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“HYPOTRANSLATING” AND “HYPERTRANSLATING” THEORIES

in Nabokov's *Anja v strane chudes* (1923) and *Eugene Onegin* (1975)*

Over the last decades, scholars have offered manifold interpretations of Nabokov's translations, especially regarding *Anya v strane chudes* (i.e. the translation of Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, 1865), and *Eugene Onegin* (i.e. the translation of Pushkin's *Evgenij Onegin*, 1799-1837). Wilson, for instance, in the 70s, criticized Nabokov's *Eugene Onegin*, labelling it as pedantic and obsolete. Eskin, later in the 90s, analysed the same work from a semantic perspective and Bethea focused on the issue of bilingualism by comparing Nabokov and Brodsky; Rosengrant examined Nabokov's different theories of translation enunciated in the foreword to *Eugene Onegin*. More recently, Fet has analysed the cultural and semantic differences between the English and the Russian versions of Carroll's work, and Vid, starting from the target audience's perspective, has offered an interesting and complex analysis of the different characteristics of the domesticated and foreignized translations in, respectively, *Anya v strane chudes* and *Eugene Onegin*, (see Wilson 1972, 209-37; Rosengrant 1994, 13-32; Bethea 1995, 157-84; Eskin 1997, 1-32; Vid 2008, no pagination; Fet 2009, 47-55). In the light of these hermeneutic routes, the purpose of this paper is to develop such concepts as the “domesticating” process of cultural transposition and the “foreignizing” process of literal translation, by adopting Newmark's theories of communicative and semantic translation. The analysis will go beyond the borders of domesticated and foreignized translations; it will contextualize Newmark's concepts within the coordinates of a wider “frame” representing the different degrees of the (de)familiarizing process towards the target audience. Such a “frame” ranges from the target audience-oriented approach to translation to a more complex one, which is more distant from the reader's perspective. The former reads like a “smooth” and simple style, in that it tends to “hypotranslate”, to carry out a cultural translation and to maintain a certain conceptual correspondence

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between the source text and the target text. The latter is represented by a “rough” style, which “hypertranslates” and requires from the target reader an in-depth knowledge of the cultural setting of the source text.

The issues of the use of language and bilingualism are central in Nabokov’s poetics and are strictly connected with his education. The vicissitudes that compelled the Nabokovs to live as emigrants, gave Nabokov a particular sensitivity to the problems of language and translation. Unlike other bilingual writers, who used a second language to abandon their mother tongue, like Joseph Conrad, Nabokov never relinquished his interest in translations from Russian into English and vice versa. During his long exile in Western Europe, he never stopped reading and studying works in English, thus “forging” his future as an American writer. Despite the criticism of some among the Russian emigrées, such as Georgij Adamovich and Mikhail Osorgin, who accused him of having lost his Slavic roots, Nabokov’s tendency to reveal himself through the “deforming mirrors” of the Russian language, even in his American works, testifies to his deep bond with the Russian substrate (see Adamovich 1975, 219-31).

Nabokov elaborates his conception of translation as an adaptation of a text into a different culture in his first translations of tales and works by English and American writers. His translation of *Alice in Wonderland* constitutes one of the first experiments, in which Nabokov applies his theory of translation as a process of cultural transposition: he “slavicizes” Carroll’s fantasy world and adapts the names, the characters and the story for the Russian readers. As Steiner observes, “[Nabokov’s] Russian version of *Alice in Wonderland* [...] has long been recognized as one of the keys to the whole Nabokov oeuvre” (Steiner 1970, 122). Although Carroll’s work is apparently simple, as a story written for a target audience of children, many critics, such as Demurova, point out the complexity of the text, so that “the early translators of Carroll had to introduce the Russian reader to a most unusual book in which verbal and logical nonsense, all sorts of puns and parodies, played an important role” (Demurova 2003, 184). Nabokov had to use a “functional” translation of *Alice in Wonderland*, considering the audience it was addressed to and, as a consequence, designed it as an aid to scholarship. Hence, the necessity to adopt a communicative translation as well as hypotranslating devices. According to Newmark, “a communicative translation is likely to be smoother, simpler, clearer, more direct, more conventional, conforming to a particular register of language, tending to undertranslate, i.e. to use more generic, hold-all terms in difficult passages”, whereas “a semantic translation tends to be more complex, more awkward, more detailed, more concentrated, and pursues the thought processes rather than the intention of the transmitter. It tends to overtranslate, to be more specific than the original, to include more meanings in its search for one nuance of meaning” (Newmark 1981, 39). Nabokov’s approach to the translation of Carroll’s text had to follow the principles of the Soviet school, that asked for communicating “the distinctive character of one people to another, to convey mutual understanding across the barriers not just of language but also of cultural-historical experience” (Leighton

