

Tolstoy's Happy Children of Peace. The Wartime Translation of *Sevastopol in December* (1855)*

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Abstract. A geopolitical clash between Russia and other European powers, the Crimean War (1854–1856) witnessed the first mediatized armed conflict in modern history. During the war, the young Lev Tolstoy wrote and published three *Sevastopol Sketches*, based on his wartime experiences in the besieged port of Sevastopol. Upon publication, the first of the stories was translated into French and published within a fortnight. *Une journée à Sévastopol en décembre 1854* featured in *Le Nord*, a Brussels newspaper covertly operated by the Russian government. An in-depth analysis of the translation shows that the text was abridged and carefully groomed to serve Russia's interests and Tolstoy's patriotism made way for an appeal to the target audience, designated as 'happy children of peace.' Elaborating on the origins of the translation and its publishing context, I argue that this particular translation needs to be read both as an act of soft power and as an act of diplomacy. If the target text is considered as a historical document among other sources, empirical historical research can prove beneficial to the discipline and move forward the debate on Translation Studies' approach to highly ideological contexts, in particular translations in periodicals.

Keywords: Russia, translation, periodicals, Tolstoy, Crimean War.

Levo Tolstojaus „laimingi taikos vaikai“. Apsakymo *Sevastopolis gruodžio mėnesį* (1855 m.) vertimas karo metais

Santrauka. Krymo karas (1854–1856 m.) – Rusijos geopolitinis susidūrimas su kitomis didžiosiomis Europos valstybėmis – tapo šiuolaikinėje istorijoje pirmuoju spaudoje aptartu ginkluotuoju konfliktu. Per karą, dar būdamas jaunas, Levas Tolstojus parašė ir paskelbė tris *Sevastopolio apsakymus*, paremtus savo karo metų išgyvenimais apgultame Sevastopolio uoste. Vos apsakymams pasirodžius, per dvi savaites pirmasis buvo išverstas į prancūzų kalbą ir išleistas pavadinimu *Une journée à Sévastopol en décembre*

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1854 Briuselio laikraštyje *Le Nord*, kurį slapta valdė Rusijos vyriausybė. Išsami vertimo analizė rodo, kad tekstas buvo sutrumpintas ir kruopščiai parengtas taip, kad tarnautų Rusijos interesams, o Tolstojaus patriotizmas tapo apeliacija į tikslinę auditoriją, pavadintą „laimingais taikos vaikais“. Aptardamas vertimo kilmę ir jo leidybos kontekstą laikausi nuomonės, kad šį konkretų vertimą reikia skaityti ir kaip švelniosios galios, ir kaip diplomatijos aktą. Tikslinį tekstą vertinant kaip istorinį dokumentą tarp kitų šaltinių, empiriniai istoriniai tyrimai praturtintų vertimo studijas ir leistų kiek kitaip prieiti prie itin ideologizuotų kontekstų, šiuo atveju prie vertimų periodiniuose leidiniuose.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: Rusija, vertimas, periodinė spauda, Tolstojus, Krymo karas.

In Cultural Studies, the representation of war and warfare and the understanding of wartime cultural production have long been on the research agenda. Likewise, within the field of War Studies, there is that reciprocal focus on what Evans (2008: 49) describes as “cumulative history of war,” including the relationship between war, history, and culture. It is worth noting that the research focus has kept pace with the contemporary view of warfare and the increasing importance of ideology and culture as prerequisites for military success (Kujamäki, Footitt 2016: 55). In an era of hybrid warfare, influencing public opinion—whether domestic or foreign—is more than ever an issue. If we adopt an etic perspective and assume that war is a form of a dialogue between nations or cultures, how does one translate these vehemently violent interactions? This rather rhetorical inquiry leads me to probe a historical case of wartime translation and examine what it can bring to the conversation on the interrelation between translation, ideology, and ethics. This paper examines the translation of Lev Tolstoy's *Sebastopol in December*, a story published in Russia in 1855 and almost immediately, while the war was still raging, translated to be published in a Brussels newspaper. This translation has sparked surprisingly little scholarly interest (Regniers 2021: 58–61) and is the main focal point of this paper. Drawing on contemporary sources and performing a rigorous analysis of the translation, we seek to trace the design and motives of this translation. This analysis is embedded in the contemporary context, of which translation was the product, but which it also shaped itself. This paper seeks to examine in what manner the translation was modelled for a new, Western readership. In view of the latter, it also explores the way the medium, a daily periodical, affected the translation. This ties in with the increasing focus within translation studies on mediality (de Groote 2023, Littau 2011) in general and periodicals in particular (O'Connor 2019, Fólca et al. 2020).

1. The Crimean War

A geopolitical clash between the Russian Empire and an alliance of the United Kingdom, Napoleon III's France, the Ottoman empire, and Piedmont-Sardinia, the Crimean War (1853–1856) was the first truly mediatized war. Newspaper reports and photo-

graphs, a brand-new medium at the time, reached the European capitals within days, and the belligerent parties had to cater to public opinion and actively meddled in newspaper's accounts of the events in the Crimean Peninsula (Figs 2011: 143–149). In Russia, the leading literary journal *Sovremennik* ('The Contemporary') received a story by a young writer who, hiding behind the initials L.N.T., processed his wartime experiences in the sketch *Sevastopol' v dekabre mesjace* ('Sevastopol in the Month of December'). Stationed at the port town of Sevastopol, Lev Nikolaevitch Tolstoy—on the verge of gaining literary fame—describes life in the main war theatre in the Crimean Peninsula.

