

Contesting Ukrainian Nationhood: Literary Translation and the Russian- Ukrainian Conflict

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Abstract. The use of literary translations as an ideological weapon in the Cold War era has received considerable attention from translation scholars. However, the same tendency in today's world remains underestimated, and research tends to be limited to political and media discourse. This paper examines the use of literary translations in the contemporary RF for contesting Ukrainian nationhood, fueling anti-Ukrainian sentiment and providing public support for the Russian military aggression against Ukraine. The research combines analysis of translated texts with examining factors that influence (non)translation and reception of works highlighting Russian-Ukrainian relations. The study focuses on translations of works by Taras Shevchenko, Nikolay Gogol and Oksana Zabuzhko and the Russian public debate concerning the role of literary translations in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Keywords: literary translation; ideology; manipulation; Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Introduction

The ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war started in 2014, but the conflict between the two nations has a long history. Some regions of Ukraine were parts of the Russian Empire, later Ukraine became one of the so-called “Soviet republics”, and the Soviet power tried to form the new Soviet “supranational” identity¹, eliminating national identities (Kahanov, 2019). After the dissolution of the USSR, the imperialistic ideology gradually rehabilitated in contemporary Russia, and chauvinistic views of Ukraine are typical for the present-day official discourse and Russian information warfare; according to Kuzio (2020), among main narratives towards Ukraine and Ukrainians are the following:

¹ The Soviet people were defined as a new social and international community that “developed in the USSR as a result of socialist transformations and convergence of working classes and strata, all nations and ethnic groups” (Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia, 1976, p. 25).

Ukraine is an artificial country and bankrupt state;
Ukrainians are not a separate people to Russians and Russians and Ukrainians are ‘one people’;
The Ukrainian language is artificial and a dialect of Russian.

This study aims at considering the role of literary translation in forming public opinion concerning Ukrainian nationhood and Russian-Ukrainian relations. It focuses on translations of works by Taras Shevchenko, Nikolay Gogol and Oksana Zabuzhko, dwelling on these issues, and Russian public debate on literary translations and their role in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Different aspects of the interaction of state ideologies and political courses and literary translation when the latter can undergo censorial restrictions and serve as a means of enhancing the dominant ideology have been analyzed by a number of translation scholars. They highlighted translation as an object and an instrument of political and ideological control in European countries under fascism (Rundle, Sturge, 2010) and communism (Vimr, 2009; Sherry, 2012; Rundle et al., 2022) and the role of translated literature in Western democracies as a propaganda instrument during the Cold War (Kundera, 1978; Kates, 2008; Woods, 2012). Of interest for the present discussion is the research on the role of translation in the formation of a nation’s image (Fowler, 1992; Venuti, 2005) or manipulations to make the image of the nation in the translated text correspond to the domestic, already existing one (Munday, 2009).

As for the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war, analyzing official documents and media discourses, Lada Kolomiyets (2020) demonstrates the role of translation as an ideological weapon of the RF; Kostiantyn Gizer and Vira Nikonova (2021) highlight the impact of ideology on the translation of media discourse on the Donbas war and underline the importance of this kind of analysis for the Ukrainian context. However, the similar role of literary translation remains underestimated and under-researched though the combination of Russian imperial and Soviet ideological heritages and the transition to autocracy during Putin’s rule has created a specific situation where literary translation experiences huge pressure from the state. The subject matter of the present study is a manipulative translation of literary works on Ukrainian nationhood and Russian-Ukrainian relations as an instrument of formation of public opinion.

The present work adheres to an interdisciplinary approach. It is based on a linguistic analysis of the original and translated texts and empirical qualitative method, allowing to highlight the state ideological pressure on literary translators and the ideological role of manipulated translations through analysis of documents and publications in (pro)governmental media, supplemented by the research of bibliographical data on the publishing of literary works concerning the Russian-Ukrainian relations.

