TRANSLATION AND THE PROBLEMATICS OF TEXTUAL INTEGRITY: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TWO ENGLISH RENDERINGS OF FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY'S ДНЕВНИК ПИСАТЕЛЯ

by

GRZEGORZ DANOWSKI

B.A., The University of British Columbia, 2002

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

IN THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

PROGRAMME IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 2003

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Department of Programme in Comparative Literature

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date April 25, 2003

DE-6 (2/88)

Abstract

This paper is a comparative analysis of selections from the two English translations of Fyodor Dostoevsky's Дневник писателя (1873-1881)—The Diary of a Writer (Boris Brasol, 1949) and A Writer's Diary (Kenneth Lantz, 1993). The selections include the short stories "The Meek One" and "Bobok," the fictional epistle "A Half-Letter from a 'Certain Person,'" the semi-fictional sketch "A Hundred-Year-Old Woman," as well as two feullietons: "What Does the Word 'Striutsky' Mean" and "The History of the Verb 'Stushevatsia.'"

While elements of reader response theory and recent translation studies scholarship provided a basic theoretical framework for this discussion, the latter shaped itself mainly as a comparison of the three primary texts: the Russian and the two English translations. This approach made it possible to amass a considerable database of textual detail upon which to draw for pronouncements regarding the difficulties that may potentially accompany translation from Russian into English in general, as well as the difficulties that seem to originate in the peculiarities of Dostoevsky's style. Although an effort has been made throughout to avoid a purely qualitative comparison of the two translations, this analysis frequently favours Lantz's translation as more accurate and flexible in its approach. Rather than constituting the ultimate object of the present study, whenever made, qualitative judgements provide points of departure for inquiry into the nature of the translator's task—one that often involves the ability and willingness to accept the untranslatable.

By considering some parts of Дневник in relation to their English translations, this paper demonstrates that the most important aspect of the work is its "one-ness." Although clearly a combination of genres, it is also a separate genre in its own right. As this analysis proves, the formal paradox inherent in the Diary's very design has until recently puzzled, discouraged, and

challenged both literary critics and translators. Together with Brasol's and Lantz's translations, this paper is offered as an effort aimed at promoting a better understanding of the Diary within the context of Dostoevsky's other literary and philosophical output.

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CHAPTER I Overview and Summary

1.1 Introduction

Many readers know Fyodor Dostoevsky mainly as the author of the now classic novels Crime and Punishment, The Idiot, The Devils, and The Brothers Karamazov. While these novels have been published and read in virtually all world languages, Дневник писателя[1] (The Diary of a Writer; A Writer's Diary) (1873-1881) has remained in relative obscurity. As recently as 1968, D. V. Grishin concluded one of his critical works on the Diary by stating that "[it] cannot and should not be consigned to oblivion" (253).[2] Since Grishin places this statement strategically at the end of Дневник писателя Ф. М. Достоевского (The Diary of a Writer by F. M. Dostoevsky), it acquires a very strong tone of urgency. Why should the Diary be read and researched more often? What makes it an important text among Dostoevsky's oeuvre? There are several reasons that the Diary needs to be introduced to a wider community of readers. First, it is Dostoevsky's most personal piece of writing. In contrast to his major novels, it contains not only fictional transformations of Dostoevsky's ideas but the ideas themselves expressed by a strong authorial narrator in a straightforward, if not blunt, manner. The Diary tells us not only what views Dostoevsky held on a number of important issues, but also what personal opinions he tried to promulgate among his readers. The Diary became a forum from which the writer addressed the public directly and often responded to his readers' feedback concerning his earlier statements. Already a celebrity by then, in 1873 Dostoevsky commenced carrying out in the Diary his lifelong dream of creating a discursive community driven by his journalistic output on the one hand and his readers' reaction to it on the other. The Diary appeared as a series of irregular instalments in the journal Гражданин (The Citizen), which Dostoevsky served both as

editor and sole contributor. The number of subscribers to the Diary soared from 2,000 in 1873 to 7,000 in 1877 (Mochulsky 540, 543), and its publication ceased permanently only with Dostoevsky's demise in 1881.

Apart from being a platform that kept Dostoevsky in direct touch with the public, the Diary also served as testing grounds for his future fiction. Even though it contains only a small number of polished fictional pieces, it allowed Dostoevsky to consider numerous ideas that later were to underpin his celebrated novel The Brothers Karamazov. Many of the reports of sensational crimes, intriguing suicides, and controversial court proceedings that Dostoevsky followed year after year made their way into the Diary. There they were "pre-digested," sorted, analyzed from a variety of angles, and frequently transformed into fictional and semi-fictional discourse ready to become the very stuff of Dostoevsky's literary art. In the Diary we see Dostoevsky flex his artistic muscles and show the reader how an idea is processed into a finished product: fiction.

1.2 Дневник писателя as an Experiment in Genre

Yet perhaps the most important reason to discover and promote the Diary is that it documents Dostoevsky's effort both to develop new literary genres and to rework the already existing ones. Even considered in its entirety, the Diary has been seen as a new literary form.[3] One has to note at this point that the Diary achieved immense popularity long before the era of the now ubiquitous mass media, as well as that Dostoevsky never stooped to cheap sensationalism in order to increase the sales of the Diary. But the Diary can also be considered as a collection of separate texts which, despite being interconnected in the context of the work as a whole, nevertheless bear stylistic features that brand them as representative of a host of

different genres. Among them are short stories, half-journalistic and half-fictional sketches, plans for future short stories, autobiographical essays, psychological analyses of crimes and suicides, literary criticism (including interpretative criticism of Dostoevsky's own fiction), political commentary, political/religious prophecy, a speech, and a rhetorical analysis of a speech. Nor are these all the genres represented in the Diary. The short stories embedded in it come in a variety of sorts. While "Кроткая" ("The Meek One") makes use of interior discourse monologue, "Бобок" ("Bobok") is a *danse macabre*, and "Сон смешного человека" ("The Dream of a Ridiculous Man") is utopian in character. Apart from that Dostoevsky employs in the Diary satire—"Спиритизм. Нечто о чертях. Чрезвычайная хитрость чертей, если только это черти" ("Spiritualism. "Something about Devils. The Extraordinary Cleverness of Devils, If Only These Are Devils"), and an epistolary form—"Полписьма 'одного лица'" ("A Half-Letter from 'A Certain Person.'"

Its variety makes the Diary very difficult to deal with. It is rarely read in its entirety and often pillaged for its fictional pieces: "The Meek One," "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man," "The Boy at Christ's Christmas Party," and "Bobok" are frequently anthologized and, consequently, read outside the proper context of the Diary. Since clearly defined transitions exist between the various segments of the Diary, the fact that the work was originally published serially does not justify the selective approach that is typically adopted toward it. Those sections that cannot be separated from the remaining body of text are either ignored or commented on from a distance. Second-hand opinion about them circulates in place of first-hand knowledge, and issues such as Dostoevsky's anti-Jewish statements or his anti-Western ideology are often mentioned in passing, taken for granted, and rarely subjected to detailed critical treatment. Also the convenient label of an artistic failure is often attached to the Diary.

