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About *Marriage*
On the Practices of Intercultural Translation

Vladimir Nabokov, a Russian-American writer, once wrote: the idea of "'a literal translation' is more or less nonsense"; what should be worked out in a new language is "not only the mere contact between the words, but their exact position in regard both to the rhythm of the line and to one another", as it is in recognizing poetic structures of the original and moving them into a new linguistic context that the task of a translator lies (1941). Nabokov believed: to translate poetry one should not translate its separate words but its rhythmical designs. Translating for theatre, I argue, we should similarly treat any dramatic text as poetry, whether this text is written in prose or in verse. So, despite the common belief that it is the cultural context that often predetermines the shortcomings of literary translations (as the audience does not have historical or cultural knowledge to which the original refers); it is the play's rhythmical structure – its pace, alternations of speakers' voices, pauses and silences – that is the most vulnerable to the act of a theatrical border-crossing. Hence, if translating for theatre it might be not possible to keep the source text's contextual references intact, it might be possible to recreate its visceral and somatic potential in a new language. This potential can be discovered dramaturgically as the practice of *relational translation* (Sidiropoulou 2015). The technique includes a translator (re)imagining both the source text and the new one as music, using such performative devices of enacting the text as 1) speaking it aloud and listening for its rhythmical compositions; 2) moving along its implied kinetic designs; 3) trying them on with his/her body in the new language and in the space of the rehearsal hall. Naoki Sakai theorizes this approach as *(co)figuring difference* in translation: not necessary as a process of bridging distinct cultural contexts but as searching for rhythmical patterns of the original designs within the new cultural and performative contexts (Sakai 2008). This idea finds echoing in Ric Knowles' definition of *new interculturalism* that "involves collaborations and solidarities across real and respected material differences within local, urban, national and global intercultural performance ecologies" (59). Relational translation serves as an example of this new interculturalism as it is based on (co)figuring difference on stage. It assigns special agency to the actors, whose objectives become to re-create the complexities of the original through their on-

stage behaviour, using translated words as a blueprint of their characters' intentions. Hence, to translate a play relationally is to recognize its stylistic idiosyncrasy and find its linguistic equivalent in another language.

This article offers a dramaturgical report and a theoretical reflection on the challenges and pleasures of intercultural translation. It documents a four months journey I undertook in the Fall 2016, assisting a University of Ottawa, MFA student, Nicholas Leno in translating and adapting Nikolay Gogol's comedy *Marriage* for his thesis production. First, it describes dramaturgical choices I and director made to bring the phantasmagoria of Gogol's universe to its Canadian audiences. Then it examines the processes of creative discovery as a device of intercultural translation that relies on the melodies and rhythms of the target language to reconstruct anew the stylistic patterns of the source text.

Relational Translation: Definition and Devices

Mikhail Bulgakov, another Russian writer, spoke of a playwright's laboratory as a 3D box of a writer's mind, in which the fictional world of a future play appears as a movement of bodies, objects and spaces (2007). The box is full of sounds: the characters' movements are accompanied by a sound score that includes their dialogue and intra-diegetic (on-stage) and extra-diegetic (off–stage) sounds. To translate for theatre is to transfer this implied performance - bodies and objects moving in space immersed into a sound-score - from its original cultural and linguistic environment into the new one. It is to rely on the interpretative mechanisms of "intersemiotic translation or *transmutation"* based on what Roman Jakobson calls "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems" (114).

Jakobson argued that "poetry by definition is untranslatable" and "only creative transposition is possible" (118). Hence, one should "distinguish three ways of interpreting a verbal sign: it may be translated into other signs of the same language, into another language, or into another, nonverbal system of symbols. These three kinds of translation are to be differently labeled: 1. Intralingual translation or *rewording* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language; 2. Interlingual translation or *translation proper* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language; and 3. Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems". (114) Translating for theatre relies on the same premises: it can only be done as an act of

"intersemiotic transposition", i.e. moving a source text "from one system of signs into another, e.g., from verbal art into music, dance, cinema, or painting" (118). The process can be only collaborative, as it takes place between the translator/dramaturge, a native speaker of the chosen text's language, and the translator/director, a native speaker of the target one. It is preferred, of course, for both partners to be bilingual and well informed of the theatrical traditions in which the source text originated and of those, into which it will be moved. In this process, the task of the translator/dramaturge is to identify and expose the rhythmical patterns and the inner pace of the original, whereas the task of the translator/director is to re-imagine its rhythmical and semantic equivalents in a new language. This technique relies on the devices of poetry recitation, widely used in Shakespeare acting training. It implies both the translator and the director seeking compositional designs in a new language, similar to those identified by the original. To translate for theatre, therefore, is to recognize dramatic text not as a literary object but as a sound-score to be moved across languages and cultures into a sound-image of a theatre production.

Secondly, relational translation presupposes recognising dramatic text as a score of characters' actions, expressed through their psycho-physical behaviour regardless the words they say. The translator's task is to identify these actions as implied in the original and remount them in the new one. This approach assumes embodied practices, such as partners moving along the text's inner rhythms, recognizing and trying out its implied kinetics with their own bodies, in the new language and in the space of a rehearsal hall. Similarly to *translation as analogue,* to use Deborah Cartmell's term (24), this approach relies on moving dramatic text, a system of verbal signs, directly into a theatre production, a system of non-verbal, material and embodied signs.