The theoretical basis of the study is based on the works of Teun A. van Dijk who defines the overall framework for his approach to ideology as “the triangle formed by the concepts Cognition, Society and Discourse” (1998, p. vii) and underlines a special function of discourse “in the expression, implementation and especially the reproduction of ideologies” (1998, p. 316).

The study intends to uncover the Russian imperial ideology underlying (non)translation of Ukrainian literary works. We will analyze the specific linguistic choices and highlight their ideological implications, considering the socio-historical context in which the translations were made/published. We will also scrutinize the Russian public debate on translations of Ukrainian literature and some Ukrainian translations to illuminate the role of governmental institutions and media in using literary translations as an ideological weapon.

The finding will provide a basis for understanding the role of literary translation in contesting Ukrainian nationhood and mobilizing public support for the Russian military aggression against Ukraine.

1. Ukrainian nationhood: politics and literature

In modern times, Ukraine gained independence in 1991, but it had three periods of statehood throughout its history: Kyiv Rus (9th–13th centuries), the Cossack Zaporizhian Host (17th–18th centuries) and the Ukrainian People's Republic (1917–1920). Since the 18th century, a significant part of Ukrainian territories belonged to imperial Russia, then to the USSR²; this fact, together with the genetic proximity of the Ukrainian and Russian languages and wide use of the latter by Ukrainian citizens³ are employed by Putin's administration to contest Ukrainian nationhood (q.v. Putin, 2021).

As national autonomy is based on cultural and linguistic one, the rulers of Russia took measures to limit the development of the Ukrainian language and culture and spheres of their presence from the foundation of the Empire till the dissolution of the USSR. Peter the Great was the first to introduce censorship toward books by Ukrainian publishers (1721). In 1769, Ukrainian primers were forbidden (Kyrienko, 2013, p. 449). In the 19th century, which saw the rise of national consciousness among Ukrainians and the struggle for independent statehood (Kovaliov, 2021; Remy, 2016), the Valuev Circular (1868) banned the publication of literature in Ukrainian, including textbooks and religious texts, and the Ems Ukaz (1876) prohibited the use of the Ukrainian language in print (except for reprinting old texts), theatre and education, as well as the import of Ukrainian published materials. Thus, the use of this language was limited to the family and domestic sphere. Even in the last decade before the Bolshevik revolution (1917), Ukrainian publications were restricted: about 50 per cent of literary translations into Ukrainian were banned, or their storage was permitted only in special depositories, closed to the public (Kyrienko, 2013, p. 450).

According to Andrii Danylenko and Halyna Naienko (2019, p. 20), Russia's rulers treated Ukraine "more severely than other non-Russian areas", which resulted "in a constant, consistent, and long-lasting policy of linguistic russification" and "denationalization".

Nevertheless, Ukrainian literati wrote about national oppression (e.g. Ivan Franko, Yurii Fedkovych, Panteleimon Kulish, Taras Shevchenko). They first published their works in

² After the Soviet occupation of Western Ukraine (1939) and transferring the Crimean region (1954), all the Ukrainian territories were gathered within the UkrSSR.

³ According to the Ukrainian Census of 2001, 29.6 per cent of the Ukrainian citizens called Russian their mother tongue (Vseukrainskaia, 2001).

Western Ukraine, part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, from 1795–1918, where the state censorship was tolerant of national issues (Kyrienko, 2013, p. 451).

In the USSR, the 1920s saw a short period of “Korenizatsia” [Indigenization/Ingraining] when the power supported the cultural development of different nations to “ingrain”, i.e. to win support from different ethnic communities within the country. In 1929, it introduced the new policy aimed at “mutual enrichment” of languages and works of literature (Gorky, 1928, p.1), which in reality meant linguistic and cultural russification (Masenko, 2005; Dziuba, 2012). Ukrainian literature depicting the opposition between the Ukrainian and Russian nations could be published only abroad (*Тузолову* [*Tiger Hunters*] by Ivan Bahriany, *Фавст* [*Faust*] by Hryhorii Kosynka). As will be discussed further, the well-known works by Taras Shevchenko were misinterpreted and manipulated in translation.