1991, 83). In the wake of such an interpretation, translation is a matter of culture whose task is to render and represent the cultural elements of the source language as best as possible. Carroll’s text contains various elements, as well as parodies of pedagogic poems and rhymes, typical of Victorian times, that clearly ridicule the institutions and the models of the world of children.

Nabokov’s first aim is to solve the problem of reproducing the humorous background of Alice’s story, coping with passages, texts and hypotexts unknown to the readers of the target language. He, therefore, paves the way for cultural translatability, namely the cultural translation of the elements and the units of the source text, by adopting a target text-oriented approach. Such an attitude to translation, however, does not deteriorate his style for the sake of the readers’ taste. On translating the text, Nabokov does not mean to modify or distort the original text to conform to the aesthetic tastes of the Russian readers. As to the main errors made in translation, in fact, he states that “the [...] worst degree of turpitude is reached when a masterpiece is planished and patted in such a shape, vilely beautified in such a fashion as to conform to the notions and prejudices of a given public” (Nabokov 1941, 160). By considering the formalist concept of “polisystem”, as the “entire network of correlated systems – literary and extraliterary – within society”, Nabokov confirms the necessity to have an in-depth knowledge of the cultural and linguistic systems of the two languages he is working with (Gentzler 1993, 114). The first example of Nabokov’s practical and not artificial approach to the translation of Carroll’s work lies in the translation of the title itself. It introduces the Russian readers into Carroll’s macrotext, since it uses cultural units that are familiar to the Russian context. In spite of Newmark’s thesis of the untranslatability of proper names, according to which “names of single persons or objects are ‘outside’ languages, belong, if at all, to the encyclopedia not the dictionary, have [...] no meaning or connotations, are, therefore, both untranslatable and not to be translated”, the name of the protagonist, Alice, becomes Anya, instead of being transliterated into the foreign form “Alisa” (Newmark 1981, 70). Nabokov introduces his Russian readers into the macrotext of *Alice in Wonderland* by means of the title, and does not leave the name of the protagonist untranslated, as it usually happens. The name Anya fits the Russian context and decreases the sense of foreignness conveyed by the name “Alisa”.

Having solved the problem of the approach to translation, Nabokov’s choices as he translates are remarkable when he renders the “frames” of the story, that is to say the units of words that are combined with longer sentences: he gives them ambiguous and polysemantic overtones. Such frames include puns, allusions, proverbs and idioms. In the ninth chapter of *Alice in Wonderland*, for example, in which Mock Turtle boasts his education in front of Alice and lists the subjects he has studied, Carroll makes use of a pun, “Reeling and Writhing”, a paronym of “Reading and Writing” (Carroll 2002, 103). The allusion to reading and writing becomes explicit if the reader considers the whole narrative context. The pun is typical of the source language and its translation into the Russian version requires a lexical substitution conveying its alliterative effect. Nabokov

