Socialist realism in translation

The theory of a practice

by **Susanna Witt**

Soviet culture is not what it used to be. Once regarded as monolithic and stable, it now emerges – thanks to a boom in studies over recent decades – as a complex, multilayered and dynamic phenomenon, not least with reference to socialist realism as a central concept of this culture.[1] This paper focuses on the repercussions of socialist realism in literary translation – a field of culture not reflected in any of the many studies devoted to the topic to date. It starts from the assumption that, in order to pinpoint socialist realism, it is necessary to analyze the discourses which were operative in forming it, or rather, which to a large extent *made up* this elusive phenomenon.

Because socialist realism was first invoked in relation to the field of original literature and was codified in literary terms, the concept itself had to be *translated* for application to other fields of art. How was socialist realism to be understood and expressed in music? In architecture? Or in ballet? Such translation, or transposition, of the discourse relating to the topic could pose considerable problems, especially where non-verbal arts were concerned. Although translation is a quintessentially verbal activity, it differs from original literature in ways that resist any simple application of analogies, not least due to considerations related to authorship.

Furthermore, in the field of translation, the issue of socialist realism became intertwined with other, more existential concerns: it was actualized at a time of intense self-reflection and self-assessment of translators as cultural workers within Soviet culture, often articulated from a point of perceived inferiority in relation to original writers. Drawing on archival mate-

abstract

Following the 1934 establishment of socialist realism as the main "method" to be applied in all spheres of Soviet artistic production, more particular discourses evolved addressing the issue of how the concept was to be interpreted and defined in the various fields of culture. Literary translation was no exception. At the First All-Union Conference of Translators in Moscow in 1936, some attempts were made to articulate what was required of translators in order to adhere to the new standards. It was not until the late 1940s and early 1950s, however, that the discourse took more concrete forms, notably in the efforts to establish "realist translation" as a guiding principle for Soviet translation in general. Drawing on archival and printed material from the period, this paper explores the significance of the discourse on socialist realism for Soviet translation practices and translation theory during late Stalinism.

KEYWORDS: Soviet culture, socialist realism, literary translation, realist translation, translation theory, translation practice, literalism, Soviet translators, Ivan Kashkin.
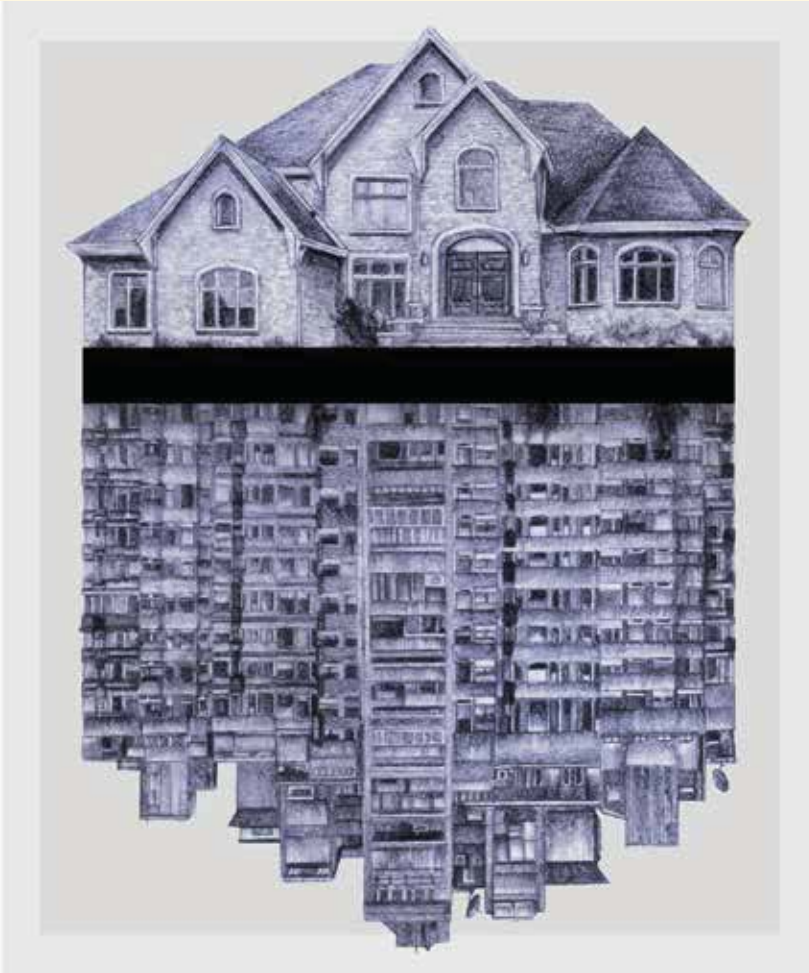
rial pertaining to the Soviet Writers' Union as well as published material in newspapers and journals, I will explore the significance of the discourse on socialist realism for issues relating to Soviet translation practices as well as translation theory during late Stalinism.