In the post-Soviet RF, the choice of Ukrainian literary works for translation depends primarily on the political course of the state. The most sensitive issues, causing manipulation in translation and contentious debate, are Ukrainian nationhood and relations between the two nations, both in historical perspective and at present.

Translations from contemporary Ukrainian literature are published inconsistently in the RF and have a sociopolitical impact. Hanna Uliura (2012, p. 299) points out the “obvious correlation” between publications of translations widely discussed in Russian mass media and the dynamics of Ukrainian sociopolitical life that has resulted in Russian readers’ perception of contemporary Ukrainian writers as “politically engaged figures”.

According to the Russian translator Elena Marinicheva (Perevedi, 2012), the image of the national past represented in Ukrainian literature “cannot but ‘touch the nerve’ of the Russian reader” as this image does not correspond to the one dominating in the “Russian mass propaganda media”; Ukrainian literature “brutally annoys” some Russian readers.

The presence of contemporary Ukrainian authors in the Russian cultural space is perceived as “undermining the foundations of the Russian World” (Makarov, 2011). Stanislav Minakov (2011) claims that publishing translations of such literature in Russia’s literary magazines is “ideological destruction fire at the Russian World”.

It is symptomatic that the panel discussion of translations within the *Ukrainian Motif Moscow Open Literary Festival* (2011) had the name *Ukrainian literature in Russian translations: ‘What? Why? How?’* and dealt with nonliterary factors, influencing Russian translations of Ukrainian literature.

Let us examine translations of well-known literary works by Shevchenko, Gogol and Zabuzhko, taking into consideration the broad historical-political and ideological contexts.

2. Shevchenko the (inter)nationalist

Taras Shevchenko (1814–1861) is a symbolic figure for the Ukrainian nation as his literary activity contributed greatly to the growth of national consciousness. He wrote about the glorious, free past of Ukrainians, oppressed later by the Russian Empire, and the Ukrainians’ aspiration for national freedom; he consistently called on fighting against “Moscow”.

In the USSR, the poet was proclaimed a great *internationalist*, and his nationalistic views were concealed; appeals to fight for national freedom were replaced with calls for social struggle in translations. In the 21st century, no new translations of his poetry were published in Russia⁴, and quotes from Soviet manipulated translations are used in the media discourse today as arguments to charge the Ukrainian side with misinterpreting to foment hatred toward Russia. For instance, in 2015, Professor of Moscow University Andrei Manoilo, in his interview with the major news website Lifenevs.ru⁵ blamed official Kyiv for manipulating Shevchenko's poems to ferment nationalism (Ekspert, 2015).

Let us consider how Russian translations lay the groundwork for manipulating the target reader's opinion; the analysis is based on translations of two famous poems – *Сон [Dream]* and *Кавказ⁶ [The Caucasus]*.

Shevchenko's satirical poem "Сон" is dedicated to the fate of Ukrainians and condemns Russia's imperial policy towards Ukraine. It is symptomatic that the author never uses lexemes *Russia/Russian*, but employs *Москва [Moscow]/московський* instead which suggests that (1) Ukraine is oppressed not by the whole (multinational) empire but its metropole; (2) Moscovia (Moscow principality, a vassal state of the Golden Horde until 1480 which later expanded by seizing neighboring territories to proclaim itself the Tsardom of Russia in 1547 and the Russian Empire in 1721) appropriated the name *Rus*, which originally referred to the medieval state of *Kyiv Rus* whose territories are distributed today among Ukraine, Belarus, Poland and Russia⁷. In the translation of Vladimir Derzhavin, the national issue was completely omitted or replaced with social injustice, which became the main theme of the target text.

Shevchenko begins with the description of different types of people – creators, destroyers, invaders by nature:

*Той мурує, той руйнує,
Той неситим оком
За край світа зазирає,
Чи нема країни,
Щоб загарбать⁸* (Shevchenko, 2003b, p. 265).