In view of the above, it is crucial that the Diary be read by all those interested in Dostoevsky and his ideas. Since many of them cannot read Russian, good translations of the work are indispensable. But so far only a limited number of translations of the Diary has appeared. The German Tagebuch eines Schriftstellers (1921-1924, 1996), the French Journal d'un Ecrivain (1972, 1996), the Chinese Zuo jia ri ji (1977), and the Croatian Dnevnik pisca (1982) are among those relatively well known and readily available.

1.3 The Two English Translations of Дневник

The first comprehensive English translation by Boris Brasol—The Diary of a Writer—did not appear until 1949 (reprinted in 1985), and for over four decades was to be the only one. While it has been uncharitably described as "extremely poor,"[4] common courtesy requires that the late scholar be given at least some credit for attempting a translation of Dostoevsky's multifaceted and challenging text. Brasol's translation may and will at times strike one as inaccurate. Nevertheless, it remains as evidence of a laudable effort at blazing a new trail in the field of Dostoevsky research in English. In the early 1990s, Kenneth Lantz produced a new English translation of the text—A Writer's Diary (1993-1994). Anyone interested in comparing these two translations against the Russian original will immediately acknowledge the superiority of Lantz's rendition. Yet it becomes apparent only if and when one is willing to keep coming back to the Russian all the time. Kenneth Lantz seems to have studied Brasol's translation in great detail in relation to the Russian text, and in numerous cases he succeeded in rendering it into English so well because The Diary of a Writer was available to him as a frame o reference: a medium between the "ideal text" in Russian and the better new English translation that he must have set for himself as an objective before commencing work on the project. In other words,

Lantz's task in innumerable instances must have been that of a proofreader's before he could provide his own translation of a particular excerpt. When one compares the wording of specific passages in these two translations, one quickly realizes how much Lantz learned from Brasol's mistakes and to what extent his own sensitivity as a translator of the Diary was shaped by Brasol's apparent lack of it in crucial moments in the text. Thus, Lantz seems to have used the first English translation of the Diary in a very constructive manner, rather than simply dismissing is as poor and therefore useless.

Yet Lantz's success is not only due to the fact that he made improvements to Brasol's translation of the text. In many ways A Writer's Diary is also Lantz's own reading of the Russian—the effect of a long and painstaking process of textual analysis, as well as his personal way of coping with the many challenges that the original offers. The most important of them is that the Diary is a conglomerate of genres. All of them need to be as visible in a translation as they are in the original. The translator cannot treat them all in the same way. His first steps must be identifying the separate genres and working out a strategy that will allow him to render them into English as unique textual entities. They cannot all read in English the same way, but have to strike the reader as different from each other. Understandably, this involves paying special attention to Dostoevsky's lexicon and using as many registers in the English as the author uses in the Russian. Under no circumstances should Dostoevsky's language be homogenized or "smoothed out" in the translation. Colloquialisms and vulgarisms must not be got rid of. The Diary simply cannot be translated by means of an integrated approach. It must be rendered as a collection of different kinds of text.[5]

Another difficulty connected with the variety of material included in the Diary relates not so much to its many separate genres as to the different types of the authorial voice that manifest

themselves in the text. It is still the same Dostoevsky, but he always chooses the voice that will best fit the general thrust of a particular piece. Thus, "Мужик Марей" ("The Peasant Marey") is narrated with a softness that accompanies fond memories of childhood in the country, but the vociferous critique of Spasovich's defense speech presented in "Речь г. Спасовича. Ловкие приёмы" ("Mr. Spasovich's Speech. Clever Tactics") is delivered by a fierce and competent orator. While "Столетняя" ("A Hundred-Year-Old Woman") is told with a warmth reflecting Dostoevsky's filial respect and veneration for an admirable senior citizen, his voice resounds with perceptible coolness when he reminisces about the late Herzen in "Старые люди" ("Old People"). It seems, then, that the polyphony for which Dostoevsky's major novels have been celebrated reveals itself also in the different tones of the authorial voice in the Diary. It takes a musician's ear to be able to discriminate between them and transfer them correctly into the medium of another language.

At the same time, one must not overlook the fact that through the Diary Dostoevsky realizes a communality that includes him and his readers.[6] As Mochulsky's analysis of the Diary also indicates, this communality is, in a very profound sense, the main purpose of the Diary's publication. Therefore, extra care needs to be taken to communicate the personal touch of Dostoevsky's writing in a translation. The frequent occasions on which Dostoevsky addresses his reader directly and makes him and her integral parts of his discourse need to have similar impact in the target language as they have in the original. The atmosphere of mutual trust and honesty that Dostoevsky creates so effectively between himself and the reader through an extensive use of personal pronouns and reader-inclusive strategies needs to appear in its full force also in a translation. The latter must come across as equally personal.

Another important issue that arises in connection with Dostoevsky the author is that of intended meaning in the Diary.[7] Dostoevsky's stance on meaning as originating with the author remains in stark contrast to the now popular reader-based approaches to textual meaning. In the Diary Dostoevsky promotes an author's perspective on the text. After all, it is a *writer's* and not a *reader's* diary. Dostoevsky refuses to submit to the dictates of Barthes' concept of the death of the author (expressed in the essay "The Death of the Author," first published in Mantéia V in 1968). He takes great pains to ensure that the reader finds in the text *only* what he, the author, has placed in it.[8] The strong authorial voice narrating the Diary greatly limits the reader's interpretative manoeuvrability. A competent translator first needs to locate a particular ("Dostoevskian") meaning in the text and then to stress it in the translation. This is no easy task in the post-modern age when readers are used to "writing" themselves into the text. In the case of the Diary, one is free to take initiative in a search for meaning in the text, but it can only be found on one condition—it has to match the meaning that Dostoevsky himself bestowed on it. His text engineers meaning, and therefore the reader must be struck by the text in specific ways. If one does not cry when reading a translation of "Мальчик у Христа на ёлке" ("A Boy at Christ's Christmas Party") chances are that, at least from the standpoint of Dostoevsky, the translator (and by extension, the reader) has entirely missed the whole point of the story. Similarly, if one sees "The Meek One" merely as one-sided critique of conjugal tyranny, it is likely that one writes into the text *only* one's own subjective perspectives on human relationships. From the point of view of Dostoevsky the author, the meaning of the text is always specific. A translator who takes unwarranted liberties with the original will invariably fail properly to render it into a foreign language. Thus, in order to be reasonably successful as a translator of the Diary one first needs to obtain particular insight into the text and then follow

closely every step of the process whereby meaning is generated by the author. Using Wolfgang Iser's terminology one could say that a translator of the Diary needs to focus on the "artistic" aspect of the work, i.e., "the text created by the author" and not the "aesthetic" one—"the realization [of the text] accomplished by the reader" (Iser 50).