chooses the verbs “chesat i pitat” (namely “scraping” and “feeding”), acronyms of “chitat i pisat” (“reading” and “writing”); he employs a hypotranslating nuance, in that the phonic architecture of the text is made smoother and more direct, even by using verbs of different semantic denotations (Nabokov 1976, 85).¹ The pun is rendered by means of homophonic lexical elements in both texts, that are chosen more for stylistic than for semantic reasons. The process of cultural translation in *Anya v strane chudes* also stands out in the transposition of historical names and allusions, which abound in Carroll’s work. In the second chapter, for instance, Alice is surprised of being ignored by the Mouse, and says “ ‘Perhaps it doesn’t understand English. [...] I daresay it’s a French mouse, come over with William the Conqueror’. (For, with all her knowledge of history, Alice had no very clear notion how long ago anything had happened)” (Carroll 2002, 34). On translating these sentences, Nabokov preserves the Mouse’s French identity: “Veroyatno, eto frantsuzskaya mysh, ostavshayasya pri otstuplenii Napoleona” (Nabokov 1976, 18), namely “It is probably a French mouse that has remained after Napoleon’s withdrawal”. As a result, Nabokov’s compromise of preserving the French Mouse’s identity in the Russian text is balanced by his choice of turning William the Conqueror into Napoleon. The translator associates the Mouse with two different French invasions and changes the historical setting of the target text: he “transposes” it into the Russian context, by alluding to Napoleon’s withdrawal from Russia.

Nabokov’s translation choices in *Anya v strane chudes* seem to take advantage of what Molnar names “noetic licence”, with some slight changes, as this theory refers to so-called “self-translators”. According to Molnar, writers who translate their own works use the advantage of their authorial position to manipulate the process of self-translation, thus concealing from the readers the literary devices and tools which make a translation sound suitable for the target context (see Molnar 1995, 333). Nabokov seems to adopt a similar approach, as if he were the author of *Alice in Wonderland*; he even assumes the perspective of a self-translator. He appropriates Carroll’s text and shapes it by following certain criteria of “cross pollination”. Nabokov transplants elements of the source text into the cultural context of the land of the Romanovs. As Steiner claims, in so doing the translator invades a text, takes its content away with him and literally “imports” it into the “ground” of the target text (see Steiner 2004, 356). The translator reproduces, therefore, the same phonic effects of the source language from a Russian perspective and he often changes, at the same time, the lexical framework, without altering the original spirit. He adopts a delicate approach in the transition to the Slavic world and makes remarkable changes which do not violate the rules set by Carroll. In light of this, Nabokov preserves the extravagant setting of the source text before the Russian readers, by adopting a special “camouflaging” technique, also when rendering idioms and place names. The words and phrases that he uses in his

¹ All the subsequent references will be to this edition and page numeration will be given in the text.

translation are often heterogeneous, but they fit the cultural background of the target text and, under a diverse “lexical appearance”, they disclose the nature of the original one. Some of the characters in *Alice in Wonderland* are emblematic of certain English idioms, such as the “Cheshire-Cat”, which is the source of the idiom “to grin like a Cheshire cat”, namely to smile broadly. Carroll provides a particular representation of this character:

The only two creatures in the kitchen, that did *not* sneeze, were the cook, and a large cat which was lying on the hearth and grinning from ear to ear.

“Please would you tell me”, said Alice [...] “why your cat grins like that?”

“It’s a Cheshire-Cat”, said the Duchess, “and that’s why. Pig!” [...]

“I didn’t know that Cheshire-Cats always grinned; in fact, I didn’t know that cats *could* grin”.

“They all can”, said the Duchess; and most of ‘em do”.

(Carroll 2002, 72)

The Russian expression that Nabokov coins to translate the English idiom is named after a Russian feast, the “maslenitsa”, that is the so-called “Mardi Gras”. The name of the Russian feast is used by Nabokov to translate the English idiom into Russian, “Maslyanichnyj kot” (Nabokov 1976, 51), the “carnival cat”. The semantic effect of “to grin like a Cheshire cat” is conveyed by means of the Russian saying “Ne vseгда kotu maslenitsa” (Nabokov 1976, 52), which is, in turn, connected with “Ne vse kotu maslenitsa”, “every day is not a feast”. In Carroll’s text the Duchess says to Alice that all Cheshire cats can grin. Nabokov writes in his translation that “Ne vseгда kotu maslenitsa. [...] Moemu zhe-kotu – vseгда. Vot on i ukhmylyaetsya” (Nabokov 1976, 52), that is “It is not always a feast for cats, but it is always for mine. There he is, grinning”.

