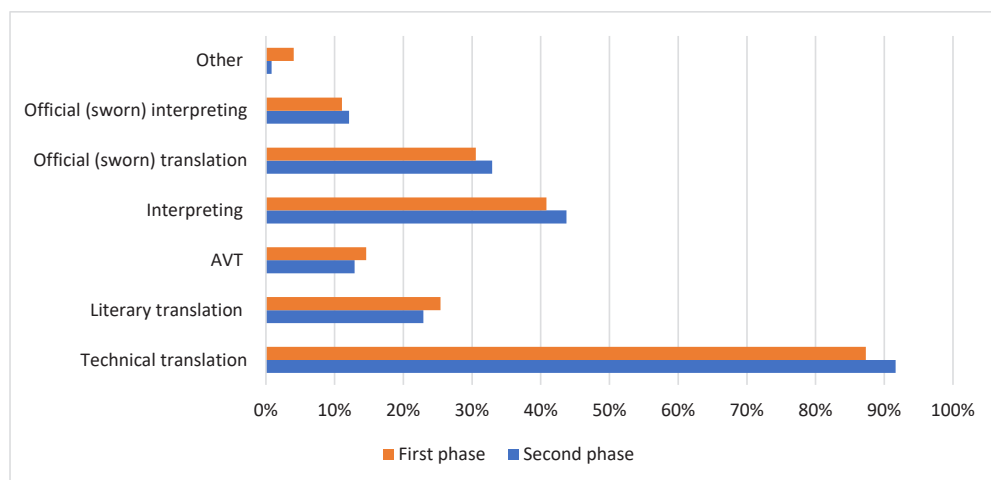


Figure 1. The composition of respondents in the first and second phases in terms of fields of the professional T&I services provided.

In this case, the respondents could indicate several answers, and as we can see, the vast majority of them are primarily engaged in professional translation, either for direct clients or translation companies. On this basis, it could be concluded that almost

every translator or interpreter has to do professional translation and supplement it with other activities from the spectrum on offer. Naturally, the share of income from translation and interpreting in the total income of the respondents is closely related to this (see Table 2).

Table 2. What is the share of income from translation and interpreting services within your total income?

Share of income from T&I	0–25%	25%–50%	50%–75 %	75%–100%
First phase (N=371)	10.83%	11.94%	12.78%	64.44%
Second phase (N=240)	8.40%	11.76%	12.18%	67.65%

The findings in this category indicate that 65–68% of our sample were primarily engaged in translation and interpretation before the pandemic, as 75–100% of their income came directly from these activities. However, the impact of the pandemic was not uniform.

4.2 Demand for interpreting and translation services

One of the most anticipated aspects of our research was precisely to compare how different translators and interpreters were affected by the anti-pandemic measures. As might be expected, it was those colleagues working primarily in interpreting who were most affected by the measures associated with the first wave of the pandemic. Responses to the question “How has the demand for your interpreting services changed since the beginning of the pandemic?” are presented in Figure 2.

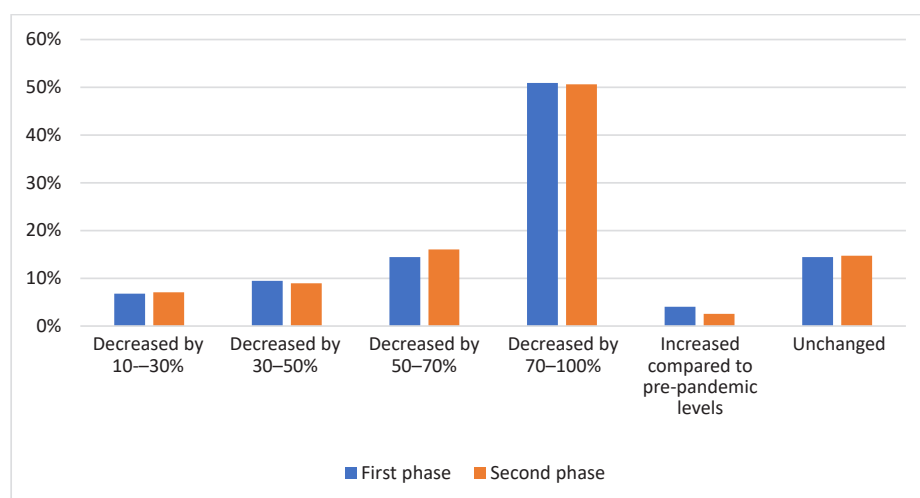


Figure 2. How has the demand for your interpreting services changed since the beginning of the pandemic?

Both at the beginning and the end of the first wave, we see that up to half of the respondents involved in interpreting had lost 70–100% of their contracts. Only around 15% of interpreters reported that their workload had not changed. The impact of the anti-pandemic measures during the first wave of COVID-19 on the interpreting market was, therefore, immediate and devastating.

The situation in the field of demand for translation services was very different. The answers of the respondents to the question “How has the demand for your translation services changed since the beginning of the pandemic?” are summarised in Figure 3.

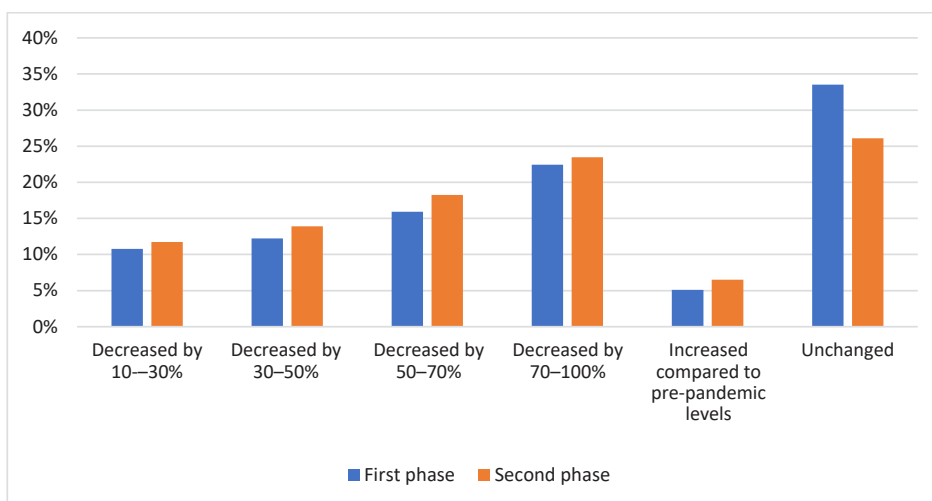


Figure 3. How has the demand for your translation services changed since the beginning of the pandemic?

The graph clearly shows that our respondents were dominated by translators, whose demand for services remained mainly unchanged (at the beginning of the first wave), but we also saw a slight decline at the end of the wave. The group of those who did not see a change in demand fell from 33.52% at the end of March to 26.09% at the end of May/June. In any case, when we look at the individual columns we can conclude that the situation has not changed that dramatically for translators. Many did see a decrease in demand, but certainly not as significant as in the case of interpreting. A smaller group of translators (5.11% and 6.52%, respectively) even saw an increase in demand. Thus, the situation faced by translators changed much less dramatically, whereas for interpreters there were immediate effects.

4.3 Cancelled assignments and pressure to reduce rates

The contrast mentioned above can be seen in the following table, which shows the responses to two questions, “Have your clients cancelled pre-arranged interpreting assignments since the pandemic began?” and the same question for the area of translations. In the case of interpreters, as many as 52.35% of respondents in the first phase said that clients had cancelled 80-100% of their pre-arranged assignments, while in the case of translations the figure was just over 4%. A look at the very different situations for interpreting and translation illustrates how the pandemic affected different parts of the market (see Table 3).

Table 3. Have your clients cancelled pre-arranged interpreting assignments since the pandemic began?

Cancelled assignments	Interpreting		Translations	
	First phase	Second phase	First phase	Second phase
80–100%	52.35%	53.40%	4.03%	2.21%
60–80%	5.88%	8.74%	1.15%	1.77%
40–60%	3.53%	6.80%	4.61%	1.77%
20–40%	6.47%	2.91%	6.34%	10.18%
None	31.76%	28.16%	83.86%	84.07%

One would expect that with a decrease in demand, one of the responses among the providers of language services could be a lowering of rates. This, however, does not seem to be true, at least according to our survey’s findings, even though rumours about sharp decreases in rates were often discussed on social networks. More specifically, multiple respondents in the comments section to the questionnaire mentioned a fear from pressure on the side of the LSPs to reduce rates among translators. In the comments, some translators and interpreters also added that they had expected their colleagues to reduce their rates, but this never happened. This is a classic example of availability heuristics leading to distortions of reality and negative perceptions of the environment (Tversky and Kahneman in Pinker 2018). As demonstrated by responses to the question: “Have you been confronted with a downward pressure on your rates since the start of the pandemic?” (Figure 4) we can see that these were only isolated incidents.

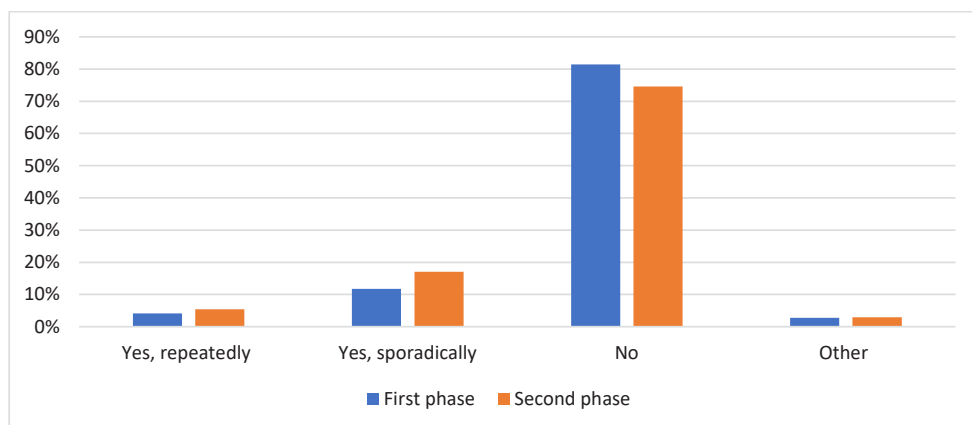


Figure 4. Have you been confronted with a downward pressure on your rates since the start of the pandemic?

4.4 Expectations of future demand

When asked about the return of demand for their services after the end of the pandemic, interpreters were relatively optimistic despite the situation at the outset, although we noted a relatively high level of uncertainty, with almost 40% of respondents marking “do not know”. In the second phase, just under 20% of respondents had this level of uncertainty. Yet a cautious optimism can be seen among interpreters in both phases of the survey, similar to the findings of the ELIS 2021 survey. On the other hand, as Figure 5 shows, we can see that many pessimists adopted an even more negative outlook in the second phase. This example shows how dynamically the situation changed during the first wave of the pandemic in the first semester of 2020.

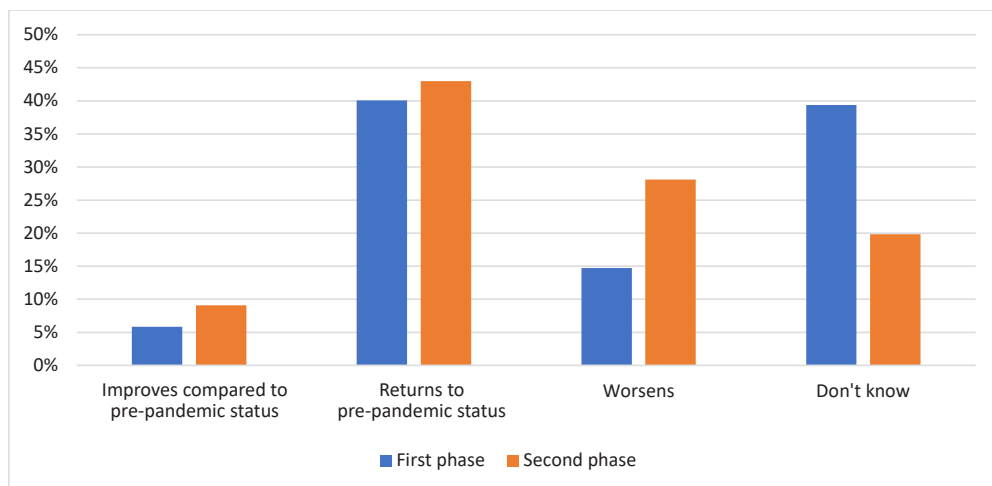


Figure 5. How do you estimate the demand for your interpretation services after the end of the pandemic?

The translators were much more optimistic in this respect, and perhaps rightly so because the signals they received from the market gradually calmed them down. Again, we would like to point out that, as in times of pre-pandemic market behaviour (Djovčoš and Šveda 2017), market participants make decisions based on what activity they are primarily engaged in, which holds true also during the pandemic. Therefore, we reiterate (as illustrated in Djovčoš and Šveda 2021) that interpreters and translators cannot be “lumped together”, but must be examined by activity type, work volume, and income diversification.

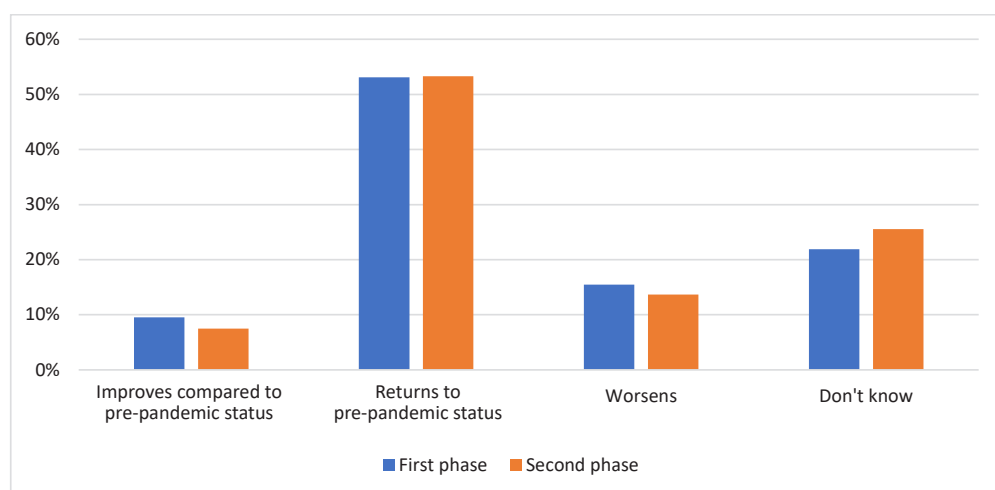


Figure 6. How do you estimate the demand for your translation services after the end of the pandemic?

In the second part of the research, as with the previous question, we wanted to focus more on the development of the mood and expectations in the community of translators and interpreters. For this reason, we also asked them whether they considered the current situation to present an existential threat to translators and interpreters. The respondents thus answered two questions: “Do you believe this situation presents an existential threat for interpreters”, and the same question focused on translators (see Table 4).

Table 4. Do you believe this situation presents an existential threat for interpreters/translators?

	Interpreters	Translators
Definitely yes	26.65%	9.72%
Rather yes	36.68%	25.56%
Rather not	17.48%	43.06%
Definitely not	4.30%	15.28%
Don't know	14.90%	6.39%

4.5 Onset of remote interpreting and open-ended questions

In terms of the future, we see that translators were much more optimistic than interpreters, and had good reason for this. As we observed and as confirmed by subsequent global market surveys, the market changed, transformed itself, and took off again, albeit in a different way than many had anticipated. This is why we were interested to know whether and to what extent interpreters encountered demand for remote interpreting since the pandemic began. While only 18.75% had encountered such a request during the first phase of the survey (end of March 2020), 39.69% of responding interpreters had received such an offer only six weeks later. We believe that this extremely rapid uptake of remote interpreting that our research captures is one of our survey's most interesting findings. We will return to the topic of remote interpreting in a separate part of this paper.

As we indicated at the beginning of this section, two questions in both the first and second surveys were open-ended. The respondents replied to the questions about how they spent the time freed up and how they thought the pandemic would change our profession in the long term.

We received as many as 201 verbal comments in the first phase (54% of respondents) and 131 comments in the second phase (43% of respondents), which is not usual in normal questionnaire surveys we have conducted so far. We could divide the comments in the first phase into three broad categories: catching up with neglected hobbies

and activities (reading, garden, sports, hobbies), preparing a plan B (training, change of career, change of focus from interpreting to translation, etc.), and home-schooling (parents with children at home). Perhaps it is worth recalling that most respondents in our sample had 20 years or more of experience in the field, which means that they often had parenting responsibilities, which were particularly demanding during the pandemic, as they were forced to assist their children with school duties (see Tomšik et al. 2020). The responses in the second phase were very much similar, perhaps with a higher ratio of those spending free time home-schooling their children and preparing a plan B. In fact, responses indicating the acquisition of new skills or brushing up of existing ones were more numerous than in the first phase, perhaps linked to a higher level of pessimism and pandemic fatigue by the second phase.

As regards their vision for the future, we received 182 comments (49% of respondents) in the first phase and 102 (43% of respondents) in the second. There were frequent suggestions that clients would push for price reductions (which was not confirmed, as discussed above). The prevailing view was that there would be a strong move to online interpreting and that this trend would continue after the pandemic was over. Regarding the market transformation, we quote a view that illustrates the respondents' attitude towards it: "I think it will shut most of us down for a while, but those who can cope financially will return to their standard once the situation calms down." Translators also frequently expressed concern that there would be a more pronounced push toward PEMT, with the pandemic acting as a catalyst (similar trends were reported on the EU level in the ELIS 2021 survey). At the beginning of the first wave, we also noted expectations that it would increase the volume of medical translation assignments.

In the second wave, we observed more frequent comments linked to changing the portfolio of services offered and moving from interpreting to translation. Concerns about the accelerated advent of machine translation and post-editing were also reiterated, but translators stated that would feel optimistic if the situation were to return to normal quickly. It is also interesting to note that book translators reported the later payment of royalties. In general, however, opinions about moving to online translation dominated the responses.

We can clearly see that in the first phase, roughly one-fifth of the respondents encountered the requirement to interpret remotely, with the predominance of platforms such as Skype, Zoom, Teams, and Webex, which at that time did not have specific functionalities for simultaneous interpretation, or many interpreters provided their services via conference phone calls and the like. At the end of the first wave, as we have mentioned, almost half of the interpreters had already encountered a request to interpret remotely, but the same platforms still prevailed, although Zoom started to

show up more and more often among the responses (perhaps because this company was the first to introduce a simultaneous interpreting capability into its software).

5. The 2021 Rates Survey

To get a broader idea of how significant the rise of remote interpreting has been, we also decided to look at the SAPT 2021 Rates Survey. We believe that although this is a survey that worked with a different sample, there is still a significant overlap, and it captures the trend of the gradual transformation of the interpreting market in Slovakia. In addition, SAPT is the only organisation in Slovakia that brings together professional interpreters, and an invitation to participate in the 2020 Pandemic Survey was also distributed to its members via an internal mailing list. Last but not least, this was the first survey that specifically asked about the proportion of remote interpreting since the pandemic, and worked with a nationwide sample. So what were its findings?