No other work by Dostoevsky shows the process of literary creation more explicitly than the semi-fictional sections of the Diary. Dostoevsky typically starts with a dry idea and in front of our eyes puts it through the fascinating machinery of his artistic imagination. For instance, in the article "Среда" ("Environment") he talks about a mother who, having grown tired of her baby's incessant crying, puts the child's tiny hand under the tap of a samovar and, after turning the tap on, deliberately mutilates the baby's limb through prolonged exposure to a stream of scalding hot water. All it takes to move from a fact to literary art is the inclusion of a few details and the use of some particular turns of phrase. As a result, the reader cannot but respond with a mixture of speechless astonishment, fierce anger, and boundless sympathy for the tortured little creature. There *are* no mitigating circumstances here, and there *is* no room for other possible interpretations of the event. Dostoevsky sketches the incident with a few deft strokes of the pen:

> Wait a moment, I'll tell you one more story. Once, before the new courts were established (not long before, however,), I read of this particular little incident in our newspapers: a mother was holding in her arms her baby of a year or fourteen months. Children of that age are teething; they are ailing and cry and suffer a good deal. It seems the mother lost patience with the baby; perhaps she was very busy, and here she had to carry this child and listen to its heart-rending cries. She got angry. But can such a small child be beaten for something like this? It's a pity to strike it, and what can it understand anyway? It's so helpless and can't do a

> thing for itself. And even if you do beat it, it won't stop crying. Its little tears will just keep pouring out and it will put its arms around you; or else it will start to kiss you and just go on crying. So she didn't beat the child. A samovar full of boiling water stood in the room. She put the child's little hand right under the tap and opened it. She held the child's hand under the boiling water for a good ten seconds. (144)[9]

At the same time, Dostoevsky makes sure that the passage has sufficient shock value: "So she didn't beat the child [. . .]. She held the child's hand under the boiling water for a good ten seconds" ("Но она не прибила его [. . .]. Она выдержала ручку под кипятком секунд десять" (2: 207). These two short statements express the whole horror of the scene, because the reader can easily appreciate that being beaten up would have been a blessing for the baby in comparison with the bestial treatment it actually received at the hands of its mother.

What a good translator also needs to take into account in this kind of passage is its authenticity.[10] The reader has to be able to see clearly who or what is being depicted in a given passage and from whose point of view it is being narrated. Authenticity in the example given above entails the virtually tangible presence of the young baby in it. It is not only Dostoevsky talking to us *about* the baby and describing its behaviour and suffering. The baby really comes to life via the medium of the numerous diminutives: "зубки," "маленький ребёночек," "слёзки," "ручки" (2: 207), and remains in the centre of the scene throughout. The success of Dostoevsky's message in the passage hinges upon his convincing portrayal of the baby. This kind of authenticity is very difficult to recapture in translation, but once the translator has realized its importance, s/he will make a conscious effort to achieve it at least in some degree.

In what sense, then, did Lantz improve on Brasol's translation of the Diary? The language of the new translation is certainly more colloquial and better reflects the "chattiness" of the Russian. In contrast to Brasol, who generally employs a rather rigid approach to Dostoevsky's text, Lantz never loses sight of the fact that the Diary as a whole is, in fact, made up of many different texts, each of which is built in accordance with a separate set of aesthetic principles, and that its unique nature has to be obvious also in the translation. While Brasol homogenizes and smoothes out Dostoevsky's text, Lantz resists this temptation, thus better conveying the generic variety of the original. It is only natural that A Writer's Diary should have surpassed The Diary of a Writer. The period of Lantz's work on the translation and the time of its publication coincided with the advent of a new academic discipline—translation studies.[11] Lantz's translation shows visible traces of exposure to new ideas. In it several points of contact are established between translation theory and practice. Lantz clearly favours the so-called analysis-transfer-synthesis approach,[12] in which the finished translation appears only after the original has been carefully considered from a number of angles, converted into the target language, and additionally modified to accommodate both the intended meaning of the source text and the differences between the source language and the target language. Lantz's A Writer's Diary is a milestone on the road toward better literary translations in general and better English translations of Dostoevsky in particular. It demonstrates how new developments in translation studies can be applied to less known and frequently quite challenging texts, in order to make them more accessible to a wider community of readers.[13]

This study of Lantz's translation in relation to Brasol's rendition and the Russian original aims to provide a description of a translated text not as a more or less successful venture, but as a product of a complex process whose objective is to make meaningful in a target language what

has been expressed in a source language. The Diary was chosen for two main reasons. First, because it is hoped that critical discussions of its content in English will continue helping to "open it up" to English-speaking readers of Dostoevsky. Second, because its great formal variety considerably complicates the translator's task, thus naturally inviting inquiry into some of the particular challenges s/he is likely to face when working with it. As well as illustrating the Diary's generic multifariousness, the samples chosen for this analysis exemplify some of the main principles according to which the Diary's diverse content was arranged into a coherent whole. A careful consideration of textual detail is framed by two theoretical approaches: reader response theory and translation studies. While the former helps better to define the interaction between the author-narrator in the Diary and its reader-translator, the latter is applied to relate Lantz's work as a translator of the Diary to the recent developments in the field of literary translation.

CHAPTER II Two Short Stories

2.1 "The Meek One" and Dostoevsky's Concept of Collective Consciousness

A fictional piece to which faithful readers of Dostoevsky often come back is the short story "The Meek One." As Mochulsky rightly remarks, it is "one of Dostoevsky's most accomplished artistic works" (546) and amply repays multiple reading. Usually, the reader does not discover "The Meek One" until after having been acquainted with one or more of Dostoevsky's great novels. Having read, for instance, Crime and Punishment and proceeding to "The Meek One," we can hardly help being at least slightly intrigued by the content of the story. An introvert, a pawnbroker, and a psychological battle between two strong personalities are only

a few key components that the novel and the short story have in common. Despite the difference in size, they are also works of comparable magnitude. But if one does not know that Crime and Punishment preceded "The Meek One" by a whole decade, it is virtually impossible to guess which of them was written earlier. While consulting a chronology of Dostoevsky's works will immediately provide the answer, not many readers are familiar enough with Dostoevsky's oeuvre to hit upon the idea of analyzing its development chronologically. Those who will take the trouble to do it are quite surprised to discover that "The Meek One" is not a "separate" short story but merely a fraction of the mammoth work called A Writer's Diary. And yet it has been quite customary either to publish it as a self-contained work or to include it in collections of other short pieces by Dostoevsky that do not "fit" anywhere else.

