

Romeo and Juliet in Ukraine: the interface of semiotics and translation studies

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Abstract. This article is the first one to provide its readers with the in-depth overview on the theory of semiotics as well as to analyze and compare five Ukrainian translations of the greatest tragedies of Shakespeare from the semiotic prospective. One of the key scene full of different semiotic codes is under view of this research. The analysis helps to distinguish and explain the main themes and motifs of the play, translator's methods and decisions, as well as to figure out the role of signs in the process of translating.

Keywords: translation, semiotics, structural analysis, code, sign, Shakespeare, Barthes

Ukrainian translations of *Romeo and Juliet* have paved its way for readers for more than a century. It is thanks to bright minds of translators that the main heroes, Romeo and Juliet, still continue to live in the hearts of millions. It is no secret that the great playwright was in fond of grandiloquent metaphors, allusions, pragmatically and semantically charged phrases, and whatnots. Such an *arsenal of rhetorical riches* helped the author to create authentic images and hidden meanings which pose great difficulties for translators. Shakespeare is such a tough nut to crack for translators of all time. Semiotics proves it as well.

The present article is an attempt to compare and analyze the structures of the translations of the tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* in order to find out its hidden meanings, themes, motifs and semiotic codes as well as to explore solutions and methods of each particular translator. To conduct such a comprehensive research a variety of methods are used, including literary, semiotic, linguistic and translational methods, descriptive and comparative methods, method of a text structures contrasting, transformational analysis, thesaurus analysis, semantic translational analysis, communicative analysis (of a dramatic specificity of a text).

Translation Studies keeps evolving all the time. Due to its interdisciplinary nature, translatology and intertwines with different scientific domains, such as Functional Stylistics, Linguistics, Genre Studies, Anthropology, Cultural Studies and Semiotics. Let us focus on the last one since questions of Semiotics from the translational perspective have become pretty much en vogue in the scientific circles nowadays. In short, Semiotics is a science of signs. Nevertheless, the best and most popular definition of the term semiotics is provided by U. Eco, who states that semiotics is concerned with everything that can be regarded as a sign. Semiotics involves the study not only of what we refer to as 'signs' in everyday speech, but of anything which *stands for* something else. In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects. Contemporary semioticians study signs not in isolation but as part of semiotic *sign-system* (such as a medium or genre). They study how meanings are made and how reality is represented [3, c. 2].

Semiotics deals with the developing and explaining of new meanings, which is called semiosis. This term stands for the translation process, within the framework of which a *code* is decoded. It brings Semiotics and Translation Studies together.

Dinda L. Gorrée, a Dutch translator, theorist, and semiotician, notes that translation can be assimilated to semiosis, or sign activity in the sense that semiotics studies the transmission, and the interpretation of the meanings consisting one or more signs, which is rather similar to the issues translation studies addresses [6, p.10].

A. Popovič, a famous Slovak researcher and translator, stresses that the literary text is connected with the cultural linguistic system. He notes that the semiotic aspect of

translation deals with the discrepancies appearing in the process of translation because of the removed in time and space texts of translation. Hence, Semiotics plays an important role in translation [9, p. 16].

This is quite an interesting statement in the light of the topics discussed here, since Ukrainian translations of the famous *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare are made systematically for more than 100 years [3, p. 361]. The translators worked in different times and circumstances, and it is clear that their readings are likely to differ from each other and even from the original.

The first notable debates on signs appear in the Ancient world. Then Semiotics continues to develop worldwide until the 20th century that a full-blown semiotic awareness appears, under the auspices of two founding fathers – F. de Saussure and Ch. Peirce. In the Saussure's semiotic theory, the definition of a sign as a bilateral mental activity of the signifier and the signified is of vital importance. The signifier is a purely material aspect of the sign. The sign becomes as such when acquires the meaning (Valeur). In this respect, a verbal sign is called an acoustic image. The signified is integral from the sign's signifier and, in fact, created by the signifier. The signified concerns a mental aspect. Central to Saussure's understanding of the linguistic sign is the arbitrary nature of the bond between signifier and signified [5, p. 4-7].