Of the 66 respondents, 44 interpreters interpreted for at least one day during 2021. We then worked with the responses of this sample. For a more complete picture of the situation in the Slovak interpreting market, it is also essential to understand the influence of the European Institutions as a significant employer of Slovak-speaking interpreters. Of the 44 people who interpreted at least one day in 2021, 14 interpreted at least one day for the European Institutions (31.82%). This ratio corresponds to previous SAPT surveys (SAPT 2019). As the influence of the European Institutions is significant in the relatively limited Slovak interpreting market, the questions in the survey were formulated in such a way as to be able to isolate it.

5.1 Volume of interpreting and the share of remote interpreting

First of all, we can look at the total number of days with some interpreting work. Answering question 5: “How many days did you work as an interpreter for clients other than the EU in 2021? Include in your answer all interpreting days, including remote interpreting”, the highest value given was 210 days and the lowest was one day. The average number of days interpreted was 34.22 days, and the median was 22 days (see Table 5). For comparison, we add that the average number of days interpreted well before the pandemic in 2015 was 40 per year (Djovčoš and Šveda 2017). Thus, it appears that by 2021, at least for respondents to this survey, the situation has begun to revert to the pre-pandemic average. In answering question 6: “How many days of the total number of days interpreted in 2021 did you interpret remotely? (from home or from an interpreting hub or other remote location)”, 36 respondents answered, with the highest value being 180 days and the lowest being one day. The mean number of days

interpreted remotely was 23.11, and the median was 15. Thus, we can see that roughly 18 months after the pandemic's beginning, the average number of remote interpreting days was 67.53% of the total number of interpreting days among SAPT members.

Table 5. How many days did you work as an interpreter for clients other than EU in 2021? How many days of the total number of days interpreted in 2021 did you interpret remotely?

	Average	Median
Total number of interpreting days (outside of EU institutions) N = 44	34.22	22
Total number of remote interpreting days (outside of EU institutions) N = 36	23.11	15

5.2 Remuneration of onsite and remote interpreting

The second area addressed in the 2021 Rates Survey was the issue of remuneration or rates for remote interpreting compared to standard interpreting rates (see Table 6). As SAPT is an association of professional interpreters and translators, the survey also naturally focused on rates. So let us look at the responses to question 8 (“When it comes to remote interpreting, compared to standard onsite interpreting, most of the time:”), 51 respondents gave answers, as summarised in the table below.

Table 6. Rates for remote interpreting compared with rates for standard interpreting.

When it comes to remote interpreting, compared to standard onsite interpreting, most of the time	
I charge a higher rate	9.80%
I charge the same rate	62.75%
I charge a lower rate	1.96%
I don't interpret remotely	21.57%
I don't interpret at all	3.92%

Therefore, the SAPT members included in this survey approach remote interpreting in much the same way as conventional interpreting in terms of pricing policy. However, the survey addressed rates and the psychological stress that remote interpreting can cause.

5.3 Perception of remote interpreting

Indeed, in internal discussions on social media, concerns were repeatedly raised among SAPT members that remote interpreting causes undue stress, similar to

discussions in other professional fora (e.g. Caniato 2021). This is perhaps why item 9 “In my experience remote interpreting (compared to onsite interpreting) is...” was included in the survey. When answering, respondents could choose one or more of the following options: more challenging, equivalent, easier and more convenient (e.g. in terms of time loss). Responses to this item are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Perception of remote interpreting when compared with onsite interpreting (multiple answers possible).

In my experience remote interpreting (compared to onsite interpreting) is...	
More challenging	38.10%
More challenging + More convenient	21.43%
Equivalent	21.43%
Equivalent + More convenient	4.76%
More convenient	11.90% (Seeber 2022)
Easier + More convenient	2.38%

Most respondents considered remote interpreting more challenging compared to onsite interpreting (59.53% in total). A total of 26.19% of the respondents considered it to be equivalent. However, when considering remote interpreting the greater higher convenience offered also plays a significant role, and as one of the multiple answers it was noted by 40.47% of the respondents.

6. Conclusion

So what are the most significant findings we have seen in both surveys? First of all, we were able to capture how drastically the onset of the pandemic affected the work of interpreters, who lost a large part of their income from interpreting in a matter of days and weeks. This trend was also captured in other industry-wide surveys (e.g. ELIS 2021; Nimdzi 2021). On the other hand, from our previous research (Djovčoš and Šveda 2017) we know that it is almost impossible to find a professional who works exclusively as an interpreter in Slovakia. We can conclude that interpreting is usually combined with other activities, especially translation. Such a strategy seems to be an economic necessity in the conditions of an LLD environment. This diversity of activities, however, protects translators and interpreters quite effectively, and proved helpful during the pandemic in particular.

As regards the general mood among translators and interpreters, it appeared that the restrictive measures would be temporary at the time of the first wave, and optimism

with uncertainty prevailed. After a few weeks, more scepticism and pessimism emerged, perhaps due to pandemic fatigue. On the other hand, we were particularly surprised by the vigour with which remote interpreting had already taken off during the first wave of the pandemic. As our research findings suggest, within weeks of the outbreak of the first wave in the spring of 2020, interpreters were already beginning to encounter offers for remote interpreting, with the proportion nearly doubling in six weeks (an increase from 18.75% to 39.69%).

When we look at the Slovak interpreter community more than a year after the outbreak of the pandemic, we see that remote interpreting had become an important component of interpreters' work. Of the total number of interpreting days among SAPT members, up to two-thirds were carried out remotely. Remote interpreting thus significantly impacted the structure of work assignments, bringing interpreters a volume of work that started to catch up with pre-pandemic levels, but also bringing them a greater psychological burden and stress resulting from the different nature of remote interpreting. Not surprisingly, and as noted in global forums (e.g. Caniato 2021; Seeber 2022), the issues of sound quality, the various non-standard requirements for interpreters (working alone, without a second interpreter; working from interpreting studios and from home) and other changes brought about by remote interpreting began to be critically discussed increasingly often in the Slovak environment.

Acknowledgements

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The (in)visibility of translation and translators in the Swedish publication of post-Soviet Russian literature: An analysis of peritexts

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ABSTRACT

In this article the (in)visibility of translation and translators in Sweden is studied, based on the analysis of a corpus of 82 post-Soviet Russian novels. The aim is to investigate how (if at all) the peritexts reveal the foreign nature of the text and the identity of the translator. The analysis shows that the translator is rather invisible in the external peritext, which is placed on the cover or dust jacket of the published translation, while the foreign (and consequently also the translated) nature of the novel is highlighted. The translator's visibility inside Swedish translations of post-Soviet novels is usually signaled on the title page. Apart from this, the translator is invisible. A few translator's comments and notes are included in the translation, but usually these are inconspicuous and not explicitly attributed to the translator. Moreover, they are written in an apologetic tone and do not seem to wish to disturb the reader.

Keywords: visibility/invisibility, translators, translation, peritext, Russian literature

(Ne)vidnost prevajanja in prevajalcev v švedskih objavah postsovjetske ruske književnosti: analiza peritekstov

IZVLEČEK

Prispevek na osnovi analize korpusa 82 postsovjetskih ruskih romanov obravnava (ne)vidnost prevajanja in prevajalcev na Švedskem. Cilj študije je raziskati, kako (če sploh) periteksti razkrivajo tujost v besedilu in identiteto prevajalca. Analiza korpusa je pokazala, da je prevajalec v veliki meri neviden v zunanjem peritekstu, tj. v besedilu, ki se pojavi na platnicah ali na ovitku objavljenih prevodov, medtem ko sta tujost romana in posledično tudi dejstvo, da gre za prevedeno delo, poudarjena. Ime prevajalca v švedskih prevodih postsovjetskih romanov je navadno omenjeno na prvi notranji strani, drugače pa je prevajalec neviden. Izjemo predstavljajo redke opombe in opazke prevajalca v prevodu, a navadno so te nevsiljive in niso izrecno pripisane prevajalcu, še več, napisane so v opravičujočem tonu in poskušajo biti čim manj moteče za bralca.

Ključne besede: vidnost/nevidnost, prevajalci, prevod, peritekst, ruska književnost

1. Introduction

In a recent publication I analyzed translators' visibility and translation criticism in reviews of Swedish translations of post-Soviet Russian novels (Podlevskikh Carlström 2022b). The analysis was performed using a corpus of 430 reviews of 82 novels, and led to the conclusion that "contemporary translation criticism in literary reviews published in general media sources reproduce and confirm the low status of translation and translators in the Swedish literary system" (Podlevskikh Carlström 2022b, 157). The analysis also revealed that most reviews (89%) indicate the name of the translator either in a fact-box (or info line)¹ (86%) or in the running text (3%). However, it was concluded that the visibility of translation in Swedish reviews of post-Soviet novels is, in fact, a "pseudo-visibility," since "the mere mentioning of a translator's name (as required by law) does not give any insights into what a translator does or what the process of translation entails" (Podlevskikh Carlström 2022b, 156).

In this article the (in)visibility of translation and translators will be studied using the same corpus of 82 novels, however, the focus will here lie on the (in)visibility of translation and translators in peritexts (see section 2). The article will therefore provide the results of the investigation of how the peritext of a translated work of fiction reveals to the readers that the text is, in fact, foreign and a translation. It is argued here that since the critic responsible for writing the translation review must have had access to the printed copy of the novel, the (in)visibility of translation and translators in reviews corresponds to the (in)visibility of translation and translators in the peritext of published translations.

The (in)visibility of translators and translations has been widely discussed within translation studies for many years, and as pointed out in the previously mentioned study of epitexts, translation criticism has lately received much attention in the Swedish cultural debate, in which Swedish translators and scholars encourage the increased visibility of translators and translation in reviews (Podlevskikh Carlström 2022b, 127–28). Against this background, it is argued here that translator visibility in the peritext of translated works should also be given more scholarly attention.

The choice of a corpus of Russian contemporary fiction, rather than one of Anglo-American or other Western literature, is deliberate. Firstly, many of the post-Soviet Russian novels translated into Swedish belong to highbrow literature, a category that more often comes with translator's comments and notes than popular literature (see section 3). Secondly, Swedish translations of Russian literature have a long history

1 The fact box or info line of a review commonly contains information related to the reviewed novel, such as author, title, publishing house, price, and translator.

of being politicized, with the publishing houses favoring authors who stand in opposition to Russian (or Soviet) state authority (Håkanson 2012, 148). Consequently, in the majority of the translated works included in the corpus the action not only takes place in post-Soviet Russia, but also *actively deals with* social and political issues, or depicts everyday life in this new situation. Thus, they stem from a reality that lies far beyond the prevailing Anglo-American popular culture that Western readers know through the media, film and television series.

2. The peritext

The term *peritext* originates from Gerard Genette's framework of paratextuality (Genette 1997) and refers to paratexts which are included in the same volume as the main text (for example, fore-/afterwords, notes or comments), as opposed to *epitexts*, which are placed elsewhere, such as author interviews and promotional material. Kathryn Batchelor's more recent framework of paratextuality builds on Genette's work but is especially adapted for translation studies. Here, the paratext is defined as "a consciously crafted threshold for a text which has the potential to influence the way(s) in which the text is received" (Batchelor 2018, 142). For the present analysis it is relevant to differentiate between peritexts that belong to the source text and those that were created for the translation. This is one area for which Batchelor suggests new terminology and classifications, since Genette's typology "is based on the premise that a text is published in its complete form at a particular moment in time" (Batchelor 2018, 156). She therefore suggests the following basic types:

- pre-ST – consciously crafted for the ST (e.g., promotional material)
- with-ST – published together with the ST (e.g., cover paratexts, forewords)
- post-ST – paratexts that appear after the ST (e.g., reviews)
- pre-TT – consciously crafted for the TT (e.g., promotional material)
- with-TT – published together with the TT (e.g., cover paratexts, forewords)
- post-TT – paratexts that appear after the TT (e.g., reviews)

Apart from differentiating between peritexts created for source and target texts, it is also relevant to distinguish between peritexts based on their spatial characteristics. For this purpose, Valerie Pellatt suggests the terms *external peritexts* for those placed on the cover or dust jacket of the published translation, and *internal peritexts*, for those placed inside the volume but separated from the main body of text (Pellatt 2013). Paratexts may also have different senders and functions. All paratexts in my material may be defined as industry-created, since their authors have been "authorized by the text-producers to

produce paratexts for the text in question” (Batchelor 2018, 157). The production of paratexts, and particularly peritexts, may thus in a sense be seen as a collective effort. The same assumption was made by Siri Nergaard, who in an investigation of the different roles involved in publishing a translation suggests that all agents involved in the process could be called translators, since “they all in some way [are] translating the text” (Nergaard 2013, first paragraph). Similarly, Cecilia Alvstad calls the creation of paratexts “a process of translation in the broad sense” (Alvstad 2012, 79). However, there are also situations when the author or translator may be clearly defined as paratext sender, such as with a comment or note signed by one of them.

When it comes to paratext functions, Batchelor suggests a model that builds on Rockenberger’s functions of videogame paratexts (Batchelor 2018, 160–61). Eight of these functions are of relevance for my material and this particular analysis: *Referential* paratexts identify a work and clarify, for example, by whom it is published and when. *Generic* paratexts categorize a work, for example, as a translation (Batchelor 2018, 160). *Informative* paratexts mediate empirical data, and may be exemplified with translator’s notes that clarify culture specific references to the readers of the translation. Paratexts that aim at supporting understanding or interpretation are called *hermeneutical*, while *evaluative* paratexts are focused on “claiming and demanding value or cultural significance” (Batchelor 2018, 160). Particularly relevant for our analysis are *meta-communicative* paratexts, since they provide “reflections on translation and/or the difficulties of the translation process” (Batchelor 2018, 160). *Commercial* paratexts try to attract the buyer’s attention, and, finally, *legal* paratexts inform about legal matters, such as rights, obligations and contracts (Batchelor 2018, 160). Naturally, a paratext may have more than one function, or different functions depending on where it is placed. For example, while the provision of the translator’s name on the title page of a novel may be classified as both a generic (classifies the work as a translation) and informative peritext (reveals the identity of the translator), it also has a legal function on the copyright page. Similarly, the publisher’s blurb—a peritext of particular importance for the analysis of translation visibility—is a text type with several functions. The publisher’s blurb usually consists of a summary of the novel in question, combined with information about the author. However, the blurb should not primarily be seen as an informative paratext. After analyzing more than 60 blurbs, María Lluïsa Gea Valor concludes that such texts belong to the advertising genre, since their informative function is secondary to their primary function, which is “to persuade the reader to buy the book by describing its contents and by praising its qualities” (2005, 61).

3. The (in)visibility of translation and translators

3.1 Venuti's invisibility

The visibility of translators and translation has been a much-discussed topic within translation and literary studies since 1995, when Lawrence Venuti published his seminal work *The Translator's Invisibility*. In this book—apart from introducing the concepts of foreignization and domestication to contemporary translation studies—he criticized the low share of translations on the Anglo-American book market (below 3%) and the general resistance towards translations. In Venuti's reasoning, the invisible translator—who is rarely mentioned in reviews or on book covers—is a symptom of a culture that is generally unreceptive to the foreign and taught only to appreciate fluent translations (Venuti 1995, 15–7). For the same reason, translated works are often presented as originals, and “translation is required to efface its second-order status with transparent discourse, producing the illusion of authorial presence whereby the translated text can be taken as the original” (Venuti 1995, 7). However, it might be assumed that this is not true for all literary systems of the world. In fact, the Swedish literary system is known to be less rigid than the Anglo-American one, and translations in this system generally have a more central position (Lindqvist 2015, 74–5). According to statistics from the Swedish Royal Library, the average percentage of Swedish translations on the Swedish book market for the years 2002–2020 is 22% (Kungliga biblioteket 2003–2021). Since the publication of *The Translator's Invisibility*, the scholarly discussion about translation and visibility has continued and evolved. Susan Bassnett, for example, has discussed the translator's visibility from different perspectives and concluded that “the issue is not that the translator is invisible, but rather that in judging translations, critical opinion has opted to render the translator invisible by stressing the significance of the original over its translation” (Bassnett 2014, 124). There are many scholars who have followed in Venuti's footsteps and questioned the marginal position of translators on the modern book market. For example, in an article that analyzes the translation of children's literature as paratranslation,² Yuste Frías (2012, 132) calls translators “second authors” and claims that “the translators' names should appear not only on the copyright page but also on the title page and even—why not?—on the cover.” Siri Nergaard (2013) also advocates increased visibility for both translators and translations, and emphasizes that while most agents

2 *Paratranslation* is a term coined by a group of scholars at the University of Vigo, Spain as a methodological tool for studying paratextual elements, such as orthography, in translation. Paratranslation is supposed to encompass the process of translating any paratext that surrounds, wraps, accompanies, extends, introduces and presents the translated text (Yuste Frías 2012, 118).

involved in the translation process, such as literary agents, series editors, and copy editors, are employed by the publishing house, the translator is an external figure, commonly working on freelance. This leads to a great power imbalance between the publisher and translator, and “the norm is that the translator’s contribution to the publishing process finishes with the ‘translation itself.’” Nergaard also stresses that the translator’s “relative visibility” is the result of the general lack of translator’s notes, and the fact that fore- or afterwords written by translators rarely deal with aspects related to the translation. Ulf Norberg (2012) comes to a similar conclusion based on a corpus of novels translated into Swedish:

Prefaces are most often written by someone other than the translator. The writers of prefaces usually have a large literary capital (literary critics, literary scholars or authors), and the prefaces usually deal with the books and/or the writers, and not with the translations. (Norberg 2012, 105)

Another aspect noted by Norberg is the difference between highbrow and popular literature. He explains that prefaces to translations are uncommon in today’s Sweden “even for high prestige literature,” and that they are almost never found in pulp novels (Norberg 2012, 105). On the basis of the analysis of translation visibility and translation criticism in reviews, Podlevskikh Carlström (2022b, 154) also showed that there is a difference between different kinds of literature: highbrow publications not only receive more attention in the Swedish media, but also receive more reviews containing translation criticism. It is thus argued in this article that the visibility of translation and translators in the peritexts also depends on the type and prestige of translated texts.