The rationale behind anthologizing parts of the Diary may have been the benevolent intention of some to introduce the general readership to those little "tasty morsels" of Dostoevsky's writing lest they should never be discovered. Instead, this policy has done substantial disservice not only to the works in question but also to the Diary itself. Once one has acknowledged the superior qualities of the above-mentioned short stories, it becomes very difficult to criticize the work that provides the context for them. This said, even Gary Soul Morson in the introductory study that accompanies A Writer's Diary states that "[i]n the Russian tradition of 'loose baggy monsters,' the Diary may be the loosest and baggiest" (Morson, Introductory Study 1) and that "[the Diary] may perhaps be regarded as Dostoevsky's most brilliant and intriguing failure" (5). Although in the same study Morson makes it clear that the Diary should not be "treated as a mere anthology, a random collection of Dostoevsky's writings during a given period, with no integrity of its own" as well as admitting that "recently [. . .] scholars and readers [have] begun to be fascinated by the Diary" (5), those statements lose much

of their positive impact when coupled with the ones quoted before. Even if we disagree that the former show the Diary in purely negative light, we will at least notice the ambivalent character of the collocation "[the] most brilliant and intriguing failure." In order fully to appreciate the Diary, we need to accept it warts and all. And where better to start than by analyzing one of Dostoevsky's most brilliant and intriguing successes—"The Meek One"?

Since we are looking at the Diary in connection with and through the prism of its two English translations, it seems to be appropriate to consider certain aspects of "The Meek One" that become apparent only when one takes the time to do some close reading of the Russian and its two English versions at the same time. While being extremely time-consuming and at times very frustrating, this procedure is, however, indispensable if important conclusions concerning both Dostoevsky's text and the English translations are to be arrived at. It has to be stressed that the close comparative reading of "The Meek One" mentioned above has in our case served not so much to establish why Lantz's translation surpasses Brasol's as to discover certain mechanisms at work during the process of translation. These will assist us in relating Brasol's and Lantz's renditions of a sample of the Diary to each other and to the Russian, as well as in establishing close links between "The Meek One" and the Diary. While the latter may strike one as an intrinsically paradoxical undertaking, "The Meek One" has so rarely been considered in connection with the Diary that every little effort leading in that direction will be of value. Since desperate illnesses call for desperate cures, let us counter one paradox with another and again place "The Meek One" where it has belonged from its very inception: in A Writer's Diary.

Both Brasol and Lantz deserve credit for their refusal to succumb to the general temptation to anthologize selected segments of the Diary and for their willingness to undertake the giant task of translating the whole work. While the fact that these two English translations

exist is normally taken for granted, their availability to those scholars who do not read Russian cannot be overestimated. Especially in the English-speaking West, where Dostoevsky is so often and so readily equated solely with Записки из подполья[14] (Notes from Underground) (1864), Lantz's translation has brought a renewed interest in Dostoevsky's less known works. Dostoevsky scholarship can only profit by more frequent discussions of the Diary, all the more so as readers will now see parts of this text in their proper context. For is it not beneficial to know that Dostoevsky wrote "The Meek One" with the purpose of commenting on the plague of suicides sweeping across Russia in the 1870s? Similarly, is it not enlightening to find out that the suicide depicted in "The Meek One" is a sum total of three real suicides, two of which Dostoevsky discusses at length in the October[15] issue of the Diary? And these are only two of the many details that help contextualize and understand "The Meek One" better.

Perhaps the most essential message of "The Meek One" is the condemnation of suicide as such as well as the factors (i.e., the various reasons) that cause people to commit suicide. More specifically, "The Meek One" examines the process of isolating an individual (if not more than one individual) from the community and the catastrophic consequences of such isolation. The narrator, a "brilliant" captain-turned-pawnbroker marries an impoverished sixteen-year-old girl, who is his junior by 25 years. Intending to rescue her from abject poverty, he transplants her to his eccentric/egocentric environment, and thus inadvertently precipitates her suicide.

The main character, who originally thinks of himself as living apart from the community, cannot help acknowledging his need to interact with it (at least verbally) when he is trying to find answers to the question "For what, why did this woman die?" (714). Since Dostoevsky's character is talking to a specific audience throughout his monologue, the question arises to what extent Mochulsky's label of interior discourse (548) characterizes the genre in which the story is

written. The pawnbroker frequently addresses his listeners (and Dostoevsky his readers) as "господа" (gentlemen) (1: 416) and "вы" (the second person plural) (1: 438). The community of listeners to whom the narrator is trying to explain events, and for whose favourable judgement of his own behaviour he frequently hopes, is additionally revealed by the presence of verbs in the second person plural: "Если хотите знать" (If you want to know) (1: 416) and "Видите ли" (You see) (1: 426). While the word "gentlemen" or (in the case of Lantz) the phrase "ladies and gentlemen" reminds the reader that s/he is not the only listener to the narrator's frustrated discourse, it is virtually impossible to render the verbs as specifically the second person plural in English. "If you people want to know" or "You people will appreciate the fact that," and other similar phrases would sound extremely awkward in English. Lantz and Brasol steer clear of them for the sake of good style, and the English-speaking reader can easily lose full sight of the degree to which Dostoevsky wants all his readers to become part of the pawnbroker's experience of personal tragedy, and perhaps to make his burden lighter through remaining by his side and carefully considering what he has to say.

Indeed, neither the main character nor the reader can feel left out or lonely even for a moment. Whether we like it or not, we are forcefully drawn into Dostoevsky's text to keep the writer and his character company. Through the pawnbroker, Dostoevsky vicariously participates in the process of solving the mystery contained in the phenomenon of suicide in general and in the three specific suicides in particular. Herzen's daughter, whose "soul revolted against the 'rectilinearness' of [. . .] phenomena," and who had gone through "animal and unaccountable suffering" (Brasol 470) to die "'of cold, darkness and tedium'" (470); the midwife Pisaryeva, to whom suicide was a means of taking a rest; finally, the seamstress who, unable to find work, "destroyed [herself] involuntarily" (470) by jumping out a window with an icon in her hands. In

each case we know the tragedy's finale, but our insight into the motives and progress of events must be only superficial. Dostoevsky appears to know as little as we do when we begin reading the story. Since the issue of suicide "keeps vexing [his] mind" (470), however, he embarks upon the difficult process of reconstructing events by tracing them back to their very source: the psychology of human behaviour. He does it for his own sake as well as for ours, and he refuses to do it without us for several reasons. The most important ones are that, first, with us witnessing his exercise in psychological hermeneutics, the artist in him receives an amount of motivation sufficient to carry his tragic tale up to what is usually considered Western tragedy at its best: to the level of Oedipus the King, Antigone, or King Lear. Second, "The Meek One" is an extension of the community consisting of an influential writer and the readers of his output. As Iser (7) reminds us, "[although] a literary text presents no real objects, it nevertheless establishes its reality by the reader's participation and by the reader's response." Thus, while reading "The Meek One," we not only interact with literary art of superior quality but, even more importantly, we are invited to evaluate the implications of suicide as members of a society in which suicides occur. Dostoevsky addresses his readers collectively in the story to make them accept collective responsibility for the phenomenon of suicide. We are reminded here that the proverbial bell also tolls for us. Dostoevsky asks us to become active readers of the story not in order that we form individual sets of personal opinions regarding its content, but rather with the purpose of creating a collective consciousness. This collective consciousness is to help us improve as humans and members of society. Dostoevsky expresses in the Diary a strong belief in the possibility of such improvement, especially in relation to the Russian society of the time. Therefore, it is crucial that his call for improvement at the levels of a single person and that of society be heard by as many readers as possible. The issue of the desired multiplicity of listeners

in "The Meek One" needs to be addressed to a greater extent if English translations of the story are to have an impact similar to that of the original.