Nabokov proves to be more concerned with sounds and words than with their referential meaning in his translation of Carroll’s parody of Ann and Jane Taylor’s poem “The Star”. Such a parody emphasizes the monotony and the tediousness of the text, whose repetitions facilitate children’s memorization: “*Twinkle, twinkle, little bat! / How I wonder what you’re at! [...] / Up above the world you fly / Like a tea-tray in the sky. / Twinkle, twinkle -*” (Carroll 2002, 82-83). Nabokov clearly focuses on both cultural and phonic transposition, since he does not only replace Ann and Jane Taylor’s text with a parody of a Russian folkloristic work, but also preserves the rhymed structure of the poem in the target language. He makes some changes in the Russian song, usually sung during Mardi Gras, by eliminating its original allusions to alcohol, not pertinent in a text addressed to children. The tedious function of the repetition “Twinkle, twinkle” is replaced by the anaphoric alternation “Ryzhik, ryzhik, gde ty byl?” (Nabokov 1976, 62). The text is then translated as follows: “Na polyanke dozhdik pil? [...] Vypil kaplyu, vypil dve, / Stalo syro v golove” (Nabokov 1976, 62-63), that is “Delicious lactarius,

delicious lactarius, where have you been? / Did you drink any drizzle in the clearing? / Did you drink a raindrop, two raindrops, / Did your head become damp”. Unlike the source text, in which the Dormouse repeats in its sleep “*Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle*” (Carroll 2002, 83), in the target text it says: “*syro, syro, syro, syro*” (Nabokov 1976, 63), namely “moist”. The allusion to drunkenness is quite direct. Nabokov’s translation, once more, proves to be stylistically and phonically original, since, although changing the semantic value of Carroll’s words, it reproduces the alliterations and the two rhymed couplets: *byl / pyl* and *dve / golove* (Nabokov 1976, 62-63). Moreover, the Dormouse is translated as Sonya, deriving from the Russian “son”, namely “sleep”. Such a lexical choice underlines the link with the English “dorm”, and confirms once again the accuracy with which Nabokov translates proper names. The author of *Anya v strane chudes* does not use circumlocutions. He “undertranslates” and employs precise and direct words, without embellishing the text with artificial devices. To quote Grayson, Nabokov, “in his translation of the alliteration and onomatopoeia, [...] will often modify and change his meaning in order to give an equivalent auditive effect” (Grayson 1977, 176). The semantic substitutions in *Anja v strane chudes* are “shifts”. They are required “by the different structures of the source and target languages”, and make semantic changes in the target text possible, as they are not important elements of the plot (Weissbrod 1996, 221). They generate a “creative transposition into a different system of signs”, and convey the message of the source text (Venuti 2000, 69).

In opposition to the theories of translation that Nabokov applies to *Anya v strane chudes*, the translation of *Evgenij Onegin* is structured according to the rules of literal translation. As Steiner confirms, Nabokov did not regard literal translations of lines as a deception (see Steiner 2004, 293). In the foreword to the book, Nabokov actually claims that literal translation is “true translation”, in that, as a translation intended for educated people, it renders the contextual meaning of the source text, by using the associative and syntactical means of the target text (see Nabokov 1990, viii). As Baer writes, “Nabokov’s concept of literal translation was one that developed during the years he spent on his English translation of Pushkin’s *Evgenij Onegin*, which, like his translations of Lermontov’s *Geroi nashego vremeni* and *Slovo o polku Igoreve*, were intended primarily or at least initially for American students of Russian literature” (Baer 2011, 179). Nabokov intends Pushkin’s work for readers who have a fair knowledge of Russian, to facilitate their comprehension of the original text. Nabokov does not change the structure of the stanzas. He retains the fourteen lines and follows the order of the words; he “sacrifices” the rhymes and the phonic effects and applies, as a consequence, the principles of literal equivalence. To quote Wilson, the target text is written in a “bald and awkward language which has nothing in common with Pushkin’s or with the usual writing of Nabokov” (Wilson 1972, 210). On reading the lines of stanza eighteen in the fourth chapter, the reader may soon perceive a sense of awkwardness: “You will agree, my reader / That very nicely acted / Our pal toward sad Tanya” (Nabokov 1990, 183). The translation of the lines reflects the syntagmatic structure of the source text, since