Translators in the Soviet Writers' Union

The Translators' Section of the Writers' Union was officially formed on October 16, 1934, that is, after the First Congress of Soviet Writers, which had been held in August that same year. The Writers' Congress had not featured any speech specifically devoted to translation and nothing was said about the applicability of the newly adopted socialist realist doctrine to this field. In January 1936, the translators finally had their own "First All-Union Conference of Translators." By this point, problems of translation had already been discussed for a long time, both within the translators' organization and publicly in the press.[2] Major issues here were the urgent need for translations from and into the different languages of the many peoples of the USSR (following Maxim Gorky's call for such translations in the process of "organizing all-union literature as a whole"),[3] the lack of language competence among translators to perform this task and, as a consequence, the ubiquitous use of intermediate interlinears (*podstrochniki*); the ideological aspects of translation, which demanded ideological training of translators; the low level of translation critique. An important point were the predominantly negative attitudes towards translators as an "untrustworthy" category of people on the one hand and as an inferior type of literary worker on the other. Attempts to transpose Stalinist discourse on original literature into the

ILLUSTRATION: KARIN SUNVISSON

istic copying, but opposes gross tendentiousness in translation as well, that is the kind of tendentiousness that hinders a correct conceptualization of the work. We require creative tendencies, creative perspectives from the translator."[6]

The translation doctrine outlined by Al'tman was as loosely defined as socialist realism in general, merely comprising positively charged terms like "creative" (*tvorcheskii*) and "adequate" (*adekvatnyi*), both of which had been variously used before and were to live long in Soviet translation theory. Furthermore, as was the case with socialist realism in general, some degree of definition was supplied by model examples. What socialist realism demands of translation, Al'tman summarizes, is "a fight against naturalism, against formalist, impressionist, exoticizing and stylizing translation."[7] Here, the speaker adheres to practices already at work in establishing socialist realism. Although the formalist label was to acquire its full repressive potential only with the launch of the antiformalist campaign some weeks later, in *Pravda* on January 28, 1936, it had already been used quite broadly since spring of 1933 as the antithesis of the ideal socialist realism now to be promoted.[8] In the resolution of the 1936 conference, however, socialist realism was not mentioned, and the term was actually not brought up again in relation to translation until the early 1950s.

The theory of a practice

Having been "frozen" during the war, the Translators' Section of the Writers' Union was reanimated in 1947, in a climate informed by the general shift in Soviet cultural politics toward the end of the 1940s known as the *zhdanovshchina*. This austere turn, named after Central Committee secretary Andrei Zhdanov (the author of the programmatic articles about socialist realism in *Pravda* in 1934), entailed a tightening of Party control over cultural production involving xenophobic and antimodernist ("antiformalist") campaigns. A break had occurred with the 1930s and that decade's relative openness towards Western impulses, its "cosmopolitanism" in the words of Katerina Clark.[9] The 1930s had seen the publication, in Russian translation, of authors such as James Joyce, Thomas Mann, and Marcel Proust. A main outlet for translated foreign literature, the journal *Internatsional'naia literatura* ["International literature"] had provided a "window to the west"[10] until it was closed down in 1943/1944.

The resumed activities of the Translators' Section prompted professional self-scrutiny against the background of the new, nationalist orientation of the late 1940s. Part of this general line was an emphasis on the Soviet or Russian origin of major achievements in science and technology as well as in culture

field of translation had already been made by translators, such as the claim, "If writers are the 'engineers of human souls', then we are the 'engineers of communication', and must work hastily."[4]

The keynote speech at the 1936 conference, which was explicitly to focus on translation from "the languages of the peoples of the USSR," was assigned to the theatre critic Iogann Al'tman. The speech may be considered an accommodation of the theme of translation to several discourses of immediate actuality: the recently established discourse of the "friendship of the peoples" pertaining to Stalinist nationalities policy, the "Stakhanov discourse" of heroic shockworking (actualized by *Pravda*'s editorial of January 1, 1936, titled "The Stakhanov Year"), and, most importantly, the "wreckers' discourse" known from innumerable campaigns in the newspapers since the late 1920s: this served to highlight the ideologically harmful potential of faulty translations.[5] The speech also included a prescriptive section in which socialist realism was invoked as a guiding principle for Soviet translation and as a means to "cure" the main problems (*bedy, opasnosti*) affecting Soviet translation, such as "naturalism" and "formalism." The notion of socialist realism, Al'tman declared,