3.2 Approaches to peritexts and visibility

To the best of my knowledge, no general analyses of translation and translator visibility in the peritext have been done yet. Apart from the already mentioned studies, there are a number of text-type restricted analyses, although visibility is rarely the primary focus. Translator prefaces and comments have, for example, been studied by Rodica Dimitriu (2009), Ellen McRae (2012) and Isabelle Bilodeau (2013). Dimitriu’s analysis focuses on suggesting a typology of functions that may be fulfilled by translator prefaces. Her material consisted of 65 prefaced editions, which served as a basis for a corpus of only 20 translator’s meta-texts. The same scarcity of translator’s prefaces was also confirmed by McRae, who compiled a corpus of over 800 translations into English from major world languages and concluded that only 20% contain prefaces, of which only half mention aspects related to the translation (2012, 66). Interestingly, Isabelle Bilodeau studied translations into Japanese and concluded that this type of peritext is

far more common in Japan, and that the production of translator's commentary is an integral part of the Japanese translator's assignment (Bilodeau 2013, 17).

As well as fore-/afterwords and translator comments, translator's notes have also been investigated. For example, Carmen Toledano Buendía describes translator's notes as statements that distinguish the translator's voice from the source text author's voice (2013, 150). Furthermore, she argues that through the use of notes the otherwise invisible translator becomes visible to the reader "whilst interrupting the flow of reading" (Toledano Buendía 2013, 150). This particular view that translator notes—and footnotes, in particular—are a disturbance is, in fact, widespread within translation studies, and particularly pronounced in relation to literary translation. Course books in translation, as well as practical guides to literary translation, commonly share this opinion. For example, in *Literary Translation*, Clifford E. Landers (2001) explains that in his opinion footnotes not only break the flow and disturb the continuity, but also "destroy the mimetic effect, the attempt by (most) fiction writers to create the illusion that the reader is actually witnessing, if not experiencing, the events described" (Landers 2001, 93). Similarly, both Peter Newmark (1988) and Rune Ingo (1991) advise against the use of footnotes in literary translation. In *A Textbook of Translation*, Newmark explains that any necessary additional information should be added within the text, and if notes are necessary then a notes section at the end of the book is the best choice, since placing "notes at the bottom of the page is a nuisance when they are too lengthy and numerous" (1988, 92). Finally, in *Från källspråk till målspråk* ("From Source Language to Target Language")—a course book originally written in Finnish, but also translated into Swedish—Ingo simply concludes that the use of footnotes for complementary additions and explanations "above all belongs in non-fiction" (Ingo 1991, 203).

3.3 Translation and norms

The attitudes towards translator's notes and commentaries may vary between different cultures and literary systems, as was shown by Bilodeau's analysis of Japanese translators' commentaries (Bilodeau 2013). Different attitudes towards different aspects of translation may be related to various norms that govern translation activity in different environment. According to Gideon Toury, translation is a norm-governed activity "characterized by immense variability, both across cultures (in space or time) as well as within single ones" (Toury 2012, 61). This means that translation is seen as a socio-cultural activity regulated by means of negotiations that occur between members of a particular group in society. With time, such negotiations lead to conventions "according to which members of the group then feel obliged to behave in particular situations" (Toury 2012, 62). Norms may vary between members of a larger group and sub-sections of the

group (e.g., non-fiction translators, and translators of highbrow literature), and the individual members of a group will strive to act according to prevailing patterns in order to avoid sanctions (Toury 2012, 68). Toury's concept of norms has, for example, been used by Yvonne Lindqvist to illustrate that translators of high prestige and popular literature use different translation strategies (Lindqvist 2002, 47).

4. Material and method

The material for this analysis includes 82 first editions of post-Soviet Russian³ novels (prose fiction) published in Sweden between 1994 and 2020 (see appendix⁴). Thus, in accordance with the principle of inclusivity (Paloposki 2010, 88), this is not a collection of novels especially selected for an analysis of translation visibility, but rather a holistic selection of novels from a specific source language. All book covers, front- and back matter, foot- and endnotes, as well as fore- or afterwords have been scanned and categorized in a spreadsheet. I have analyzed the (in)visibility of translation and translators in the following parts of the published translations:

- 1) The front cover
- 2) The spine
- 3) The back cover
 - a. Publisher's blurb
 - b. Translator's bio
 - c. Quotes from reviews
- 4) The dust-cover flaps
- 5) Front matter
 - a. Title page
 - b. Copyright page
- 6) Fore- and afterwords
 - a. Written by editors, critics
 - b. Written by the translator

3 Post-Soviet Russian literature is here defined as literature *translated from Russian*. However, it was later clarified that Oksana Zabužko's *Fältstudier i ukrainskt sex* (Польові дослідження з українського сексу) is an indirect translation, using Russian as a mediating language. It is thus part of post-Soviet *Ukrainian* literature, and should not have been included in this corpus.

4 The appendix only provides Swedish titles of the novels included in the analysis. For Russian and English titles, please see Tab A in the dataset *Swedish reviews of post-Soviet Russian novels published in Swedish translation 1992-2020* (Podlevskikh Carlström 2022a).

7) Notes, comments

8) Additional peritexts

When analyzing translator and translation visibility in the peritext of the 82 novels, I have paid attention to the function of peritexts that mention translators and/or translation. Furthermore, I have differentiated between *internal* and *external* peritexts, as well as *with-ST* and *with-TT* peritext, which meant that in some cases I needed to make a comparison with the source text. Those peritexts that have an indicated sender are referred to as attributed, while those without indicated sender are referred to as non-attributed. Finally, I have differentiated between literary genres: i.e., highbrow and popular literature. One way to differentiate between these major types of literature is provided by Robert Escarpit (1970). He distinguishes between a popular and a cultivated circuit of distribution, where popular literature is sold in kiosks and department stores, while publications that belong to the cultivated circuit are sold in bookstores, reviewed in newspapers and included in books of literary history (Escarpit 1970, 88–90). Nowadays, popular fiction and highbrow literature are sold in the same stores, and when dealing with contemporary literature literary histories are of little help. I have therefore used in this study a genre-based definition of popular literature that separates a categorized genre-fiction (marketed as pertaining to a specific genre) from a non-categorized genre fiction (which shares traits with a particular genre, but is not marketed as such) (Määttä 2006, 46). For example, although Vladimir Sorokin's *Is* (Лёд) contains sci-fi traits, it has been classified as non-categorized genre fiction and therefore sorted into highbrow literature, while Boris Akunin's (the pseudonym for Grigorij Čchartišvili) *Fandorin* stylistically challenging historical detective novels, which are clearly marketed as crime fiction, have been classified as categorized genre fiction and sorted into popular literature.

5. Translator (in)visibility

5.1 External (in)visibility

Translators are rather invisible on the covers and dustjackets of Swedish translations of post-Soviet Russian literature. The few covers that do mention the translator are the exceptions that prove the rule. Figure 1 illustrates the external visibility of translators in the corpus of 82 translated novels from Russian into Swedish.

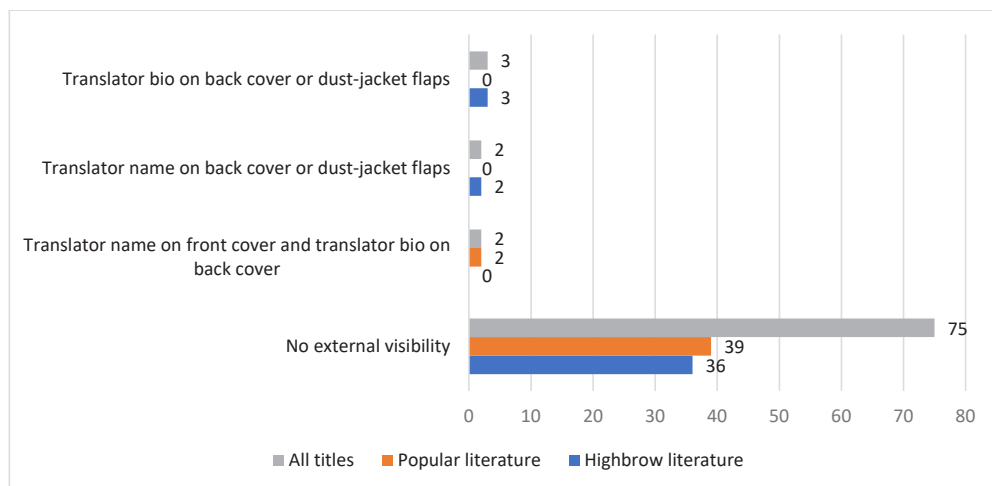


Figure 1. The external visibility of the translator in Swedish translations of post-Soviet Russian literature.

As illustrated by Figure 1, as many as 91% (75 of 82) of the translations do not mention the translator on the cover. However, two translations pertaining to popular literature (both thrillers) do provide both a translator's bio on the front flap of the dust cover, and the name of the translator on the front cover. The works in question are Andrej Konstantinov's *Dödlig trojka* (*Адвокат*) and *Baronens hemlighet* (*Журналист*) both published by Prisma publishing house in 1999 and 2000, and translated by Malcolm Dixelius. Additionally, three novels by Vladimir Sorokin in Swedish translation by Ben Hellman provide a translator's bio on the back flap of the dust cover. The novels are *Snöstormen* (*Метель*), *Tellurien* (*Теллурия*), and *Manaraga: Mästerkockens dagbok* (*Манарага*). Finally, two translations—Roman Senčín's *Familjen Joltysjev* (*Ёлтышевы*) and Michail Šiškin's *Erövringen av Izmail* (*Взятие Измаила*)—provide the name of the translator on the back cover or flaps. In fact, *Erövringen av Izmail* is the only novel in the corpus that mentions the translator in the peritext with a commercial function, i.e. in the publisher's blurb:

Erövringen av Izmail böljar fram och tillbaka i tiden och rummet, och Mikael Nydahls översättning omfattar allt från medeltida till nutida svenska. ("Taking Izmail billows backward and forward in time and space, and Mikael Nydahl's translation comprises everything from medieval to contemporary Swedish.") (Ersatz 2020)

To conclude, the analysis of the external visibility of the translator did not reveal any major surprises. The translator is, as expected, a rather invisible figure on the cover of

Swedish translations of post-Soviet Russian literature. Moreover, there are no significant differences between highbrow and popular publications.

5.2 Internal visibility

5.2.1 *The title page and copyright page*

The analysis of the corpus reveals that the internal visibility of the translator in Swedish translations tends to be limited to the title page. In total, 99% (81 of 82) of the analyzed translations provide the name of the translator on the title page of the book, of which 89% (73 of 82) also include the name of the translator on the copyright page. One publication provides the name of the translator on the copyright page only.

5.2.2 *Translator forewords*

The translator foreword is a rather uncommon peritext in Sweden. Eleven of the analyzed translations have a fore- or afterword, of which one was written by the translator and one by the translator/editor. Both these peritexts have been classified as informative and evaluative, and do not touch upon aspects related to the translation. That means that even if translators become more visible in the peritext by authoring a foreword, they are not visible as translators. Forewords written by other publishing house agents will be further discussed in section 6.

5.2.3 *Translator's notes and comments*

Notes and comments are another type of peritext of relevance for the translator's (in)visibility. The analysis has shown that it is often difficult to determine whether such peritexts ought to be classified as with-ST or with-TT peritexts, since they are often non-attributed and lack information about paratext sender. Seventeen of the 82 analyzed novels together contain 25 peritexts⁵ belonging to this category. Figure 2 illustrates how these 25 peritexts are distributed over the relevant categories:

5 A footnote apparatus containing several individual notes is seen as one peritext.

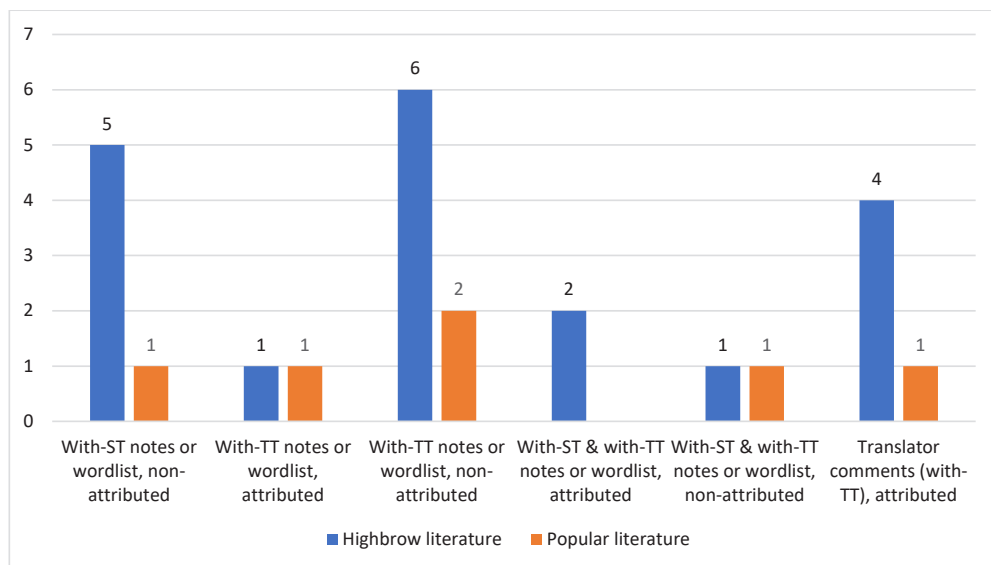


Figure 2. Translator notes and comments.⁶

As illustrated by Figure 2, notes and comments are more common in highbrow than in popular literature. In total, only nine peritexts were attributed, of which seven were defined as with-TT and two contained a mixture of with-ST and with-TT material. In contrast, 16 peritexts were non-attributed, of which six were classified as with-ST peritexts, two as a mixture of with-ST and with-TT material and, finally, eight as with-TT peritexts. The type of information provided in these peritexts is described below.

The with-ST peritexts in this category are informative and consist of translations of words and expressions in languages other than Russian (including fictional languages) and explanations of cultural phenomena pertaining to the novel's fictional universe (see next paragraph). As illustrated by Figure 2, with-ST peritexts are rarely attributed. However, four peritexts consist of a mixture of with-ST and with-TT material, where supposedly the translator has added information to already existing with-ST wordlists, and in two cases also added attribution. For example, in Michail Šiškin's *Erövringen av Izmail* (*Взятие Измаила*) the Swedish translator specifies which comments belong to the source text, and which were added to the Swedish translation (Nydahl 2020, 447). The notes to Nils Håkanson's translation of Andrej Volos *Hurramabad* (*Хуррамабад*) contain a similar comment, specifying the origin of the different wordlist entries (Håkanson 2005, 407).

⁶ The appendix contains information about the classifications of each novel.

When it comes to the two remaining—non-attributed—peritexts that consist of both with-ST and with-TT notes, it was necessary to compare source and target texts, in order to find out if the material ought to be classified as with-ST or with-TT. For example, the with-ST entries in the wordlist to Nick Perumov’s fantasy novel *Diamantsvärdet och träsvärdet, del 1* (Алмазный Меч, Деревянный Меч. Книга 1) consists of translations of words in the language of the fictional universe. To this word list the translator Britt-Marie Ingdén-Ringselle (or another publishing house agent) has added explanations to Russian measures of length, units of weight and quantity expressions (Ersatz 2006, back matter). Similarly, in Mikael Nydahl’s translation of Guzel’ Jachina’s *Zulejcha öppnar ögonen* (Зулейха открывает глаза) the with-ST wordlist entries consist of translations of French expressions, while the added with-TT entries explain cultural allusions, such as the GULAG prison camps and the Russian soup “soljanka” (Ersatz 2019, 515–16). Four of the five novels that contain non-attributed with-ST peritexts are dystopias and set in fictional universes. The three novels by Vladimir Sorokin—*Blått fett* (Голубое сало) (2001), *I det heliga Rysslands tjänst* (День опричника) (2008), and *Tellurien* (Теллурия) (2015)—all translated by Ben Hellman, contain with-ST footnotes or with-ST wordlists. These notes consist of translations of Chinese words and phrases, as well as explanations to words specific for the fictional universes of the respective novels. Similarly, Mikael Nydahl’s translation of Anna Starobinec’s sci-fi dystopia *Den levande* (Живущий) (2012) contains footnotes that explain words and phrases used in the novel’s fictional universe. For example, the first translated with-ST footnote explains that the abbreviation *jappp!* means “jag pissar på pausen!” (“I pee on the pause!”) (Starobinec 2012, 18). Furthermore, the footnote explains that the abbreviation is popular in the *socio* chat forums (*socio* is a social network within the world of the novel), and that it became part of the surface language at the beginning of the second century e.F. (the abbreviation means “after the birth of the living”). Interestingly, all with-ST peritexts and all peritexts with mixed origins have been reproduced in the TT according to ST type and placement. That is, footnotes in the ST becomes footnotes in the TT, while a ST wordlist without textual indicators (superscripted numbers or asterixis) will also result in a wordlist in the TT. Furthermore, in only two dystopian novels—in which notes and explanations may be seen as part of the fiction—are “real” footnotes (an in-text indicator referring to a note placed below the text) used.

I will now turn to the notes and comments that have been classified as with-TT peritexts. Surprisingly, non-attributed with-TT notes were found in as many as eight of the analyzed translations. Here, the translator or publisher has added information without indicating the paratext sender. The analysis of the text does not allow us to determine if the translator or another publishing house agent was responsible for the

notes. However, since the translator generally has the required cultural knowledge and close interaction with the text, it is reasonable to assume that the translator is also the paratext sender. It is, however, surprising that no one wanted to take credit for these. The eight novels include two popular and six highbrow publications by seven authors, translated by five translators: Viktor Pelevin's *Omon Ra* (*Омон Ра*), Dmitrij Gluchovskij's *Metro 2034* (*Метро 2034*), Andrej D'jakov's *Resan till ljuset* (*К свету*), Arkadij Babčenko's *Krigets färger ett vittnesmål* (*Цветы войны*), Svetlana Aleksievič's *Tiden second hand* (*Время секунд хэнд*), Marina Stepnova's *Lasarus kvinnor* (*Женищины Лазаря*), Ljudmila Ulitskaja's *Det gröna tältet* (*Зелёный шатёр*) och *Jakobs steg* (*Лестница Якова*). The notes to these novels consist of entries that explain intertextuality as well as political and cultural allusions to the target text reader. There are no meta-communicative elements in these notes. Instead, they present factual information in a matter-of-fact way. For example, in Ola Wallin's translation of *Metro 2034*, the notes explain that *tjort* is the Russian word for "devil," and that *Tverskajagatan* is a famous business street in Moscow. Interestingly, the notes include explanations for Western references as well, such as *Hansan* ("a medieval German commercial confederation") and *Homeros* ("traditionally seen as the author of the classical epic poems the Iliad and the Odyssey") (Coltso 2011, 397).⁷ The notes to Kajsa Öberg Lindsten's translation of Aleksievič's *Tiden second hand* explain, among other things, that the word *pionjär* ("pioneer") refers to a member of the Communist Scout movement, and that Marina Cvetaeva was a Russian poet. Additionally, they provide sources to intertextual references (Ersatz 2013, 659). However, the most interesting aspect of the translator's notes is not their contents, but rather the fact that they attract so little attention. Firstly, they are, as mentioned above, not signed by their author. Secondly, only two of the eight novels use real footnotes or endnotes with indicators placed in the text. In the other six novels, the notes are placed in a specific section and either refer to a page or a chapter. Three of these novels have a table of contents that indicates that notes can be found at the back of the book, while three novels do not in any way inform the reader about the existence of the (translator's) notes.