⁴ Some of Shevchenko's poems in Russian translation by his offspring Viacheslav Shevchenko were published by Dimur, a minor publishing house in Orenburg, in 1997. Later, Vitaly Krykunenko gathered translations of Shevchenko's works made by contemporary poets and translated *Kobzar* by himself but failed to find funding for publication in Russia (Matusova, 2014); eventually, Krikunenko's translations were published in 2014 in Chernivtsi, Ukraine.

⁵ Life.ru since 2016.

⁶ The carefully censored Russian translations of the poems were first published in Shevchenko's "Собрание сочинений в пяти томах" (1948–49) and later republished several times.

⁷ The conflicting narratives of Ukraine or Russia (Moscovia) being the heir of Kyiv Rus are broadly used in contemporary Ukrainian and Russian political and media discourses (Kappeler, 2014).

⁸ *Someone builds, someone ruins, someone with a greedy eye looks past the horizon if there is a country to conquer.*

Країна, щоб загарбать [a country to conquer] is translated into Russian as *земля, чтобы силой заграбастать [some land to grab]*, which can refer to any illegal land seizure and does not imply conquering a country:

*Этот жадным оком
Высматривает всюду
Землю, чтобы силой
Заграбастать*⁹ (Shevchenko 1972b, p. 226).

Further, the poet ridicules the Ukrainians' submissiveness to the Russians:

*А братія мовчить собі,
Витріцивши очі!
Як ягнята. 'Нехай, – каже, –
Може, так і треба'*¹⁰ (Shevchenko, 2003b, p. 265).

Shevchenko ironically calls the Ukrainians *братія [brethren]* as the word implies a unity/fellowship, but in the Russian text, it is replaced with *люди [men and women]*, and the epithet *убогий [needy]* is added. As a result, the target text tells about the *needy people's* reaction to being abused:

*Молчат люди, как ягнята,
Вытаращив очи!
Пускай: "Может, так и надо?"
Скажет люд убогий*¹¹ (Shevchenko 1972b, p. 226).

Then, the poet depicts imaginary travel of his soul to Saint-Petersburg, where he sees the monument to Peter the Great made by Catherine the Great's order, recalls the emperors' policies towards Ukraine and starts hesitating if the latter still exists:

*України далекої,
Може, вже немає. . . .
Може, Москва випалила
І Дніпро спустила
В синє море, розкопала
Високі могили —
Нашу славу*¹² (Shevchenko, 2003b, p. 276).

⁹ Someone with a greedy eye looks everywhere for some land to grab.

¹⁰ And the brethren keep silent and stare! They are like lambs, saying: 'Let it be; maybe, it must be this way'.

¹¹ The people keep silent like lambs and stare! Let it be. 'Maybe, it must be this way?' the needy people will say.

¹² The distant Ukraine may not exist anymore. . . . Moscow may have burnt it and flushed the Dnieper into the blue sea, desecrated high burial mounds – our glory.

In Derzhavin's translation, *Москва* [*Moscow*] is omitted, and the doer of destructive actions towards Ukraine is not mentioned:

*Может, всю ее спалили,
В море Днепр спустили,
Насмеялись и разрыли
Старые могилы –
Нашу славу*¹³ (Shevchenko 1972b, p. 229).

Further, the poet contemplates the fate of Ukrainian youth – *young flowers, choked by Moscow's henbanes*:

*Україно! Україно!
Оце твої діти,
Твої квіти молодії,
Чорнилом політі.
Московською блекотою . . .
Заглушені!*¹⁴ (Shevchenko, 2003b, p. 277).

Derzhavin replaces the image of *Moscow* with that of the *Tsar*:

*Твои ль то родные,
Чернилами политые
Цветы молодые,
Царевною беленою . . .
Заглушены!*¹⁵ (Shevchenko 1972b, p. 230).

Shevchenko also dwells on the language policy in the Empire, where Ukrainians had to learn the Russian language to be employed, and parents had to sacrifice a lot to provide their children with this kind of learning:

*Можє, батько
Остатню корову
Жидам продав, поки вивчив
Московської мови!*¹⁶ (Shevchenko, 2003b, p. 277).