Nicholas Bourriaud's *relational aesthetics,* a device of constructing an artistic venue for human interaction and creative collaboration as conditioned by social context, can serve as metaphor to this practice. *Relational translation* defines collaborative partnership between the translator, the director and the production team: with a translator/dramaturge simultaneously acting as an actor, a director and a composer of the implied sound-score of the dialogue, initiating the process of moving the music of an implied theatre performance across theatrical cultures and natural languages. The process is not complete until the text meets the actors and is read or tried out on the tongue by them. Accordingly, a good translator, in Nabokov's words, "must have as much talent, or at least the same kind of talent, as the author he chooses"; "he must know thoroughly the two nations and the two languages involved and be perfectly acquainted with all

details relating to his author's manner and methods; also, with the social background of words, their fashions, history and period associations. […] he must possess the gift of mimicry and be able to act […] the real author's part by impersonating his tricks of demeanor and speech, his ways and his mind, with the utmost degree of verisimilitude" (1941). Similarly, Umberto Eco envisions the act of translation as oscillation between faithful and literal translation, when a literal translation can, because of the peculiarities of the meanings of words, be inaccurate, compared to the substitution of the right word that matches the meaning of the sentence or the context in the faithful translation; to a complete mutation of the text and thus arrival to the play which can defend its own coherence and completeness without looking back at the original (Eco 6-8). To translate, Eco offers, is "to lead beyond": "The term translation first appeared in the sense of 'change,' even of address, 'transport,' banking operation, botanical graft, and metaphor. Only in Seneca does it appear as a turning from one language into another. Likewise *traducere* meant 'to lead beyond' " (Eco 74).

To translate for theatre is – to use Eco's idea - to take a dramatic text out of its original context and graft additional meaning onto the original root, imagining this re-routing as the work of theatre actors, directors and designers. Maria Sidiropoulou summarizes this process as an activity of relation:

> The question arises whether stage translation situations may be assumed to be interactional contexts. Interaction can be conceptualized as occurring at a meta-level, i.e. as occurring between translator and target audience, but also among fictional addressees, in the presence of audience/'bystanders'. Stage translation is asynchronous in that the time of target version production is different from the time of reception and it does involve general public awareness. In addition […] stage translation situations seem to rely heavily on audience evaluation. Translators' 'relational' work aims at appealing to the audience, whereas communication among fictional addressees seems to conform to considerations of 'interpersonal relationships' in the play, which may vary between source and target communities of practice. (Sidiropoulou 19)

In our work on Gogol's *Marriage*, the director Nicholas Leno was implemented in devising new text from the very start: Nicholas identified available English translations (we used Christopher English's 1995 version as our point of reference) and worked through the difficult passages in the

new text, searching for English idiomatic expressions to serve as equivalents to the Russian proverbs and sayings. Most importantly, Nicholas' work was to constantly check how "speakable" the new text was for the unilingual Anglophones, who might have difficulties enunciating characters' names and geographical locations in Russian, as well as working through long and complex sentences. He acted the text aloud, checking the correlation between the rhythmical patterns of the original Russian text and the found English equivalents. Together we paid special attention to the tension between short and long sentences, the crescendo/diminuendo dichotomy, speeding up and slowing down action that make up Gogol's dramatic style. This way we turned into makers of a new theatre symphony, with Nicholas learning his score at the process of its creation. My work as a native speaker of Russian was to identify these patterns within the original and help Nicholas searching for them in English, regardless whether the context of the speeches was lost or alternated. To illustrate this point, I have chosen the opening scenes of the play *Marriage.*

Д Е Й С Т В И Е П Е Р В О Е **Явление I** **Комната холостяка.** **П о д к о л е с и н один, лежит на диване с трубкой.** Вот как начнешь эдак один на досуге подумывать, так видишь, что наконец точно нужно жениться. Что, в самом деле? Живешь, живешь, да такая наконец скверность становится. Вот опять пропустил мясоед. А ведь, кажется, все готово, и сваха вот уж три месяца ходит. Право, самому как-то становится совестно. Эй, Степан!	**ACT I** **SCENE I** **Bachelor's room** **PODKOLYOSIN alone; He lies on his couch with the pipe** Marriage! Marriage is the only way. What else is there? You live and you live, you go and you go, and in the end you just can't take it any longer. Now I've gone and missed the marrying season again. The matchmaker has been calling for the last three months. I should be ashamed of myself! Hey, Stepan!
Явление II П о д к о л е с и н , С т е п а н . **П о д к о л е с и н** . Не приходила сваха? **С т е п а н** . Никак нет. **П о д к о л е с и н** . А у портного был? **С т е п а н .** Был. **П о д к о л е с и н .** Что ж он, шьет фрак? **С т е п а н .** Шьет .**П о д к о л е с и н .** И много уже нашил? **С т е п а н .** Да, уж довольно. Начал уж петли метать. **П о д к о л е с и** н . Что ты говоришь? **С т е п а н .** Говорю: начал уж петли метать. **П о д к о л е с и н .** А не спрашивал он, на что, мол, нужен барину фрак? **С т е п а н** . Нет, не спрашивал. **П о д к о л е с и н** . Может быть, он говорил, не хочет ли барин жениться?	**SCENE II** **PODKOLYOSIN , STEPAN.** **PODKOLYOSIN** Has the matchmaker come? **STEPAN** Not yet. **PODKOLYOSIN** And did you go to the tailor? **STEPAN** I did. **PODKOLYOSIN** Is he working on my tailcoat? **STEPAN**. He is. **PODKOLYOSIN.** How far has he got? **STEPAN.** He's already doing the buttonholes. **PODKOLYOSIN**. What? **STEPAN .** I said: he's already doing the buttonholes. **PODKOLYOSIN** And didn't he ask: "What does your master need a tailcoat for?" **STEPAN** No, he didn't. **PODKOLYOSIN** Perhaps he said something about your master getting married?