> **"is of no less relevance with reference to translation than to the whole of Soviet literature. Socialist realism as applied to artistic translation is opposed to natural-**

– a tendency jocularly referred to in popular parlance of the later Soviet period as "The USSR is the homeland of elephants" (*SSSR – rodina slonov*).[11] Such priorities informed translational discourse as well, as evidenced in translation scholar Andrei Fedorov's report to the Translators' Section at one of its first meetings on February 2, 1948.[12] Pinpointing the "Russian, Soviet theory of translation" as a "completely new phenomenon in the philological discipline worldwide," a "completely original and unprecedented phenomenon,"[13] Fedorov also called upon translation critics to denounce "every kind of kowtowing (*nizkopoklonstvo*) before foreign scholarship and literature" and excessive "reverence for other languages" (*blagogovenie pered inoiazychnym*). Part of the ideological decorum, this verbal gesture tells us eloquently of the potential threat perceived in translation from foreign languages and the significance accorded the practice itself.[14] What the distinguished scholar Fedorov actually reported, within this rhetorical frame, as achievements of the Soviet theory of translation was, indeed, truly remarkable and ahead of its time, and it had little to do with official clichés. Typical of this theory were, according to Fedorov, "a recognition of the principle of translatability"; evaluation of a translation from the point of view of its "functional and semantic correspondence (*sootvetstvie*) with the original, and not only from the point of view of their formal coincidence (*sovpadenie*)"; "a systematic use of facts from the history of literature and language and other humanistic scholarship."[15] In addition to these features, Fedorov remarked, "it is essential to notice the absence of any narrowly axiological dogmatism and the breadth of evaluative judgments which are characteristic of our theory of translation."[16] As examples of such a pluralism Fedorov mentions translations by Mikhail Lozinskii, Sergei Shervinskii and Samuil Marshak. These were translators who represented different positions on a scale whose two end poles would be what Lawrence Venuti[17] refers to as "foreignization" and "domestication," that is, an ideal striving to move the reader in the direction toward the author as opposed to one that strives to bring the author closer to the reader, privileging smoothness and readability. "It is an undisputable fact," Fedorov declares, "that our critics and our theory of translation recognize both possibilities as equally valid in practice, and it is one of our as yet unresolved tasks to provide a theoretical substantiation of this."[18]

Such a sanguine stance was not typical of Soviet translation theory, which had always tended to be normative in essence (perhaps with the exception of Mikhail Alekseev's booklet *Problems of Literary Translation* from 1931). Neither was it shared by all participants at the meeting. The chairman Ivan Kashkin, translator

"Muddle instead of Music," the *Pravda* article published on Januari 28, 1936 that initiated the campaign against "formalism" and "naturalism" in the arts.

Ivan Kashkin.

of Anglo-American literature and a renowned specialist on Hemingway, commented that Fedorov "should have pointed out that there are cases of inadmissible distortions of the Russian language in order to please some imaginary similarity."[19] Samuil Marshak himself picked up the cue, arguing that "when one language comes into contact with another there is a kind of a battle going on; like a swamp the foreign language sucks the translator into its turns of speech, into its circle of images."[20] Kashkin imparted, referring to the contemporary context that, "when you say that one shouldn't introduce the category of 'have to', this may have relevance in relation to yesterday, but today it is necessary to talk about what we have to do. To think about what we have to do is of course our obligation today."[21] According to Kashkin,

> **"Translation has to acquaint us with the [literary] legacy. But now, having read Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, who all touched on this problem (Lenin in particular, who was himself a translator), we understand that to inherit doesn't mean to worship the legacy and that the assimilation of the classical legacy has to serve the construction of a new socialist aesthetics."[22]**

In this construction process Kashkin himself was to take a lead, making the value and function of "foreignness" in translation a central issue. The descriptive and analytic approach advocated by Fedorov at this point was dismissed in favor of a prescriptive discourse effectively merging translation theory and translation criticism. In a programmatic statement at the same meeting Kashkin announced:

> **"At the basis of our translation activities there is an old, simple truth which sounds like a truism: a translation has to be precise (*tochen*), it has to acquaint us with the achievements of our cultural heritage and it has to be carried out masterfully. This is all true, but today all these requirements are being reconceptualized. A translation has to be precise (*tochen*), but we understand this precision (*tochnost'*) in a different way. You see, this is not about mechanical photography, it is not about technological precision (*tekhologicheskaia tochnost'*), this translation should show us with precision (*s tochnost'iu*) the excited face of our friend, [it should] fix the malicious grimace of our enemy."[23]**