As far as attributed with-TT notes and comments are concerned, four novels contain seven with-TT peritexts of this type altogether, of which two consist of notes similar to the previously discussed non-attributed notes. However, these notes are either introduced or concluded by a more general comment, signed by the translator. Staffan Skott's notes to the Swedish translation of Viktor Pelevin's *Insekternas liv* (*Жизнь насекомых*) are special, since they not only provide explanations to cultural allusions, but also include meta-communicative discussions regarding the translation of certain

7 All translations into English are mine, unless stated otherwise.

source text allusions and word play. For example, one of the characters in *Insekternas liv* refers to the darkness behind closed eyelids as being *predvečnyj*, translated as “före evigheten” (before eternity) since the word could be derived from either the Russian word for eyelids (*veki*) or the word for eternal (*večnyj*). To this explanation Skott adds that “this could not be included in the translation” (Skott 2000, 242). Not only the notes to *Insekternas liv*, but also the translator’s comments, have been classified as meta-communicative, since in these the translator Skott, in a very modest and apologetic way, explains why he finds the notes to be of relevance for the TT reader:

Läsaren behöver i och för sig inte ögna igenom följande kommentarer. Som hon eller han redan har märkt kan man ha stor behållning av Insekternas liv utan att förstå de följande anspelningarna, vilka däremot faller i ögonen på en rysk läsare, och ibland bereder en sådan ett påtagligt nöje. Men när nu förlaget tagit det utmärkta initiativet att låta utge denna remarkabla bok, detta under en tid då den svenska utgivningen av rysk litteratur minskat till nästan ingenting, kan det vara skäl att redogöra för en del av dessa anspelningar. (“The reader does actually not have to glance through the following comments. As she or he already has noticed you may have great pleasure of *Insekternas liv* also without understanding the following allusions, which on the contrary will be noticed by a Russian reader, and may provide such a reader obvious pleasure. But now, when the publishing house has taken the excellent decision to publish this remarkable book, during the time when the Swedish publication of Russian literature has decreased to almost nothing, there might be reason to explain some of these allusions.”) (Skott 2000, 237)

Interestingly, the same wish not to disturb the reader is expressed by another attributed with-TT comment, namely one by Mikael Nydahl in his translation of Michail Šiškin’s *Erövringen av Izmail* (*Взятие Измаила*). This translation contains two with-TT peritexts that have been classified as meta-communicative, since they explicitly comment on aspects that concern translation. First, in a short comment titled “Översättarens anmärkning” (The translator’s comment) placed before the main text, Mikael Nydahl explains that sections of the text that in the source text were written in an older variety of Russian have been adapted to the Swedish of the corresponding epoch by language consultants (Nydahl 2020a, front matter). The second translator’s comment introduces the translator’s notes and is placed after the main text. It is signed using the Swedish abbreviation *Ö.a.* (Översättarens anmärkning, “the translator’s comment”). Here, Mikael Nydahl, explains that the notes compiled for the translation have been added to a list of translations of aphorisms rendered in Latin, French and German,

which were included in the original work (Nydahl 2020b, 447). Furthermore, Nydahl informs the reader that also the German edition contained “an extensive apparatus of notes against which the present commentary has been checked and, where appropriate, supplemented” (Nydahl 2020b, 447). Here, it seems as if the translator is justifying the presence of notes in the Swedish translation by mentioning that the German translation also had them.

6. The visibility of translation

6.1 External visibility

While the translator seems to be a subordinate figure on the cover of Swedish translations of post-Soviet Russian fiction, it is not possible to say that the Swedish translations have been disguised as original works. As previously indicated, a majority of the novels are not only set in Russia or the former Soviet Union, but also deal with the history of the region or the development of society. That is, the foreign nature of the novel is part of the marketing of the book, and present also in the commercial paratexts. Figure 3 illustrates the foreign framing of the analyzed novels.

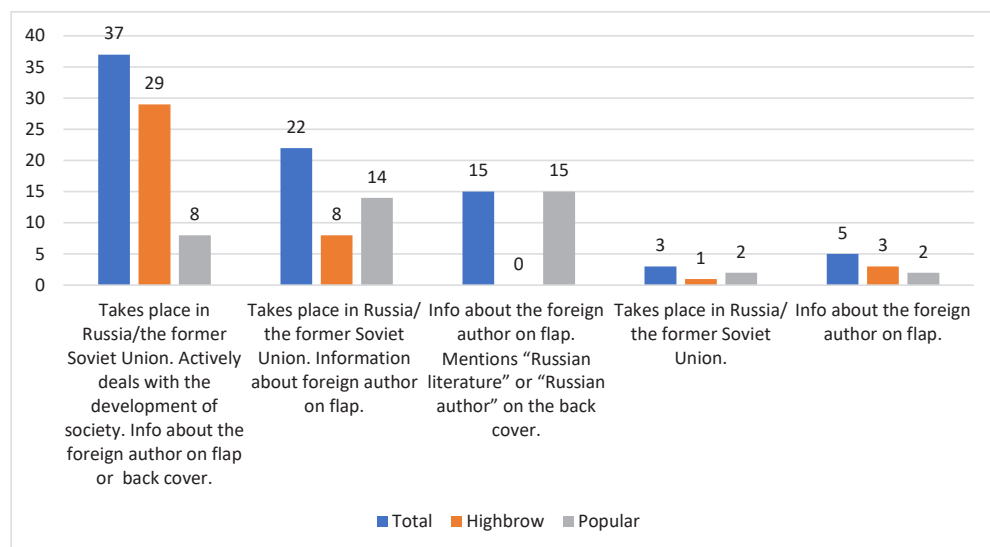


Figure 3. External visibility of translation: The use of a novel’s foreign nature in the commercial peritext.

As illustrated by Figure 3, the external peritexts of all 82 novels included in this analysis signal in some way that the novel in question is a translation. Seventy-seven novels (94%) do this both on the back cover and flaps, while five (6%) only indicate the foreign

nature of the novel on the flaps of the dust jacket. The back cover paratext of 74 of the novels (90%) indicates that the book is related to Russia or the former Soviet Union, or to Russian literature, while as many as 59 of the 82 novels (72%) inform the presumptive reader that the novel takes place in Russia and that the author is foreign. Finally, the back cover of 37 novels (45%)—the majority of which belong to highbrow literature—do not only inform the reader that the action takes place in Russia and that the author is Russian, but also actively use elements of post-Soviet reality in the marketing of the novel. For example, the novel by Roman Senčín's *Familjen Joltysjev* (Ёлтышевы) is described in the publisher's blurb as a work "providing an unusual glimpse of a sort of Russian everyday life, far away from the sparkling Moscow" ("2244" 2015). Similarly, Vladimir Sorokin's *I det heliga Rysslands tjänst* (День опричника) is described as "a pungent political satire of present-day Russian society" (Norstedt 2008), while Sergej Lebedev's *Vid glömskans rand* (Предел забвения) is "a terrifying portrayal of the deep and concealed wounds of contemporary Russia" (Natur & Kultur 2017). Not only highbrow but also popular literature, such as thrillers and crime fiction, use the source culture as part of the marketing. Alexandra Marinina's *Den stulna drömmen* (Украденный сон) is thus described as "a thrilling crime fiction novel that depicts the criminality in the new, Russian society" (Wahlström & Widstrand 2002). Even though the Russian/post-Soviet presence is less pronounced on the cover of fantasy novels by authors such as Nick Perumov, Max Frei and Anna Starobinec, which take place in fictional universes, it is still common that novels pertaining to these genres are attributed to Russian literature or Russian authors on the back cover. For example, Anna Starobinec's *Den levande* (Живущий) is referred to as an "award winning book by Russia's queen of horror (Coltso 2012), while the fantasy author Max Frei is described as "one of Russia's most popular authors" (Coltso 2010).

External peritexts may also be references to previous translations. The flap or back cover of 20 of the analyzed editions either include information about the author's previous translations into Swedish or other languages, or reveal that the present novel is the author's first translation into Swedish.

6.2 Internal (in)visibility

The visibility of translation is connected to the visibility of the translator. Thus, on the one hand the indication of translator name on the title page also increases the general visibility of translation in the peritext of a novel. On the other hand, by not indicating the translator as the sender of internal with-TT peritexts such as notes and comments, the translation visibility is reduced. That is also the case for the analyzed with-TT fore- and afterwords. In this type of peritext, a Swedish scholar or author discusses the qualities of

the source text and the merits of the source text author without touching upon aspects related to the translation. Naturally, such peritexts also reduce translation visibility.

6.2.1 *Additional peritexts*

Peritexts that did not fit into any of the more common categories have been categorized as “additional” peritexts. The analyzed material contained 18 additional with-TT peritexts, all without an indicated sender. They contain other types of information than translator’s notes and comments, and may very well have been composed by another agent involved in the translation process. For example, three novels in Boris Akunin’s *Fandorin* series (Akunin 2002, 2004 and 2005) translated by different translators, have been given a table of ranks of 19th century Russian public officials, taken from *Den klassiska romanens Ryssland* (“The Russia of Classical literature”) by Lennart Kjellberg (1991). Ten fantasy novels, all translations of Nick Perumov’s *Keeper of the Swords* series (*Хранитель мечей*), contain a list of characters that is not present in the source text (Perumov 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016). The publisher has also added a page that explains different units of measurement used for radioactive radiation to the first edition of Svetlana Aleksievič’s *Bön för tjernobyl* (*Чернобыльская молитва. Хроника будущего*) (1997). Finally, in Maria Stepanova’s *Minnen av minnet* (*Памяти памяти*) (2019), a list of works quoted in the translation has been added to the back matter without an indication of the author.

6.2.2 *Original title, information about funding, and references to translation/s*

The peritext may also include information that accentuates the translation visibility. Firstly, most of the analyzed works do provide the ST title on the copyright page. In the corpus 77 of 82 novels (94%) provided the ST title, of which 42 are in Cyrillic script. These peritexts are examples of peritexts with legal function, and therefore differ between cultures. For example, in Russia it is common to provide a translated novel with a double title page, where a folio page next to the regular title page replicates the ST title page. Secondly, the copyright pages of four publications contain a list of works quoted in the translation. Importantly, these lists include the published Swedish translations that are referenced in the translations and also mention the name of the Swedish translator. The practice of using other published translations when dealing with intertextuality seems to be typical of Swedish or Nordic translation practice (see Podlevskikh Carlström 2020, 196). Thirdly, the internal peritext of 25 of the novels include a list of the author’s previous translations to Swedish and, finally, the internal peritext of 13 works include information about funding received either for publishing Russian literature (five novels) or specifically for the particular translation in question (eight novels).

7. Summary of findings and conclusion

The analysis of the peritext of translations published in recent decades in Sweden yields both expected and unexpected results regarding translation and translator (in)visibility. As far as the translator's visibility is concerned, firstly, the analysis shows that the translator is a rather invisible figure on the cover of a Swedish translation of post-Soviet Russian literature. Secondly, the name of the Swedish translator—at least according to the analyzed Russian-Swedish translations—is mentioned on the title page of the translated novel. Nearly all of the analyzed translations also use this page to inform the reader of the identity of the translator. In addition to this, in accordance with Swedish copyright law, most publishers name the translator on the copyright page. However, the extent of the translator's external invisibility is striking: The translator is completely invisible in the external peritext of 91% of the analyzed translations. Only five translations include a translator's bio in the external peritext, and only one translation mentions the translator's name in the publisher's blurb, as part of the commercial peritext.

Despite the fact that the translator is made quite invisible, Swedish publishing houses make no secret of the fact that the published novels are translations, and the foreign nature of the novels in question receives much attention in the peritexts. This did not come as a surprise: With an open literary system and a high translation ratio, Sweden has no tradition of disguising translations as originals. Still, it was surprising that the external peritext of *all* analyzed translations explicitly signal the foreign nature of the work, and that, in addition, as many as 37 of the novels actively use post-Soviet history and the development of society in the marketing of the works. Here, further research based on other source languages would be needed in order to determine if Swedish translations from Russian are an exception when it comes to accentuating the foreign nature of the text.

The results showed that the difference between highbrow and popular literature was not reflected in translation visibility. The foreign nature of the text, as well as aspects of Russian history and post-Soviet reality, are frequently used in the marketing of both highbrow and popular fiction. However, when it comes to translator visibility and particularly translator's notes, the difference between these two types of literature were more pronounced, with translator's notes being more common in highbrow literature. However, since Russian popular literature builds on a non-Western literary tradition and makes use of other cultural references than those found in Western popular culture, two translations of popular dystopian novels also had substantial notes sections.

The most remarkable finding of the analysis, however, is the inconspicuous nature of the analyzed with-TT peritexts. As noted earlier, with-ST notes (i.e., the notes created

already in the ST) are generally reproduced in the TT according to their position in the ST, while with-TT notes (i.e., the notes added in the TT) are often placed in the back matter, as independent notes sections without textual indicators. Another aspect of the inconspicuous nature of with-TT peritexts is the frequent lack of attribution. The fact that as many as eight with-TT notes sections and two notes sections that contained a mixture of with-ST and with-TT material completely lacked information about the paratext sender is rather astonishing. It seems that it is assumed that the translator's notes might disturb both the reading and the narrative, and that this assumption has developed into a norm among Swedish translators and publishers. This conclusion is also supported by two of the translator's comments, which both express a strong wish not to disturb the reader and apologize for the use of notes in the translation. In their ambition not to disturb the reader, translators and publishers unintentionally refuse translations the status of works in their own right.⁸ In order to fully understand the reasoning behind this behavior, further research should be carried out, focusing on publishing house policies as well as translator attitudes towards translator's comments and notes.

Translation criticism has lately become the subject of heated debate in Swedish culture, where some angry voices claim that Sweden lacks a high-quality translation criticism and that therefore university courses in translation criticism should be introduced (see Podlevskikh Carlström 2022b). Perhaps, instead, the visibility of translations could be enhanced in the peritext, by means of greater external visibility, and more translator forewords, notes and comments. This would not only enhance the general visibility of translation, but also provide critics with a better understanding of what the process of translation entails.

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8 In the essay “How to Read a Translation” Lawrence Venuti promotes the viewpoint that a translation is “a text in its own right” (2013, 110).

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Appendix

The classification and coding of translation and translator (in)visibility

Translator (in)visibility

0. No translator visibility in external peritext
- 1a. Translator name on front cover
- 1b. Translator name on back cover or flaps
- 1c. Translator bio on back cover or flaps
- 2a. Translator name both title page and CR-page
- 2b. Translator name only on title page
- 2c. Translator name only on CR-page
- 3a. With-ST notes or wordlist, non-attributed
- 3b. With-TT notes or wordlist, attributed
- 3c. With-TT notes or wordlist, non-attributed
- 3d. Mix of with-ST and with-TT notes or wordlist, attributed
- 3e. Mix of with-ST and with-TT notes or wordlist, non-attributed
4. Translator comment, attributed
5. Translator fore- or afterword

Translation (in)visibility

1. CR-page provides original title
2. Lists previously published translations
3. References to cited translations provided
4. Information about funding for publication/translation
- 5a. The external peritext (blurb) clarifies that the work deals with post-Soviet reality
- 5b. Information about source culture in author bio (on flap)
- 5c. The back cover blurb clarifies that the story is set in the former Soviet Union
- 5d. The authors nationality stated in blurb or bio. Otherwise not related to post-Soviet reality
6. Translation/s explicitly mentioned in blurb or bio
- 7a. With-TT fore- or afterword that does not mention the translation
- 7b. With-ST fore- or afterword
8. Additional peritexts

	Year	Author	Title	Publisher	Translator	Segment	Translator (in)visibility	Translation (in)visibility
1	1994	Jevtusjenko, Jevgenij	Dö inte före din död	Gedin	Samuelson, Bengt	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 5a; 5b
2	1997	Aleksijevitj, Svetlana	Bön för Tjernobyl	Ordfront	Björkegren, Hans	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 2; 5a; 7a; 8
3	1999	Konstantinov, Andrej	Dödlig trojka	Prisma	Dixelius, Malcolm	Popular	1a; 1c; 2a	1; 5a; 5b
4	1999	Marinina, Alexandra	Mördare mot sin vilja	Wahlström & Widstrand	Dahnberg, Magnus	Popular	0; 2b	1; 5a; 5b
5	1999	Pelevin, Viktor	Omon Ra	Norstedts	Hellman, Ben	Highbrow	0; 2a; 3c	1; 4; 5b; 5c; 7a
6	1999	Petrusjevskaja, Ljudmila	Tiden är natt	Norstedts	Lönnqvist, Barbara	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 4; 5b; 5c; 7a
7	2000	Abdullaev, Chingiz	Symfoni i svart	Tresselts	Samuelson, Bengt	Popular	0; 2c	1; 5a; 5b
8	2000	Konstantinov, Andrej	Baronens hemlighet	Prisma	Dixelius, Malcolm	Popular	1a; 1c; 2a	1; 5b; 5c
9	2000	Marinina, Alexandra	De som dör först	Wahlström & Widstrand	Dahnberg, Magnus	Popular	0; 2b	1; 5b; 5c