С т е п а н . Нет, ничего не говорил. **П о д к о л е с и н** . Ты видел, однако ж, у него и другие фраки? Ведь он и для других тоже шьет? **С т е п а н** . Да, фраков у него много висит. **П о д к о л е с и н** . Однако ж ведь сукно-то на них будет, чай, похуже, чем на моем? **С т е п а н** . Да, это будет поприглядистее, что на вашем. **П о д к о л е с и** н . Что ты говоришь? **С т е п а н** . Говорю: это поприглядистее, что на вашем. **П о д к о л е с и н .** Хорошо. Ну, а не спрашивал: для чего, мол, барин из такого тонкого сукна шьет себе фрак? **С т е п а н** . Нет. **П о д к о л е с и н** . Не говорил ничего о том, что не хочет ли, дискать, жениться? **С т е п а н .** Нет, об этом не заговаривал. **П о д к о л е с и н** . Ты, однако же, сказал, какой на мне чин и где служу? **С т е п а н .** Сказывал. **П о д к о л е с и н . Что ж он на это?** **С т е п а н** . Говорит: буду стараться. **П о д к о л е с и н .** Хорошо. Теперь ступай. Степан уходит.	**STEPAN** No, he didn't. **PODKOLYOSIN** Did you see, perhaps, other tailcoats in his workshop? He makes tailcoats for other people too? **STEPAN** . Yes, he has lots of tailcoats. **PODKOLYOSIN** Still, their cloth wouldn't be quite as good as mine would it? **STEPAN** . It's true. **PODKOLYOSIN** What? **STEPAN** . I said your cloth is better than theirs. **PODKOLYOSIN** Good. [pause] So, didn't he ask why your master was having a tailcoat made from such fine cloth? **STEPAN** No. **PODKOLYOSIN** Didn't he say anything like… err… “Is your master getting married?” **STEPAN.** No. **PODKOLYOSIN** . But I presume you told him what my rank is and which department I'm in? **STEPAN** . Yes, I did. **PODKOLYOSIN.** And what did he say to that? **STEPAN** . He said: “I'll see what I can do.” **PODKOLYOSIN** . Good. Off you go, now. **STEPAN exits**

What is important here is to pay attention to the graphic layout of the dialogue: the grouping of the English text mimics the Russian design. It reveals our strategy of relational translation to seek if not identical than similar rhythmical structure of the comic exchange, even if the new text exhibits certain short cuts and generalizations in meaning.

Gogol and Humor – on the Pros and Contras of Relational Translation

1. Historical Context and Social Satire

Considered to be an encyclopedia of comedic devices, Gogol’s plays do not carry elaborated plots. His masterpiece is *The Government Inspector* or *The Inspector General* (1836/1842): an example of a social satire that looks into the follies of human nature and destiny. The play dramatizes the grandiose of eternal evil revealed on stage through the figures of the Russian bureaucrats inhabiting the country’s capital cities and provinces[1]. *Marriage* was Gogol’s

[1] *The Government Inspector* had a tremendous influence on playwrights and theatre makers worldwide. Its two canonical stagings belong to Konstantin Stanislavsky, who directed the play for the Moscow Art Theatre in 1921 with Michael Chekhov in the leading part as Khlestakov; and Vsevolod Meyerhold, who directed it in 1926, in the style reminiscent of German Expressionism with Erast Garin in the leading part. In the play’s finale, the so called “mute scene”, which presents the characters’ realization that both the human and the divine punishment are inescapable,

second play. Searching for the dramatic theme and genre to speak of the wrongdoings of his age and society on stage – theatre understood as a mirror to human nature (Mann 438) - Gogol started working on the play's first draft, *Suitors,* in 1833. It opened with the young bride's monologue, preparing to choose among her many suitors. In this draft, emotion "[was] not counted out, but it [became] a part of the life business, one of many other important things or matters one should take care in his/her life" (Mann 439). Gogol de-romanticized the concept of love as a foundation of family. He turned human affection into the matter of the "marriage business". In its second draft, produced in 1842, and known as *Marriage: an Absolutely Impossible Event in Two Acts,* Gogol continued to investigate this tension between love and profit as the underpinning of a modern family and by extension a modern society; a conflict not far remote from today's practices when newlyweds begin treating love as just a clause in a marriage contract. In this play, "there [was] no plot at all, but only a comic situation […] serving as an impetus or pretext for the elaboration of comic devices" (Eikhenbaum 270).