Another interesting feature of the discourse in "The Meek One" is connected with what might be called the shifts of the speaker's perspective in relation to his own person. For the pawnbroker is talking to himself to the same extent as he is talking to an imaginary audience. Although we can hear his monologue distinctly, we are not really physically present in the setting in which it is delivered. Dostoevsky states clearly in his foreword that his hero is "the sort who talks to himself" and that "he is talking to himself, telling the story" (Lantz 677). Throughout his narrative, he generally talks about himself in the first person singular. There occurs, however, a notable exception to this rule. With his despair reaching its outer limit, he at one point rhetorically "steps out" of himself and addresses himself in the second person singular:

> But who was the worse for her then: the shopkeeper or I? A shopkeeper or a pawnbroker who quotes Goethe? That's still the question! What question? *And you don't understand even that: the answer is lying on the table, and you're talking about a question!* (687) (emphasis added).

Brasol obviously overlooks this important switch of the narrator's rhetorical perspective when he uses the first person singular consistently in this passage in order to smooth out what Lantz calls "the rawness and rough edges of [Dostoevsky's] prose" (xiv): "Even this I don't understand: the answer lies on the table, and yet I say 'question'!" (Brasol 500). Respecting the source text is very important in this instance because it allows the translator to render the complex nature of what the speaker attempts to communicate as well as the various idiosyncrasies of Dostoevsky's character's psychology.[16]

Attention to detail is also of paramount importance considering that the narrator understands very well that the readers "are going to judge [him]" and therefore stresses that, in order to do it properly, they "have to know the facts of his case" (688). Additionally, he states that he too is trying to pass a judgment upon his own behaviour: "I want to judge myself and I am judging myself. I'm supposed to speak both *pro* and *contra*, and that's what I'm doing" (685). Most of the story's narrative resembles the record of a court case in which the speaker takes turns at being the prosecutor, defense lawyer, judge, and defendant all in one. The intricate arrangement of details in the story strikes one with renewed force with each subsequent reading of Dostoevsky's text. It is, however, equally easy quickly to forget many of them or to overlook some. One detail which is certainly worth noting is that the pawnbroker and his wife address each other using the formal "you"—"вы." Among other things, this reflects the tension that exists between them virtually from the first day of their marriage. Since "вы" requires a verb in the second person plural in Russian, it is not possible adequately to render it into a language that either does not have a verb form that serves exclusively the second person plural, such as, for example, English, or one that employs an entirely different verb form to indicate interaction at a formal level. For instance Polish, a language that is very closely related to Russian, accompanies the formal forms "pan" and "pani"[17] with a third person singular verb. With the universal "you" in the English translations, this important subtlety must be lost. Brasol and Lantz are powerless here simply because their target language happens to be English.

To make matters even more interesting, it is worth mentioning a subtlety that exists within the subtlety outlined above. Shortly before his wife commits suicide, the pawnbroker plunges into one of the classic fits frequently seen in Dostoevsky's fiction in which a male humiliates himself in front of the woman he loves, complete with kneeling and kissing her feet

and dress. Although it would be worthwhile to take this opportunity to emphasize Dostoevsky's mastery in handling such scenes, the present discussion will profit more from focussing on one specific detail of this particular scene in "The Meek One." This scene is extraordinary because it shows the only instance in the story when the man addresses his wife using the informal "ты" (the singular "you").

> Поговорим [. . .] знаешь [. . .] скажи что нибудь! [. . .] дай мне целовать твоё платье [. . .] так всю жизнь на тебя молиться [. . .] больше я ничего, ничего не спрошу у тебя [. . .] не отвечай мне ничего, не замечай меня вовсе и только дай из угла смотреть на тебя, обрати меня в свою вещь, в собачонку [. . .]. (1: 447-48)
>
> Let's talk [. . .] you know [. . .] say something to me! [. . .] Let me kiss the hem of your dress [. . .] let me worship you this way for the rest of my life [. . .] There is nothing, nothing more that I ask of you [. . .] Don't say anything, don't pay any attention to me, just let me sit in the corner and look at you. Turn me into your thing, your lapdog [. . .]. (708-709)

The two passionate pleas "Поговорим [. . .] знаешь [. . .] скажи что нибудь!" (1: 447)[18] and "Дай мне целовать твоё платье [. . .] так всю жизнь на тебя молиться" (1: 448)[19] mark the pawnbroker's only attempt to remove the wall of silence that his stern approach has created between him and his wife. The woman is either not ready or unwilling to accept the "new" love her husband unexpectedly offers. It is important to note that she rejects the offer not only by receiving her husband's euphoria with a great degree of reserve, but also by refusing to enter into an informal mode of communicating with him. "Полноте, не мучьте себя, успокойтесь!" (1: 448) ("Enough! Don't torment yourself, calm down!") (709) and "А я думала, что вы меня

оставите так" (1: 448) ("*And I thought you would just let me go on like that*") (709) are the only statements the woman makes in response. The imperatives "не мучьте себя" (don't torment yourself) and "успокойтесь" (calm down) as well as the plural pronoun "вы" (you) indicate that the woman does not feel comfortable addressing her husband in an informal manner. Dostoevsky provides a convincing description of the complex combination of fear and amazement that she is experiencing at this point, and one cannot but feel compassion and sympathy for her. At the same time, those reading an English translation of this important passage are very likely to generate these feelings at the cost of a wholesale condemnation of the pawnbroker's conduct. The Russian original is less likely to elicit this kind of response. The informal, personal element in the man's utterance is a considerable saving grace. Even though we still admit that he has seriously mistreated his wife, we are able better to appreciate his effort to restore "normality" into their relationship. We know how passionately he yearns after his wife's affection when he spells out for us what he supposes she must be thinking, but what she will never bring herself to say out loud:

> "Так тебе ещё любви?"—Как будто спросилось в этом удивлении, хотя она и молчала. (1: 447)
>
> "So is it still love you want? Is it love?" This was what her amazed expression seemed to be asking, although she still didn't say a word. (708)

Incidentally, this is the only instance in the story when the woman is quoted as using the informal "тебе" (the Dative case of "ты"—the singular "you") rather than the formal "вам"—the plural "you." To be more precise, the pawnbroker imagines his wife having an "informal" thought concerning him, a thought that he proceeds to put into words instead of her.