the order of the words is retained: “Vy soglasites, moj chitatel, / Chto ochen milo postupil / S pechalnoj Tanej nash priyatel / [...]” (Pushkin 2000, 222).² Nabokov justifies his translation as a need to “rearrange the order of words to achieve some semblance of English construction and retain some vestige of Russian rhythm [...]” (Nabokov 1990, viii). Nabokov employs this approach to the translation of Pushkin’s work, in order to convey a sense of “otherness”; he uses expressions and phrases which an English reader may not be familiar with. Something similar happens in the following lines:

Buyanov, my mettlesome cousin,
Has to our hero led
Tatiana with Olga; deft
Onegin with Olga has gone
(Nabokov 1990, 223)

The lines would sound quite unnatural to an English reader because, as Wilson observes, “[t]he natural English here would be *and* not *with* [...] I suppose that we have here the same idiom, which Nabokov has translated literally” (Wilson 1972, 212). Actually, in Pushkin’s work one reads “Tatyanu s Olgoyu” (Pushkin 2000, 292). The use of the Russian preposition “s” (“with”) serves the purpose to create a rhyme with the following line, “Onegin s Olgoyu poshël” (Pushkin 2000, 292), and it is used likewise in the English text. Such a foreignized style, which uses an irregular syntactic structure in English, allows Nabokov to convey a sense of linguistic estrangement in the target reader’s perspective. As a matter of fact, Pushkin’s work may sometimes sound foreign even to a Russian reader, owing to the presence of numerous intertextual references. Nabokov’s *Eugene Onegin* seems to represent a “counter-translation”, that is to say *another* space of translation that acts as an equivalent place and offers an alternative and uncommon reality. Nabokov’s translation “deviates” from certain syntactic norms of the language, to serve the logic of literal translation, and stands for a deforming mirror whose function is to invite the reader to overtranslate and to understand Nabokov’s source text-oriented translation.

Nabokov is literal while translating some stanzas with references to foreign writers or expressions.³ Although adopting a literal translation, he pays attention, at the same time, to the phonic effects of the work. In stanza number eight, first chapter, which

² All the subsequent references will be to this edition and page numeration will be given in the text.

³ Such stanzas reveal the cultural influence of other European countries on Russian society, as well as Pushkin’s knowledge of Italian works, such as Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata*. Although some critics think that Pushkin did not fully appreciate Tasso’s works, there is evidence that the former knew such poets as Ariosto, Homer and Virgil. In addition, he loved Italy, the country of freedom and culture (see Pushkin 2000, 534).