In *Marriage*, Gogol also played with the conventions of Roman comedy by turning its rules upside down, and making its familiar structure and characters strange. The world of Gogol's comedy is dangerous and seductive at the same time, as it balances on the edge of farce and phantasmagoria, exhibiting the elements of social satire. Borrowing his characters from Roman comedy, in which the conflict often rests with the unequal social status between a suitor and a bride, with a female character being of a lower class or even a slave (Frye 2-3; Packman 23-24), Gogol made his own protagonist, Podkolyosin, a government functionary, a new upper class of the 19th century Russia, and his bride, Agafya, a merchant's daughter, dreaming of a nobleman.

Genre wise, *Marriage* is a theatrical anecdote about a young bachelor on the marital quest, who does not do anything about it. Podkolyosin's close friend, Kochkarev, decides to take the matter in his own hands and brings him into the house of Agafya, who is equally incapable of choosing her future husband. The conflict reveals a discrepancy between the society's expectations of the institute of marriage and Podkolyosin and Agafya's inability to fulfil their functions as prospective pillars of a family unit. Podkolyosin is catastrophically unfit to the role of a husband as he cannot make a single decision of his own; Agafya is equally frail in the role of a wife. The action unfolds through a series of encounters between Agafya and her suitors. It ends with

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Meyerhold replaced actors with dummies, hence emphasizing Gogol's sense of grotesque and hyperbolae (Fusso 1994; Listengarten 2000).

Podkolyosin, after he has finally proposed, jumping out of the window. Gogol contextualizes characters' indecisiveness through the prism of greed, cowardice, deceitfulness and foolishness that surround Podkolyosin and Agafya. Hypocrisy becomes the major characteristic of this world, in which we find no single plausible or good-natured character (Mann 453-455). The ending of the play brings neither reconciliation to the characters' dilemmas nor resolution to this situation. Podkolyosin jumps out of the window, leaving Agafya thunder-struck by unfairness of the world. Accordingly, as Eikhenbaum argued, Gogol's "characters are only petrified poses. They are dominated by the mirthful and ever-playful spirit of the artist himself" (275). In its assembly of comedic devices, however, *Marriage* has it all: it relies on physical comedy (slapstick) and witty dialogue; it uses elements of farce and social satire; it employs sexual jokes and language games; it provides psychological characterization and builds on stock characters of Commedia dell'arte; and it includes lyrical monologues and comic asides.

An important layer of Gogol's satire has to do with the play's historical context and characters' behavior, the environment that would have to be either lost or modernized today, regardless the audiences' language. To translate this text relationally is to re-invent its fictional world in a new temporal (historical, cultural, and linguistic) context that relates to the original only to a certain extent, indexically and by ostension. In this approach, many historical and contextual peculiarities will be lost. For example, in our work of bringing Gogol's text closer to its Canadian audiences, we opted for creating a somewhat a-temporal fictional world that would refer to the Russian geography, historical context and cultural specificity only through the choice of the characters' first and last names, occasional use of patronymics and references to the characters' social status. Thus, the new dramatis persona – a list of characters – would follow the Gogol's original. It lists the names of female characters and male suitors of the higher social rank first, followed by the names of the servants. Like in the original, in our dramatis persona we use characters' full names with patronymics or their last names only; whereas in the text itself the male characters are addressed by their last names, while the female characters are addressed by their full names. An exception is Fyokla – the matchmaker. As this character is closer in her social status to servants, she is addressed by her first name, Fyokla, only. At the same time, we set to keep Gogol's "speaking names", a famous device of his comedy, intact. In the form of metonymy, personification or by association, Gogol's speaking names present a holistic definition of the character. For example, Yaichnica, which translates into English as Omelette, is the name of one

of Agafya's suitors. Apart from a funny idea to have the character named after food, the name Omelette also refers to this dish's quality: it is unsteady (sometimes he is also called "scrambled eggs"), warm, homely and somewhat formless, all the characterizations contrasted with the character's high rank position in the government, his greediness and ill-mannered behavior. Hence, the comic function of this speaking name is rooted in the discrepancy between the associations the word "omelette" evokes and the character's appearance, personal conduct, and actions.

In addition, to make the new script dynamic, engaging, and speakable for the actors Nicholas and I opted for theatrical references we share: as we were uprooting the action from its original historical and cultural context, we were constructing a unique theatre universe based on the characters' objectives and functions, stemming from the paradigms of Commedia dell'arte, a theatre genre and acting technique well known both in Russia and Canada. For instance, references to the dates in the Russian history, geographical locations, and social context were cut. Sometimes they were exchanged for such generic phrases as "on that street", "many years ago", "sometime before", "this man – such a man". Sometimes we had to cut small sections of dialogue because using such generic approach undercut the social satire underlining these original exchanges. Instead, we chose to provide more room for actors to exercise their skill in comedy, including slapstick and exaggeration, and to look for more nuanced characterization of actions, using pauses, facial expressions, body language and other techniques of staging comedy. Act 1, Scene 13 with the matchmaker Fyokla describing Agafya's suitors presents a good example of this approach.