2. The Story

Sevastopol in December accounts for one day at the Crimean port city, between dusk and dawn. Written as a second-person narration, the narrator acts as a guide (Layton 2006: 54–55; Le Gouis 1993: 352–355). Whatever he experiences the reader witnesses as if walking alongside the narrator. Sevastopol's geography is a key structural element of the sketch. The narrator travels from the Northern Side and crosses the Sevastopol roadstead, to the city centre. As Donna Tussing Orwin (2021: 93) writes, "the purpose of the story and its structure is to embed readers in Sevastopol through their imagination of sights, sounds, smells, and time, and show them the true inside story of the war." Arriving at the main dock, the narrator cinematically describes the city converted into a military stronghold before visiting a makeshift military hospital where he talks to injured soldiers and their relatives, and where he witnesses horrific scenes of amputation. The gruesome images, sounds, and smells leave a lasting impression, on the narrator and his imaginary audience (see Knapp 2015: 27–228). After witnessing all the suffering, the storyteller has a drink in a local pub, where he mingles with the locals. The last leg of his tour of the besieged city takes him uphill to the barricades and fortresses. Both the passage of time, the geography of the city, and the events he witnesses create a crescendo. When he finally reaches the infamous 4th bastion, where heavy artillery shelling takes place, the narrator voices his admiration for the city's defenders: "The main and most welcome conviction that you have brought out is the conviction that it is impossible to take Sevastopol, and not only to take Sevastopol, but to shake the strength of the Russian people anywhere."¹

¹ "Главное, отрадное убеждение, которое вы вынесли, — это убеждение в невозможности взять Севастополь, и не только взять Севастополь, но поколебать где бы то ни было силу русского народа (...)"

3. An 'Imperial' Translation

Tolstoy wrote the story between November 1854 and April 1855, and after the approval of both the military and civil censorship (Layton 2008: 15–16), it was featured in the June issue of *The Contemporary*. On June 15th, Tolstoy learned from the journal's editor Panaev that the story was read to the Czar himself. Tolstoy wrote in his diary that he was "flattered" by this.² When Tolstoy met his Peterburg acquaintance Baron Ferzen on June 29th, the latter told him that Alexander the Second had commissioned the translation of *Sebastopol in December* into French. Tolstoy was overjoyed and noted in his diary "it seems that indeed I am beginning to establish a reputation in Saint Petersburg"³ (Tolstoy 1937: 48). The translated Tolstoy's story was published as *Une journée à Sevastopol* ('A Day at Sebastopol'). The generic part of the original title became the translation's subtitle: *En décembre 1854* ('in December 1854'). Added as a second subtitle, between brackets, is the disclaimer "*Traduit du russe*" ('translated from Russian'). The translator is mentioned only by the initials "Y.F." This may refer to Yegorovitch Ferzen, in full: German Yegorovitch Ferzen (1821–1862). It is unusual that he should refer to his father's name (Yegorovitch) and not his first name in initials, but it is not impossible to rule out. Based on the lapidary comments in Tolstoy's diary of June 29th, 1855 ("the Czar ordered the translation of *Sebastopol in December*"⁴, Tolstoy 1937: 48) and the fact that he mentions Baron Ferzen's visit that very same day, the editors of Tolstoy's published diaries and his biographer Gusev both assume that it was Ferzen who informed Tolstoy of the news (Tolstoy 1937: 290; Gusev 1954: 564). Then again, if Ferzen knew about the translation, he may as well have been the translator. Based on the current evidence, this remains a hypothesis, but as a government official and an acquaintance of Tolstoy's, he has a plausible profile. In any case, the use of 'Sevastopol,' with the 'v' as in the town's Cyrillic transliteration (Sevastopol'/Севастополь) instead of the French noun '*Sébastopol*,' suggests a Russian hand.

Even though this 'imperial translation' is the first of many Tolstoy translations in a wide variety of languages, the translation itself was never analyzed. In the following sections, I will perform both a macro-structural (3.2) and a micro-analysis (3.3) of the translation, elaborated with a contextual reading (3.4) of the translation. First, we need to take a closer look at the periodical *Le Nord*.⁵

² "Меня польстило, что ее читали Государю."

³ "Действительно, я кажется начинаю приобретать репутацию в Петербург."

⁴ "Сев[астополь] въ Дек[абре] Государь приказал перевести по Французский"

⁵ The translation was reprinted in the *Journal de Francfort* (July 14, 1855), but no copy appears to have survived. Tolstoy read the translation on July 29 (Tolstoy 1937: 57).