Unfortunately, the nature of Brasol and Lantz's target language prevents them from adequately rendering the above-mentioned subtleties.

The importance of recognizing an element of interpretation in every translation has been acknowledged by various exponents of translation theory.[20] This study too takes the view that—since a translator is also a reader—a translation is always a particular reading of a particular text. As such, it has a tendency to invest its product—the text in the target language—with meanings that are often different from those to be discovered in the original text. Needless to say, a simultaneous comparative reading of both texts needs to be done in order to find specific words, phrases, and sentences that reveal the translator as a reader of the original. When read separately, both the original and a decent translation of it strike one as self-contained entities that make sense because each of them is expressed through the medium of its respective language. Since the ability to read a text in the original subsumes a reasonably good command of its language, it would be counterproductive meticulously to transfer the meaning of every single word into another language in order to understand the original. In other words, it is possible to understand the original without resorting to the assistance of a language different from the one in which the text was written. By the same token, one is generally very unlikely to depend upon the original for gaining full satisfaction from a reading of a text in translation. This simple logic is supported by the fact that translations are meant for those whose command of the original's language is inadequate and who, therefore, rely on a translation out of necessity. Indeed, even a person who is a competent reader of more than one language tends to "close up" in one specific language for the duration of the reading once s/he has decided in which language to read a specific text. Even if it happens to be a translation, we still generally find ourselves capable of relating to the text in constructive ways. If the assertion that "the translator cannot afford the

luxury of saying that something cannot be translated" (Newmark, *A Textbook* 6) is legitimate, it also makes sense to say that a reader cannot afford the luxury of refusing to understand a text solely on the grounds that s/he is reading it in translation. Various translations of a text may be more or less successful, but translation as such has always been needed, possible, and useful.

All the above statements concerning an original and its translations were made in order to clarify the stance that this study takes toward the two English versions of "The Meek One" *vis-à-vis* the Russian. It intends not so much to evaluate as to describe Brasol and Lantz as readers of the original. It aims to demonstrate how each of them chose to understand parts of the story and to represent them in English. It needs to be emphasized that the possibility of the existence of various interpretations of the original by no means contradicts the specific meaning(s) which Dostoevsky engineers in "The Meek One." Such coexistence of apparently contradictory states is possible because Brasol and Lantz reveal their readings of Dostoevsky in English and not in Russian. Thus we can still talk about authorial intention on the one hand and the translator's interpretation on the other. If Brasol and/or Lantz had chosen to render the story into Russian instead of English, i.e., to use Jakobson's (114) terminology, if they had produced "intra-" and not "inter-lingual" translations of "The Meek One," their renderings of Dostoevsky's text would be too closely linked to the original by a shared medium—the Russian language—to enable us to consider them as totally independent of it. In its two English translations, "The Meek One" is too remote from the original to be approached only as Dostoevsky's creation.[21] Therefore, the meaning the Russian writer orchestrates with such care was necessarily modified (and in some cases even perverted) by the translators.

Let us look at some specific instances of this phenomenon and, where possible, suggest other English interpretations of the Russian. One of the challenges of translating Dostoevsky lies

in transferring the wide variety of registers that he employs in the Russian into the target language. Constance Garnett (1861-1946), whose numerous translations of Dostoevsky's works have done so much to promote the writer in the English-speaking world, has been criticized for homogenizing Dostoevsky's language in order to conceal the informal and slang lexicon which the writer uses quite often[22] to obtain a particular shade of meaning in a specific context. The narrator of "The Meek One" appears to display a marked predilection for informal, and even non-standard, Russian. It can be readily traced to at least two obvious sources. First, a person confronted by his beloved's suicide is very unlikely to express his thoughts in highly polished, literary language. Second, the abject and the abhorrent constitute a substantial part of the pawnbroker's world. "A retired junior captain from a renowned regiment" and "a nobleman by birth" (684) who stoops to taking up money-lending can hardly pretend that this occupation does not mean—at least from his own point of view—social demotion and moral degradation. The frequent occurrence of the word "грязь" (mud; dirt; filth) in the text is also fully justified given that the narrator's occupation necessarily involves interaction with those who are too poor to think about high ideals, and whose existence often consists in doing what it takes to escape being engulfed by the social and moral mire on whose surface they have to live.

When the pawnbroker decides to propose to the penniless young girl frequenting his shop, he finds himself discovering all the "intimate details" (683) concerning her. The Russian word "подноготная" (1: 421) used in the original means literally "that which is located under one's fingernail." While Brasol translates it as "ins and outs" (496), other relevant English equivalents may include "the whole truth," and "all there is to know" (The Oxford Russian Dictionary 364). S. I. Ozhegov[23] explains the word as "the secret, hidden details of something," and goes on to trace it to "an old torture consisting in thrusting needles or nails under [a

person's] fingernails" (529).[24] The word "intimate" used by Lantz stresses the fact that the pawnbroker's curiosity concerning his prospective wife's background shows disregard for her privacy and thus may be embarrassing to her. The expression "ins and outs" used by Brasol means simply "details," and sounds rather neutral. Ozhegov's definition reinforces Lantz's choice of words with the element of torture and, by extension, the psychological pain and suffering which the pawnbroker's insistence on details may have caused the girl to experience.

Neither of the interpretations, however, makes a connection with the word "dirt." Yet it could be argued that this connection is implicit in the word "подноготная." Although the girl herself has done nothing to be ashamed of, the aunts with whom she is staying become the object of the pawnbroker's disgust and hate as soon as he learns that they have abused her in most abominable ways. The girl's relatives can be seen symbolically as the dirt under her nails whose existence she cannot help. In fact, she insists that her husband "pay [his] respects to the aunts as the nearest relatives" (687). While bespeaking the girl's magnanimity, this fact does not alter the pawnbroker's negative evaluation of the aunts' past behaviour toward his wife.