By using the expression "technological precision" Kashkin clearly defined the translation principles in contrast to which the new aesthetics was to be developed. The reference here was unmistakably to Evgenii Lann, a translator of English literature and Dickens in particular. In an article published in 1939 in *Liter-*

aturnyi kritik, the leading literary journal of the time, Lann had outlined his translation philosophy as applied to the translation of Dickens's novel *The Pickwick Papers* that he had produced together with his wife Aleksandra Krivtsova in 1933.[24] In a scientistically informed idiom more typical of the 1920s, Lann had put forward his source-oriented views as a "formal principle of precision of translation" (*formal'nyi printsip tochnosti perevoda*) which was to guarantee a "technologically precise translation" (*tekhnologicheski tochnyi perevod*).[25] For Lann, the overarching goal of a translation was to give the reader an idea of the author's "style", and in this endeavor *tochnost'* was to play a leading role: "the devices of *tochnost'* in translation are to be the key with which the translator opens up the author's style."[26] He warned specifically against the modernization of language and Russianisms. The article was originally intended as a foreword to the *Pickwick* translation, but had not been included in the edition. It had, however, been delivered as a paper by Lann, introducing a discussion of the translation among colleagues at the Translation Bureau in 1934.[27] On this occasion, Kashkin had already emerged as a critic of the translation and his criticism was likewise published as an article in *Literaturnyi kritik*, actually predating Lann's text by three years.[28]

Now, in 1948, Lann was not the only exponent of *tochnost'* in translation to be projected by Kashkin as an enemy of the burgeoning socialist aesthetics. Another was Georgii Shengeli, whose new translation of Byron's *Don Juan* was the next topic of discussion at the Translators' Section, held a month after Fedorov's report. Shengeli, who was also a prolific poet of classical orientation (whose original writing had not been published after 1935) and a literary scholar, had outlined his translation philosophy in an afterword to his *Don Juan*. Here, an orientation toward *tochnost'* in translation was motivated by Byron's own concern for accuracy in description. Shengeli's main concern, however, was the effect a translation produces in the target culture, put forward here as a "theory of functional similarity" (*teoriia funktsional'nogo podobiia*). The choice of meter in the target language was to be guided by a concern that it be functionally approximate to the original meter in terms of genre and character, being at the same time perceived as "our own meter, easy and natural."[29] In order to preserve the rich lexical content of Byron's verse (a matter of *tochnost'*) and at the same time its light, ironic, conversational tone (a matter of functionality), Shengeli proposes to substitute iambic hexameter for Byron's iambic pentameter, arguing that in this case it is a Russian functional equivalent.

THE DISCUSSION ABOUT the new *Don Juan* translation was introduced by a highly appreciative talk given by a fellow translator, who hailed it as a major achievement on the part of the "Soviet school of translation."[30] Both the talk and Shengeli's translation were criticized, however, by Kashkin, who pointed out ideologi-

cal shortcomings in the edition and blamed the general orientation toward *tochnost'*. Most objectionable in the talk was, according to Kashkin, the application of the term "the Soviet school of translation" to Shengeli's *Don Juan* – the attempt to "canonize" Shengeli's translation principles as "the principles of the Soviet school of translation."[31] Here it becomes clear that, for Kashkin, this notion – the "Soviet school of translation" – was the name for "the socialist aesthetics" invoked at the previous meeting.

Two years later, at the annual meeting of the Translators' Section in March 1950, Kashkin sharpened his criticism against Lann and Shengeli, recasting it in the terms of "formalism." Kashkin, then head of the Section, expressed his discontent with the earlier discussion and with Fedorov's report, declaring that,

> "True, at the same time it became apparent what the opposition to the main creative kernel of the Section is like. What we have to oppose. In our field there haven't been any straightforward sorties, but some camouflaged harmful tendencies have been noticed all the same. Some echoes have been preserved of a formalism that has not entirely been disarmed in various aspects:
> – Expressions of an alien orientation – in the creative method.
> – Unprincipled practicism and empiricism, which is concealed under the false and imaginary principle of feckless calque.
> It is not so much a matter of the convinced bearers of these tendencies as of the fact that these tendencies are still in the air, poisoning it."[32]