	Year	Author	Title	Publisher	Translator	Segment	Translator (in)visibility	Translation (in)visibility
10	2000	Pelevin, Viktor	Insekternas liv	Norstedts	Skott, Staffan	Highbrow	0; 2b; 3b; 4	1; 5a; 5b
11	2000	Ulitskaja, Ljudmila	Sonetjka	Norstedts	Rotkirch, Kristina	Highbrow	0; 2a; 5	1; 4; 5a; 5b; 7a
12	2001	Marinina, Alexandra	Död och lite kärlek	Wahlström & Widstrand	Dahnberg, Magnus	Popular	0; 2b	1; 5a; 5b
13	2001	Sadur, Nina	Lustgården	Norstedts	Orlov, Janina	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 4; 5a; 5b; 7a
14	2001	Sorokin, Vladimir	Blått fett	Norstedts	Hellman, Ben	Highbrow	0; 2a; 3a; 3a	1; 4; 5a; 5b; 7a
15	2002	Akunin, Boris	Vinterdrottningen	Norstedts	Rotkirch, Kristina	Popular	0; 2a	1; 5b; 5c; 8
16	2002	Marinina, Alexandra	Den stulna drömmen	Wahlström & Widstrand	Dahnberg, Magnus	Popular	0; 2b	1; 5a; 5b
17	2003	Akunin, Boris	Leviathan	Norstedts	Rotkirch, Kristina	Popular	0; 2a	1; 5b; 5c
18	2003	Akunin, Boris	Turkisk gambit	Norstedts	Rotkirch, Kristina	Popular	0; 2a	1; 5b; 5c
19	2003	Tolstaja, Tatiana	Därv	Bonnier	Skott, Staffan and Maria Nikolajeva	Highbrow	0; 2b	1; 5a; 5b
20	2004	Akunin, Boris	Akilles död	Norstedts	Rotkirch, Kristina	Popular	0; 2a	1; 5a; 5b; 8
21	2005	Akunin, Boris	Särskilda uppdrag	Norstedts	Johansson, Magnus	Popular	0; 2a	1; 5b; 5c; 8
22	2005	Gallego, Ruben	Vitt på svart	Ersatz	Wallin, Ola	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 5a
23	2005	Grigorjev, Boris	Med säpo i hämlarna	Efron & Dotter	Lindgren, Stefan	Popular	0; 2a	5a; 5b
24	2005	Kozyrev, Aleksej	Minus en	Ord & visor	Petersson, Lina	Highbrow	0; 2a; 5	5a; 5b; 6; 7b
25	2005	Volos, Andrej	Hurramabad	Ruin	Håkanson, Nils	Highbrow	0; 2a; 3d; 4	5a; 5b; 6
26	2006	Kurkov, Andrej	Döden och pingvinen	Natur & Kultur	Mörk, Ylva	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 5a; 5b; 6
27	2006	Lukjanenko, Sergej	Nattens väktare	Fabulera	Karlsson, Roger	Popular	0; 2b	1; 5b; 5c; 6; 8
28	2006	Perumov, Nick	Diamantsvärdet och träsvärdet 1	Ersatz	Ingdén-Ringselle, Britt-Marie	Popular	0; 2a; 3e	1; 5b; 5d
29	2006	Robski, Oksana	Casual	Fabulera	Karlsson, Roger	Popular	0; 2a	1; 5b; 5c; 6
30	2006	Sorokin, Vladimir	Is	Norstedts	Hellman, Ben	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 2; 5a; 5b
31	2006	Zabuzjko, Oksana	Fältstudier i ukrainskt sex	Norstedts	Voltjanskaja, Irina	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 5a; 5b
32	2007	Babtjenko, Arkadij	Krigets färger: Ett vittnesmål	Ersatz	Wallin, Ola	Highbrow	0; 2a; 3c	5a; 5b
33	2007	Kurkov, Andrej	Pingvin försvunnen	Natur & Kultur	Mörk, Ylva	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 5b; 5c; 6

	Year	Author	Title	Publisher	Translator	Segment	Translator (in)visibility	Translation (in)visibility
34	2007	Perumov, Nick	Diamantsvärdet och träsvärdet 2	Ersatz	Ingdén-Ringselle, Britt-Marie	Popular	0; 2a	1; 5b; 5d; 6
35	2007	Ulitskaja, Ljudmila	En munter begravning	Bazar	Rotkirch, Kristina	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 5a; 5b; 6
36	2008	Perumov, Nick	Nekroman- tikerns födelse	Ersatz	Grigoriev, Maxim	Popular	0; 2a	1; 5b; 5d; 6; 8
37	2008	Perumov, Nick	Nekroman- tikerns irrfärder	Ersatz	Grigoriev, Maxim	Popular	0; 2a	1; 2; 5b; 5d; 8
38	2008	Sorokin, Vladimir	I det heliga Rysslands tjänst	Norstedts	Hellman, Ben	Highbrow	0; 2a; 3a	1; 2; 5a; 5b; 6
39	2009	Gluchovskij, Dmitrij	Metro 2033	Ersatz	Wallin, Ola	Popular	0; 2a; 3b; 4	1; 5b; 5c; 6
40	2009	Kurkov, Andrej	Presidentens sista kärlek	Natur & Kultur	Mörk, Ylva	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 2; 5b; 5c; 6; 7b
41	2009	Perumov, Nick	Nekroman- tikerns flykt	Ersatz	Ingdén-Ringselle, Britt-Marie and Ola Wallin	Popular	0; 2a	1; 2; 5b; 5d; 6; 8
42	2010	Frei, Max	Främlingen	Coltso	Asaid, Alan	Popular	0; 2a	1; 5b; 5d; 6
43	2010	Grisjkovets, Jevgenij	Floder	Ersatz	Rotkirch, Kristina	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 5a; 5b; 6
44	2010	Perumov, Nick	Alvklingan	Coltso	Asaid, Alan	Popular	0; 2a	1; 2; 5b; 5d
45	2010	Perumov, Nick	Nekroman- tikerns ensam- het 1	Ersatz	Wallin, Ola and Kajsa Öberg Lindsten	Popular	0; 2a	1; 2; 3; 5b; 5d; 7a; 8
46	2011	Frei, Max	Resan till Ket-tari	Coltso	Asaid, Alan	Popular	0; 2a	1; 5b; 5c
47	2011	Gluchovskij, Dmitrij	Metro 2034	Coltso	Wallin, Ola	Popular	0; 2a; 3c	1; 5b; 5c; 6
48	2011	Goralik, Linor	Valerij	Ruin	Wirengren, Ingrid	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 5b; 6
49	2011	Krym, Anatolij	Den ryska frågan	Ruin	Håkanson, Nils	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 5a; 5b; 6
50	2011	Perumov, Nick	Nekroman- tikerns ensam- het 2	Ersatz	Ingdén-Ringselle, Britt-Marie	Popular	0; 2a	1; 2; 5b; 5d; 6; 8
51	2012	Djakov, Andrej	Resan till ljustet	Coltso	Wallin, Ola	Popular	0; 2a; 3c	1; 5d
52	2012	Perumov, Nick	Nekroman- tikerns krig 1	Coltso	Grigoriev, Maxim	Popular	0; 2a	1; 2; 5b; 5d; 8
53	2012	Starobinets, Anna	Den levande	Coltso	Nydahl, Mikael	Popular	0; 2a; 3a	1; 5b
54	2013	Aleksijevitj, Svetlana	Tiden second hand: slutet för den röda människan	Ersatz	Öberg Lindsten, Kajsa	Highbrow	0; 2a; 3c	1; 4; 5a; 5b; 8
55	2013	Perumov, Nick	Nekroman- tikerns krig 2	Coltso	Ingdén-Ringselle, Britt-Marie	Popular	0; 2a	1; 2; 5b; 5d; 8

	Year	Author	Title	Publisher	Translator	Segment	Translator (in)visibility	Translation (in)visibility
56	2013	Sjisjkin, Michail	Brevboken	Ersatz	Parkman, Elin	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 4; 5b
57	2013	Slavnikova, Olga	2017	Ersatz	Grigoriev, Maxim and Mikael Nydahl	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 5b; 5c; 6
58	2013	Sorokin, Vladimir	Snöstormen	Norstedts	Hellman, Ben	Highbrow	1c; 2a	1; 2; 5b; 5c
59	2013	Stepnova, Marina	Lasarus kvinnor	2244	Lindblad, Johanna	Highbrow	0; 2b; 3c	1; 3; 5a; 5b
60	2014	Babtjenko, Arkadij	Dagar i Al-chan-Jurt	Ersatz	Wallin, Ola	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 2; 5a; 5b
61	2014	Andrej Djakov	Resan till mörkret	Coltso	Wallin, Ola	Popular	0; 2a	1; 5d
62	2014	Minajev, Sergej	Moskva, jag älskar dig inte	2244	Lindblad, Johanna	Popular	0; 2a	1; 5b; 5c
63	2014	Perumov, Nick	Svarta lansen	Coltso	Alan Asaid and Mikael Nydahl	Popular	0; 2a	1; 2; 5b; 5d
64	2014	Perumov, Nick	Nekroman- tikerns krig 3	Coltso	Grigoriev, Maxim	Popular	0; 2a	1; 2; 5b; 5d; 8
65	2014	Sjisjkin, Michail	Venusår	Ersatz	Parkman, Elin	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 2; 4; 5a; 5b
66	2014	Vagner, Jana	Ön	Ersatz	Lidén, Karin	Popular	0; 2a	5b; 5c
67	2015	Perumov, Nick	Nekroman- tikerns krig 4	Coltso	Ingdén-Ringselle, Britt-Marie	Popular	0; 2a	1; 2; 5b; 5d; 8
68	2015	Sentjin, Roman	Familjen Joltys- jev	2244	Håkanson, Nils	Highbrow	1b; 2a	1; 4; 5a; 5b
69	2015	Sorokin, Vladimir	Tellurien	Norstedts	Hellman, Ben	Highbrow	1c; 2a; 3a	1; 2; 5b
70	2015	Ulitskaja, Ljudmila	Det gröna tältet	Ersatz	Björkegren, Hans	Highbrow	0; 2a; 3c	1; 5a; 5b
71	2015	Vodolazkin, Jevgenij	Laurus	Ersatz	Lindén, Karin	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 2; 4; 5b; 5c
72	2016	DJ Stalingrad	Exodus	Ersatz	Parkman, Elin	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 5a; 5b; 7b
73	2016	Gluchovskij, Dmitrij	Future	Coltso	Minth, Wera	Popular	0; 2a	1; 2; 5b
74	2016	Perumov, Nick	Nekroman- tikerns krig 5	Coltso	Ingdén-Ringselle, Britt-Marie	Popular	0; 2a	1; 2; 5b; 5d; 8
75	2017	Ulitskaja, Ljudmila	Jakobs steg	Ersatz	Björkegren, Hans	Highbrow	0; 2a; 3c	1; 2; 5a; 5b; 8
76	2017	Lebedev, Sergej	Vid glömskans rand	Natur & Kultur	Håkanson, Nils	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 5a; 5b
77	2017	Gluchovskij, Dmitrij	Metro 2035	Coltso	Wallin, Ola	Popular	0; 2a	1; 2; 5b; 5c
78	2019	Jachina, Guzel	Zulejcha öppnar ögonen	Ersatz	Nydahl, Mikael	Highbrow	0; 2a; 3a; 3e	1; 4; 5a; 5b

	Year	Author	Title	Publisher	Translator	Segment	Translator (in)visibility	Translation (in)visibility
79	2019	Sorokin, Vladimir	Manaraga	Norstedts	Hellman, Ben	Highbrow	1c; 2a	1; 2; 3; 5b
80	2019	Stepanova, Maria	Minnen av minnet: en roman	Nirstedt/litteratur	Håkanson, Nils	Highbrow	0; 2a	1; 3; 4; 5b; 5c; 7a; 8
81	2020	Sjiskin, Michail	Erövringen av Izmail	Ersatz	Nydahl, Mikael	Highbrow	1b; 3d; 2; 4; 4	1; 2; 4; 5a; 5b
82	2020	Lavrentieva, Olga	Survilo: mormors berättelse om livet i Leningrad	Kaunitz-Olsson	Håkanson, Nils	Popular	0; 2a	1; 5a; 5b

Re/Deconstructing voices of (female) translators: The case of Bolesława Kopelówna (1897-1961)

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ABSTRACT

The article presents the life and work of Bolesława Kopelówna, a Polish literary translator who was especially active (and widely criticised) in the interwar years in Poland, and is now almost completely forgotten. The article attempts to answer the following questions: why was Kopelówna so intensely criticised? Why has she disappeared from the collective memory? Why was she so active in the field of translation? And, no less crucially, who was this enigmatic figure of Bolesława Kopelówna? Through an application of microhistorical tools to fragments of Kopelówna's life and work, I will re/deconstruct her seemingly non-existing archive. Combining interdisciplinary tools from literary history, history and feminist studies, my aim is not only to bring back the voice of a silenced, overlooked, and underestimated translator, but also to encourage other researchers to attempt to fill blank spaces in translation history.

Keywords: translator studies, Bolesława Kopelówna, archives, microhistory, translation history

Re/dekonstrukcija glasov prevajalk na primeru Bolesławe Kopelówne (1897-1961)

IZVLEČEK

V članku je predstavljeno življenje in delo Bolesławe Kopelówne, poljske književne prevajalke, ki je delovala (in bila tarča številnih kritik) zlasti v obdobju med prvo in drugo svetovno vojno na Poljskem, danes pa je skoraj pozabljena. V prispevku poskušam odgovoriti na naslednja vprašanja: zakaj so Kopelówno tako intenzivno kritizirali? Zakaj je izginila iz kolektivnega spomina? Kako da je bila tako aktivna na področju prevajanja? In nenazadnje: kdo je bila enigmatična Bolesława Kopelówna? Z uporabo mikrohistoričnih orodij pri analizi fragmentov življenja in dela Bolesławe Kopelówne re/dekonstruiram njen na videz neobstoječi arhiv. Moj cilj je, da bi s kombinacijo interdisciplinarnih orodij od literarne zgodovine, zgodovine in feminističnih študij, vrnila glas utišani, spregledani in podcenjeni prevajalki ter spodbudila druge raziskovalce, da bi tudi poskusili zapolniti vrzeli v prevodni zgodovini.

Ključne besede: študije prevajalcev, Bolesława Kopelówna, arhivi, mikrozgodovina, zgodovina prevajanja

1. Introduction

In 2005 Michael Cronin made the following observation in *Palimpsestes*:

In a way that is only apparently paradoxical, we must ask ourselves not only why so much gets translated, but also why so much does not get translated. In other words, a history of translation that only looks at translations at some level misses the point. Just as a figure is defined by and necessitates a ground, so also the figure of translation demands the figure of non-translation if we are to make any sense of the activity in our society, and this holds as much for today as it did four hundred years ago. (Cronin 2005, 9)

Michael Cronin's provocative, yet eye-opening statement, might be inspiring not only for translation studies scholars investigating texts and their circulation, but also for those who focus on agents of translation. In this article, I will argue that these lacunae that Cronin notes are ever present. To paraphrase him – a history of translation that only looks at translators who are remembered, recognised, praised, and who have archives, at some level misses the point. This is especially the case when the voice of a particular translator, the author of many existing translations still in use in the target culture, is not only absent, but also not given a platform and is ignored by reviews and paratextual critique.

In what follows, I will focus on Bolesława Kopelówna (1897–1961) – a very active, but also harshly criticised female translator from English into Polish, an author of children's books and editor of several left-wing periodicals. Kopelówna has been forgotten by (translation) history,¹ and remains frequently misattributed in contemporary essays. By presenting her life and work through a microhistorical lens, I will investigate who she was, some of the reasons underlying why she was criticised, and why she is now mostly forgotten. A microhistorical examination of Kopelówna's reception also leads us to address more general questions; namely, it prompts us to reconsider different compositions of archives in translation history, and to promote metaliterary speculation in translation history.

1 Translation history in Poland is developing rapidly, with many bio-bibliographical projects in progress. To name just two of them: the National Science Center (NCN) grant "A century of translation. Translators and their work in Polish literature after 1918" led by Magda Heydel; and the Repository of Polish Translations of Shakespeare's Plays in the 19th Century: Resources, Approaches, Reception "Polski Szekspir" led by Anna Cetera-Włodarczyk. Nevertheless, currently it is still the case that many translators active in the past are not recognised by the wider audience as important agents promoting cultural development and exchange in Poland.

2. The human factor in Translation Studies

Since the cultural turn in Translation Studies in 1990s (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990), linguistic or functionalist aspects of translation are no longer considered the main focus of the discipline. Translation in its broader definition is now regarded as a “historical product that serves a specific function within the target culture” (Fólica et al. 2020, 5) and a complex process of cultural transfer (Espagne 2013) involving institutions (Lefevere 1992; Hermans 2007) and individuals (Delisle and Woodsworth 2012). In his *Method in Translation History*, Anthony Pym (1998) investigated many translators from various cultural and historical contexts, and identified five features they shared: he recognised that there is no point in talking about “the” translator – an abstract and impersonal concept. Instead, he stressed the importance of taking into consideration a variety of individuals with different physical bodies, sociocultural and economic backgrounds, personal aspirations, motivations, and abilities.

In two decades since Pym’s seminal work, there has been a growing interest in (investigating) individual translators in different historical, geographical, linguistic, and cultural contexts. Furthermore, the methodology applied to the TS research has become more varied, and even started to draw on some other well-established disciplines. Not only historical, but also sociological, cognitive, and cultural approaches have been used to investigate the biographies, agency and working conditions of translators. A decade after Pym’s work, the focus on the translator was explicitly set out in Andrew Chesterman’s seminal paper “The Name and Nature of Translator Studies”. Chesterman, building on James Holmes’ foundational map of Translation Studies (1988), called for recognising and defining the field of Translator Studies (Chesterman 2009). This has led to growing interdisciplinary and integrated interest in various individuals who translated in different times and places. In 2019 a conference organised by Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań – along with Jagiellonian University, Kraków, one of the two most active academic centres for Translation Studies in Poland – focused on Translator Studies. One of its results was also the publication of the volume *The Human Factor in Literary Translation – Theories, Histories, Practices* edited by Ewa Rajewska (2020). It sparked a discussion on the current state of Translator Studies in the local context. In an international setting, it is worth mentioning the 2018 Conference “Staging the Literary Translators: Roles, Identities, Personalities” organised by the University of Vienna that resulted in a recent Routledge publication *Literary Translator Studies* (2021).

This article addresses the absence of Bolesława Kopelówna’s voice (as evidenced by a lack of interviews and few paratexts in relation to her impressive body of translated works) and focuses on “an otherwise unknown individual who would at most be a

footnote in a larger account of the period” (Ginzburg, Tedeschi and Tedeschi 1993, 21, quoted in Munday 2014, 67).

2.1 How to research translators within translation history

Studying translators’ personal interests and private lives provides a fruitful ground for investigating the reasons why and how particular translators started their careers and, sometimes even more interestingly, why and how they stopped translating. It seems fair to say that translators’ career trajectories are still not the subject of much research in Translation Studies, something which the present study may help to remedy. As Pym (1998) suggests, translators can do much more in their lives than “just” translate, and indeed, translators’ biographies show many of those who translated had also gained prestige and recognition in different fields, i.e., art, education, theology, pedagogy, and science. Pym clearly shows that monoprofessionalism in translation is an illusion. He also stresses the ability of translators to travel, and notes that in many historical contexts, those who knew foreign languages moved across borders with considerable ease. Pym also argues that translators’ physical form, i.e., their bodies, is no less important than their minds: “when I talk about translators, plural, I refer to people with flesh-and-blood bodies. If you prick them, they bleed” (Pym 1998, 161). Bodies can hurt, feel pleasure or pain. Furthermore, translators move with their names across scripts, languages, nations and political regimes. This journey is ascribed in their identity and leaves traces even at the seemingly cursory layer of nicknames. Different spellings and/or pronunciations of their names in different dialects and contexts tells a profound truth about the existential challenges related to the so-called in-betweenness that lies at the core of their profession. As was stated by Maria Constanza Guzman, translation should be considered as “invested and embodied practice, rendering translators’ bodies and life histories as part of the epistemological enquiry about the translator’s self” (Guzman 2013, 189). This view of translators as people, with their own identities, ambitions, and agenda, was also adopted in the following investigation of the translation history and biography of Bolesława Kopelówna.