As Nabokov observed, Gogol's fictional world is often overcrowded, not because his dramatis personae is unusually large but because he is the master of character evocation or construction through the art of verbal description (1980:21-23). Very often, using only a phrase or two, Gogol can create a fully-fletched character, without necessarily bringing it on stage. Nabokov calls these creations "peripheral characters": they can "enliven the texture of [the play's] background" but never emerge "from the wings. In a novel the lack of action or speech on the part of secondary characters would not have been sufficient to endow them with that kind of backstage existence, there being no footlights to stress their actual absence from the front place. Gogol however had another trick up his sleeve. The peripheral characters of his novel are engendered by the subordinate clauses of its various metaphors, comparisons and lyrical outbursts. We are faced by the remarkable phenomenon of mere forms of speech directly giving rise to live creatures"

(Nabokov 1980: 21). This device of Gogol's comedy is probably one of the most challenging to carry in a new translation. To master it, a translator must demonstrate the same level of literary talent and inventiveness based on his/her understanding of how language based hyperbola and repetition work, how one can create a fully-fletched character through a description often based on language games, use of proverbs and stock images, inaccessible to the audiences of a different cultural time and context. Unfortunately, due to these difficulties certain passages of the dialogue based on this particular device were to be lost. In some cases, however, keeping these repetitions and descriptions intact would significantly slow down the action and take away the invaluable stage time for the actors' work in comic characterization.

2. Genre – Anecdote

Gogol's satire ridicules the weakness of human nature and social groups. It employs verbal irony and practices devices of distancing and alienation, creating a discrepancy between the playfulness of the fiction and the realism of the subject. Gogol's comedy can be instructional, but it must entertain as well, by zooming on the uneven, the grotesque, the contradictory, and the sinful of a human behavior. All these qualities were to be preserved in the new translation, so Nicholas and I opted for creating a unique "planet" of Gogol's fictional world (Fuchs 2004) that would follow its own rules and logic of dramatic verisimilitude. The original context was used only indexically: we made Gogol's world as recognizable for Canadian audiences as possible not by transposing it into some fictionalized Canadian geography, as other translations tend to do[2], but through emphasizing its ambiguity. In terms of psychological and social traits of the characters, we decided to adopt the concept of *character-archetype*. Much as in Gogol's original, in our translation each character represents one or several human follies, such as gluttony, envy, irresponsibility, greed, absent-mindedness, rudeness, misogyny, stupidity, indecision, laziness, naiveté and pride. This way Gogol's commentary on the weakness of a human kind can be re-

[2] In its 2007-2008 season, The Great Canadian Theatre Company (GCTC), Ottawa, programed a musical *The Man from the Capital,* (book and lyrics by Colin Heath, music John Millard), based on Gogol's play *The Government Inspector.* Typically to many adaptations, this musical was moved from its original context and "set in the fictitious town of Salmon Elbow, B.C., during the Great Depression" (Langston). Directed by Jennifer Brewin, it featured a "hopelessly compromised and self-admiring mayor Ira Trout (Todd Duckworth)", the judge, Amos Blight (Pierre Brault), "the stuttering, perpetually flustered school superintendent Willy Flinch (Paul Rainville)", and "the high-strung charity commissioner Artemus Fox (Constant Bernard)" (Langston); all inhabitants of the fictional Canadian little town, Salmon Elbow. "Fun, energetic and immensely silly, with a high slapstick quotient", the musical drove its point home, as it reminded The Ottawa Citizen critic, Patrick Langston, that "corruption is not really funny at all" (Langston).

emphasized. The traits of a genre – be it a comedy, a satire, or an anecdote – became indispensable mechanisms and criteria to measure changes and modifications of the original that we used in translation.

In its structure, *Marriage* resembles a French farce that often closes with a festive grand finale dedicated to the celebration of the newlyweds. Gogol's play, however, does not end this way. It involves all steps and actors of the marrying business, with the lovers – even as shy and reluctant as Podkolyosin and Agafya - in its centre; several sets of helpers – the matchmaker Fyokla and her male foil, Kochkarev; human obstacles - such as Agafya's suitors; and two servants; all moving forward to their respective goals. But it ends with Podkolyosin jumping out of the window, leaving his young bride and other characters standing alone on stage, astonished in their shame and disbelief. Gogol used this device in his other play, *The Government Inspector*, in which the ending revealed the characters standing defenseless before the advent of the punishing power, the toll of the tragic fate. In *Marriage,* Podkolyosin's jump belongs to farce not tragedy. Instead of the punishing advent of the tragic fate, as in tragedy, or marriage festivities, as in farce, the play's mute-scene carries moralizing and educating functions; it turns the entire hustle into an anecdote. As Ferianty tells us, although "sometimes humorous, anecdotes are not jokes, because their primary purpose is not simply to […] produce laughter, but to reveal a truth more general than the brief tale itself, or to delineate a character trait in such a light that it strikes in a flash of insight to its very essence. An anecdote thus is closer to the tradition of the parable than the patently invented fable with its animal characters and generic human figures, but it is distinct from the parable in the historical specificity which it claims" (2016). The value of an anecdote is in "promoting understanding of a social, cultural, or economic phenomenon". Its generic structures are: "Abstract: signals the retelling of unusual, uncommon or amusing incident; Orientation: introduction or sets the scene; Crisis: provides details of unusual, uncommon or amusing incident; Incident : reaction to the Crisis; [and] Coda : (optional), a reflection or an evaluation of unusual, uncommon or amusing incident" (Ferianty 2016). The translator's task is to recognize these genre related idiosyncrasies of the chosen text and make sure they are not lost to the act of transcultural transfer. These genre-related traits, we strongly believe, were to appear in the new translation intact. In Gogol's case these genre traits determine the structure of the plot and the arch of the characters' development. The genre of the play – to paraphrase McLuhen's famous saying – becomes its message; it serves as the major supporting