The moral dirt which the narrator locates in the aunts is additionally stressed by Dostoevsky with the non-standard word "жрать" (1: 422) which, when translated euphemistically, means "to eat greedily." When talking about the aunts, Dostoevsky's narrator states that they "reproached [their niece] for every crust of bread" and that "[they] kept nagging at her: 'We don't know where our next meal is coming from ourselves, never mind having an extra mouth to feed'" (684). Although much closer to the original than Brasol's rather stilted "'We don't know what we shall be eating ourselves'" (497), Lantz's interpretation removes the crudity from what the narrator imagines to be the aunts' lexicon. The fact that they prefer the non-standard "жрать" to the neutral "есть" or "кушать" puts the aunts in a certain class of

people—one from which the pawnbroker would rather keep at a distance. Additionally, the crude colloquialism reflects the aunts' complete lack of respect for their niece. Although several informal English expressions exist that mean "to eat greedily,"[25] none of them carry all the connotations of the verb "жрать."[26] But even if it cannot be satisfactorily translated into English, some insight into its meaning is useful in that it leads one toward a new interpretation of the original. Again, this kind of discovery can be made without disqualifying Brasol's and Lantz's renditions of the word, especially because the word has no close equivalent in English.

Another unpleasant character whom Dostoevsky puts on the stage of his drama for a brief moment is the fat shopkeeper past fifty who is the pawnbroker's rival for the girl's hand. We are told that he is a widower with children. While Brasol simply states that the man "already buried two wives" (497), Lantz tells us that this particular suitor "had already driven two wives to their graves with his beatings" (684). Lantz does a considerable amount of "filling in" here in order to make sure that those reading the English version know that the man *caused* his wives to die as well as *how* he did it. This interpretation of the original is fully justified because it explains some important connotations of the verb "усахарить" (1: 422) used by Dostoevsky. But even if Lantz had used the slang expression "to do somebody in" to say that the shopkeeper effectively killed his two wives, the unique nature of the verb "усахарить" would still leave room for an alternative interpretation. While "усахарить" is not a very common verb, it is simply one of the possible perfectives of the common imperfective verb "сахарить"—"to sprinkle sugar onto or to add sugar to something" (Ozhegov 689). But what is the "sugary" connection here? Incidentally, Dostoevsky tells us earlier that the man is "not simply a shopkeeper" but the owner of "two grocery stores" (684). The Russian word "бакалея" or "бакалейная [лавка]" (1: 422) means a store that sells "dry comestibles (tea, sugar, coffee, flour, groats, pepper, etc.)" (Ozhegov 32). It

is also interesting that the shopkeeper "bring[s] a pound of sweets worth half a rouble from his store" (684) to one of his dates with the girl. All this lexicon revolving around sugar may have been used by Dostoevsky in connection with the shopkeeper quite accidentally, but those reading the Russian cannot help forming a certain image of the man. He is not someone who will *kill* his spouse: he will actually "*sugar*" her to death. This element of black humour is further reinforced by the fact that the man perceives the girl solely as someone whom to subject to the treatment that proved so "successful" in relation to his previous partners. The girl clearly recognizes his "potential" in this respect if we are to agree with the pawnbroker's opinion that at some point she is, in her despair, contemplating giving her hand to the shopkeeper (rather than the pawnbroker) so that the former will "beat[ ] [her] to death in a drunken fit" (687).

There is still more to be said about the English translations of "The Meek One" and Dostoevsky's use of humour in the Russian. The feature of numerous passages in the story that opens them up to different interpretations in translation is Dostoevsky's irony. Depending on the reader-translator's ability to detect the irony, a given translation may or may not reflect it. It comes in a variety of kinds and degrees, and sometimes we find it where we least expect it.[27] During one of the girl's visits to his shop, the pawnbroker launches into a brief session of psychological torture by telling her how properly to advertise in newspapers. He is aware that her advertisements have failed to secure her the post of governess for which she has been looking so desperately. Instead of comforting her, he quotes an ad and recommends that she copy its format. The ad runs as follows: "Young person; fatherless and motherless orphan; desires position as governess of minor children; may be useful in household" (Brasol 494).

This interpretation of the Russian strikes us as quite bland, and we are justified in doubting the existence of even a shred of irony in it. The Russian says, "Молодая особа,

круглая сирота, ищет места гувернантки к малолетним детям, преимущественно у пожилого вдовца. Может облегчить в хозяйстве" (1: 418). The sentence "Может облегчить в хозяйстве" means "(She) is able to make running the household easier," and Brasol's "may be useful in household" really says they same in different words. In his translation, however, he leaves out the phrase "преимущественно у пожилого вдовца"—"preferably with elderly widower" (Lantz 681). Thus, irony is missing from this particular English interpretation because the phrase "may be useful in household" no more relates to "[a] preferably [. . .] elderly widower['s household]" (681). Brasol interprets the ad quoted by the pawnbroker as one in which a young girl advertises herself *only* as a governess. Lantz, on the other hand, makes it very clear that the candidate for a governess is also ready to serve as the widower's lover and/or wife. If Brasol's translation says less than the original, Lantz's says more: "Young lady, orphaned, seeks position as governess to young children, preferably with elderly widower. Can provide comforts in the home" (681).

The original is not nearly as explicit as that, especially as regards the last sentence quoted above. Although Brasol's phrase "may be useful in household" would have sufficed, provided he had not left the widower out of the picture, Lantz's translation makes the irony here more obvious than it appears to be in the original. We know that the pawnbroker is teasing the girl in a very heavy-handed manner, simply because we are told later that what he says makes her "flush [. . .] again and again" before "she turn[s] and walk[s] out at once" (681). Despite all this, we may not necessarily see the connection between the elderly widower and the idea of making the task of running his household easier. In this sense, Lantz's "Can provide comforts [. . .]" really drives the ironic message home.

On another occasion Brasol chooses to place additional emphasis on a statement by the pawnbroker that he clearly sees as ironic. Curiously enough, Lantz refrains from adding stress to the statement in question, although his interpretation also acknowledges its ironic nature. While Brasol's interpretation says more than the original, Lantz's this time happens to say less. Let us look at some possible implications of the two different readings and their results in English. In the sections titled "The Noblest of Men, but I Don't Believe It Myself" (687) and "Plans and More Plans" (690), the narrator explains to us the strict policy of silence that he used in order to break his young wife's independent spirit as part of what he considered the process of bringing her up. He follows his explanation with the rhetorical interrogative "Не оправдываться же?" (1: 429). In this context it expresses his steadfast refusal to attempt justifying himself as a pawnbroker in his wife's eyes. Brasol decides here to replace the question altogether with the strong negative statement "Certainly I wouldn't try to exculpate myself!" (504). Lantz, on the other hand, manages to say "less" than the original by using the pure interrogative "Should I have tried to justify myself?" (691), rather than "Shouldn't I have tried to justify myself?"—the negative interrogative "prescribed" by the original.