A renewed attack on the perceived enemies of the "Soviet school of translation" was launched by Kashkin at a conference held in October–November 1950 to discuss "the tasks of the Soviet translation of world classics." Shengeli's *Don Juan* thus emerged as one of its central issues – much to the surprise of the translator himself, as the topic had not been brought up since the first discussion almost three years earlier. Now Kashkin virulently denounced the method by which "factographical exactness" blurred the "ideological and artistic significance" of Byron's work, resulting in "verse translation without poetry, prose translation without emotional coloring, without sincere and deep feeling, in short: without artistic charm."[33] Furthermore, he targeted the shortcomings of contemporary criticism, exemplified by the "excessive praise" in the introductory speech of 1948 which allowed translations such as Shengeli's to appear in the first place. Therefore, Kashkin declared, even if at this point "the principles of the Soviet school had been consolidated in hard struggle against alien and hostile positions inherited from decadence and formalism and the hack attitudes of the NEP period," and the enemy had been defeated, the fight for "the concept of the Soviet school" had to be continued:

"BY USING THE EXPRESSION 'TECHNOLOGICAL PRECISION', KASHKIN CLEARLY DEFINED THE TRANSLATION PRINCIPLES."

"It is necessary to resist all attempts to vulgarize, banalize, and falsify the very concept of the 'principles of Soviet translation,' and the 'school of Soviet translation', attempts at passing off as its own achievements works which are alien to the very essence of this concept."[34]

Somewhat paradoxically, it was a case of alleged imprecision of translation that was the most compromising and far-reaching of Kashkin's accusations against Shengeli at this conference. In the "Russian episode" of Byron's work (occupying Cantos VII–X) which features the Russian take-over of the fortress of Izmail from the Turks in 1790, Shengeli had, Kashkin claimed, *distorted* and denigrated the picture of Field Marshal Suvorov and the Russian soldiers. Despite the translator's efforts to demonstrate that he had rendered the disputed loci with utter exactness (in accordance with his overall principles of *tochnost*') and that the ambiguity and irony were vital constituents of the source work itself, the fate of the translation was decided: from now on it was discursively constructed as "unpatriotic" and "unpoetic" in all public contexts. As a rule, this was a translation critique in which no original texts were ever provided, not even in detailed discussions of particular examples such as Kashkin's lengthy criticism of the translation published in *Novyi mir*.[35]

The precepts for the new "socialist aesthetics" in translation began to be articulated in the early 1950s, invariably in contrast to the projected enemy of "literalism." In an article published in *Literaturnaia gazeta* on December 1, 1951 ("On the language of translation"), Kashkin[36] accused both Shengeli and Lann of representing a "stronghold of literalism and linguistic foreignness" (*zasil'e bukvalizma i chuzheiazychiia*). Their translations reflected "bourgeois-decadent disintegration (*raspad*), manifested in the corruption of the national language in favor of foreign languages and linguistic acrobatics." Such a criticism, targeting an alleged "pollution" of language, in fact echoed Gorky's position in the "discussion on language" in 1934, which was effectively a step toward the normative aesthetics of socialist realism.[37] Offering his own precepts for Soviet translators, Kashkin invokes the notion of "realism" in translation for the first time since Al'tman's speech in 1936. Kashkin urged Soviet translators to convey the original "in a realist way, that is without naturalist hair-splitting and without impressionist embellishment, truthfully and creatively." Some months later, the term was developed further in an article by Kashkin's colleague Pavel Toper in *Novyi mir*, who also opposed it to "formalist translation" and Lann's Dickens in particular. Arguing for "realism" in translation, he paralleled the construction of socialist realism in literature by identifying the forerunners of such a realist translation in Belinskii, Chernyshevskii and Dobroliubov, who were translators as well.[38] Moreover, alluding to the traditional metaphor of the translator as an actor, Toper's description of "realist translation" echoes

> **"KASHKIN'S IDEAL, ALLEGEDLY BEING ACHIEVED BY THE 'BEST SOVIET TRANSLATORS,' IMPLIED AN ONTOLOGICAL PARADOX."**

the principles of Stanislavskii, the socialist realist model for the Soviet theatre: "Every image created by the author he [the translator] is obliged to see, every thought he is obliged to make his own, every nuance of mode he is obliged to experience."[39]

Finally, almost mimicking the original formulation of socialist realism, Kashkin declares in his 1954 article "On the Method and School of Soviet Translation":

**"In the realist method, in its *truthfulness* (*pravdivost*') and *historical concreteness* (*istoricheskaia konkretnost*') [my emphasis, S.W.], is the best guarantee for a faithful transference (*vernaia peredacha*) of the original with all its chiaroscuro; a guarantee for a faithful transference, albeit refracted through our perception, because our Soviet literary translation is far from 'a photographer's trade', it is a creative appropriation (*osvoenie*), a branch of the art of socialist realism ."[40]