pillar for the future translation. To translate relationally, in other words, is to preserve the play's genre. A good example of this tactics is the ending of Act 1: the scene features seven suitors eagerly waiting for the young bride to appear. The action is built on the device of acceleration with repetition, a common feature of comedy when one element is repeated many times, but every time it occurs it is either enlarged or exaggerated, so the inner designs and rhythms of the original sequence get modified. As Agafya's suitors appear on stage one after another, the agitation of the general atmosphere and of each character behaviour increases, with the action reaching its emotional pick with all seven suitors peeking through a keyhole of the door leading into the bride's bedroom. The speed of the action accelerates as well, so the scene crashes into the next one with Agafya and her aunt, Arina entering the stage. The translator's task is to recreate this rhythmical design - acceleration and crash – within the new text. To do so, a translator needs to work with the overall rhythmical structure of the scene, not its separate words.

3. Language – *Skaz*

According to Nabokov, a translator of Gogol's texts should remember that the essential feature of his writing is irrationality, the feature to be discovered anew through the act of translation. In the short story *The Overcoat*, Gogol's irrationality "forms the tragic undercurrent of an otherwise meaningless anecdote". Irrationality is "organically connected with the special style in which this story is written: there are weird repetitions of the same absurd adverb, and these repetitions become a kind of uncanny incantation; there are descriptions which look innocent enough until you discover that chaos lies right round the corner, and that Gogol has inserted into this or that harmless sentence a word or a simile that makes a passage burst into a wild display of nightmare fireworks" (Nabokov 1941). Gogol's plays are constructed on similar principles: irrationality marks his social satire, physical comedy, language, and character types; all the elements that make up his grotesque and phantasmagoria. Irrationality is at the core of Gogol's dramatic language as well: the rhythms, the composition and the pace of his dialogue, the way the speeches are related to each other. Eikhenbaum calls this idiosyncrasy *"skaz",* an oral form of a literary narrative, "the dynamic force" (275), and the "author's personal tone" as encoded on the page of his literary works (269). Gogol's language articulates sound and its acoustic effects, making them the expressive devices of the text (273). "The structure of Gogol's work depends on the way the *skaz* is put together, on the play of language" (275); it includes "the actual elements of speech and verbalized emotions"

(272); the feature that cannot be lost in translation. Moreover, in Gogol's skaz, "sentences are devised and put together not according to the logical speech alone, but more according to the principles of expressive speech, where articulated sound, mimicry, phonic gestures play a special role. Hence the phenomenon of sound-semantics in Gogol's language: the phonic "envelope" of the word, or its acoustic characteristics, take on significance quite independent of logic or of concrete meaning" (273). A verbal mimicry, Gogol's language constitutes a particular form of skaz – a *comic skaz* – that comes in two types: the one that narrates and the one that reproduces.

> The first is confined to jokes, plays on meaning […], the second introduces the devices of verbal mimicry and verbal gesture, in the form of specially devised comic articulations, word-plays based on sounds, capricious arrangements of syntax. The first creates an impression of an even flow of speech, the second often seems concealing an actor, so the skaz here becomes a kind of play-acting [linked together] by a system of articulated phonic gestures of various kinds. (Eikhenbaum 269-270)

According to Eikhenbaum, Gogol's comic utterance consists of the following six elements:

1) Puns "constructed either on similarities of sound, plays on etymologies, or hidden absurdities" (276);
2) Absurdity – "the device of reducing something to absurdity or of making a non-logical combination of words is often met in Gogol, but it is usually masked by strictly logical syntax and therefore creates an impression that it is unintentional. […] the pun is not flaunted ; on the contrary, it is concealed in every possible way and its comic effect is heightened" (277);
3) A pun based on sound-effects – Gogol's use of " 'meaningless' terms and names" that "open up possibilities for a distinctive semantics of sound" (278), the sound-based puns are constructed on the principles of sound selection: the way these names/terms are put together in one sentence or across several of them. The result is "an imitation in articulated sound – a phonic gesture (279); the character is presented to the reader through the device of "reproduction" – it appears to the reader as a grotesque figure summoned in our imagination by "means of articulated sound" (280); "a system of phonic gestures which has been created by the careful choice of words" (280).
4) Intonation – Gogol's language is never neutral; a highly intensified intonation gives his sentences their inner shape (281); often Gogol builds his passages on the paradoxical

juxtaposition of different intonations that contradict not complement each other (282). This device is particularly prone to comedy;

5) Sentimental and melodramatic speech juxtaposed with declamatory style passages, a device that creates the sense of estrangement and comic effect (282); in the play *Marriage,* Agafya and Podkolyosin's monologues are of this nature; and
6) Authorial speech based on chatter intonation (283), calling the reader's attention to the performative potentials of the text.