This brief review of some aspects of Pym’s approach to translation history also highlights that the research on biographies within translation history can encounter many potential difficulties, such as inconsistencies and gaps in the archives of translators who moved, changed their names and professions, and who were either neglected or known for their other occupation, and sometimes deliberately hidden, for instance in the case of oppressive state policy (Hermans 2007). In this respect, an important approach to data collection was proposed by Lieven D’hulst (2010): by asking traditional questions from rhetoric (*quis? quid? ubi? quibus auxiliis? cur? quomodo? quando?*) it

becomes possible to extend our understanding of translators' archives and uncover key aspects, such as who translated, when, for what purposes, and for whom.

Another scholar whose work proposed new ways of thinking about translation history, therefore also responding to some of the difficulties raised by Pym, is Christopher Rundle. Rundle (2014) overtly encourages presenting the results of one's research to a deliberately selected audience that can provide relevant feedback. In the case of TS scholars and "conventional" historians, dialogue and collaboration can lead to the revision of traditional literary and cultural history with particular attention to figures that were previously neglected or hidden. Openness to integrated tools from various disciplines, as proposed by Rundle, make it possible to not only ask more inspiring questions, but also to benefit from the achievements of different fields.

If I seek a dialogue with a 'conventional' historian who works on my same historical subject, it is because that historian will have a similar expertise to mine and will therefore be in a position to appreciate the value of any historical insight that I have to offer. We engage in the same discourse and he or she will be in a position both to appreciate my own position and influence it. (Rundle 2014, 4)

This can apparently bridge the gap between historians and translation scholars who present a substantial "asymmetry of engagement" (Rafael and Rundle 2016, 28) in the recognition of the importance and potential of translation in history.

2.2 Microhistories and translation history

Adopting an integrated, interdisciplinary approach within translation history will not automatically solve all the problems of the field as encountered by Translation Studies scholars: because – as Jeremy Munday puts it – they not only "need to be aware of the applications, and limitations, of methods employed by historians, social scientists and literary theorists", but also "be prepared to tailor them in a way that can address the needs of the discipline" (Munday 2014, 64). By investigating the working papers of little-known or forgotten translators, such as Andrew Hurley, Bernard Miall or Margaret Sayers Peden, Munday tries to demonstrate the potential of manuscripts, especially translators' papers, post-hoc accounts and interviews in producing archives of translators and histories of translation. Munday applies a microhistorical approach in order to give voice to individuals "we did not know existed" (Munday 2014, 66–67 quoted in Paloposki 2017, 3). He presents many benefits of this approach, and in particular he argues that it allows access to the motivations of

particular translators, which would be impossible to reconstruct from the traditional textual analysis only. As he points out, personal papers offer relatively unmediated access to the working practices of translators and can provide the researcher with a valuable historical context (Munday 2014, 66).

The microhistorical approach adapted to the particular translator's persona, contributes to the accumulation of translation knowledge and is in line with Julio César Santoyo's remark that "[i]f we think of the history of translation as a mosaic, there can be little doubt that there are still many small pieces or tesserae missing, as well as large empty spaces yet to be filled" (Santoyo 2006, 13, quoted in Woodsworth 2012, XVII). The importance of accumulating translators' accounts in comparative studies of different practices of transfer in translation history was also emphasised by Dirk Delabastita (Delabastita 2012, 246, quoted in Paloposki 2017, 2). In this sense, investigating the accounts of Kopelówna's life and work from many sources will hopefully also add more small pieces to the mosaic of translation history in Poland.

The use of primary sources raises several challenges for translation studies, as mentioned by Outi Paloposki (2017, 3), who elaborated on Munday's microhistorical approach to translator's archives. Paloposki identified two main reasons underlying the reluctance within translation studies with regard to archival work. Firstly, she claims that archives are not attractive as they are usually seen as reserved for the so-called 'proper historians' only; and secondly, the fact that they are organised along national distinctions makes it almost impossible to create comparative patterns (*ibid.*).² According to my own research, there is yet another factor, valid at least in the Polish context, which works as a disincentive for translation-related archival research: the fact that the archives are difficult to access and lack clear reference to translators. As Munday states:

When it comes to the study of translation, until recently exclusion seems to have been the norm. Traces of the translator are generally hard to find in many collections and require some excavation. In the absence of a central catalogue of archives searchable by keyword or theme, it is often difficult to locate collections that are relevant for translation studies research. (Munday 2017, 71)

As translation is often not "at the first level of classification" (Munday 2014, 73), archival work in the context of translators requires particular creativity and determination.

2 Recently, change can be seen thanks to global and transnational approaches increasingly adopted within Translation Studies; e.g., Batchelor and Harding (2017); Castro and Ergun (2017); D'hulst and Gambier (2018).

Adopting a microhistorical approach legitimises and encourages the focus on the non-obvious and obscure traces of translators' agency, motivation, and attitude to the profession through the everyday experience of individuals inscribed in personal papers, correspondence, and artefacts. In addition, as Munday emphasised, material on translation and translators is often housed in the collections of others, i.e., diplomats, publishing companies or writers (Munday 2014, 72).

A microhistorical approach therefore seems to be most suitable for the study of the case of Kopelówna. Although she authored dozens of translations from English into Polish in the interwar period, she is virtually unknown today (Sobesto 2018). Kopelówna authored the first Polish translation of Katherine Mansfield's prose, and in 1934 the collection *The Garden Party and Other Stories* was published and soon reviewed in various literary periodicals by many eminent scholars who also happened to be translators, such as Witold Chwalewik and Zbigniew Grabowski. The findings from my research revealed that Kopelówna's allegedly poor renditions of Mansfield's short stories greatly affected the writer's reception in Poland for many decades.³ Since many questions about Kopelówna still remain unanswered, this article will describe her persona employing the concept of *reading against the grain* (Wiget 1991, 209) – a postcolonial mode of critical reading in order to recover marginalised voices, in this particular case, of a forgotten female translator.⁴

2.3 Gender matters

The position of a woman in patriarchal society is also reflected in Kopelówna's life and works, however, in order to study this, we need to extend the traditional notion of archival material in order to include previously excluded “silent majorities, unheard

- 3 The status of the author can be inferred from the very scarce frequency of reeditions of her short stories (Sobesto 2018). Only recently a retranslation of Mansfield's stories into Polish was published in a critical collection which was edited, translated and given an ample foreword by Magda Heydel – a translator and translation studies scholar (cf. Mansfield/Heydel 2020). Unfortunately, even in this edition Kopelówna was not given true credit – instead of “Bolesława” she was referred to by a similar in spelling and pronunciation yet substantially different Polish female name “Bronisława” (Heydel 2020, 386).
- 4 Although used earlier, the term *reading against the grain* along with the notion of *reading with the grain* were popularised by a prominent figure in the field of composition and rhetoric, David Bartholomae, and a co-director of the Institute for Learning (IFL) at the Learning Research & Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh and a poet Anthony Petrosky. It was announced in their anthology *Ways of Reading. Anthology for Writers* (1995) and later borrowed by many scholars from various fields, including history, culture studies and feminist studies.

voices and marginalised groups” (Paloposki 2017, 3) into the historical research within Translation Studies. Specific challenges are associated with archival research concerning female creators. For instance, in the volume *Working in Women’s Archives*, female literary scholars aimed to bring back voices and stories of seven female writers of various ethnic origins and socio-cultural backgrounds from different historical periods, now completely forgotten, excluded from the canon and relegated to their relationships with male relatives. The autobiographies, letters, private notes, biographies, paintings, inscriptions on gravestones and many other artifacts of someone’s mother, wife and daughter were investigated to create multidimensional, non-linear and sensitive-to-gaps narrative of great, and yet forgotten minds, while, at the same time, not pretending objectivity or usurping the absolute truth. In this respect, the approach proposed by the scholar Gwendolyn Davies, who researched the 18th century maritime writer Deborah How Cottnam, seems particularly inspiring. Davies (2001) coined the term *re/deconstruction*, “to describe the complexity of the multiple goals that women academics in our times bring to archives, as we both deconstruct the traditional views of the female subject and reconstruct female subjects from the anonymity of history” – as was aptly stated by the editors of the volume (Buss and Kadar 2001, 2). In this way, Davies speaks of the silences that surround these women and the need to re-create with sensitivity and diligence their profile and spirit with the help of the so-called ‘material history’ (Davies 2001, 35). In this respect, accumulating private artefacts (including e.g., dried flowers, locks of hair, timetables) often overlooked by historians, extends the notion of the conventional archive and enables the telling of stories from different perspectives and tracing the voice of female subjects.

In the case of Kopelówna, extending the notion of an archive to the artefacts linked with her everyday life was not sufficient, as there were no private objects to collect or investigate at our disposal. That is why in our research into Kopelówna the notion of an archive needed to be extended even further. If we understand the archive not only as a set of tangible artefacts, but also as a dynamic net of interpersonal relations (Guzman 2013, 179), this allows us to research Kopelówna through the study of her professional affiliations with the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and her relationship with one of its leading figures, Zygmunt Żuławski. Adopting this extended understanding of the source material, the archive of her friend Żuławski was also investigated, which consists of dozens of letters, manuscripts, and documents. Nowadays Żuławski’s personal papers are stored in one of the largest scientific libraries in Poland, the Ossolineum, and has been investigated by historians and bibliographers (Smyłła 2008). Our main interest was the volume consisting of Żuławski’s letters, speeches, and articles, edited by the historian Jakub Tyszkiewicz and librarian Ireneusz Lipiński and published in 1998 by the Ossolineum Publishing House. It was particularly striking that although many of the letters in the volume were

addressed to Kopelówna, she was referred to in only one modest footnote, in which there was no mention that she was also a translator (Żuławski 1998, 19).

3. Who is Bolesława Kopelówna?

The fate of research on Bolesława Kopelówna embodies many of the tendencies presented in her biography. Kopelówna might be seen as a case in point when it comes to Pym's "five principles" in relation to translators: she cannot be considered "the cultural figure" typical or stereotypical of translator, and cannot be identified only with the translatorial practice. The trajectory of her life and work was not linear: she did not study translation, nor did she carry on the profession throughout her entire life. She was also not considered as the most representative of the so-called professional translators⁵ (she was more a political activist than translator) and certainly not (fully) recognised. She is not only neglected by the existing history of translation and ignored by her contemporaries, but she is also hidden under many pseudonyms. For example, in various relatively comprehensive entries on her she is listed by the following names: Anna Kopel, Franciszka Kwiatkowska, Bolesława Kopelówna and the nickname "Bolka" (Smogorzewska 1992; Smyłła 2008; Żuławski 1980). Moreover, in some bibliographical entries the books she translated are ascribed to the non-existent Bronisława Kopelówna. Furthermore, not only her first name, also her surname varies – which, in the Polish context, would not be that surprising as a woman traditionally takes her husband's surname – but, in this case it is surprising, as Kopelówna never married. In her case, the changes of her first name were related to her conversion to Christianity in 1924 (she was born Jewish),⁶ while the alteration of surnames might have had political reasons, as during the Second World War she went by Franciszka Kwiatkowska to conceal her political activism from the Nazis (Smogorzewska 1992).

Her place of birth was not difficult to track: she was born in Warsaw in December 1897, although the exact day varies from record to record, stating either the 2nd or the 7th of December (Smogorzewska 1992; [wg] 1961). She travelled a lot, and soon after finishing her secondary school in 1914 she moved with her mother (a music teacher) to the United States, where she studied literature and history at the New York College.

5 As was pointed out by Kaisa Koskinen, for decades the focus in Translation Studies was put on so-called professional translators, defined as experts trained in the field. Koskinen recognises the need for the research on paraprofessionals – those individuals who did not get the professional training but happened to be experienced in translation or interpretation for one reason or another (Koskela et al. 2017; Koskinen et al. 2020).

6 She was a delegate during the Jewish Trade Union Congress in Paris in 1927 (J.T.A. 1927, 16). Her surname, Kopel, and the first name of her father, Samuel also suggests her Jewish origin.

She returned to Poland in 1919 and enrolled in the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). She lived in Warsaw, but travelled to Paris in March 1927 as the Polish press delegate for the Trade Union Congress (J.T.A. 1927, 16). During the Second World War, in 1941, she fled from Warsaw to the city of Łańcut, and returned to the capital in 1945. After the war, she took part in various international conferences abroad, like, for example, the Three-Power Conference in London in March 1948. She died in Warsaw in 1961. Paradoxically, her death was an important moment for the recognition of her life and work, as the obituary notice published in the press revealed some biographical facts that had not been mentioned before ([wg] 1961). It is often the case for female writers and translators that only after their deaths do they become recognised as authors, and that their *oeuvre* is mentioned (Buss and Kadar 2001). The fact that Kopelówna's obituary was published in the Press Notebooks issued by the Centre of Press Studies in Kraków [Krakowski Ośrodek Badań Prasoznawczych] is telling, and also in line with Pym's (1998) observation that translators do more than translate. As far as her career as a translator is concerned, Kopelówna's first work experience was in technical and legal translation, which she did for the Life Insurance Bureau [Biuro Ubezpieczeń na Życie] in the US (1915–1917). In 1917, before her conversion, she joined the Young Women's Christian Association, and later, in 1918 in Poland, she worked in an American company in Warsaw as a translator, though her tasks there are unclear.

In the interwar period, she was a very active part-time literary translator and translated almost 50 books, mostly from English into Polish. Kopelówna rendered many works from popular genres: from adventure books aimed at young adults (e.g., by Philip Gibbs) to romances (e.g., by Mary Webb) and detective and mystery fiction (e.g., by Bernard Newman). She also translated pieces written by Pearl S. Buck, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1938, as well as by the novelist and playwright W. Somerset Maugham. Kopelówna worked for different Polish publishers, and did not rely on one client (Worldcat 2022; Heydel et al. 2022).

From March 1920 to September 1939, she worked for the *Robotnik* socialist periodical as a proofreader and editorial assistant ([wg] 1961). She was also the editorial assistant in the Polish socio-cultural weekly *Światło* and the chief editor of the magazine *Metalowiec*, which was a periodical published by the Polish Metalworkers' Association [Związek Metalowców w Polsce]. During the Second World War, she worked as the secretary of the politician Mieczysław Niedziałkowski, and after his death in 1940 she fled to Łańcut where, under the name Franciszka, she worked in the Polish Insurance Company and taught English unofficially (Smogorzewska 1992).

After the Second World War, Kopelówna worked as a translator in the International Work Department of the Ministry of Labour. In addition to this she was also a journalist,

publishing in the *Telegram Codzienny* and *Nowy Świat* dailies (1918–1919). Shortly after the war, she also worked as a teacher in Łańcut, and later as a secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in Warsaw. From 1950 Kopelówna was employed in the national medical publishing house [Państwowy Zakład Wydawnictw Lekarskich], and in the 1950s she joined the Polish Journalists' Association (Smogorzewska 1992).

Her personal interests and motivations have not been recorded anywhere. Through the process of re/deconstruction or the path of her life I will try to partly and retrospectively trace her archive.

3.1 Where does Kopelówna's archive come from?

To overcome the lack of Kopelówna's voice in the present research, I have extended the definition of her archive in order to re/deconstruct her position within Polish culture of the first half of the 20th century by incorporating paratexts and every cultural practice of reception "that surrounds, wraps, accompanies, extends, introduces and presents the translated text" (Yuste 2012, 118). I have analysed her translations in the search for footnotes and other authorial gestures. In this respect, Kopelówna's translation of Katherine Mansfield's stories turned out to be particularly intriguing. In the Polish edition of the collection *The Garden Party and Other Stories* (1922), only a few and inconsistent footnotes appear, but what turned out to be particularly intriguing was the reception and editorial fate of the volume. Published for the first time in Polish in Kopelówna's translation in 1934, these stories noticeably received underwhelming and critical press reviews. Stanisława Kuszelewska, a writer and translator herself, called Kopelówna's rendition "[...] decent, however, Mrs. Kopelówna's quill, usually promising and very hard-working, is not able to transplant Katherine Mansfield's subtle charm⁷ (Kuszelewska 1934, 5). Irena Krzywicka, a writer and left-wing activist was much more critical. To her, Mansfield's novels were published "in a translation so poor that there is nothing left of them, it is just a wreck of a book, impossible to judge" (Krzywicka 1935, 3). Krzywicka accused the translator of wrecking Mansfield's style, but does not mention Kopelówna by name.⁸ Elżbieta Kurowska's study on the reception of translations from English into Polish in the 1930s also proves that Kopelówna was a well-known, but heavily criticised translator. She depicts Kopelówna

7 All translations, unless otherwise stated, are by the author of the article. I would like to thank prof. Magda Heydel and my colleague Karolina Kwaśna for help in this regard.

8 The motivation of Krzywicka for not revealing Kopelówna's identity is not known, but it is striking that unlike all other reviewers she decided not to overly embarrass the translator. Or maybe her decision was motivated by the fact that she did not want Kopelówna to become recognised.

as hard-working, but producing “extraordinarily inaccurate translations” of various English and American novelists (Kurowska 1987, 40). Kurowska points out that Kopelówna translated various literary genres: from modernist contemporary prose published in prestigious publishing houses, like J. Przeworski’s, to crime novels and romance novels for popular publishing houses. The majority of her translations appeared in the 1930s. Kurowska suggests that in the interwar period almost all translators from English were criticised for their renditions of the source texts, but Kopelówna was especially disdained (Kurowska 1987, 40). For example, she writes that J. Przeworski “carelessly” commissioned Kopelówna for translation of Mansfield’s prose (Kurowska 1987, 40). Critics particularly disliked the fact that she did not domesticate cultural references and was too literal in her renditions, so that the text sounded awkward in Polish.

In this context, it is worth mentioning the textual material from Mansfield’s collection *The Garden Party and Other Stories* published in 1934, 1954 and 1970 in an abridged version. Kopelówna’s initial translation choices show that she was struggling to understand the source text. If we take an example of the titles of particular stories: the original set phrase, *Bank Holiday*, which is non-existent in Polish, was initially translated as *Święto sierpniowe* [the August Festival] and changed in the 1958 edition into an even more misleading rendition: *Święto bankowe* [the Bank Festival]. Kopelówna used false friends, omitted difficult phrases, and treated words she did not understand as proper names. For instance, in one of the stories, *At the Bay*, she left common words like porridge untranslated in the target text: “wyżłobiła sobie tylko rzeczkę pośrodku swego porridge” (Mansfield 1934, 19), probably not as a deliberate choice adopting the so-called foreignizing strategy, but due to the fact that she was unfamiliar with the term. If we compare Kopelówna’s first translation of the collection of short stories *The Garden Party and Other Stories* from 1934 to the one from 1958, we see that she made some seemingly random alterations: Kopelówna changed two out of fifteen titles and made dozens of corrections in each of the short stories. The reasons behind the revisions and the dynamics and workflow with the publisher in this case are not clear. I assume that it was Kopelówna’s initiative to make changes and potentially protect herself from further critique. She revised poems and footnotes, which could be evidence of her continued engagement with the text and her changing attitude towards the first version of the translation, as well as her possibly growing familiarity with the source culture.