What was to be the "one and only" (*edinyi*) method was already practiced by the "best Soviet translators," Kashkin argued, and the task of Soviet translation theory was now to study these translations carefully and to "generalize their experience."[41] Expounding on the realist method, he declared that these translators are convinced "that a literary translation takes its point of departure not in the traces which constitutes a work [of art] but in the work as a whole, which includes not only linguistic elements, and strives in the first place to transfer its general intention, its spirit, its ideological meaning."[42] In order to do so, "they strive to put themselves in the position of the author and to see what he saw when he created his work, but to see it with their own eyes, and then they try to render, in their own language in accordance with its internal laws, not only the conventional verbal sign but all that stands behind the word: thoughts, facts, conditions, actions."[43] Simultaneously, "the best Soviet translators," according to Kashkin, apply a metaperspective:

"They strive to determine for themselves the most fundamental and important elements that made the author and his work significant and topical for its time, and try first and foremost to convey to our reader all that is progressive, that is live and topical in it for our time as well."[44]

What emerges here (and elsewhere in Kashkin's writings of the time) is a fully developed transposition of the socialist realist doctrine: the translator had to convey not the text of the original literary work, but the *reality* which, according to Leninist aesthetics, was mirrored in this work – the typical traits of reality as they *should have been seen* by the original author *had he possessed the necessary ideological awareness* and rendered in forms accessible to the Soviet reader; the last requirement arguably corresponded to the *narodnost*' of the original doctrine.[45]

Kashkin's ideal, allegedly being achieved by the "best Soviet translators," implied an ontological paradox. Without losing his "stylistic and individual characteristics" or his "historical and national specificity," the foreign author ("be it Shakespeare, Navoi, Dickens, Hafiz, Burns, Omar Khayyam or Nizami") should sound in Russian translation "as if he had himself written the work in Russian, in his own way and with his typical mastery, in full command of all the means of expression".[46] The act of translation thus presupposed an imaginary abolishment of the need for translation. The practice of such a theory was inevitably to be marked by a tendency towards eradication of difference.

Even if Kashkin's position was later criticized and modified by other theorists, for example Gachechiladze,[47] the significance of Kashkin's promotion of the "realist method" in the early 1950s as *a discursive event* is hard to overestimate. It contributed effectively to the thwarting of pluralist views on translation such as the one advocated by Fedorov in 1948. It also helped to shape the "Soviet school of translation" as a prescriptive concept implying a multilayered domestication which entailed elisions and rewritings in order to adapt the foreign material to an "ideal" Soviet reader.

The development of the "Soviet school of translation" as a concept was in fact so intertwined with Kashkin and his circle (his own "school") that they became nearly synonymous. The wave of translations of American literature during the Thaw period, many of them carried out by talented former members of the Kashkin group,[48] and particularly the canonization of Hemingway, brought new status to Kashkin's name, due to his reputation as an eminent Hemingway scholar and promotor of his works (Kashkin prefaced the famous Soviet two-volume Hemingway edition of 1959). The Belgian scholar Christian Balliu recounts[49] that, at a translation conference at the Moscow State Linguistic University in 2002, Professor Marina Litvinova (well-known today as one of the translators of *Harry Potter*) told him, "Nous sommes tous des Kachkiniens."

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated how the "practice of a theory" – the socialist realist *discourse* – worked to shape the "theory of a practice" – Ivan Kashkin's method of "realist translation" launched as "the one and only" for Soviet translators in the 1950s. It has also shown how, in the field of literary translation, the socialist realist discourse became operative in the process of excluding "foreignness," that is, approaches that brought to light and creatively addressed issues of difference, often from a functional point of view. This is a legacy still being perceived in Russia today: perhaps not so much in reference to Kashkin's theory of "realist translation," which is merely regarded as a chapter in Russian translation history, as in the still prevailing negative attitudes towards what he, Kashkin, defined as "literalist translation" and in the lasting difficulties of discussing the value and function of "foreignness" in translation in a non-normative way.