¹³ *Maybe, it [Ukraine] has been burnt, the Dnieper has been flushed into the sea, the old graves – our glory – have been desecrated.*

¹⁴ *Ukraine! Ukraine! Your children, your flowers have been poured with ink, have been choked by Moscow's henbanes in German hothouses.*

¹⁵ *Your darlings, your flowers have been poured with ink, choked by the Tsar's henbanes in German hothouses.*

¹⁶ *Father may have sold the last cow to Yids [for you] to learn Moscow's language!*

In the translation, *Moscow* is replaced with the *capital* though the capital of the Empire was Saint-Petersburg from 1712 to 1918, and Moscow stands here not for the city, but the state – *Moscovia*; *мова [language]* is translated as *говор [dialect/accnt]*. As a result, instead of the antagonism between the two nations, the translated text hints at the opposition between the centre and the periphery of the country:

*Может, батько
Продавал корову
Последнюю, чтобы выучил
Ты столичный говор!*¹⁷ (Shevchenko 1972b, p. 230).

Due to the manipulations, Shevchenko's image of Moscow as the national oppressor that violates the Ukrainians' rights and whose policy may lead to the complete vanishing of this nation never appears in the Russian translation of the poem.

Similar replacements can be observed in Pavel Antokolsky's translation of the poem *Кавказ*. Shevchenko addresses his friend Yakiv, a Ukrainian soldier who was conscripted into the imperial army and killed in combat for the Caucasus, another Russian colony:

*Не за Україну,
А за її ката довелось пролить
Кров добру, не чорну. Довелось запить
З московської чаши московську отруту!*¹⁸ (Shevchenko, 2003a, p. 348).

Kat [torturer] of Ukraine is used by Shevchenko as a metaphorical name for the Muscovites' Tsar. Antokolsky uses the word *тиран [tyrant]*, meaning a cruel ruler, which implies a conflict between the ruler and the public of the same country rather than between nations:

*Не за Украину –
За ее тирана довелось пролить
Столько крови. Довелось испить
Из царевой чаши царевой отравы!*¹⁹ (Shevchenko 1972a, p. 297).

Further, the author asks his friend's soul to stay in Ukraine, cry with Cossacks, watch over the desecrated burial mounds and wait for him to come back free:

¹⁷Father may have sold the last cow for you to learn **the accent of the capital city!**

¹⁸Not for Ukraine, for its **torturer** you had to shed you good blood, not the black one. You had to drink **Moscow's poison from Moscow's cup!**

¹⁹Not for Ukraine, for its **tyrant** you had to shed so much honorable blood. You had to drink **the Tsar's poison from the Tsar's cup!**

*Живою душею в Україні витай,
Литай з козаками понад берегами,
Розкриті могили в степу назирай.
Заплач з козаками дрібними сльозами
І мене з неволі в степу виглядай*²⁰ (Shevchenko, 2003a, p. 348).

Shevchenko hints at the historical fact that the glorious era of Ukrainians ended after their Cossack proto-state was liquidated according to Catherine the Great's manifesto *On the Liquidation of Zaporizhian Sich and Annexation thereof to Novorossiya Governorate of 1775*. In Antokolsky's translation, the narrator tells to *strengthen friendship with Cossacks with tears* that sounds strange and obscures the author's idea. Besides, the burial mounds in the target text are not *deseccrated* but just *old*, and instead of *watching over* them, Yakiv is to *look round* as if there is no menace to the Cossacks' relics:

*Ты на Украине душою витай
Вместе с казаками мчись над берегами,
Старые курганы в степи озирай.
Закрепи слезами дружбу с казаками,
Меня из неволи в степи поджидай*²¹ (Shevchenko 1972a, p. 301).

As new, uncensored translations are not published in the contemporary RF, the manipulated texts where the image of Moscow as the oppressor of the Ukrainian nation was erased afford ground for blaming the Ukrainian side for *misinterpreting* the far-famed author to inflate hostility towards Russia.