What is worth mentioning is that her work was later re-used. Two decades after Kopelówna’s death, in 1980, the peculiar selection of 8 out of 15 stories from the collection *The Garden Party and Other Stories* was republished under the title of one of the other stories, *Her First Ball*. However, it is impossible to treat the translation of

Mansfield as Kopelówna's independent voice due to the fact that during her lifetime and even after her death a plethora of unregistered and inconsistent changes were made to her translations throughout the editing process in the 1950s and 1980s.

3.2 Where can Kopelówna's voice be heard?

As the notion of an archive was extended in the case of Kopelówna, yet another important factor comes to play. Being involved in the socialist movement in Poland as a long-standing associate of the periodical *Robotnik*, Kopelówna worked with many politicians, especially Zygmunt Żuławski, a socialist activist and journalist. Initially, Żuławski was her colleague, but in his memoirs he mentions the rapid development of their relationship. He refers to Kopelówna in a vague, indirect way: stressing her young age and physical appearance in detail, e.g. recalling her “serene nut-brown eyes of a frightened gazelle” (Żuławski 1980, 81). He directly speaks about the fact that Kopelówna's main motivation for translation was in fact the need to earn a living: her mother died in the US, and she had to be financially independent for her entire adult life. Żuławski mentions that Kopelówna was not only a reliable companion in the professional context of political events, but also his closest and dearest friend. It was Kopelówna with whom Żuławski shared his plans, thoughts and dreams (Żuławski 1980, 81). It is not stated directly, but while reading Żuławski's recollections of Kopelówna he seemed to be embarrassed by the extent to which he took advantage of her work: she accompanied and supported the entire process Żuławski's social and political activity, by contacting his colleagues, collecting press reviews for him, making notes and typing his papers (Żuławski 1998: 20–21). Maybe Żuławski even blamed himself for involving her too much in political affairs: “I have disturbed her as I have put her in the midst of the battle I have been fighting myself and I dragged her into the life I have lived myself – adventurous and extreme” (Żuławski 1980, 81). In his memoirs, he states:

Zośka [Zofia Żuławska – JS] was my wife, a housewife, a mother for my children and a member of my family, loved by everyone – whereas Bolka was an inspiration, a good caring spirit in my life, my faithful comrade in my social work and a support in hard times. (Żuławski 1980, 121, quoted in Smyłła 2008, 240)

As far as the present research is concerned, the most important source of knowledge about Kopelówna was Żuławski's letters to her. Published in the meticulously designed collection entitled *Zygmunt Żuławski: Listy, Przemówienia, Artykuły* [Letters, Speeches and Articles] by the eminent publishing house Ossolineum, they are

strikingly personal when compared to other, rather more official texts included in the volume. Surprisingly, out of all 39 letters published, the majority (26) were addressed to Kopelówna. What emerges from the reading of those personal letters is the different voice Żuławski adopts, one that is far from his charismatic yet harsh tone that can be seen in his political speeches and letters, such as those addressed to the communist politician and president of People's Poland Bolesław Bierut (Żuławski 1998). In many of his letters to Kopelówna, Żuławski thanks her for her hospitality, devotion, financial support after the Second World War, for the medicines, clothes and food she sent him. He also stresses how important she is to him and how grateful he is:

I am so glad every time I receive a letter from you, for you always write in such a kind and warm way. You are indeed my best and the most faithful “ambassador” who, even without a direct contact with her “principal” can instinctively feel my own desires”. (Żuławski 1998, 32)

In a sense, some of Kopelówna's personality is reflected back to us through Żuławski's writings: her generosity despite experiencing financial instability herself, and her empathy and diligence in maintaining her relationships.

Kopelówna's extraordinary affection, esteem and willingness to sacrifice herself were stressed by Żuławski many times in his letters. Of course, as with any subjective writing of this nature, it is difficult to tell whether she was indeed as she was described in his letters, or whether he exaggerated his own gratitude. It could also be the case that the relationship was not symmetrical, but more one-sided: maybe Kopelówna was used by Żuławski in a rather cynical way. In one of his letters from 1946, he states that:

for many years I have this feeling that I am in fact exploiting you and I am still pushing it forward. If there is any kind of plea for my behaviour, maybe it is the fact that you help me with that a lot, as well [...] (Żuławski 1998, 51)

What seems certain is that he relied on her and that she was an active and seemingly aware participant in the relationship.

From other letters, we learn about their mutual friends and political undertakings. Żuławski also mentions the fact that Kopelówna lives in Warsaw, writes about her trips to London and the political circumstances affecting their correspondence, such as censorship. He also refers to her living conditions, i.e., lack of central heating and financial problems:

“I’ve received sweets from Stefan and sugar from Witek, I thank you so much. You are far too good for me, you are spoiling me. For, dear Boleczka, you are having quite a hard time yourself, why are you spending money like that.” (Żuławski 1998, 63)

In one of the letters from 1945, Żuławski gives thanks for sweets and the playing cards; he also expresses concern that another parcel Kopelówna sent is still on its way (Żuławski 1998, 33–34). In some of Żuławski’s letters, he thanks her for supplying him with books that were inaccessible in Poland in the late 1940s. Kopelówna often received copies directly from the authors – among them also those by Irena Krzywicka, who had criticised the quality of Kopelówna’s translation of Mansfield’s prose, but also by other famous artists like Kornel Makuszyński, Karol Irzykowski and Władysław Broniewski. She was also buying many books in second-hand bookshops in London, and sent them over to Żuławski (Smyłła 2008, 240):

I thank you a lot for your, gifts but it is really extravagant of you. You know me, I am a modest man, and you have bought half of London. You are not my aunt. Instead of thinking about your own needs you tool me up as if I was going to live for 100 years. (Żuławski 1998, 20).

There was humour and familiarity inscribed in these exchanges, thereby shedding precious light on what Pym (2014) referred to as the private life story of this translator – her deeply personal, travel-filled, and embodied history.

Żuławski’s approach to his seemingly private correspondence was surprisingly self-censoring, although this attitude is perhaps characteristic of male figures aware of their importance in political history (Buss and Kadar 2001). Żuławski believed he was important enough to have his private archive preserved and potentially accessible for his descendants. Perhaps he may have been worried that others might misinterpret the nature of the relationship due to the gifts Kopelówna gave him, but to my understanding he might have also been aware of the potential that his private letters be read in the future by others and that he might be judged after his death. At least this seems to be evident from the last letter to Kopelówna from 1947, where Żuławski writes:

My Dearest Boleczka! I wrote to you a couple of days ago but nowadays I am never sure whether you’ve obtained my letter. Only now I got a parcel from you, as I reckon, only to force me to answer you as quickly as possible. Why are you doing this? You sent me so many sweets and lemons,

and pate, and tea, for I don't really need that. You are always so good to me – really, far too good, please, don't do this as we only compromise ourselves. (Żuławski 1998, 67)

Even in these scattered fragments of Kopelówna's indirect and re/deconstructed voice, one can trace a devoted and kind colleague and friend. There is no further evidence of the true nature of their affection, but, undeniably, due to this friendship it is possible to have some refracted access to at least part of Kopelówna's life. The intangible tension between the two political activists and human beings can be traced, but it is only briefly and vaguely signalled, leaving room for much speculation. Kopelówna's story, as told by Żuławski, points to some interesting revelations about the translator's biography. The fact that these additional insights are brought forward to us through another person's correspondence gives further evidence that invisible women need to be approached 'obliquely', and often become the subject of literary detective work (Gerson 2001, 15).

4. Conclusion

Microhistories are still rare in translation studies: the biographies of translators, especially of female translators, are scattered, unrecognised, difficult to investigate, and yet – fascinating. In the case of Kopelówna, one of the reasons that she was criticised by her fellow female translators could be because she approached translation as a profession that could provide an unmarried woman with a stable source of income, and thus a means of independence. Her culturally divergent political engagement and her Jewish origin could also have played a role in the fact that she was so widely criticised by her contemporaries, as well as by other critics after the Second World War.

In this article, my aim was not to address the entire complexity of Kopelówna's life and work, but rather to attempt to highlight commonly overlooked sources as potential reservoirs of a translator's voice, personality, affects and motivations. This kind of careful, meticulous, and determined approach seems to be particularly important in defining and constructing archives in translation history. Adopting a microhistorical approach in Translation Studies might be yet another proof that "[...] history is a creative, interpretive act, to some extent an act of imagination. Not unlike translation [...]" (Woodsworth 2012, XIII).

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The stranger loops of translation: Responding to Douglas Robinson

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ABSTRACT

This paper responds to criticism of some of my work by Douglas Robinson. After pointing out some factual problems in his response, I agree with Robinson that my 2014 views on agency and complexity can be expanded, and show how I have done so since then. I then engage with the kind of hermeneutics Robinson uses in his response to my work, arguing that it is a contextless, affect-driven hermeneutics that bases too much of its argument on matters of identity. I try to explain what I find problematic with constructivist arguments, and to offer a complexity approach that overcomes the binary between idealism and realism. I also question Robinson's claim that he needs to 'correct' me where I am 'wrong', relating this strange loop in his hermeneutics to his own epistemological stance.

Keywords: idealism, realism, constructivism, hermeneutics, semiotics

Nenavadne zanke prevajanja: odgovor Douglasu Robinsonu

IZVLEČEK

Prispevek je odgovor na kritični odziv Douglasa Robinsona na nekatera moja dela. V prispevku najprej opozorim na določene probleme v zvezi z dejstvi, ki jih navaja Robinson, hkrati pa izrazim strinjanje z Robinsonovim mnenjem, da je mogoče moje poglede na delovalnost in kompleksnost iz leta 2014 razširiti, in pokažem, kako sem to tudi že storil. Nato se odzovem na hermenevotiko, ki jo Robinson ponudi kot alternativo mojemu razmišljanju, pri čemer izrazim mnenje, da gre za brezkontekstno hermenevotiko, ki jo usmerjajo čustva in ki temelji na identitetnih sodbah. Razložiti poskušam, kaj se mi zdi problematično pri konstruktivističnih argumentih, in ponuditi kompleksnostni pristop, ki presega binarnost med idealizmom in realizmom. Prav tako poudarim, da Robinsonovo prepričanje, da me mora »popraviti«, kjer se »motim«, razkriva nenavadno zanko v njegovi hermenevotiki, ki spodbija njegovo lastno epistemološko stališče.

Ključne besede: idealizem, realizem, konstruktivizem, hermenevotika, semiotika

1. Introduction

I think there can be little disagreement about Douglas Robinson being one of the most influential translation studies scholars alive. His work on hermeneutics and

neuroscience in translation started when it was not fashionable, and assisted the field in moving forward in many ways, not least in understanding how translation is always a semiotic activity that is related to the translator as an embodied, interpreting agent. His work on icosis tries to explain how the process of interpretation that occurs in an individual spreads through a community, adding a social dimension to his explanation. That a scholar of his calibre would take the time and effort to publish two chapters about my work in one year, quite similar in content but different in tone, is something I take as a compliment (Robinson 2022a; 2022b),¹ even though it took him eight years to respond to the 2014 publication *Translation theory and development studies: A complexity theory approach*,² and even though he ignores a number of relevant publications I have produced since. As expected, Robinson is mostly critical of my work, especially in *Strange loops*, but this kind of criticism can only be welcomed for advancing the agenda of translation studies. Following the opportunity to publish my reply to his article in *Stridon*, I decided to engage with Robinson. As it is impossible to respond to every point he raises, I would like to respond in three ways to Robinson's two papers on my work. First, I need to point out some factual problems in *Strange loops*. Next, I focus on points where I would agree with Robinson and use his criticism to clarify my own position. Finally, I spend some time pointing out what I find problematic in Robinson's hermeneutics and his criticism of my work.

2. Factual problems

On page 1 of *Strange loops*, Robinson claims that Hofstadter's work on complexity thinking has had no takers in translation studies. He then proceeds to review my work in which Hofstadter has been quoted at least 12 times without once acknowledging my engagement with Hofstadter's work. A second factual problem is that Robinson claims that I have been born in the Western Cape Province of South Africa while I was, in fact, born in what is now the Eastern Cape Province, more than 600km north-east of Ladismith, to which Robinson refers in chapter four. When I was born, the current Western, Eastern and Northern Cape were one province, the Cape Province. Lastly, Robinson refers to me as an Afrikaner. He never acknowledges the introduction to *Translation theory* where I devote pages 2 and 3 to my positionality and where I self-identify as a 'Euro-African' or an 'Afrikaans-speaking South African'. On page 3, I refer to the group into which I was born as Afrikaners, as they are commonly known throughout the world, but I have never identified as an Afrikaner. Robinson seems to

1 For the sake of convenience, I use *Strange loops* and *Translation as icosis* to refer to these two works by Robinson.

2 For the sake of convenience, I refer to this work as *Translation theory*.

be unaware that, in the South Africa about which he writes, there is not one ‘Afrikaner identity’ (see for instance Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert’s *Afrikaner – Afrikaan* (1999)). I therefore take offence at being assigned an identity that I did not choose. Moreover, basing scholarly arguments on identity is a point to which I return in the last part of my response.

3. Working towards a better understanding of agency

As a second category of responses, I would like to discuss points on which I agree with Robinson and then perhaps clarify some of my own arguments. I think Robinson is right in that my theory of agency in *Translation theory* is quite limited, although I think his hermeneutics is problematic in that he discusses this book and then mostly only two pages of it to the exclusion of all the work I have done since (Marais 2017; 2019a; 2020). That said, *Translation theory* was indeed mainly focussed on systems thinking, and in particular, it lacked a deeper semiotic understanding of agency in translation. That is why I immediately started working on the 2019 monograph to explain translation from a semiotic perspective, a work that Robinson (2019) reviewed but ignored in the two works under discussion. What Robinson seems to miss is that my intention with *Translation theory* was not a theory of agency, although that seems to be Robinson’s only interest as he admits on page 123 of *Translation as icosis*. In *Translation theory*, I tried to introduce complexity thinking as a useful epistemological tool in translation studies, and I tried to take the postcolonial debate further by positing problems in the Global South not as problems only related to colonisation, but also to the current context in which communities have to adapt to events that they cannot control, like the war in the Ukraine, hence the need for development studies (Marais and Delgado Luchner 2018). Now clearly, Robinson’s own ideas about the ico-tic process represent a much more developed understanding of agency in translation studies, and for the most part of it, I agree with him, which is why I continued working on agency (Marais 2018; 2019c; 2020; 2021; forthcoming; Marais and Meylaerts 2019; 2022). Mirror neurons should, in my view, indeed be included in this explanation, and it seems fair to argue that embodied cognition spreads through a community based on the work done by mirror neurons and communicative practices based on the work of mirror neurons. Where Robinson’s anthropocentric hermeneutics is still limited is at the level of ecology. His theory cannot explain the translation processes throughout the tradosphere (Cronin 2017) or the bio-semiosphere (Kull 2015; Lotman 2019). In a monograph that is currently under review (Marais, forthcoming), I developed Robinson’s theory further to include the semiotic agency of non-humans, as well as to explain in much more detail how the human body, among others, is a

system of integrated systems adapted to turning ideas into material artefacts. I based this development on Sharov and Tønneson's (2021) impressive monograph *Semiotic agency*. In the forthcoming monograph I suggest two 'movements' to help explain the relationship between matter and ideas, and hence semiotic agency. First I explain, following Deacon (2013), how mind emerged from matter, and then I try to explain how mind, once emerged, comes to exercise downward causation on matter. This can only be explained if one is able to demonstrate how brain and mind are related, *contra* Robinson's declarations on pages 120–21 of *Translation as icosis*, and how both are integrated in a living organism with nervous systems, muscular systems and skeletal systems, among others, in other words, much more than mirror neurons only.

I also agree with Robinson that I could have made my use of complexity thinking clearer – and less dependent on the natural sciences version thereof, which is why I had since co-edited two volumes (Marais 2019b; Marais and Meylaerts 2019; 2022) that Robinson also chose to ignore. It seems that Robinson misunderstood my intentions with regard to complexity thinking, and if he could do so, then other people might too. To clarify, my intention was not to posit complexity in a binary relationship to anything else. Rather, I contend that a careful reading of the whole of the 2014 book will show that I proposed complexity thinking as a meta-theoretical approach that could straddle all kinds of binaries. Often referring to Hofstadter, I used terms like meta-stance, meta-theoretical, meta-meta-theory, meta-epistemology, meta-disciplinary, meta-questions, meta-conceptual and meta-ideologies in a profusion of conceptualisations, all of which Robinson ignored because, as he states clearly on page 160 of *Strange loops*, pages 143–45 are the most significant part of *Translation theory*. In the argument I made in the 2014 book, complexity thinking is therefore not a binary to anything. It is a meta-theoretical perspective from which one could integrate contesting approaches, including epistemologies. The idea is that complexity thinking takes a meta-theoretical stance in which one tries to explain why traditional binaries, e.g. both universalism and particularism or both process and substance or both agent and system, are required to explain reality and the phenomena we study. This line of thought should become clear when one reads original complexity thinkers like Morin (2008) or Cilliers (1998).

In addition, I would like to mention something on which Robinson did not comment. If I had to rework the 2014 volume now, I would remove most of the figures that I had in chapter 3 because I do not think they are correct. For instance, having the semiotic and the biological as two separate spheres of reality has been refuted in biosemiotics (Favareau 2007; Kull 2007). In addition, the seemingly clear distinction, suggested by the figures, between the psychological (the term should probably have been cognitive) and semiotic is problematic. Also, I would relativise the inter-ing argument I made

back then by saying that all of semiosis is work that is done in relating two systems (Lotman 2019, CP 4.127). At any rate, I never see my thinking as final, and I shall probably once again change my mind in the future on various things.

A last point on which I would agree with Robinson is that I could have better clarified my views on constructivism and critical theory. However, a detailed analysis of the problems with these sets of ideas was not my intention. A detailed discussion of these topics would have detracted from my arguments about studying translation in developing contexts. That said, it is exactly in his application of constructivism and critical theory in his response to my work that Robinson provides justification for my criticism, a point to which I now turn in the next section.