What remains to be explored more broadly is the relationship between the declared "realism" of the method and the many concrete translations of, above all, American fiction carried out

by "the Kashkinki" which, conjuring up an "imaginary West,"[50] would paradoxically contribute to the ethos of the Thaw period. ◼

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references

1. For a concise overview of the development of research since the 1980s, see Khans Giunter [Hans Günther], "Puti i tupiki izucheniia iskusstva i literatury stalinskoi epokhi" [Paths and impasses in the study of the literature of the Stalin epoch] *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, no. 95 (2009); 287–299; for an updated account of the emergence of socialist realism as a concept, see Hans Günther, "Soviet Literary Criticism and the Formulation of the Aesthetics of Socialist Realism, 1932–1940" in *A History of Russian Literary Theory and Criticism: The Soviet Age and Beyond*, ed. by Evgeny Dobrenko and Galin Tihanov (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 2011), 90–108.

2. See: Susanna Witt, "Arts of Accommodation: The First All-Union Conference of Translators, Moscow, 1936, and the Ideologization of Norms," in *The Art of Accommodation: Literary Translation in Russia*, eds. Leon Burnett and Emily Lygo (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013a), 141–184; Elena Zemskova, "Georgian Poets' Translations by Boris Pasternak in the Soviet Culture of the 1930s," in *The Art of Accommodation: Literary Translation in Russia*, ed. Leon Burnett and Emily Lygo (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), 185–212.

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4. Russian State Archive for Literature and Art, henceforth RGALI, fond 631 (Union of Soviet Writers): opis' 21 (Translators' Section) ed. khr. 8, l. 18. (Ezra Levontin, October 29, 1935). See also Witt, "Arts of Accommodation", 173–177. All translations in this article are mine except where indicated.

5. Witt, "Arts of Accommodation", 165–166.

6. RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, ed. khr. 124, ll. 36–37.

7. RGALI, f. 631, op. 6, ed. khr. 124, l. 66.

8. Lazar Fleishman, *Boris Pasternak i literaturnoe dvizhenie 1930-kh godov* [Boris Pasternak and the literary process of the 1930s] (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2005), 402 ff.

9. Katerina Clark and Evgeny Dobrenko, *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents, 1917–1953* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007).

10. Nailya Safiullina, "Window to the West: From the Collection of Readers' Letters to the Journal I*nternatsional'naia literatura*," *Slavonica* 15, no. 2 (2009): 128–161; See also Nailya Safiullina and Rachel Platonov , "Literary Translation and Soviet Cultural Politics in the 1930s: The Role of the Journal I*nternacional'naja Literatura*," *Russian Literature* 72 no. 2 (2012); 239–269; Samantha Sherry, *Discourses of Regulation and Resistance: Censoring Translation in the Stalin and Khrushchev Era Soviet Union* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

11. Among numerous phenomena claimed as Russian inventions were the bicycle and the air balloon, as well as major geographical discoveries. See

V. S. Virginskii, S. A. Klat, T. V. Komishilova, and, G. N. List, "Kak tvoriatsia mify v istorii tekhniki: K istorii voprosa o 'velosipede Artamonova,'"[How myths are created in the history of technology: On the question of Artamonov's bicycle], *Voprosy istorii estestvoznaniia i tekhniki*, no. 1 (1989); 150–157.

12   Andrei Fedorov (1906–1997), Leningrad philologist and translation scholar, had co-authored the book *The Art of Translation* (*Iskusstvo perevoda*) with Kornei Chukovskii in 1930 and published his own book *On literary translation (O khudozhestvennom perevode)* in 1941, parts of which the audience recognized in his report at the 1948 meeting.

13   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 114, l. 32.

14   This issue is the focus of my current research project, "The Interface with the Foreign: The 'Soviet School of Translation,' the Cold War and World Literature, 1945–1985" (supported by the Swedish Research Council, 2015–2018).

15   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 114, ll. 26–28.

16   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 114, l. 28.

17   Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, (London: Routledge, 2008).

18   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 114, l. 29.

19   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 114, l. 38.

20   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 114, l. 40.

21   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 114, l. 68.

22   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 114, l. 71.

23   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 114, l. 71.

24   The collaboration between Lann and Krivtsova was often close and their respective roles as "agents of translation", i.e. translator and editor, in particular cases were apparently not always reflected in paratexts and bibliographies. On the term "agent of translation," see John Milton, and Paul F. Bandia, "Introduction: Agents of Translation and Translation Studies", i *n Agents of Translation*, ed. John Milton and Paul F. Bandia (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2009), 1–17.

25   During the 1920s, an important issue had been the new society's need for know-how in various spheres of production and for specialists, whose competence had to be utilized despite their often non-proletarian backgrounds. In the 1930s, translators (whose social record was in many cases dubious in the eyes of the new authorities) adopted a strategy of promoting themselves as such specialists, urgently needed in the production of Soviet literature (cf. Zemskova, "Georgian Poets' Translations by Boris Pasternak in the Soviet Culture of the 1930s", 2013).