Analyzing the ending of Gogol's *The Overcoat*, Eikhenbaum underlines the complexity of skaz, specifically when Gogol introduces the voice of the author with its chatty tones. "The result – Eikhenbaum writes – is a grotesque, in which the mimicry of laughter alternates with the mimicry of sorrow – both creating the impression of being a performance, with a pre-established order of gestures and intonations" (285). "The grotesque style requires the situation or event been described should be enclosed in a fantastically small world or artificial experiences; it makes it possible to play with the reality, to break up the elements and displace them freely, so that normal correlations and associations will prove inoperative in this newly created world and any trifle can grow into colossal proportions. In Gogol's work the grotesque hyperbolization unfolds, against the background of the comic skaz, withy puns, humorous words and expressions, anecdotes and so on" (288) . The task of a relational translation is to identify these idiosyncrasies in the original as a form of pre-inscribed "performance, with a pre-established order of gestures and intonations" (285) and to re-create them in a new one.

In life, Gogol was enchanted by the practice of theatre. He approached his own plays as an actor by reading them out loud, in a chat-like declamatory style (Eikhenbaum 271). As Prince Obolensky wrote, "Gogol was a master of the art of reading loud: not only he articulated each word distinctly, but he often varied his intonation, thereby giving his language diversity and making his listeners absorb the subtlest shadings of thought. […] Above all I was struck by the extraordinarily harmonious quality of his language […] Apparently he would sometimes put in some sonorous word just for the harmonious effect" (qtd. in Eikhenbaum 271) Gogol's humor, therefore, is not a form of narration, it is a form of declamation, with Gogol himself emerging as a theatre performer, who hides his ego behind the comic mask. It originates within the rhythmical structures of his texts, the feature yet recognized by Vsevolod Meyerhold, who suggested the director always seek the musical composition of a text to be reconstructed within the muscle image

of a production (Meyerhold 34)[3]. In his suggestions, Meyerhold did not talk about the relational translation; he simply spoke of the importance of rhythm and musical composition in directing. We applied these principles to translation, as we decided to move Gogol's text directly from page to stage, from the Russian text into the English production, taking into consideration the material conditions of a theatre performance, including the actors' speaking and moving bodies, the space of the stage and the auditorium. With the translator/director acting also as an actor directly implemented in the process of moving the text across languages, the translator/dramaturg acquires a chance to see his/her translation come alive within the work of the director/actor's body.

Relational Translation in Action

Implementing Michael Chekhov's actor's training, his advice to enact dramatic text according to its inner rhythmical structure, can help practice theatre translation relationally. As Chekhov explained, "rhythm – [is] the relation of form to content. […] When we live in the intellectual content, we are nothing more than nurses who speak to the audience. But the same content becomes a piece of art when we express the content with rhythmical means […]. *The rhythm then, is the content.* Try to imagine that you see a play in Chinese, in which staccato gradually becomes legato. For you this is the content" (*Michael Chekhov's Archive*). Recognizing the rhythm of a dramatic text as its content – a rhythm of each speech and scene separately, and of the play in its entirety - is the major strategy of relational translation. The task includes

1) recognizing a rhythmical design of the original as suggested by its punctuation - use of periods, commas, dashes, question and exclamation marks; the length and juxtaposition of speeches, the structure of separate phrases, repetition and breaking of patterns, their inner and outer correlations within separate scenes and the play in its entirety;
2) breaking the text into bits of action, so each sentence would acquire a clear objective or inner gesture of action, and

[3] In his remarks, Meyerhold spoke of Anton Chekhov's plays not Gogol's. His approach is still valuable to the practices of relational translation as he was the first to recognize that the rhythmically organized patterns of letters and punctuation marks in Anton Chekhov's texts were forms of humor and estrangement, an element found in Gogol's work too. For instance, in his widely quoted 1904 letter to the playwright, Meyerhold described the climactic scene of *The Cherry Orchard* (Act 3) as an example of pictorially encoded musicality and grotesque poeticity: "In the third act, against a background of the stupid stamping of feet […] enters Horror, completely unnoticed by the guests. 'The cherry orchard is sold.' They dance on. 'Sold'. Still they dance. And so on to the end." (Meyerhold 34) To Meyerhold, it is the sound of rhythmical "variations upon themes, all of which contributes to the weakening of the dependence of the work upon outside referents, inner rhymes, repetitions, parallels and symmetries" (Winner 163) that the director must grasp and work with when staging Chekhov's plays. (Meyerhold 34)

3) reading the text aloud in the original and finding equivalents of this gesture in a new language, using its sentence structures and intonations.