3.1. *Le Nord*

The Tolstoy translation featured on July 7th in *Le Nord* ('The North'), a brand-new Brussels newspaper that had been in the making for some months before the maiden issue came out in early July 1855. Russia being associated with the predicate 'north' ('eastern' is a more recent connotation), it comes as no surprise that the newspaper was designed to uphold Russia's interests in the West at a time when public opinion was not particularly Russophile. The Russian Government carefully concealed its involvement. The Belgian capital was chosen over Berlin, probably due to its neutral status, its liberal press regime, and the proximity of both France and the United Kingdom, Russia's principal enemies during the Crimean War. The Belgian authorities were tipped off about the Russian attempt to stage a newspaper, and both British and French Governments expressed their concerns, exerted pressure on *Le Nord's* host country, and ultimately tried to have the newspaper banned even before its maiden issue was published. The constitutionally guaranteed freedom of the press, which the parliament wished to uphold, was much to the dislike of the French envoy Adolphe Barrot, who accused the Belgians of taking sides with Russia. Ultimately, a compromise was struck: based on immigration law, the foreign collaborators of the newspaper were expelled just a few days before the first issue came out. Both the Russian Nicholas Poggenpohl, a German translator, and the French editor-in-chief Créteineau-Joly had to leave the country. Poggenpohl was a Paris-based diplomat who moved to Brussels in March 1855. Officially a stockholder of *Le Nord*, in reality, he served as its manager. Other diplomats were also involved. One of them was Jakov Tolstoy who had 'managed' the French press since 1837 and was a long-time advocate of a Russian newspaper abroad. All the way through, Russian officials zealously denied involvement (de Nesselrode 1910: 36–40; Tarle 1937: 567; Lademacher 1971: 189–192; Anckaer 2014: 93–94; Ronin 1991: 2–14). In July 1855 the Parisian *La Presse* denounced the claims of Russia's non-involvement:

C'est à la chancellerie de M. de Nesselrode, ministre des affaires étrangères, que s'élaborent non seulement les correspondances, mais encore les articles de fond que publie le journal russe de Bruxelles le Nord. Plusieurs attachés de la chancellerie sont chargés de ce travail et reçoivent mot d'ordre de M. J. Maltzoff; puis les articles sont revus et corrigés par M. Charles de Saint-Julien, ces articles ne sont pas envoyés directement à la rédaction du Nord, mais lui parviennent par l'intermédiaire de la légation russe à Bruxelles. M. le comte Michel de Khreptowich, ambassadeur russe en Belgique, relit de son côté ces articles avant de les expédier, et les purge de toutes les attaques ou insinuations qui pourraient compromettre le gouvernement belge aux yeux de la France. (La Presse, July 21, 1855)

“It is in the chancellery of M. de Nesselrode, Minister of Foreign Affairs, where not only the correspondence, but also the articles published in the Brussels Russian newspaper *Le Nord* are prepared. Several attachés of the chancellery are in charge of this work and receive orders from Mr. J. Maltzoff; then the articles are revised and corrected by Mr. Charles de Saint-Julien, these articles are not sent directly to the redaction of the Nord but reach him through the intermediary of the Russian legation in Brussels. The count Michel de Khreptowich, Russian ambassador in Belgium, rereads these articles before dispatching them, and purges them of all attacks or insinuations which could compromise the Belgian Government in the eyes of France.”

Although we are in the dark about the paper's sources, the detail of the report is certainly notable. De Nesselrode emerges as the spider in the web, and ambassador Kreptowich was his son-in-law. De Saint-Julien was a French journalist, working in Russia (see Speranskaja 2013). The report in *La Presse* was eagerly picked up by other newspapers in Belgium and other countries, causing the attempt to covertly influence public opinion to fail.⁶

3.2. Macro-analysis

Comparing source text and target text on a macro level, based on a word count of both source and target texts, reveals that the translation accounts for 56.02 percent of the original. In other words, more than 40% of the source-text was left out. Notwithstanding obvious differences between Russian and French, this is a significant indication that asks for an in-depth analysis. One element to consider is that intervening in the text was necessitated by the constraints of the newspaper format. Adding sentences, restructuring plot elements, and highlighting features are all practices related to transediting (see Schäffner 2012: 866–869). *Le Nord* featured ‘Une journée’ at the bottom of the page, the so-called ‘rez-de-chaussée,’ traditionally preserved for the feuilleton (serialized novel or story). Separated by a line from the other newspaper content, indicating its separate status and discerning its fictitious content from the news items. Divided into 3 columns and spread over 2 pages, the Tolstoy story was published in a single issue of *Le Nord*. Even if the cuts were functional, this still does not account for the choices made by the translator and/or the editors to deselect certain parts of the texts.