3. Gogol: Ukraine or (Little) Russia?

The public discussion that extends beyond the literary sphere has been provoked by translations of *Тарас Бульба* [*Taras Bulba*], the historical novella by Nikolay Gogol (1809–1852), written in Russian and first published in 1835.

Seven years later, a considerably revised version was published where the Ukrainian nation and culture were defined as Russian. If in the first version Gogol wrote about *Україна* [*Ukraine*] and *український* [*Ukrainian*] *Cossack/nation*, in the second one *Малороссія* [*Little Russia*] and *русский* [*Russian*] were used²². The revised version corresponded to the imperial policy of Russia that denied the existence of the Ukrainian nation (Magocsi, 2010, pp. 15–16); it was republished repeatedly and translated in the Empire and the USSR; the only translation of the first version (by Vasyl Shkliar) was published in 2003.

²⁰ Fly in Ukraine as a soul alive, fly with Cossacks over the waterside, watch over desecrated burial mounds in the steppe. Weep thin tears with Cossacks and wait for me in the steppe to release from captivity.

²¹ You fly in Ukraine with your soul, dash with Cossacks over the waterside, look round old burial mounds in the steppe. Strengthen friendship with Cossacks with tears, in the steppe wait for me from captivity.

²² For a detailed analysis of the two versions, see Bojanowska (2007).

Some translators of the revised version interpreted controversial fragments according to Gogol's unrevised text and the historical truth. Such an approach was used first by Mykola Sadovsky in 1910: in descriptions of Ukrainian nation and territories, he avoided the lexemes *Росія* [*Russia*] and *російський* [*Russian*] and replaced them with *Україна* [*Ukraine*] and *український* [*Ukrainian*] respectively (Hohol, 2005). Another translation with similar replacements was released by diasporic translators in Prague in 1941.

In the 21st century, defining territories and culture as Russian or Ukrainian, as well as the use of the imperial toponyms *Малороссія* [*Little Russia*] and *Новороссія* [*Novorossiia*], acquired special significance in the political discourse while substantiating Russianness of Southern and Eastern Ukraine (Putin's interview (Priamaia, 2014); Marchukov, 2011)). Correspondingly, the way of rendering these lexemes in the translations of *Taras Bulba*, published in contemporary Ukraine, provoked robust public discussion in the RF.

Specifically, Sadovsky's translation was republished in Ukraine in 1998 to become an object of sharp criticism by Russian critics and public figures. For instance, Andrei Vorontsov (2008), in his article in the major literary periodical *Literaturnaia Gazeta* referred to this text as "morally corrupt" and "a monstrous fake".

After 2003, when Shkliar's translation of the unrevised version was published, participants of the biased discussion started criticizing the translations by Sadovsky and Shkliar without identifying the text under consideration. Victor Chernomyrdin, Ambassador of Russia to Ukraine (2001–2009) claimed that Gogol "could not write that" (Shkliar, 2005, p. 3), while Igor Zolotusky suggested that "our state could react to these mutilations of Gogol's works" (Zolotusky, 2009).

4. Zabuzhko's Ukrainians in Russian translation

Oksana Zabuzhko, a contemporary Ukrainian author, described resistance to the Soviet regime and modern Ukrainian society in her novel *Музей покинутих секретів* [*The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*] (2009).

In 2013, the novel was translated into Russian by Elena Marinicheva²³, who condemns anti-Ukrainian activities (Marinicheva, 2007); however, the Russian text contains instances of manipulating Zabuzhko's vision of the sensitive issues. For example, the main character thinks about the use of the Ukrainian language at the turn of the 21st century:

*а серед галичан що, не буває російськомовних? – послухати лишень, як вони всі в одну душу догідливо щебечуть по-російському, іно опинившись у Києві, а українську зберігають, гейби таємна секта, в суворій конспірації перед місцевим населенням, виключно для вжитку 'серед своїх'!*²⁴ (Zabuzhko, 2009, p. 13).

