

Zeitspiel in German and English translations and retranslations of Lesya Ukrainka's "Lisova Pisnya"

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Abstract. The article focuses on exploring Zeitspiel in German and English translations and retranslations of Lesya Ukrainka's drama "Lisova pisnya" by doing a comparative translation analysis of the original source text of 1911 and its German and English translations (1931, 1950) as well as retranslations (2006, 2018 respectively). The article also scrutinizes the potential implications of a translation tendency towards Zeitspiel.

Keywords: translation, retranslation, retranslation hypothesis, Zeitspiel.

The status quo of the modernity with all of its changes and inconsistencies has upgraded and put into perspective the transcendental nature of translation as a product of human boundless intellect and as "an accommodation to the larger context of life" [6, p.47]. With translation becoming even more relevant, especially, since the majority of communication is now online, the dynamics of inter-language transfer is changing as well. Despite the well-known "three percent problem", the increasing number of books in the so-called minor languages gains more and more visibility. It opens new horizons to the literatures of the smaller non-English-speaking countries.

In May 2020, *The Guardian* reported on the increase in time people spend on reading (almost twice as many hours as before the pandemic and the spring lockdown [2]). In September 2020 *The Washington Post* published an article, offering an explanation to the US increase in reading: "As the country has muddled through a deadly pandemic and a racial reckoning under a cloud of exhaustion and dread, we've used books to escape the present, inform our beliefs and educate our homebound children." [5] However, the whole article is devoted to the English-written books by English-speaking authors. Three percent problem remains seemingly immune to the changes of 2020. As David Bellos stated in 2012: "Translations from English are all over the place; translations into English are as rare as hen's teeth" [1, p.211]. Literature of the non-English speaking countries still finds it difficult to enter the West European and American markets. Thus, the aim of this article is to explore the retranslation hypothesis by analyzing the dynamics of translations and retranslations of a literary work in Ukrainian.

The case study of this article is "Lisova Pisnya" (Forest Song, 1911), a masterpiece by Lesya Ukrainka, who is considered to be one of the most prominent Ukrainian authors of the late XIX and XX centuries. Her works are marked by an intrinsic understanding of human psyche as well as the firsthand knowledge and curiosity towards the West European philosophy and lifestyle and, thus, their adaptation in her literary works. The poetess was fluent in English, German, Polish, Italian, Greek etc. Sometimes she even translated her own works or wrote them in L2 (for example, German). That was the case of "Ein Brief ins Weite" (1900), a short story she wrote for the German journal "Die Gesellschaft" (Dresden, 1885-1902) [10, p.546]. The author's mastery of German induced even greater scholastic curiosity towards her work's German

translation analysis since the writer would be able to evaluate them too. However, she died in 1913 long before the first translation of her drama "Lisova Pisnya" (Forest Song) was published in German ("Waldlied" 1931). Its retranslation appeared more than half a century later – in 2006. English renderings of the work date back to 1950 and 2018, with the latter being represented as a part of advertising campaign for a new animated movie "Mavka. The Forest Song" that was set to be released in 2020.

In translation studies retranslation has always been viewed in terms of a win-win partnership, since it can be quite beneficial for both the source and the target texts. Berman's retranslation hypothesis bestows on retranslation a critical mission of completing translation, which he calls an "incomplete act" [3, p.233]. Thus, "a great translation" is the result of the right circumstances being present to provide a translation that will have a lasting effect in the TL literary environment" [12, p.1155]. In that regard the stakes are even higher with "Mavka. The Forest Song" (2018). The latest retranslation of Lesya Ukrainka's play into English is a part of preparation to the international release of the movie, based on "Lisova Pisnya". The original work, being defined as a "song" by the poetess, was out of the ordinary back then at the beginning of the XX century. The central narrative comprises a love story between a supernatural creature – Mavka, a half girl, a half spirit of the forest – and a young man Lukash (*Luke* in English). The story is full of intertwined plotlines and characters, and it is based on the ancient Ukrainian mythology. There is a plethora of supernatural creatures – inhabitants of the woods, plains and rivers, according to the ancient beliefs. The author uses mythology not just for narration purposes but as a main tool of symbolism. This combination (of symbolism and mythology) is an indispensable feature of the work at hand. Thus, it is even more topical to consider the dynamics of translations and retranslations of "Lisova Pisnya" in order to explore the retranslations' tendencies "to favour a more literal rendering of the original than first translations" [12, p.1155] and to evaluate the effectiveness of foreignizing in terms of the literary work pitching process.