If the standpoints of Saussure are quite blurred, Ch. Peirce has an opposite point of view: *Logic, in its general sense, is, as I believe I have shown, only another name for semiotic, the quasi-necessary, or formal doctrine of signs. By describing the doctrine as 'quasi-necessary', or formal, I mean that we observe the characters of such signs as we know, and from such an observation, by a process which I will not object to naming Abstraction, we are led to statements, eminently fallible, and therefore in one sense by no means necessary, as to what must be the characters of all signs used by a 'scientific' intelligence, that is to say by an intelligence capable of learning by experience* [8, p. 98].

As for the term *sign*, here Peirce says about a triadic theory: **Representamen** (the sign itself) which has a relation to an **Object**, which relation entails an **Interpretant**. The Object is that which the Sign/Representamen stands for – although it is slightly more complicated than that, because it can be: a) an Immediate Object (the object as it is represented by the sign) and b) dynamic object (the object independent of the sign which leads to the production of the sign). The Interpretant is the trickiest of the lot. It is not the "interpreter". Rather it is a *proper significate effect*. Most often it is thought of as the sign in the mind that is the result of an encounter with a sign [5, p. 20-22].

Hence, this principle of an Interpretant producing further signs is, in everyday terms, quite familiar. We are all aware of how one sign triggers a chain of associations which eventually seem quite removed from the initial sign. In Semiotics, this potential – and it is only a poten-

tial, simply because normal practice dictates that we need to go to work, execute chores, sleep etc., rather than constantly produce signs – is often referred to as **unlimited semiosis** [5, p. 26].

In this light, semiosis in terms of translation means that an Interpretant, or a translator, interprets and decodes his/her own *interpretants*. In other words, the background knowledge, professional expertise and personal worldviews of translators influence the process of translation.

Roland Barthes, a prominent French linguist and semiotician, left a remarkable heritage in the domain of semiotics, introducing many respective terms. He showed how to make a semiotic, structural and textual analysis. His viewpoints are taken as the principles for this research. Barthes divides the notions *Work* and *Text*. But *Romeo and Juliet* will be considered here as both a work and a text. If the first notion, as Barthes notes, concerns a fragment of substance, occupying some space on a book's shelf, the second one stands for a field of methodological operations. One can hold *Work* in his hand, while *Text* is held in a language and exists only in a discourse. It is not about the preference of *Text* over *Work* – on the contrary, *Work* is an imaginary trail of *Text*. *Text* is felt only in a process of production. *Text* "cannot stop" (for instance, on a bookshelf) – it has to move through something (through a work or a series of works) [2, p. 415] Thus, we have the Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* as a work with the whole range of imaginary images and Ukrainian translations of *Romeo and Juliet* as texts. There are at least 7 versions of the tragedy so far, not to say a word about stage- and film versions. They all are different because the text was moving through different values, concepts and customs of corresponding times the translators worked in, through their inner and outer worlds [4, p. 361].

Let us start with dividing the play's text into the key *lexias*. Barthes views *lexia* as a unit of text which encodes different meanings. It will be better for the analysis, if there will be from one to three meanings in one *lexia*. Then we need to find out these meanings. Under the no-

tion *meaning* not the dictionary clearly defined meaning is understood, but something else, namely, connotations of a *lexia* and associations connected with it, its secondary shades of sense. Then it is necessary to gradually move through the text. At this point, according to Barthes, the *page-by-page unfolding* of the text takes place [2, p. 426-428]. It is purely a structural approach to the analysis of the text, because it intends to find out not the original meaning of the text, but the plural reproductions of its meanings. To translate such a work is a challenging task, especially when it comes to the questions of style.

Another important principle of the analysis lies in focusing on the concepts of Code and Sign. The word Code, according to Barthes, should not be understood in "a purely scientific sense" of the term. Codes are merely associative fields, a supertext organization of meanings that impose an idea of a certain structure; Code, by Barthes, belongs mainly to the field of the culture; codes are certain types of already-seen, already-read, already-done; code is a specific form of this *already* that constructs any writing [2, p. 455].