3.3. Micro-analysis

In this section, we compare the three main scenes of the story translation vis-à-vis the source text: the boat trip, the hospital visit, and finally, the sighting of the fourth bas-

⁶ Tussing Orwin (2021: 89) and Mel'gunov (1989: 169) consider *Le Nord* an official Russian newspaper, only at a later stage (the newspaper ran until 1898) was this the case.

tion. In the examples, the text that has not been translated is indicated between square brackets, where the translator deviated from the source text, and the Russian is put between diagonal lines.⁷

3.3.1. *The Boat Trip*

The scene Tolstoy evokes at the onset of the story is the awakening of an army camp at the crack of dawn:

“Le jour commence à peine à poudre sur les hauteurs du mont Sapoun⁸; la [темно-синяя] surface de la mer [сбросила с себя уже сумрак ночи и] n’attend qu’un premier rayon du soleil pour resplendir dans tout son éclat.” (Example 1, TT [ST])

“The day is just beginning to powder on the heights of Sapoun mountain ; the [dark-blue] surface of the sea [has already cast off the gloom of night and] is only waiting for the first ray of the sun to shine in all its brightness.” (Example 1, English translation)

After this outline of the surroundings, the narrator takes a step back to describe the setting:

“Dans la Thernaiia /На Северной/ l’animation du jour commence peu à peu a remplacer le repos de la nuit.” (Example 2, TT/ST)

“In the Thyornaya /on the Northern side/ the liveliness of the day gradually begins to replace the night’s rest.” (Example 2, English translation)

The rendering of the opening scene shows that the translation opts for a less “ornamental” text in favor of a simpler, less literary language. The setting is not on the northern side as mentions the Russian text, but in the ‘Tchyornaya,’ which corresponds with a location at the eastern outskirts of Sebastopol.

After this, the narrator makes his way through the encampment to the waterfront:

“Vous vous rapprochez du port et soudain un goût, une odeur âpre de charbon, [навоза, сыпости] de fumée de viande salée vient saisir votre odorat, et) mille objets divers [дрова, мясо, туры, мука, железо и т. п.] frappent votre vue : des soldats de toute arme/разных полков, с мешками и ружьями, без мешков и без ружей/ se pressent confusément en rond, [без мешков и без ружей] fumant, criant, se disputant (...)” (Example 3, TT [ST])

⁷ The original of the story is set in the Russian pre-revolutionary orthography, in the examples that follow this has been changed into the contemporary spelling.

⁸ Sapoun, most likely a misprint.

“You approach the quay and suddenly a penetrating smell of coal [menure, dampness] smoke of salted meat hits you, and thousand dissimilar objects [firewood, meat, gabions⁹, flour, iron and so on] strike you : soldiers of all arms/from different regiments, with bags and rifles, without bags and without rifles/ crowd around in confusion [without sacks and without guns] smoking, shouting and swearing (...)” (Example 3, English translation)

“*Une foule animée de [серых] soldats, de [черных] мателотs et de [нестрых] femmes encombre les quais.*” (Example 4, TT [ST])

“A lively crowd of [grey] soldiers, [black] sailors and [colourful] women crowds the docks.” (Example 4, English translation)

Example 3 contains a very Tolstoyan sentence, packed with details and digressions (even between brackets). This dense phrase is toned down. Similarly, Example 4 shows how a sentence is stripped of its details by systematically omitting every single adjective.

When the narrator is being sailed to the city via a small boat, he makes the following observation:

“*aux joyeux rayons de l'aurore [и на пенящуюся белую линию бона и затопленных кораблей, от которых кой-где грустно торчат черные концы мачт] la flotte ennemie encadre au loin l'horizon de sa ligne menaçante*” (Example 5, TT [ST])

“in the joyful rays of the dawn [and the foaming white line of booms and sunken ships, from which, in some places, the black ends of the masts sadly stick out] the enemy fleet frames the horizon with its menacing line” (Example 5, English translation)

The vessels were deliberately scuttled by the Russian fleet in order to block access to the Sebastopol roadstead. In the source text, this comment is followed by an extensive section on the sunken ships. Those remarks are obviously redundant as the translation does not mention this maritime line of defenses. However, the translator may as well have taken the opposite reasoning. The excerpt is not only about the arming of one of the sunken ships, but also about the shelling of the town's bulwarks. Instead of a comprehensive narrative on its own defenses, the focus is now on the hostile fleet converging with the horizon.

After disembarking at Sebastopol—the exact location is omitted in the translation—the narrator takes stock of the environment:

“*Ce mélange singulier de la vie des camps au milieu d'une ville changée en un bivouac est loin de présenter un aspect agréable [красивого города и бивуака не привлекательно; повсюду страшный беспорядок; вам даже покажется, што все перепуганы, суетятся, не знают, што делают.]*” (Example 6 TT [ST])

⁹ Baskets filled with sand to reinforce fortifications.

“This peculiar mixture of camp life in the middle of a city turned into a bivouac is far from being a pleasant sight [the beautiful city and the bivouac are not attractive, everything is a terrible mess, you will even feel like everyone is scared, fussing about, and they don’t know what to do.]” (Example 6, English translation)

In this case, the judgement of the besieged city is visibly milder in translation; the sharp edges have been smoothed out by the fact that the most critical remarks have been omitted. Especially the last part of the sentence shows a rather unheroic picture of the people in the besieged city. The fact that this sentence made it into *Sovremennik* at all demonstrates that the censors were not passing a white-and-black judgment, as the “dirty bivouac” from the original, was at the censors’ request tuned down to “bivouac.”