²³ Besides Zabuzhko's novels, Marinicheva translated works by Maria Matios, Evheniia Kononenko and others; her translation of Serhii Zhadan's novel "Інтернат", dedicated to the Donbas war, was published not in Russia but Ukraine, by Meridian Chernowitz publishing house (2017).

²⁴ *and what, aren't there any Russian-speaking people among Galicians? – just listen, how they all as one are twittering Russian obligingly as soon as they arrive in Kyiv and preserve Ukrainian like a secret sect, in strict secrecy to the locals, exclusively for use 'among their own people'!*

According to the source text, Ukrainian Galicians start speaking Russian, *trying to please* dwellers of Kyiv, who are predominantly Russian-speakers²⁵. In Marinicheva's translation, the word *догідливо [obligingly]* is omitted:

*а среди галичан что, не бывает русскоязычных? – послушать только, как они все душа в душу щебечут по-русски, едва оказавшись в Киеве, а украинский сохраняют, как тайная секта, в строгой конспирации от местного населения, исключительно для использования 'среди своих'!*²⁶ (Zabuzhko, 2013, p. 16).

In the target text, Galicians speak Ukrainian only among themselves and are ready to speak Russian as soon as they leave their locality. This interpretation corresponds to the dominant Russian discourse, which represents Ukrainian as a local dialect with a limited sphere of use.

Human dignity is another issue important for understanding the ideological collision between present-day Ukraine and the RF. Ukrainians highly value dignity, and one of the recurrent themes in Ukrainian literature is the theme of people being deprived of it and other fundamental human rights by the Soviet regime. In Russia, however, Putin's administration tries to preserve the treatment of a person typical of totalitarianism – as an insignificant cog in the state machine.

Zabuzhko touches upon the issue of human dignity, describing the travels of Ukrainians around the USSR in search of food during the famine of 1947²⁷. People traveling in cattle cars could satisfy their corporeal needs only when the train stopped due to technical reasons: “*мою ж уяву найдужче вражала ота безстатева оргія квапливого масового випорожнення вздовж состава – легкість, із якою людей перетворювано на стадо*”²⁸ (Zabuzhko, 2009, p. 29).

The author uses a passive participle *перетворювано [(are) turned]*; the construction is not typical of the Ukrainian and serves to emphasize the idea that the people were turned into cattle by the Soviet power, which created the conditions where they had to sacrifice their human dignity to survive. In the target text, the active voice of the verb is used, which undermines the idea: “*мое же воображение больше всего поражала эта бесполоя оргия поспешного массового опорожнения вдоль состава – легкость, с которой люди превращались в стадо*”²⁹ (Zabuzhko, 2013, p. 33). According to the Russian translation, the people turned into a flock easily, apparently because of their nature. Such

²⁵ The situation changed dramatically with the growth of national consciousness during the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity (2013–2014) and after the Russian annexation of Crimea.

²⁶ *and what, aren't there any Russian-speaking people among Galicians? – just listen, how they all as one are twittering Russian as soon as they arrive in Kyiv, and preserve Ukrainian like a secret sect, in strict secrecy to the locals, exclusively for use 'among their own people'!*

²⁷ Besides the consequences of WW2 and draught, the famine was caused by the Soviet regime's economic reform and killed 300,000 Ukrainians (Ellman, 2000).

²⁸ *most of all I was impressed by this asexual orgy of mass defecation along the train – by the easiness of turning people into a flock.*

²⁹ *This asexual orgy of mass defecation along the train impressed me most of all – the easiness with which people turned into a flock.*

interpretation negatively characterizes humans, not the *regime* that had been working for decades to turn human beings into cattle – obedient and shorn of dignity.

Another instance of manipulation that presents the Soviet power in a better light than in the source text is the fragment describing the events of 1941 when Hitler’s army conquered Western Ukraine, previously occupied by the Soviets: “Коли совєти *втєкли*, це інстинктовне, як шостий змисел, відчуття чужого зосталося при ньому”³⁰ (Zabuzhko, 2009, pp. 70–71).