contains references to English culture, Nabokov uses the alliteration of the velar consonant “c”, in order to convey Onegin’s coldness and immobility. The latter are underscored by the anagram of Byron’s *Childe Harold*, containing the adjective “cold”: “the Russian ‘khondria’ / took hold of him [...]. To shoot himself, thank God, / he did not care to try, / but toward life became quite cold. / Like Childe Harold “ (Nabokov 1990, 112). The original text reads as follows: “*russkaya khandra / Im ovladela [...]; / On zastrelitsya, slava bogu, / poprobovat ne zakhotel; / No k zhizni vovse okhladel. / Kak Child-Harol*” (Pushkin 2000, 108). The English translation proves to be faithful to the original, since the velar sound is repeated both in the source and in the target text. Likewise, Nabokov preserves the fricative sounds in the second stanza of the first chapter: “Thus a young scapegrace thought, / with posters flying in the dust, / by the most lofty will of Zeus / the heir of all his relatives” (Nabokov 1990, 96), namely: “*Tak dumal molodoj povesa, / Letya v pyli na pochtovykh, / Vsevyshej voleyu Zevesa / Naslednik vsekh svoikh rodnykh*” (Pushkin 2000, 76). Although the fricative sound “Thus”, “Thought”, “with”, “dust”, “Zeus”, and “relatives” is rendered by means of different lexical elements, such as “povesa”, “Vsevyshej”, “Zevesa”, “Naslednik”, “vsekh” and “svoikh”, the translator makes the rhythm of the lines smoother and frantic, in order to introduce the subject to the reader at once. On the one hand, Nabokov, as a literal translator, works in a “no man’s land” from both a psychological and a linguistic point of view, as he carries out a *mot à mot* translation (see Steiner 2004, 376; Wilson 1972, 209-37). On the other hand, he gives his translation a didactic architecture and, owing to its literalism, makes it a useful guide for learners of Russian. Once again, Nabokov proves that literal translation, unlike lexical and paraphrastic translation, “has the best chance [...] the only chance [...] of carrying over full literary meaning from one language to another” (Rosengrant 1994, 17).

Nabokov employs a literal approach even when he translates stanzas containing allusions to facts and events of Russian culture, since they are not transposed, like in *Anya v strane chudes*, into the target reader’s cultural setting. Pushkin is self-referential and hints at autobiographical facts in the above-quoted second stanza of the first chapter. The lines “Friends of Lyudmila and Ruslan” (Nabokov 1990, 96) and “But harmful is the North to me” (Nabokov 1990, 96) are addressed to Russian readers, because they hint at Pushkin’s work *Ruslan i Lyudmila* (1817-20) and at his exile in the North, respectively. In this context, the audience is supposed to know Pushkin’s biographical elements, to confirm once again the high level of learning which is required of the reader. Nabokov retains the cultural references of the source text and renders the exact meaning of every single word. He sacrifices the formal and stylistic effects and uses a source text-oriented approach. Such an approach is supported, for the target reader’s sake, by a rich corpus of notes, which are not only appended to the translation *Eugene Onegin*, but actually make up a much bulkier second volume of the translation, aimed at explaining and clarifying the numerous references to the cultural setting of the source text. This vast paratextual apparatus facilitates the translator’s task

in his choice to use a semantic translation; it even “re-writes” some parts of the book and makes its numerous allusions to other literatures and historical events explicit, with the frequent quotation of passages and lines by different European writers and philosophers. The second volume represents the commentary to *Eugene Onegin* and is divided into two parts. The first part is composed of 547 pages and the second one is composed of 384 pages; this confirms the remarkable function of the notes within the structure of the book to help the target reader grasp every single line of the work (see Nabokov 1990, 3-547; 3-384). The substitution of the “cultural” units with elements of the English world would compromise the specificity of the cultural-historical coordinates of the source text. Nabokov’s translation does not distort the close relationship that Pushkin establishes with the reader, as well as the referential function which is revealed in the time-space relationship. Nabokov thus preserves the cultural identity of *Evgenij Onegin* without changing the relation between text and context. As a consequence, Pushkin’s translation, unlike *Anya v strane chudes*, raises a sense of foreignness in the supposed English reader and, at the same time, emphasizes the hypertranslative overtone of the text. The supposed educated English reader, in fact, is invited to read the text over and to comprehend and reconstruct the Russian historical background, thus metaphorically overtranslating the cultural references in the target text. The relation between translation and intertextuality becomes natural, and it is strictly connected with the translator’s knowledge of the two linguistic and cultural systems he deals with. Nabokov is aware of the fact that the language-culture equation is very complex, and that it is necessary to adopt different translating approaches to make a translation “work” in a different cultural context.