The narrator goes on to depict the residents of Sebastopol and their relation to the siege:

“*[Да! вам непременно предстоит разочарование, ежели вы в первый раз въезжаете в Севастополь.] C’est en vain que vous chercherez sur un seul de ces visages des traces d’inquiétude, de préoccupation [готовности к смерти, решимости, — ничего этого нет]: rien que des hommes ordinaires, des hommes de tous les jours, si je puis m’exprimer ainsi, qui vont tranquillement à leurs affaires [так что, может быть, вы упрекнете себя в излишней восторженности...]¹⁰ On les voit plutôt briller d’enthousiasme dans l’héroïque attente de la mort.*” (Example 7, TT [ST])

“[Yes! You are bound to be disappointed if you enter Sevastopol for the first time.] It is in vain that you will look on one of these faces for traces of anxiety, concern [a willingness to die, resolve – none of this]: nothing but ordinary men, everyday men, if I may say so, who quietly go about their business [So maybe you’ll reproach yourself for being overly enthusiastic...] Instead, we see them shining with enthusiasm in the heroic expectation of death.” (Example 7, English translation)

The translation omits the repeated content of the source text, no longer connecting the fear and anxiety with the willingness to die, which eliminates reservations about the ‘heroic expectation of death.’

¹⁰ The second part of this sentence was censored, the ‘...’ hints at this. The censorship also explains the ‘Instead’ in the following sentence, which refers to the banned passage. In the source text: “*усомнитесь немного в справедливости понятия о героизме защитников Севастополя, которое составилось в вас по рассказам, описаниям и видам и звукам с Северной стороны*” (“doubt a little about the validity of the notion of the heroism of the defenders of Sevastopol, which was compiled in you by the stories, descriptions and sights and sounds from the Northern side”).

3.3.2. Visiting the Hospital

Once in town, the narrator walks into a makeshift hospital. From being a largely passive observer, the narrator now becomes a real-life persona, engaging with the other characters:

“A votre demande prononcée d’une voix indécise, émue par la compassion [нерешительно и робко], vous voyez le pauvre soldat (...)” (Example 8, TT [ST])

“At your request, spoken in an indecisive voice, moved by compassion [hesitant and timid], you are shown the poor soldier (...)” (Example 8, English translation)

Visiting the hospital ward, the narrator is somewhat uneasy when approaching a wounded soldier. “Hesitant and timid” becomes “spoken in an indecisive voice,” supplemented by the clause “moved by compassion” which is an explanation of the way the narrator addresses the wounded person, and turns the narrator’s presumed state of mind more explicit.

The hospital scene consists of four parts: next to the above-mentioned conversation with the wounded soldier, there is a second one with the wife of a badly wounded, dying soldier which was not translated. This passage is particularly poignant and contains sentences like “The heavy smell of a dead body strikes you more strongly, and the devouring inner heat, penetrating all the limbs of the sufferer, seems to penetrate you too.”¹¹

The third scene with the injured woman was partially translated, the passage about her amputated leg being omitted. Finally, the closing scene in the hospital was completely transformed.

This is the version published in *Sovremennik*:

“Now, if your nerves are strong, go through the door to the left: that room is used for dressings and operations. There you will see doctors with bloodied hands up to their elbows and pale, sullen faces, busy around the bed, on which, with open eyes and speaking, as in a delirium, meaningless, sometimes simple and touching words, the wounded man lies under the influence of chloroform. The doctors are engaged in the disgusting but benign business of amputations. You will see how a sharp, crooked knife enters the white, healthy body; you will see how, with a terrible, tearing scream and curses, the wounded suddenly comes to their senses; you will see how the paramedic throws the severed arm into the corner; (...) You will see war not in its proper, beautiful and glittering formation, with music and drumming, with waving banners and galloping generals, but you will see war in its real expression – in blood, in suffering, in death...”¹²

¹¹ “Тяжелый запах мертвого тела сильнее поражает вас, и пожирающий внутренний жар, проникающий все члены страдальца, проникает как будто и вас.”

¹² “Теперь, ежели нервы ваши крепки, пройдите в дверь налево: в той комнате делают перевязки и операции. Вы увидите там докторов с окровавленными по локти руками и бледными угрюмыми

In the translation in *Le Nord*, this has been replaced by:

“Dans une salle à gauche, on voit marcher à grands pas un chirurgien qui se dirige vers un patient étendu sur un lit, ... mais il est temps de tirer un rideau sur ces scènes lugubres, qui ont peut-être déjà choqué les yeux délicats des heureux enfants de la paix.” (Example 9, TT)

“In a room to the left, we see a surgeon striding towards a patient lying on a bed, ... but it is time to draw a curtain over these dismal scenes, which may already have shocked the delicate eyes of the happy children of peace.” (Example 9, English translation)

The translation deliberately avoids the very harrowing description of the operation theatre. What follows is the translator’s creation: only a glimpse is given, and the scene breaks off at the very moment the surgeon is approaching the patient. An allusion is made to sinister scenes that the reader would perceive as shocking. The caution is conspicuous and at odds with Tolstoy’s realistic and blood-stained description. The death and suffering from the original strongly contrast with the “delicate eyes of the happy children of peace.” The theatrical intervention “but it is time to lower the curtain” in turn breaches the second-person narration.