It is worth saying a few words about the relationships between the two above-mentioned notions, i.e. Code and Sign. Though de Saussure studies language code (*langue*) in general, he emphasizes the signs mean something not on their own, but only when they are interpreted in relation to each other. In this respect, Jakobson stresses that the creation and the interpretation of text depend on the presence of codes or rules of communication [7, p. 573-574]. While a meaning of Sign depends on Code in which it is enclosed, codes create a field within which signs matter. We cannot give someone or something the status of Sign, until it does not work in Code (author's translation) [3, p. 176].

The first thing that springs to mind when we think of *Romeo and Juliet* is love and noble feelings. In the process of analyzing the text and its Ukrainian translations, however, another leading code becomes obvious. Having met his newest cousin and enemy, all rolled into one, Tybalt, Romeo hears *villain* in his address and politely responds to it:

<p>Original: <i>I do protest I never injur'd thee, But love thee better than thou canst devise, Till thou shalt know the reason of my love, And so, good Capulet – which name I tender As dearly as mine own – be satisfied.</i> [15, p. 139]</p>	<p>P. Kulish: <i>Ніколи я тебе нічим не скривдив, І більш тебе люблю, ніж ти міркуєш, Не знаючи, за що тебе люблю. Доволі з тебе, любий Капулетте: Люблю твоє ім'я, як і своє. [12, p. 64]</i></p>
<p>V. Mytsyk: <i>Я протестую, бо тебе не кривдив, бо більш люблю тебе, ніж ти гадаєш, покиль не відаєш причин любови. То ж, Капулетті мій, чие ім'я люблю, як власне, цим задовольнись.</i> [13, p. 9]</p>	<p>Hozenpud: <i>Тібальте, зроду я тебе не кривдив! Ти й не збагнеш, чому тебе люблю я, Допоки сам любові не збагнеш. Мій Капулетті, знай – твоє ім'я Для мене рідне – досить з тебе цього? [11, p. 88]</i></p>
<p>I. Steshenko: <i>Ніколи я тебе не ображав І більш тебе люблю, ніж ти гадаєш. Але за віщо - зараз не скажу. А через те, мій добрий Капулетті, Чие ім'я шаную так, як власне, Не гарячкуй і з цього вдовольнись.</i> [14, p. 361]</p>	<p>Yu. Andrukhovych: <i>Не завдавав я жодної образи Тобі і відчуваю тільки приязнь До тебе. Жаль, звичайно, причину не смію називати. Капулетті, Будь певен: я твоє ім'я шаную Не менше власного. [10, с. 107]</i></p>

These lines trace the code of a love-inspired, wingy state of mind of Romeo. His words *love thee better than thou canst devise*, *good Capulet* prove it as well. In translations, we see that the features of Romeo's current emotional state vary; different sub-codes of love appear. In Kulish's translation, Romeo often repeats such words as *тебе, люблю, любий Капулетте*. The use of a tautology

in the rhetoric code of the statement is rather inappropriate because Romeo seems to be either nervous or mocking, that why he repeats the same thing. In fact, the boy is trying to calm Tybalt down by means of lofty words rich in synonyms.

Moreover, it's worth mentioning a few words about *enjambement*, a French word meaning that words or phrases

are carried over from one poetic line to the next one without terminal punctuation. We can see this technique used by all the translators, except Kulish and Steshenko. The latter one, however, succeeds in retaining all the beauty and idiomaticity of Shakespeare's thought.

Hozenpud delivers nicely the rhetoric code of the Romeo's utterance, but by making the words of the boy more precise «*твое ім'я / Для мене рідне – досить з тебе цього?*», the translator adds fuel to the fire of the already complicated relationship between boys from the conflicting families. Although the code of action is introduced in the translation, the original lines of the tragedy show, in contrast, that Romeo does not want this fight to happen (i. e. he don't mean to act). Steshenko lofty interprets the major codes and sub-codes of this lexia. As a result, we have a perfect translation.