One of the main features of "Lisova Pisnya" is its relation to time. The concept of *time* (die Zeit, el tiempo etc.) connects humankind to its roots – its history – the chronology of events (die Chronologie, la cronología etc.). It is also a common denominator for many mythologies, i.e. Chronos (the personification of Time) in ancient

Greek mythology. Thus, the aim of this article is to analyze Zeitspiel (die Zeit – time in German, das Spiel – a game, a play in German), which is a play of time that encompasses gaming with time by shifting timelines in different versions of the same text (source text), from the standpoint of translation and retranslation correlation.

The majority of the play's characters are supernatural mythological creatures and their attitude towards *time* is unlike humans' because they are immortal. However, Lesya Ukrainka aspires to create characters one can relate to and, thus, in the original we can encounter expressions connected to time, used by non-humans in an ordinary way. Their renderings into German or English are sometimes quiet far from the original. For example:

1. "Той, що греблі рве":
Тую Русалку,
що **покохав я змалку**,
бо водяній царівні
нема на світі рівні!" [9, p.9]
- 1.1. "He Who Rends the Dikes":
That Rusalka, blithe and kittle,
Whom **I've loved since I was little**;
For of water nymphs so queenly
There is none I love more keenly. [8, p.171]
- 1.2. Spring Flood
I'm looking for Ondine,
my Water Princess.
I fell in love with her last spring. [9, p.139]
- 1.3. «DER DIE DÄMME EINREISST»:
Die **ich als Knabe geliebt**,
ersehnet habe,
das Nixelein, das Kleine,
an Schönheit gleicht ihr keine! [7, p.22]
- 1.4. "Der die Dämme sprengt"
Die Nympe, der **seit Jahren**
In Liebe bin verfallen,
keine kann in den Reichen
der Flussprinzessin gleichen! [11, p.23]

The supernatural character in the example 1. expresses his sentiment of being in love for a long time, using a common expression – **I've loved (her) since my childhood** (покохав я змалку). The main sense is a strong and lasting (since the beginning of life) feeling. It is preserved in the first English translation of the play by P. Candy (1950) as we can see in the Example 1.1. – **I've loved since I was little**. However, in retranslation of 2018 by V. Tkacz and W. Phipps the timeline has shifted to "**last spring**" (Example 1.2.) and doesn't imply an old feeling any more. Moreover, this time shift changes the profile of the character due to the flirty overtone added by mentioning the spring etc. The same tendency is observed in both German translations. Example 1.3 illustrates that a 1931 translation of the play by E. Bermann remained more faithful to the original – **ich als Knabe geliebt** (I loved as a young boy/lad) in terms of timelines preservation then the latest retranslation of 2006 by I. Katschaniuk-Spiech (Example 1.4. **seit Jahren in Liebe bin verfallen** –for many years). "Many years" presupposes a lasting feeling, however, due to its time unclarity it doesn't render the original sense of "from the very beginning", which in the context of immortal creatures has entirely another meaning and is more significant than "many years". Let us consider more examples of Zeitspiel:

2. Я марила **всю ніченьку**
про тебе, мій паниченьку! [9, p.10]
- 2.1. **All the night, dear**, I've been yearning,
Dreaming that you were returning! [8, p.172]
- 2.2. **All year** I dreamt
of you, my kind sir! [9, p.140]
- 2.3. Ich sehne mich **die Nächte lang** nach dir, [...] [7, p.23]
- 2.4. **Die ganze lange Nacht**
hab' nur an dich gedacht! [11, p.25]
3. Де ти барився?
Ти водяну царівну
зміняв на мельниківну! [9, p.11]
- 3.1. While you were away
A miller's maid seemed fair,
So you forgot me here. [8, p.173]
- 3.2. Why are you so late **this year**?
Haven't you been deceiving
your Water Princess with the daughter of a miller! [9, p.141]
- 3.3. Wo verbargst du dich?
Der Müllerin zu Willen verrietst du mich im Stillen. [7, p.24]
- 3.4. Wo bist du denn gewesen?
Du tauschst die Nympe ein für's Müllerstöchterlein! [11, p.27]