3.3.3. *Sighting of the 4th Bastion*

Once outside the hospital (“this house of suffering,” as the narrator calls it), he takes a break in a pub, where he listens in on the stories being told by the locals, before finally setting course for the strongholds in the hills surrounding the city. The final scene of the story is also the most heavily abridged section, with the translation counting for about 45% of the number of words in the source text. As he makes his way to the fortifications protecting the city from the attacking troops, the narrator describes that uphill journey:

“A une distance de 300 pas /узаво двестул/ vous arrivez sur une plate-forme fangeuse, entourée de gabions, pleine de remblais, de caves, de cabanons, et garnie d’énormes canons en fonte.” (Example 10, ST/TT)

“At a distance of 300 steps/200 steps/ you arrive on a muddy platform, surrounded by gabions, full of embankments, cellars, sheds, and lined with huge cast-iron cannons.” (Example 10, English translation)

физиономиями, занятых около койки, на которой, с открытыми глазами и говоря, как в бреду, бессмысленные, иногда простые и трогательные слова, лежит раненый под влиянием хлороформа. Доктора заняты отвратительным, но благотельным делом ампутаций. Вы увидите, как острый кривой нож входит в белое здоровое тело; увидите, как с ужасным, раздирающим криком и проклятиями раненый вдруг приходит в чувство; увидите, как фельдшер бросит в угол отрезанную руку; (...) увидите войну не в правильном, красивом и блестящем строе, с музыкой и барабанным боем, с развещающимися знаменами и гарцующими генералами, а увидите войну в настоящем ее выражении — в крови, в страданиях, в смерти...”

When he makes it to the bastion, the narrator invites the reader to look at the enemy:

“(...) si vous ne craignez pas de mettre le bout du nez à une des embrasures, vous pourrez distinguer facilement à quelque distance/ не дальше здесь как в тридцати-сорока сажнях/ de là le redan ennemi.” (Example 10, ST/TT)

“if you are not afraid to put your nose to one of the embrasures, you can easily distinguish at some distance/ not more than 30 to 40 sazhen¹³/ from there the enemy redan.” (Example 10, English translation)

It is striking that in both cases, the distances are distorted rather than simply omitted. As with the blurring of geographical indications earlier in the story, it seems to indicate a deliberate policy.

In the source text, as the narrator approaches the bastion, the suspense mounts accordingly. The increasing sounds of whistling bullets and roaring cannons hint at this, as do the people he meets:

*“(...) the soldiers are walking quickly, on the road there are drops of blood, and you will certainly meet four soldiers with a stretcher and on the stretcher a pale yellowish face and a bloody overcoat.”*¹⁴ (Example 11, not in TT)

When he finally reaches the actual theatre of war, the narrator himself experiences first-hand the siege:

*“With a whistling and screeching sound, you will hear fragments explode, stones rustling in the air, and you will be splashed with mud.”*¹⁵ (Example 12, not in TT)

This excerpt was also not translated, nor were the conversations the narrator has with the soldiers in the rampart. These describe in detail the shelling of the fortifications, as these samples illustrate:

*“(...) a blow and a bomb burst; but together with this sound you are struck by the moan of a man. You approach the wounded man, who, in blood and mud, has a kind of strange inhuman appearance (...) Part of the sailor's chest is torn out.”*¹⁶ (Example 13, not in TT)

¹³ Traditional Russian unit of measurement. The enemy lines are at a distance between 63 and 84 meters away.

¹⁴ *“(...) солдаты идут скоро, по дороге попадают капли крови, и непременно встретите тут четырех солдат с носилками и на носилках бледно-желтоватое лицо и окровавленную шинель.”*

¹⁵ *“Со свистом и визгом разлетятся потом осколки, зашуршат в воздухе камни, и забрызгает вас грязью.”*

¹⁶ *“(...) удар и разрыв бомбы; но вместе с этим звуком вас поражает стон человека. Вы подходите к раненому, который, в крови и грязи, имеет какой-то странный нечеловеческий вид (...) У матроса вырвана часть груди.”*

“That’s seven or eight men every day,” the naval officer says to you, responding to the look of horror on your face, yawning and rolling up a yellow paper cigarette...”¹⁷ (Example 14, not in TT)

The most gruesome, often sculpturally described, passages and the seemingly unmoved reaction of the officers have not been retained in the translation. When we turn to the very last paragraphs of the story, we notice that the most patriotic statements were not translated:

“(...) imagine those people whom you have now seen, those heroes who in those difficult times did not fall, but rose in spirit and with pleasure prepared to die, not for the city, but for the homeland. For a long time this epic of Sevastopol, of which the hero was the Russian people, will leave great traces in Russia...”¹⁸ (Example 15, not in TT)

The translator leaves his mark even more explicitly on the changes he makes. In the penultimate paragraph, bulging with patriotism, a concluding remark is added:

*“L’amour seul de la patrie est assez puissant pour produire un semblable dévouement, et vous comprenez alors toute la valeur de cette parole que l’amiral Korniloff adressait à ses héroïques défenseurs, alors que réduits à un petit nombre ils se voyaient privés de toutes les fortifications que l’on est parvenu à élever plus tard. « Enfants mourons, » s’il le faut, mais ne livrons pas Sévastopol ! » Braves de Sévastopol vous avez répondu à cet appel par deux mots que l’histoire à recueillis : « Mourons, ourrah ! » // **Et ces deux mots vous les avez traduits en fait à la face de l’Europe ; et si la grande épopée de Sévastopol est destiné à vivre éternellement dans la mémoire du monde, c’est que vous en avez été les héros.//**”* (Example 16, TT)