This new sentence should include a sound-gesture, similar in its performative power to Michael Chekhov's Psychological Gesture (PG), the major element of characterization in his acting system. Psychological Gesture originates in the actor's mind, transforms into his/her movement or action, and is manifested in time and space. Never produced for the audience, PG embodies both the character's archetype as imagined by the actor and the audience's expectations of it. It "stirs our will power, gives it a definite direction, awakens feelings and gives us a condensed version of the character […] It must be archetypal, strong, simple and well-formed, it must radiate and be performed in the correct tempo" (Chekhov 2002:76). In its essence, PG is the "language of gestures"; a "focusing mechanism, allowing the performer to attend to a particular set of feelings that link the actor's emotional life to that of the character" (Lutterbie 100). PG has its own rhythm and form: it presents the outer dynamics of the character's body that expresses its inner efforts. Chekhov's PG can be created for the role as a whole (Chekhov 2002:186); separate moments of the role (188); separate scenes (190-191), score of atmospheres (195-196), and a monologue (200-201). Conceived as a physical image through movement, PG can help an actor visualize the space-time continuum of the play. In this capacity of bringing up, through the highly concentrated physical and visual form the essence of the scene, PG becomes an invaluable dramaturgical tool when working in the realm of relational translation. As Chekhov explains: "with the help of the PG, you will be able to see the predominate will and emotion of the scene clearly" (190); the PG of a scene will present it "from the perspective of the author, the director, or perhaps the theatre, and not from the point of view of any particular character in the scene" (194). Thinking about translating task along these lines can help a translator/dramaturge express the essence of the play's conflict as well as its spatial-temporal continuum in another language. Thinking about Chekhov's *four qualities: ease, form, beauty* and *entirety* (13-17), a translator can begin searching for a gesture that can better express his/her sense of stage action as a set of spatial tensions and metaphors, which later could be reflected in the architectural arrangement and designs of the actual staging. Using the PG of the scene, the translator can think about it holistically - as a tripartite structure of the beginning-middle-end, unfolding in a certain rhythmical pattern. Instead of translating lines one-by-one, a translator can keep the image of the scene in his/her imagination and seek linguistic

equivalents to construct this image anew, in the new language and in the new theatrical circumstances.

Similarly, contemporary dramaturgs recognize the importance of breaking the play into its smallest units of action and applying acting tools of character analysis to working with text. As Andrew Carlson suggests, working with the actors a dramaturg must stop treating dramatic text as an object of literature but recognize it as a score of actions, objectives and patterns of behavior. Likewise, the translator should "seek playable verbs" (Carlson 318), develop a specific point of view from the position of each character and from the position of the play, help actors create and understand special circumstances of the play's world and action, use verbs not adjectives in his/her communication with the actors so avoid speaking about characters in a storytelling mode, and focus on what the character wants (319). Most importantly, this translator/dramaturg should convert his/her knowledge of general history or dramatic context into a set of given circumstances to help actors generate questions about and for the characters, so to relate their work back to the material conditions of performance (320). This advice is very useful in working on Gogol's texts. His characters are uniquely positioned between the stock characters of Commedia dell'arte and psychological archetypes. Enacting these characters on stage an actor might find him/herself in the contradictory place, i.e. aiming simultaneously at revealing the tension between the realistic objectives his/her character possesses, the sense of truth they carry, and the character's behaviour conditioned by its archetypal mask. To help the actor out of this performative conundrum the translator must remember to outline the importance of verbs not adjectives in the new score, as it is verbs not adjectives that contain the characters' objectives and actions, whereas adjectives help actors to imagine or feel but not enact the action on stage. In his directorial reflections, Nicholas Leno speaks about this element of relational translation. He identifies his directing process with pedagogy of actor, based on teaching his cast searching for playable verbs and seek horizons of expectations for each character, and following at the same time the rhythmical forms of the text itself.

Gogol's humor is embedded in the structure of each scene, so a translator must aim at moving this entire structure across the languages. Humour is in the characters' actions and their rhythmical patterns; so we must find verbal equivalents to these patterns in a target language. What the characters say might be of secondary importance; what they mean, how they act, what

objectives they carry and how their speeches are related to each other are the points of concerns and responsibility in the relational translation.

To Conclude: Creative conditions of relational translation should be discovered every time anew, as it is possible the approaches we found working on the text of Gogol might not apply to the texts written by another Russian author. Thus, to translate relationally is to also accept that as theatre is temporal and ephemeral so are theatre translations, as they must be made anew for contemporary to them audiences. In theatre, together with the play's compositional elements we translate cultural, historical and theatrical contexts, adapting them to the needs of our target audiences. In this aspect, relational translation is similar to a new play development· As Sidiropoulou explains, in theatre translation "interaction can be occurring horizontally on stage, between fictional addressees, and vertically between translator and target audience." (19) This way a theatre translator has to take into consideration the expectations of the audience as articulated to him/her by a theatre director. Relational translation takes into account material conditions of a future production, including its geographical location, producers, designers, and audiences. At the same time, the translation team should embrace a possibility of a failure, as it is very possible that the new text will not be a copy of the original, just it's another version. In this, relational translation is like intercultural theatre practices as understood by Eugenio Barba, who proposes to walk along the rhythms and musical patterns of the source text creating the dance of a translation in the new theatrical language.

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