4. The stranger loops in an affect-hermeneutics

As a first point, it is clear from the tone and choice of words that Robinson interpreted what I intended as an engagement with some of the underlying assumptions in translation studies as an attack on those assumptions. For instance, I “just attack, eyes squinted shut” (*Strange loops*, 162), I launch a “snide attack” (*Strange loops*, 163) or a “savage attack” (*Strange loops*, 164), I “take potshots” (*Translation as icosis*, 98) and “a jab” (*Translation as icosis*, 113). Robinson’s interpretation demonstrates some of the problems with his affect-driven hermeneutics. My interpretation of his interpretation of my work is that something in it – or me, because he gets quite personal – triggered a feeling of being under attack. He seemingly never questions that feeling, but rather uses his considerable intellect to justify his feeling and then attack my identity as part of his defence. Yes, I did indeed express some criticism of Western scholarship, but so have Susam-Sarajeva (2002), Tymoczko (2007), Bandia (2008) and just about every postcolonial translation studies scholar. It is not clear why Robinson would find criticism against central ideas in Western scholarship “an attack”, to the point that he needs to become personal in its defence. The only answer I can find, which might be entirely wrong, lies in Robinson’s affect hermeneutics. He responded to something that he felt when reading my book rather than to an argument. In explaining his hermeneutics, he sometimes uses the term “affect-becoming-conative” and sometimes “affect-becoming-cognitive”, which seems to indicate that he is not sure or not serious about rationality in scholarship. For instance, on page 105 in *Translation as icosis*, he uses “kinesthetic-becoming-affective-becoming-conative(-becoming-cognitive)”. Why is the “becoming-cognitive” bracketed out? On pages 110, 113, 115 and 124 the “becoming-cognitive” is not included at all. Now, in 2022, I think that we all know that rationality is bounded, limited, relative, etc. However, does that mean that we stop trying to make rational arguments in scholarship? Has scholarship now devolved

to moral judgements of our opponents' identity? In my view, endlessly restating the relativity of knowledge does not help us. Endlessly restating that knowledge is constructed equally does not help us. We need to work past this to find a way to explain how we are able to build technology, societies and cultures based on and despite this relative, limited knowledge (Barad 2007).

This brings me to a second point of criticism against Robinson's hermeneutics. In the way that he uses it against my work, it seems to be a contextless hermeneutics. First, he decides, without motivation, that the most important part of the book is the section on translation and development on pages 143–45. He seems to ignore the introduction in which I clearly hedged my views and positionality. He seems to ignore most of chapters two and three and he dismisses chapters five to seven as descriptive work. Robinson thus ignores the context I provided, namely that I am writing about translation studies in Africa and that I base my reservations about critical studies on my interpretation that translation practices in Africa have not yet been adequately described on their own terms – rather than in terms of conceptualisations that have been constructed elsewhere, which is, by the way, a common argument in the de-colonisation of the mind debate. In other words, he does not seem to consider the context in which pages 143–45 appear. Secondly, it appears that he does not consider the context of my other writings, some of which he reviewed (Robinson 2019) and in which I worked out in more detail various aspects of what he criticises in the 2014 volume. In *Translation as icosis* he writes about negentropy without a single reference to my 2019 book in which I worked out, in some detail, the negentropic aspects of translation (Marais 2019a, 158–77). The context of my work is a developing context. As indicated above, my argument was that these contexts, generally speaking and in Africa in particular, have been subject to limited description of the translational practices of the people living in those places. My argument has not been against critical thinking as a whole, but against the way in which it pertains to translation studies in developing contexts. My argument was that I think we first need to understand the context before we can criticise it. Whether right or wrong, there is a solid reason for my questions about a critical approach to translation studies in developing contexts. I often find that criticism in African contexts is justified based on values that have been determined in places other than the one to which they apply. For instance, at conferences in Africa, it is often argued that professionalisation is the answer to the invisibility of the translator, and this is done based on a critical theory analysis of the situation. However, this analysis never asks about the context, such as the fact that, in Europe, there is money to pay translators professional rates because many West-European nations had the advantage, among others, of having colonies and building their riches on the suffering of others. African governments do not have that luxury, and

repeating the same critical argument will not change this. Rather, what translation studies scholars in Africa need to do, in my view, is to understand why things are the way they are, along with the constraints under which they emerged, and only then can critical-theory apparatus become useful to ask issues about construction and power. Again, I might be wrong in my assessment, but I do not view it as an attack on critical theory. My intention is an engagement with the relevance of critical theory for translation studies in a particular context.

Robinson also expressed some criticism of my views on constructivism, which he claims I fabricated based on a lack of knowledge (“projected out of fairly widespread ignorance onto social constructivism” (*Strange loops*, 158), “it’s a fantasy” (*Strange loops*, 162)). Apart from Robinson’s own problematic views of constructivism, which I discuss below, one quick quote from Vidal Claramonte should suffice to prove that at least some translation studies scholars think in a way that I find problematic:

If we start with the idea that the Real does not exist, that what exists is its construct through language we can see that we build our reality with the words we choose [...]. The Real does not exist, only interpretations of the Real, translations which turn it into linguistic, pictorial or musical texts. But they are always translations. [...] Let us start from the premise that it is not reality that creates language but the opposite: the real in itself does not exist, the real is that which reaches us after it has been re-presented through a series of signs. We might think of a new concept of translation based on the idea that because language constructs reality the “original” text is already a translation. (Vidal Claramonte 2019, 221)

Note that here the Real does not exist, which is a pure idealist position.

Now, the problem is not that Robinson is critical of my views on this topic. Rather, the problem is that he does not seem to be able to fathom that anyone might in any way question constructivism. In his hermeneutics, he seems to have constructed constructivism to be some kind of religion that no one dares question. My point about constructivism is not that it is wrong, but that it is, from a complexity perspective, one-sided, reducing reality to human knowledge of that reality. When we deal with creating knowledge, I think we are dealing with a relational activity. Knowledge is constructed, no doubt about this in my mind, but in relation to a reality that does not always yield to our constructive intentions. This is the second, or brute reality, in Peircean thought (CP 1.24, 5.473 and 6.202, for instance). It is the object that objects to our interpretation, in actor-network theory (Callon et al. 2011, 57). It is the thing in relation to which we construct semiotic objects in Deely’s thought (Deely 2009). It is the “certain empiricism” that Pym (2016)

yearns for in translation studies. And it is the platypus that no-one has ever experienced that needs to be translated, through several iterations, in Eco's thought (1997). Consequently, knowledge is clearly constructed by us, but at least some parts of reality are not. And this is where I would differ from Robinson's version of constructivism. Robinson claims in many places that reality is constructed (*Strange loops*, 158–9) and that I cannot imagine that reality is socially constructed. My view would indeed be that knowledge about reality, but not all of reality itself, is constructed socially. To formulate it more clearly, all knowledge is constructed but some of reality is not constructed. We did not construct the Earth or any of the thousands of species of wild animals around us, or light or rain or oxygen. Certainly, we did construct our cultures and societies, and they did become reality as part of our reality, and just as certainly, our knowledge of them is constructed. In addition, we did construct new species of farm animals and plants and bridges and many other things. However, none of this implies logically that all of reality is constructed. Perhaps what we need to do here is to specify what we mean by reality. If we mean social-cultural reality, then reality is clearly constructed, but I am not talking about social-cultural reality only. I am talking about all of reality. We were born into a reality that existed long before we came and which produced and constructed us, and to reduce that reality to our construction of it is perhaps one of the things that brought us to the current ecological crisis.

In my view, therefore, we construct knowledge in relation to, in response to (Marais 2017; Petrilli and Zanoletti, forthcoming), reality. This does not mean that we have unmediated knowledge of reality, but that human cognition is structured in such a way that we can know things, reliably enough to survive, apart from what they mean in our *Umwelt* (Deely 2009). A simple example should suffice. Imagine boarding a plane and the pilot informs you in a calm voice that this plane was built on a knowledge base that is relative, uncertain and undetermined, that has no bearing on the laws of physics and that it might or might not bring you home safely, but it does not really matter because all knowledge is relative anyway. My simple point is that the idealist bias in constructivism means that it brackets out parts of reality (see also Maran's 2020 criticism of symbolicism). In *Translation as icosis*, Robinson denies that semiosis is rooted in the brain. I quote: "No, 'semiotics' is not 'rooted' in the brain. It is not rooted anywhere. It is not 'part' of anything" (*Translation as icosis*, 120). In addition, he argues that "[s]emiosis is not a reality structure but a reality-structuring activity" (*Translation as icosis*, 121). If semiosis is performed by biological organisms, which I would regard as part of reality, how would semiosis not be both a reality structure and a reality-structuring activity? I am not sure how Robinson defends this point, seeing that his semiotic theory of icosis is based on mirror neurons in the brain, but I suspect that it is his idealism/constructivism that takes over here. To my mind, Robinson's

theory of mirror-neuron icosis is therefore a solipsistic theory. He assumes that what is relevant is already in the brain, and gets mirrored to other brains. But how does any information come into the brain or how does the brain influence the matter around it? To put it differently, how do you explain an open relationship among the mind, body and environment? This anti-biology stance is what I find problematic in Robinson's version of constructivism. It is also what I find problematic in feminist calls for, for instance, debiologising the hymen (Ergun 2018). Robinson brands me a chauvinist for daring to express criticism of feminism, and the only reason that he can imagine for my criticism is that it is a threat to my chauvinist privilege. The problem with Robinson's explaining away my arguments as related to my identity is that I cannot defend myself because then it seems that "the lady doth protest too much" (pun intended). The only thing that I can do is to restate my position: I think constructivism in various guises continues the Cartesian divide between mind and matter by reducing human interaction with matter to interaction in the mind only. In my view, we do not need to de-biologise any part of our biology because that is what reality gave us. We need to interpret the meanings that we attach to biological signs and critically, yes critically, deal with those interpretations. To refer back to the example above, the hymen is not guilty of anything, so why should it be debiologised? It is men who interpreted the hymen as a value within a system of values that benefits them. Interpretations of biology need to be changed, not biology.

My further point was that the, in my view, overoptimistic view of the human ability to construct and control reality is linked to Western thought, most notably the Greek-Roman tradition and its corollaries in the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). I might be wrong, but I do not see a similar strong focus on control and agency in African traditional religions, in animism or in Buddhism or Hinduism. Moreover, the binary that Robinson concludes from this argument is not my intention nor does it follow logically from my position. The logical implication of a critique of Western thought is not that all other traditions are innocent. I am responding to a historical situation in which thought in African contexts has been shaped by the dominating colonial forces, and my response is aligned with Fanon's (1963) and other postcolonial authors' views on decolonising the mind.

I now move to a number of detailed criticisms that Robinson directed against my work. First, he takes offence of me talking about the "typical, anonymous, voiceless, invisible translator slaving away in a stuffy little office, translating boring municipal regulation after regulation", which he sees as a "savage attack" and "an aggressively explicit attack" (*Strange loops*, 164). I must say, I am taken aback by this interpretation as my intention was the exact opposite. Robinson wants to know where I get this idea,

and he sees it as offensive to any translator. Well, since Venuti's (1995) work in the 1990s, the invisibility of the translator has been a significant point of debate in translation studies. The sociological approach to translation studies have problematised work satisfaction among translators, as can be seen in a Google Scholar search for "job satisfaction in translation", and institutions like FIT and SATI (in South Africa) have worked tirelessly to create better working conditions for translators. In addition, I have worked full-time as a freelance translator, editor, transcriber for five years, and about ten more years in a part-time capacity, and I had the experience of "slaving away" on many occasions. Furthermore, I am an accredited member of SATI, I was a member of their training committee for three years, and I have attended many of their conferences in which these issues are discussed. Lastly, I have translator friends who told me that they would, proverbially, cut their wrists if they had to edit or translate another text of a certain type. It seems that, in Robinson's constructed version of reality, all translators are heroes that translate for the thrill it provides, though not Western-type heroes. Of course, upon reflection, I could have used the word "proverbial" rather than "typical", but that would have changed very little in my argument. What Robinson grudgingly acknowledges, but only after his vicious attack on my personal identity, is that I am saying that this proverbial invisible translator contributes "as much if not more" to the construction of society. In other words, translation studies tend to study high-level translators (Milton and Bandia 2009) and how they are agents, but I have seen very few studies that consider the 'real' invisible translator, and not to speak of the translator in the informal economy, as an agent of national development. My argument, in fact, is set up to argue exactly the opposite of what Robinson interprets it to be. In fact, if read together with the chapter on translation in the informal economy (*Translation theory*, chap. 7), I am exactly trying to find a way to acknowledge the crucial work translators are doing without resorting to theories of activism (Tymoczko 2007; 2010) to explain them (Marais 2019c).

Robinson also attacks me for claiming that the weather is beyond our control. The interesting point is the strange loops in his counterargument. First, he says, "Ask the shaman" (*Strange loops*, 167). Now, I do agree that there are multiple worldviews that aim at explaining reality, and that one worldview cannot be said to offer a better explanation than another – it all depends on what you want to explain. That said, the question is what shamans mean by 'control' of the weather. Given the incompatibility among worldviews, the question is also whether shamans could prove me wrong, and if so, on what basis? In other words, Robinson sets up incommensurable worldviews against one another and naively suggests that the shaman's worldview is truer than mine. Moreover, I think that Robinson's attempt to counter a scholarly argument with a spiritual/religious one is problematic. In this, I am probably a child of Western

thought that argues that, in scholarly debates, we need to bracket out spiritual/religious arguments because they are unfalsifiable and, most importantly, they do not help us to explain the things we want to explain in such a paradigm (see Deacon's (2013, chap. 2 and 3) detailed arguments against homunculi and golems in scholarly thought). Second, in his efforts to counter my argument, Robinson refers to a South African novel that operates on the assumptions of animism. So, Robinson's argument goes, ask people from traditional religions if you want real answers. Would Robinson be willing to do this by asking traditional, conservative Christians, Jews and Muslims about feminism – and abide by their judgement? At the same time, Robinson argues that we should not read scientific texts if we want answers to our questions about reality. Rather, we should read fictional texts as they will clarify things for us. Imagine a conference on psychology and, in a panel on parapsychology, someone asks if ghosts really exist. If his response to my work is anything to go by, Robinson would respond with "Of course they do, just watch the Harry Potter movies!" I think we need much more nuance in this very complex debate about competing worldviews.

I think Robinson's response to my work raises another serious question in scholarship more broadly, but also in translation studies in particular. In my view, Robinson's response in *Strange loops* constitutes an identity-driven critique. His section on my work contains the following references to my identity: South African (once on page 158), African (twice on page 160), male (thrice on pages 159–60, 164), white (four times on pages 159–60, 163–4), Afrikaner (four times on pages 163, 166–8) and farm-boy (once on page 167). This gives a total of 15 references to identity in about ten pages that he spends criticising my work. I compared this with his discussion of Henri Meshonic's work just before mine: no reference to continent, gender or race, and only one reference to French but then not in relation to Meshonic but to Bible translation. How does one make sense of these references to my identity – most of them using negative rhetoric? Frankly, I do not know. On the one hand, I can attribute it to Robinson's affect-driven hermeneutics. Some of what I said or did irritated him so much that he felt that he had to resort to a personal attack, by which I mean an attack on my identity. On the other hand, Robinson seems to stray dangerously close to the kind of "grievance studies rhetoric" that continues to be the topic of debate in scholarly circles.³ He tries to negate my arguments by putting me in categories of identity that are detested and under all kinds of suspicion: male, white, Afrikaner. Casting suspicions on my identity does a lot of semiotic work to relativise my argument. In addition, he reads me in a binary way. If I have a question about constructivism, I am a positivist. If I have a question about feminism, I am a chauvinist. If I have a question about Western

3 A Google search for 'Grievance studies affair' will deliver many varied perspectives on this event.

scholarship, I am an arrogant member of the empire who must have something wrong with me, namely that I am white and male. If I use the term “probability”, it can only be with mathematical intentions (*Translation as icosis*, 106). By the way, in my latest work, I use the term “propensity” (Marais, forthcoming) as I think Robinson’s suggested plausibility creates more problems than it solves. For instance, it is not able to deal with something like fake news, because in a particular context a certain item of fake news is plausible. How would one then criticise such news as fake? I think that the way in which Robinson goes about his criticism of my work justifies my questions about critical theory and constructivism. How does constructing me as evil or at least wrong based on the colour of my skin or my combination of chromosomes take forward the debate in translation studies? Maybe Robinson is right in that constructivists are not guilty of all of the things that I attribute to them, but Robinson as a spokesperson for constructivists does indeed seem to be guilty of quite a few of them.

Back to identity. We know by now that identity plays a role in what we observe and how we think. We also know that identity is a very complex issue with many layers of being crammed into one person. And of course, we may need to find ways to question one another’s stances as they relate to our identities. However, I am not sure that the kind of attack Robinson launched in *Strange loops* is constructive in any way. If I had to respond in kind, I would reject all of Robinson’s hermeneutics for being centred in the white, male-dominated colonisation project of the Anglo-American (Western) world. Clearly, such a rebuttal would get us nowhere. I am racking my brain for a way out of this problem, and cannot clearly see one, except that constructivism needs a dose of realism. It needs to take the Other seriously and not demean it. At the very least, discussion of these thorny topics needs to be accompanied by some respect.

Probably the strangest loop in the whole debate is Robinson’s insistence in the *Translation as icosis* paper that I am “wrong” (page 103), albeit just a little, and that he needs to “correct” me (pages 103–4). In addition, like the child from Africa that I am, I “could use some help” (page 101) – this from a coloniser who knows better. Robinson does not treat me like an equal but like a child who needs the guidance of a father. The argument is strange because Robinson has spent his whole academic career in arguing, in my reading, from a postmodernist perspective that meanings are only determined by interpretation and that these interpretations are always relative, preliminary and undetermined – a position with which I agree, by the way. In academia, there is no final interpretant. What does it require of him to decide that I am wrong and that he can correct me? Well, at the very least it means that he needs to know the truth, which he has spent his whole life denying. How else would he know I am wrong? For Robinson, the difference between us is not to be explained semiotically as a difference in interpretation. Rather, it is explained

epistemologically, namely that he knows the truth and I do not. It seems that with this argument, Robinson has completed a strange loop and returned to the positivist beginnings, which we are all, in translation studies at least, trying to avoid. There could, however, also be a different explanation, as with all interpretations. It could be that Robinson is still the postmodernist he had set out to be, but that when dealing with people from the colonies he simply takes a stronger political stand. After all, you are the empire and they are the colony, so you need to take them by the hand and show them what is correct. In other words, what drives Robinson here is not epistemology but politics, based on his belief that I am in some way an uninformed threat to the (his?) empire.

5. Conclusion

Robinson's critique of my work and my response to him in this paper are pretty much par for the course in scholarly engagement. That said, I am left with a sense that much of this debate is not taking us forward in any way. While I am not willing to go as far as Pym to claim that I am 'ashamed' to be in the same discipline as anybody, a debate on the level of identity leaves me in a solipsistic existential crisis. Robinson has constructed me, I have responded, and we are each still very safe in our own little corners of the world. He has called me names and attributed an unwanted identity to me, so how do I respond without using the same tactics, which would leave us in a vicious and childish cycle of name-calling? On the one hand, that seems to be the nature of the human condition, and nothing can be done about it. On the other hand, should we stop hoping for a real Bakhtinian dialogue in which we listen as much as we talk? That said, it is difficult for me to hear anyone when they call me names. I am not sure that I know how to overcome this problem, but I do hope that this debate between the two of us will foster further debate in the field about the nature of our engagement with each other.

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