The sentence from the Example 2. represents a flirtatious line of a mythological creature, that is encountered in many mythological systems and fairy tales – a mermaid (русалка). Mermaids like playing, luring and tempting. Lesya Ukrainka's character of a mermaid is no exception, which makes the character very relatable and familiar for English- or German-speaking audience. In the original, the mermaid professes the seriousness of her love by confessing to dreaming of the love object at night, to be more precise – **the whole night** (всю ніченьку). Examples 2.1. and 2.2. showcase Zeitspiel again, since in the 1950 translation the timespan is exactly the same (**all the night**), whereas in 2018 retranslation appears the "**all year**" of dreaming. One night and one year are definitely different time limits, especially in terms of "dreaming about someone" and thus, the character's perception as well as inter-character relationship presentation both substantially deviate from the original. In German retranslation of 2006 (Example 2.4) the time indicator is preserved – **die ganze lange Nacht** (the whole long night) – with the slightly more dramatic hue, expressed by adding the adjective – long (lange). In the 1931 translation (Example 2.3.) the night became nights (**die Nächte**) as well as "dreaming" became "sehnen" (craving, missing strongly), thus, the sense of a flirtatious and playful expression of interest is perceived as a much stronger statement/confession. The aforementioned examples illustrate how Zeitspiel can potentially change the character representation and intervene into the narrative.

Examples 3 and 3.2. also showcase that Zeitspiel is more often observed in retranslations. That is in a 2018 retranslation the character mentions a time indicator (**this year**), which is absent in the source text. In the English translation and two German translations no time changes were made. The translator's intention in the Example 3.2. is unclear since the lines are addressing another supernatural character that doubtfully has clear dead-

lines for being away or coming back, at least there is no such information in the play.

One of the inherent topics connected to *time* is eternity, which is something that mythological creatures possess (most of them are immortal etc.) as opposed to humans. In her mythological drama *Lesya Ukrainka* highlights the eternity seme, playing with the concept when a young man – a love interest of Mavka – assures his supernatural lover that people mate forever/ for eternity (**навiк**):

4. Мавка Чи у людей паруються **надовго**?

Лукаш Та вже ж **навiк!** [9, p.33]

4.1. Mavka (After a little silence)

When people mate,

do they do so **for long**?

L u k a s h **For life**, of course! [8, p.189]

4.2. Mavka: **How long** do humans stay with their mates?

Luke: **For life** [9, p.163]

4.3. MAWKA (nach einigem Schweigen).

Verbinden sich die Menschen denn **für lange**?

LUKASCH **Für alle Ewigkeit**. [7, p.45]

4.4. Mavka (nach kurzem Schweigen)

Vereinen Menschen sich **für eine lange Zeit**?

Lukasch **Für's ganze Leben!** [11, p.63]

The play with the concept of eternity here is based on its familiarity to Mavka (the character understands it literally) and a purely metaphorical use by Lukash (as a figure of speech). Moreover, the male protagonist tries to profess his “eternal” love to Mavka and uses the concept of “mating for ever” in order to lure her into a relation-

ship, which won't last. In both English renderings (Examples 4.1. and 4.2) as well as 2006 German retranslation, the original “for ever” was rendered as “**for life/ für ganze Leben** – for the whole life”. Only in the 1931 German translation (Example 4.3.) E. Bermann left the concept of “eternity” in the TL – “**Für alle Ewigkeit**” (For the whole eternity) and, thus, preserved the original paradox of a human promising a supernatural creature eternal love and partnership, and not the other way round, as well as, rendering the author's intention – to hint at possible insincerity hidden behind loud promises, which are not possible to keep. This example is illustrative of how Zeitspiel was used by the author for loading the context and offering a hint to the reader, which got lost in most of the translations.

In conclusion, it can be stated that Zeitspiel is substantially represented mostly in the retranslations of *Lesya Ukrainka's* prominent drama “*Lisova pisnya*” (Forest Song). Due to the play's mythological and symbolic foundation, the concept of *time/ Zeit* and the way it is treated in translation has a critical impact on the characters perception as well as rendering the subtleties of author's intentional hints for the readers. After analysing German and English translations and retranslations in terms of time reference rendering, we've established that retranslations have a much higher tendency towards Zeitspiel than earlier translations, which sometimes results in the character representation deviations as well as narrative changes, proving that *time* is not a concept to play with.

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