Onegin shares with Childe Harold his misanthropy and hypochondria and is, therefore, inspired by other texts and then recomposed by Pushkin, who turns out to be the “child” of a universal culture. Nabokov recognizes the numerous historical and literal allusions to foreign cultures in his translation of *Evgenij Onegin* and, by means of his literality, conveys the universal meanings of Pushkin’s work. As he writes in one of his letters to Wilson in 1957, “I have been studying the question of Pushkin’s knowledge of foreign languages for about ten years now and really you should not send me to *Rukoyu Pushkina*” (Karlinsky 2001, 350). By “rukoyu” he may mean his hand (“ruka” in Russian), and so he seems to state his full knowledge of the Russian poet, by asking Wilson not to take him “by his hand” in the complex analysis of Pushkin. Nabokov does not need a further guide when he studies Pushkin. His translation can be read with the help of its source text and its notes, without necessarily using a dictionary, and proves to be a sub-cultural system which lies, in turn, within the largest cultural system of the target language. It addresses the Russian language learners, who intend to have a thorough knowledge of the language itself. As Boyd writes, “[1]oyal to the irreducible particulars of Pushkin’s genius, to Pushkin’s natural, effortless individuality, Nabokov also inevitably demonstrates his own innate singularity, so much of which lies in his more conscious, more thoroughgoing, more dogmatic, pursuit of the particular”

(Boyd 1991, 355). Nabokov’s route from hypotranslation to hypertranslation within the “frame” of the (de)familiarizing process towards the target readers allows him to carry out his linguistic experiments and to find his own identity. He can cross the narrative and hybrid “spaces” of different literal and cultural traditions, “much like Ada’s Antiterra”, in Fet’s words (Fet 2009, 55). Such a transition from an opposite strategy of translation into another one does not lead to the incoordination of the source texts though, and it represents a process of cultural and linguistic enrichment. Nabokov carries out his task, but avoids any entropic effects on the original texts; he “balances” the features of the source texts with the exigencies of the target readers and adopts different approaches according to the different cultural settings.

The effects of entropy on translation, as well as the physical concepts of the death and the destruction of the universe, have been discussed by Steiner himself, who traces their origins back to Clausius in 1865 (see Steiner 2004, 196). On transposing the cultural setting in *Anja v strane chudes* and using a target reader-oriented approach, Nabokov may risk to generate an entropic phenomenon, with the consequent annihilation of the structure of the source text. Translation is an act of “linguistic and cultural manipulation”, and its processes of application may vary according to the aims of the translator. However, Nabokov’s translations respond to two different needs, in so far as they are addressed to two different categories of readers. When Nabokov translates the linguistic and cultural world of Carroll’s book, he uses a domesticated style which does not compromise the original structure of the text; it simply “forges” some expressions to maintain their phonic effects. He adopts an adequate style, which meets the target reader’s expectations and exigencies, and, at the same time, keeps the rhythm and the puns of the source text. Although Nabokov transposes *Alice in Wonderland* into a different context, his choices to translate and render certain phonic effects, as well as cultural and historical references, are coherent with the essence and the structure of the source text. He averts the entropic process that a free translation could generate. Moreover, his foreignizing touch in *Eugene Onegin* turns out to be effective, in order to preserve a style for literate people. Despite its apparent phonic and stylistic imperfections, the work preserves the purpose of the source text, since it keeps the numerous hypotextual references and information implicit. Nabokov is faithful to the encyclopedic configuration of *Evgenij Onegin*, and manages to convey its quintessential structure, by relying on the paratextual “scaffolding” of his translation and his readers’ erudition. Some lines in *Eugene Onegin* could sound unnatural to an English ear, but Nabokov avoids the entropic effects of the potential destruction of both the source and the target texts, thanks to his lexical and phonic sensibility, which is supported by the ample apparatus of notes to the text and its commentary.

Nabokov develops many elements that still lie in a potential state in the original work. His translations express his “trans-nationality”, i.e. his route from Europe (*Anya v strane chudes*) to America (*Eugene Onegin*), and mark the passage from the European

“innocence” and “smoothness” of his narrative and translation techniques to the “rough experience” of the American phase.

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