In the otherwise precise translation, the word *втєкли* [*fled*], which emphasizes the Soviets’ weakness before the Nazis, is replaced with neutral *ушли* [*left*]: “Когда Советы *ушли*, это инстинктивное, как шестое чувство, ощущение чужого осталось при нем”³¹ (Zabuzhko, 2013, p. 74).

Due to these manipulations, images of the Ukrainian nation and the Soviet regime in the translated novel tend to correspond to the official Russian discourse.

In the Place of Conclusion

Since 2014, Russian publishing houses have released quite a few fiction books about the war in Donbas, which present events and their participants from the position of the Kremlin and the dominant discourse. According to resumes to the books published by the biggest Russian publishing house EKSMO, they narrate *кровавый кошмар бандеровского геноцида* [*the bloody nightmare of the Banderite genocide*], *зверства киевских карателей* [*atrocities of Kyiv death-squads*] and *героическое сопротивление Новороссии* [*Novorossia’s heroic resistance*] (Bobrov, 2015); *геноцид русскоязычного населения* [*Russophone population genocide*], *Украинские захватчики* [*invaders*] of Novorossia and Crimea (Savitskii, 2014); *укро-нацисты* [*Ukro-Nazis*] and *бандеровские каратели* [*Banderite death squads*] (Berezin, 2014). Such evaluative, emotionally loaded vocabulary and specific terminology are typical of the discourse of the Russian pro-governmental media (q.v. Hosaka, 2019).

In contrast to an abundance of publications presenting the war in line with the official discourse, *no translation* of Ukrainian literature touching this theme has been published in the RF.

Some Russian translators realize their role in (mis)representing information and try to resist the use of manipulated translations for forming and upholding biased, fallacious opinions.

In September 2014, Ad Verbum Translation Institute in Moscow held the Third International Translators’ Congress, whose official slogan was “Literary translation as a cultural diplomacy tool”. Two of its participants, German translators Christiane Koerner and Gabriele Leupold, prepared the Declaration of the Congress on the Events in Ukraine, where the translators express “terror and pain concerning the events in Ukraine and

³⁰ When the Soviets *fled*, this instinctive – like the sixth sense – feeling of something alien stayed by him.

³¹ When the Soviets *left*, this instinctive – like the sixth sense – feeling of something alien stayed by him.

concerning Russia's participation in these events – both military and propagandist ones" and "protest vigorously against the policy of the Russian administration, against the military invasion of Ukraine, against the hate propaganda which distorts the reality and calls people on violence" (Koerner, Leupold, 2014). By 26 September 2014, over 400 translators, including many Russian citizens, had signed the Declaration.

Nevertheless, the official Final Document of the Congress highlights the political situation from a radically different perspective, as conditions of "escalation of international strife, increasing threats to peace and human dignity" (III Mezhdunarodnyi). The role of literary translation in resolving international conflicts peacefully is emphasized regarding translations of Russian literature as powerful means of communicating the Russian viewpoint, which suggests the vision of the RF as a peacemaker. It is self-evident that neither the anti-Ukrainian policy of Putin's administration nor the translators' disapproval of Russia's aggression is mentioned in the Document.

The discrepancy, when the Declaration, signed by the vast majority of the Congress' participants, and the *official* Final Document present incompatible narratives and opposing perspectives, suggests strong pressure by the state.

Thus, the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian war became a watershed in the Russian publishing policy. Before 2014, translations of some Ukrainian literary works were published, though (pro)governmental media presented them as an ideological weapon. After 2014, Ukrainian literature dwelling on the issues of Ukrainian nationhood and Russian-Ukrainian relations was not published in the RF; previously published (manipulated) literary translations, in combination with the one-sidedness of critique, serve to support the narratives contesting Ukrainian nationhood and to blame the Ukrainians for inflating hostility towards Russia thus providing public support of the war against Ukraine.

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