“And there is a feeling, rarely manifested, embarrassing in Russian, but lying in the depths of everyone’s soul – the love for the homeland. Only now are the stories of the early days of the siege of Sevastopol revealed, when it had no fortifications, no troops, no physical ability to hold it and yet there was not the slightest doubt that it would not surrender to the enemy, – of the times when this hero, worthy of ancient Greece – Kornilov, making a round of the troops, said, “Die, boys, and not give up Sevastopol” – and our Russians, incapable of philosophizing, answered, “Die! hurray!”// **And in fact you have translated these two words in the face of Europe; and if the great epic of Sevastopol is destined to live forever in the memory of the world, it is because you were its heroes.//**” (Example 16, English translation)

¹⁷ “Это вот каждый день этак человек семь или восемь», — говорит вам морской офицер, отвечая на выражение ужаса, выражающегося на вашем лице, зевая и свертывая папиросу из желтой бумаги...”

¹⁸ “(...) вообразите себе тех людей, которых вы сейчас видели, теми героями, которые в те тяжелые времена не упали, а возвышались духом и с наслаждением готовились к смерти, не за город, а за родину. Надолго оставит в России великие следы эта эпопея Севастополя, которой героем был народ русский...”

The second-person narrator takes a difficult-to-follow leap in these final sentences. Rather than someone who experiences everything as an implied character in the present tense (see Mørch 2021: 108) the narrator is looking back at the end of the story and switches to the past tense. Not only is he testifying about what he experienced for a European audience, he also identifies the soldiers with this persona and accolades them as the heroes of this epic story.

3.4. Context

For most book volumes, the place and date of publishing are relevant, but only to some extent as they are, in some cases, reprinted or re-issued. A newspaper item is much more tied to the publication context. *Une journée* is ambiguous: The subtitle *En décembre 1854* makes it appear as a news report, or a feature story (de Haard 2006). Even though it is a work of fiction, due to the references to locations and the fact that the story is dated, it is likely to have been perceived, read, and translated as a matter-of-fact account of the events at the Crimean war theatre.

Reading a newspaper is a continuous experience, and the accumulated previous issues build up a body of knowledge. Browsing through seemingly disparate items within one issue, the reader experiences a conglomerate effect in this as well. On the very day that saw the publication of *Une journée*, *Le Nord* published on its front page a lengthy editorial about ending the war. A war that, with the siege of Sebastopol is in deadlock:

(...) the military honor of France and England absolutely demands that Sevastopol be taken. But, on the other hand, the military honor of Russia requires, not less imperatively, that it should not be taken (...) We must therefore end this war (...) But how? (...) Why, then, should they not hand over to an arbitrator the task of resolving the question? (...) And could not this arbitrator be, for example, the king of the Belgians, whose wisdom and moderation are generally appreciated in Europe, and who, by his position, would offer to the contending powers the surest guarantees of impartiality? (...) Certainly no monarch would be more worthy and more capable of fulfilling this delicate and supreme mission than His Majesty Leopold I.¹⁹ (*Le Nord*, July 7, 1855)

¹⁹ "(...) l'honneur militaire de la France et de l'Angleterre exige impérieusement que Sévastopol soit pris. Mais, d'un autre côté, l'honneur militaire de la Russie exige, non moins impérieusement, qu'il ne le soit pas. (...) Il faut donc en finir avec cette guerre (...) Mais comment? (...) Pourquoi donc ne remettraient-elles pas à un arbitre le soin de résoudre la question? (...) Et cet arbitre, ne pourrait-il pas être, par exemple, le roi des Belges, dont la sagesse et la modération sont généralement appréciées en Europe, et qui, par sa position offrirait aux puissances contendantes les plus sûres garanties d'impartialité? (...) certes nul monarque ne serait plus digne et plus capable que S.M. Léopold Ier de remplir cette délicate et suprême mission."

A veteran of the Russian armies that defeated Napoleon and being the uncle of Britain's queen Victoria Leopold was well positioned to arbitrate, and earlier in the war, he had tried to mediate. Knowing that the newspaper was produced with the utmost circumspection at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in St. Petersburg and the Embassy in Brussels, this hints at a diplomatic resolution. In early 1855, there had been negotiations in Vienna, while at the battleground each side tried to consolidate a strong position. By June, Russian officials realized that sooner or later, Sebastopol would fall (Figs 2011: 395–448). It is very unlikely that this offer led anywhere. At the time, Leopold was struggling to withstand French and British efforts to recruit Belgium into the Allied camp (Deneckere 2011: 500–527).