26   Lann, "Stil' rannego Dikkensa i perevod 'Posmertnykh zapisok Pikvikskogo kluba," [The style of the early Dickens and the translation of *The Pickwick Papers*] ,*Literaturnyi kritik*, no. 1 (1939): 157.

27   This body was part of the Organizational Bureau set up in 1932 to prepare for the Writers' Congress 1934 and the founding of the Soviet Writers' Union.

28   Ivan Kashkin, "Mister Pikvik i drugie," [Mr Pickwick and others], *Literaturnyi kritik*, no. 5 (1936).

29   Georgii Shengeli, "Posleslovie," [Afterword], in Dzh. G. Bairon, *Don Zhuan*, trans. G. Shengeli (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1947), 532.

30   For a detailed account of the discussion, see Susanna Witt, "Byron's *Don Juan* in Russian and the 'Soviet School of Translation,'" *Contexts of Russian Literary Translation 11, no. 1 (2016),* special issue of *Translation and Interpreting Studies: The Journal of the American Translation and Interpreting Studies Association*, eds. Julie Hansen and Susanna Witt: 23–43.

31   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed khr. 115, l. 12.

32   RGALI, f. 631, op. 14, ed. khr. 88, ll. 20, 200b.

33   RGALI, f. 2854, op. 1, ed. khr. 116, l. 9.

34   Ibid. l. 10.

35   Ivan Kashkin, "Traditsia i epigonstvo: ob odnom perevode baironovskogo 'Don-Zhuana')" [Tradition and epigonism: On one translation of Byron's *Don Juan*)] *Novyi Mir*, no. 12 (1952): 229–240.

36   Ivan Kashkin, "O iazyke perevoda," [On the language of translation] *Literaturnaia gazeta*, December 1, 1951.

37   Günther 2011, 93f.

38   Pavel Toper, "O nekotorykh printsipakh khudozhestvennogo perevoda," [On some principles of literary translation] *Novyi Mir*, no. 1 (1952); 240.

39   Ibid, 244.

40   Ivan Kashkin, "O metode i shkole sovetskogo khudozhestvennogo perevoda" [On the method and school of Soviet literary translation], *Znamia,* no. 3 (1954): 145. In the canonical formulation found in the statutes of the Soviet Writers' Union, socialist realism "requires of the artist a *truthful, historically concrete* representation of reality in its revolutionary development" [my emphasis], see *Pervyi s"ezd*, 712.

41   Kashkin, 1954, 148.

42   Ibid, 151.

43   Ibid.

44   Ibid.

45   Sometimes translated as "official nationality," *narodnost'* was a "broad term which signified that works should be accessible to the masses, imbued with the national (and sometimes folk) tradition, and patriotic (or even statist)." See Clark and Dobrenko 2007, *Soviet Culture and Power: A History in Documents*, 1917–1953, 147.

46   Kashkin, 1954, 152. This position was explicitly warned against in the article on translation in the Soviet *Literary Encyclopedia* of 1934: "However, it would be dangerous to advocate the thesis that the translator should strive to find such a verbal expression for the author's thoughts that the author himself would have chosen, had he been writing in the language of the translator, in his epoch and societal situation. This would open the way for the unrestrained subjectivism of free translation, not to mention the fact that nuances pertaining to time and place would get lost"; see Aleksandr Smirnov and Mikhail Alekseev, "Perevod" [Translation], *Literaturnaia entsiklopediia*, vol. 8 (Moscow: OGIZ RSFSR, 1934): 528. In this connection, the author cites Goethe: "There are two principles of translation. One requires that the foreign author be brought to us so that we can look at him as if he were one of our own. The other, in contrast, invites us to go to the foreigner and get acquainted with his life, his ways of expressing himself and his peculiarities. Of these two principles the second is undoubtedly the true one, because choosing the first, we would deprive the translated work of a significant part of its epistemological value," Smirnov, 528–529.

47   Andrei Azov, *Poverzhennye bukvalisty: Iz istorii khudozhestvennogo perevoda v SSSR v 1920–1960-e gody* [The defeated literalists: From the history of literary translation in the USSR 1920–1960s] (Moscow: Vysshaia shkola ekonomiki, 2012), 112 ff.

48   See, e.g., Alexander Burak, *The Other in Translation: A Case for Comparative Translation Studies* (Bloomington, Indiana: Slavica, 2013).

49   Christian Balliu, "Clefs pour une histoire de la traductologie soviétique" *Meta* 3, no. 50 (2005): 939.

50   Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2006).