Andrukhovych, in his turn, simplifies his translation, replacing the literature code of that time to the code of the today's literature. Romeo speaks lines in the modern Ukrainian literary language. But there is something common between the *oldest* translation of the tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* made by Kulish and the *latest* translation by Andrukhovych, namely, tautology: *Не завдавав я жодної образи / Тобі і відчуваю тільки приязнь / До тебе*. The latter mentioned translator does this line much better because Romeo's reiteration stresses and underlines the meaning that *I hold nothing against you, Tybalt, on the contrary, I appreciate you*.

Thus, the tragedy is riddled not only with pure love. Hatred is another leading motif of the play. They are "the best of friends" of any love relationships. It is the above-mentioned lexia where hate emerged and plot tied. It is a turning point of *Romeo and Juliet* when the play takes a tragic turn.

The feud boils over not only in the heart of Tybalt. On hearing Romeo's polite response to Tybalt's abuse, Mercutio, being a man with a short temper, exclaims: *O calm, dishonorable, vile submission! / Alla stoccato carries it away.* / [Draws.] [15, p. 139]. Here it is clear that the code of hate comes through these words. Hatred, however, also has different forms of expression. Mercutio flies into a rage, but he does it lofty, in the Shakespeare's manner. He don't speak directly to Romeo; words slip out of his mouth in such a way that everyone understands who he is talking about. Thus, here lies the symbolic code. Three Ukrainian translators treat the lines as follows: **Kulish:** *Безчесна тихість, пакісна покора! / Alla stoccata змиє з нас сей сором* [12, p. 64]. **Steshenko:** *О ти, покоро, підла і ганебна! / Alla stoccata змиє вмиє її. / (Видобуває шпагу)* [14, p. 361]. **Andrukhovych;** *Оце прогнеться! / Нічого, справу виправить ранира. / (Видобуває раниру)* [10, p. 107]. If the first two translators reproduce this phrase in a poetic way, more or less following the original, the latter one excludes euphemisms that make up the socio-cultural and rhetorical codes of the tragedy and introduces the present-day slang word *прогнутися*. He also changes the Italian expression *Alla stoccata* to *справу виправить ранира*, applying such transformations as lexical substitution, addition and modulation. As a result, Andrukhovych's version is deprived of the beauty and originality of the words of the Shakespeare's hero.

The other two translators successfully manage to maintain the main semiotic codes in this lexia: **Mysyk:** *О, цей безчесний, тихий, підлий послух! / Alla stoccata геть його знесе* [13, p. 10]. **Hozenpud:** *Покірливість огидна і ганебна (Виймає шпагу) / Alla stoccata разом кривду змиє* [11, p. 89].

Romeo's desperate attempt to part the fighting boys seems to end up with the opposite of what he wants – his

words excite even stronger feeling to duel. Mercutio pulls out a weapon and Tybalt asks what he wants. Mercutio answers: *Good King of Cats, nothing but one of your nine lives* [15, p. 141]. In addition to the code of hate, one can find sociocultural, sociolinguistic and rhetorical codes here as well. The image of a cat is probably an issue here, since it concerns different linguistic worldviews and linguistic authenticity of both English and Ukrainian. For English speakers and, probably as it was for Shakespeare, the connotative meaning of the term *cat* triggers a negative features while for Ukrainians there is no bad meaning in *cat* (here such a word contains good features only). It is impossible to display this ambiguity in the Ukrainian translations. To compensate for the loss of the sociolinguistic and the symbolic codes, the next three translators reinforce the rhetorical code: **Hozenpud:** *Шановний котячий володарю, я хочу відібрати у вас одне життя з ваших дев'яток* [11, p. 89]. **Steshenko:** *Шановний котячий владарю, я хочу відібрати лише одне життя з ваших дев'яток* [14, p. 361]. **Andrukhovych:** *Та нічого, дорогий пане Тиберте Коцький, крім одного з ваших дев'яти котячих життів* [10, p. 108]. Here comes another important issue to be viewed. The English pronoun *you* has 2 equivalents in Ukrainian, that is, *ти* and *ви*. *Ти* is used when speaking to a familiar friend, family member, etc informally, whereas *Ви* is a formal way of addressing one person or a group of people (sometimes it is capitalized in formal letters, papers, reports, in order to enhance politeness).