4. Conclusions

If Tolstoy's first translation was noticed at all, *Une journée à Sevastopol* was explained as a way to allow the Czar's courtiers to become acquainted with the text (Wilson 1988: 115). This ignores the fact that the text was published in a Brussels newspaper and not in a French-language Russian newspaper. Mel'gunov (1989: 169) also considers the translation from a Russian perspective and assumes that it accelerated the permission to publish military news in *Sovremennik* and other journals. Ronin (1991: 15) and Emerson (2009: 1855), on the other hand, have construed the translation as a way of showcasing to the West Russian heroism. A close reading of the translation and the many shifts vis-à-vis the source text corroborates the motive of Russian heroism to a certain extent. On different occasions, the narrator expresses his admiration for the soldiers defending the besieged town. 'The defenders of Sebastopol' are rendered as 'the *brave* defenders of Sebastopol.' But we should add nuance to this: the courage of the soldiers evidenced by their laconic remarks when under attack, is absent from the translation.

There is more to the translation than a coating with an additional layer. The plot of the story may have remained unaffected, but the emphasis does shift. Looking at the macro-structural level, we observe that the scene on the bastion in the ST is the outspoken climax of the story, both in terms of its length and its intensity. In the TT, in contrast, this is not the case. This means that the other scenes gain importance. Looking at the nature of the omissions, a number of these are micro-omissions, which in fact, while causing a stylistic shift from Tolstoyan enumeration, have no other rationale than to make the text more concise. In the case of the entire sections that have been omitted, it is difficult to maintain that those are of an editorial nature. Two patterns can be discerned. On the one hand, there are the omissions of scenes related to acts of war: the sunken ships in the bay, and the shelling on the bastion. On the other hand,

and at times the two overlap, there are scenes where the tangible physical suffering is addressed, often in great detail.

Deliberately changing a text is unquestionably more drastic than omitting passages. A number of these shifts are text-surgical interventions: words or subordinate phrases that were modified to replace content from the source text by means of summary. When e.g. the narrator glances over the boats in the bay, the source text reads that they are “scattered far and wide over the bay,”²⁰ while the target text merely states there are boats “all over the bay.”²¹ The second category is more far-reaching in its scope. In a number of cases, adjectives related to sensory experiences are given alternative meanings in translation. When the narrator spots a big, heavy madzhar²² (a local type of chariot), in the translation this becomes a **sad** madzhar.²³ In the same paragraph, a particular smell of charcoal²⁴ ends up being a **harsh** smell.²⁵ In both of these instances, the adjective takes on an emotional quality with, moreover, a negative connotation. In this way, the tone of the story changes from Tolstoy's rather optimistic vibe to a more subdued mood in the translation. What makes these changes even more remarkable is that before the publication of Tolstoy's story in *Sovremennik*, the censors deleted a number of very similar comments. For example, in the sentence “everywhere you see unpleasant traces of a military camp,” the utterance “unpleasant traces” needed to be deleted, as it detracted from the picture of the besieged city the government wanted to show the domestic readership. So the translation curiously aligns more closely with Tolstoy's initial intentions in the manuscript.

The geography of Sebastopol, a guiding thread in Tolstoy's story, is in several instances altered in the translation. At the very onset of the story, the narrator crosses the bay from north to south. In the translation, however, the ship moves from a place somewhere in the East to the downtown area, with no indication of the place of docking. When the narrator heads for the bastions, the indications of distances are distorted. The same applies to the distance between the stronghold and the enemy lines. The most plausible rationale behind these changes is a deliberate attempt to keep details about the Russian military infrastructure and positions at the frontline as vague as possible, if not distorting them on purpose. This ties in with the omission of the sunken ships in the bay. At the time of publication, Sebastopol was still under siege, and the translation suggests to be a contemporary account. This is apparent in an added sen-

²⁰ “близко и далеко рассыпанных по бухте”

²¹ “dans toute la baie”

²² “высокая тяжелая маджара”

²³ “une **triste** madjare”

²⁴ “особенный запах”

²⁵ “un odeur **âpre**”

tence about the “more than six months” siege of the city. A statement that holds no water with the intent of Tolstoy’s story which, as is clear from the title, takes place in December 1854 (the siege had begun in October 1854).

The narratee is no longer a Russian audience that reads *Sebastopol in December* as a brimming testimony of patriotism from the besieged city, but a western readership. Whoever prepared the text (we can assume that this was not merely the translator but also the diplomatic team in Brussels and foreign affairs officials in St. Petersburg) took into account the fact that hostile states were reading along and concealed details about military activities. To the extent that they set up false trails and deliberately sneaked false information into the story. The text was also adapted in keeping with the needs of the readership. As the text explicitly states, there was no desire to shock the reader, and little remains of Tolstoy’s anti-romantic depiction of war’s harsh reality. This may be prompted by an awareness of what was prevalent for a European audience, which, in the aftermath of Romanticism, was accustomed to reading highly stylized and heroic war scenes, and for whom all too visible, physical war horror showed an impermissible displayism (cf. Gusejnova 2019: 15). The explicit reference to “Happy Children of Peace” not only shows that they were aware of the new readership, but it can also be read in relation to the appeal to king Leopold to initiate peace negotiations. In this sense, the translation of Tolstoy’s story is more than mere propaganda for the Russian case and can be read as an invitation to dialogue that sits at the intersection of hard diplomacy and soft power.

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