There is no age or social difference between Mercutio and Tybalt, so it is logical that Mercutio refers to Tybalt with informal *tu-form*. The above-mentioned translators treat the pronoun *your* as polite *Ви* (*ваших*, correspondingly) and due to the context and the codes enclosed in it, this "politeness" is turned into hostility, hatred and mockery.

Other translators fail to transfer the main semiotic codes met in the original, except for the code of action. **Kulish:** *Добрий котячий королю, ні чого, тільки одну з твоїх дев'яток життям* [12, p. 64]. **Mysyk:** *Добрий королю котів, нічого, тільки одне життя з твоїх дев'яти* [13, p. 10].

Mercutio does achieve what he wants and the fatal fight takes place. Here it is introduced the code of chance with the code of fate coming next. Romeo, by the decree of fate, appears between the contradicting parties and Tybalt delivers the fatal blow to Mercutio. This action plays an essential and earth-shaking role in *Romeo and Juliet*. Before breathe his last, wounded and furious because of injustice and hate Mercutio ejaculates: *A plague a' both your houses!* [15, p. 143], which is interpreted by the translators as follows: **Kulish:** *О, прокляття вам* [12, p. 65]. **Mysyk:** *Чума обом домам!* [13, p. 10-11] **Hozenpud:** *Чума на ваші дома!* [11, p. 90]. **Steshenko:** *Чума, чума на ваші дві родини!* [14, p. 362]. **Andrukhovych:** *Чума на вас* [10, p. 110].

The ambiguity and inaccuracy of the semiotic codes depicted in some translations play the crucial role in the pragmatic perception of the scene. Kulish's version is generalized, albeit, the concretization is of vital importance here, while Mercutio curses the very two families. This lexia has the symbolic code because the damnation uttered in the heat of the moment will tragically come true – Romeo and Juliet will perish.

In her presentation of Shakespeare's word, Steshenko recreates the image of Mercutio as best as possible, using emotionally and pragmatically charged words. For instance, a repetition of the word *чума* informs us about a state of extreme excitement of the main hero of the play, as well as a concretization *a plague on both your families*.

It helps the translator to preserve the semiotic code.

Although Andrukhovych shortens the text, the rhetorical code is still reinforced in his version. This method is often used while staging: *Чума на вас / це ви зробили з мене / Харч для черви, чума на васі дві!*. [10, с. 110]. The fine rhymed lines and appropriate pauses make it possible for play's viewers to finish the sentence of Mercutio.

The structural analysis allows us to see that all the five Ukrainian versions of *Romeo and Juliet* are different and depend on different factors. In this light, Barthes suggests the plurality of the translations is not archaic, because everything depends on different forms of knowledge, lying in the core of an image or a text (practical experience, ethnic background, cultural awareness and aesthetic skills) and this knowledge can be classified; an image can be read by several people and these people can freely coexist in a single individual. One and the same lexia can

organize various dictionaries (lexiques). What is a dictionary then? It is a part of a symbolic organization (of a language) corresponding to the methods of a text [1, p. 48].

Consequently, the in-depth structural analysis in light of Semiotics and Translation Studies helps to find out the new codes of the famous Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and sheds the light on how these codes are interpreted or misinterpreted, clears the way on how its losses are compensated in the five Ukrainian translations. There are lots of details which might seem at first glance insignificant. However, it is due to the trivial details and meanings which form the semiotic codes of the leading themes and motifs of the scene. True, all the codes and meanings are impossible to cover just because of the limited space of this research and simply because an exhaustive analysis has no right to exist, since the text is constantly moving through.

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Ромео и Джульетта в Украине: на стыке семиотики и переводоведения

А. Чеботарева

Аннотация. В статье впервые проводится исчерпывающее изложение основных положений семиотики, а также анализируются и сравниваются, в семиотическом плане, украинские переводы величайшей трагедии В. Шекспира о любви на примере одной из ключевых сцен пьесы, где прослеживаются разные семиокоды. Анализ помог выделить главные лейтмотивы пьесы, переводческие решения и методы, а также выяснить роль знаков в процессе перевода.

Ключевые слова: перевод, семиотика, структурный анализ, код, знак, Шекспир, Барт