Expressing the pawnbroker's thought by means of a declarative sentence, Brasol neutralizes its strong ironic potential. The idea that the pawnbroker is supposed to explain his decision to have become a money-lender to his sixteen-year-old wife strikes him at one particular moment as utterly preposterous, even though later he finds himself doing precisely that in the hope of obtaining her forgiveness and effecting a desperately needed reconciliation. When framed as an ironic rhetorical question, his earlier refusal to provide his wife with a justification for his running the pawnshop is equally categorical as the statement which Brasol chooses to end with an exclamation point. However, in this case the medium seems to be as important as the

message it carries. Brasol has decided to disregard the medium entirely in order to emphasize the message. An important lesson a prospective translator learns by analyzing Brasol's mistake is that by insisting on clarity one can easily lose sight of textual subtleties and commit the unpardonable sin of producing a translation that, although accurate, is aesthetically impoverished. The question mark included in the original makes such a big difference because it allows Dostoevsky to impart more depth into his male character. Not only does he treat his young wife with unrelenting authoritarian harshness, but his twisted mind—we are told—is also capable of finding amusement in the contemplation of a more generous, open, and friendly approach, which he all but dismisses as naïvely irrelevant. The two-fold negative nature of the pawnbroker's refusal to act reasonably is best manifested by the original's "Не оправдываться же?" (1: 429). In addition to being a negative interrogative—which already emphasizes the narrator's ironic tone—this statement ends with the emphatic particle "же," which, although it does not have a close English equivalent, could be quite accurately rendered as "perhaps." Lantz's decision to translate the question as "Should I have tried to justify myself?" (691), rather than "Shouldn't I perhaps have tried to justify myself?" may lack the full ironic impact of the original, but, in contrast to Brasol's "Certainly I wouldn't try to exculpate myself!" (504), it does come across as sufficiently ironic. One important reason Lantz did not opt for a more accurate translation of this rhetorical question may have been that, adequately to transfer all its elements into English, a sentence of considerable length would have been needed. At seven words, Lantz's sentence is still a relatively quick ironic punch; at nine, it would be but a slow, clumsy push.

This short discussion of "The Meek One" by no means exhausts the topic of translation as it relates to A Writer's Diary. It intends to point at some possible ways of comparing different

translations of only a small segment of the Diary. While conclusions based on analyses of the narrator's rhetorical perspective and formal vs. informal lexicon can be profitably applied also in the realms of translation theory located beyond the criticism concerning Dostoevsky and/or Russian literature, one—no matter how accomplished—short story cannot serve as a satisfactory sample for literary analysis in the present project. As has already been pointed out, the most representative feature of A Writer's Diary is the coexistence on its pages of a variety of genres. In each case Dostoevsky had to adopt a different artistic approach in order to succeed in bestowing a distinctive character on a particular work. Although qualitative evaluations of translations merely on the basis of how well they reflect the generic features of originals are of little interest to modern translatology, a consideration of the ways in which a translator approaches a particular genre can potentially enrich the discipline. Such a consideration would seem to fall naturally within the category of process-oriented descriptive translation studies—the branch of translatology concerned with

> The problem of what exactly takes place in the "little black box" of the translator's "mind" as he creates a new, more or less matching text in another language. (Holmes 177)

Since in the Diary Dostoevsky attempts creating new genres as well as reworking the already existing ones, the work remains a testimony to his search for new modes of artistic expression almost at the end of his literary career. Even if we agree that Dostoevsky's aesthetic trail-blazing in the Diary was more successful in some cases than in others, its contents challenge the translator merely by virtue of their extreme variety. To translate the Diary means to strike in a number of new directions in order to mark new territory with language and, as a result, to transplant the genres of the original into the environment of the target language. No matter how

renowned and experienced a translator is, by accepting the challenge of the Diary's variety, she will take her art to new heights.

2.2 "Bobok": *Danse Macabre* as Social Critique

When we look at the short story "Bobok," published in the Diary three years before "The Meek One," we can hardly believe that it was written by the same author. Although more flippant, "Bobok" is not less original than "The Meek One," and also deserves a mention in the present analysis. Despite having included a few instances of irony and black humour in "The Meek One," Dostoevsky follows a tragic framework here quite consistently, with a tragic resolution serving as an opening for the story. "Bobok," on the other hand, is written in a markedly comic vein as a combination of manippean satire and *danse macabre*. The former typically involves the use of caricature, parody, and burlesque with the purpose of satirizing human follies, while in the latter the dead are depicted as reminding the living about the need for repentance. Unlike in "The Meek One," where death provokes an emotionally intense examination of a failed relationship, in "Bobok" it places humans in a state in which, only "apparently dead" (182), they actually reflect not only on their former, but also future existence. The subtitle "fantastic story," whose use in relation to "The Meek One" Dostoevsky so convincingly justifies later in the Diary, also very aptly describes "Bobok."

At the level of the plot, "Bobok" is a first-person narrative that retells a conversation of a group of corpses as witnessed by one Ivan Ivanovich.[28] As Ivan Ivanovich much to his surprise finds, death and burial usher in a new phase in human life in which "the human body more or less comes to life again" (182). Thus the dead "have two or three months of life" (182) in the grave before death proper brings about total annihilation of their consciousness. This process is

represented in the story by the apparently meaningless word "bobok," uttered "every six weeks or so" by "one person [. . .] whose body almost entirely decomposed" (182). By framing "Bobok" as a comic story, Dostoevsky redefines the Dance of Death as a genre. With the notable exception of the God-fearing shopkeeper, the dead in Dostoevsky's satire have no intention of repenting their earthly sins. On the contrary: they almost unanimously agree to "abandon all sense of shame" and to "bare [their] bodies and [. . .] souls" (183). At first sight, it seems to be a very noble intention, especially since having agreed that it is impossible to live on earth without lying, the corpses resolve to spend the remaining time in a state of truth. This truth, however, will entail "tell[ing] [their] stories to the others and be[ing] ashamed of nothing" (183). The blatant materialism of this resolution deeply shocks even the narrator who, as we find out at the beginning of the story, is everything but a paragon of virtue. Instead of repenting and begging God's forgiveness, the corpses defiantly vow to live the remains of their lives to the full in absolute denial of the immortality of the soul. Yet shamelessness and rejection of lying do not necessarily lead to truth. In fact, the corpses' collective desire to recount their respective autobiographies to one another with a view to achieving the state of new materialist morality cannot but lead to a paradox. Since, almost without exception, each of the dead used to live a life of debauchery, dishonesty, and indulgence, the revealing of its scandalous details cannot and will not bring about moral purification. "Bobok" contains strong condemnation of a materialist attempt to redefine the meaning of life by "arrang[ing] things on an entirely new basis" (183). This "new basis," however, Dostoevsky seems to argue in "Bobok," is too shaky to sustain a comprehensive ethical philosophy. Although this message appears to be quite clear in the Russian, conveying it to those who need to rely on an English translation may prove very

difficult. Let us look at the ways Brasol and Lantz choose to read and render into English some parts of the story.

One of the most compelling characters in "Bobok" is the narrator. Prior to sharing with us the sensational conversation he chanced to overhear at a cemetery, Ivan Ivanovich introduces himself as someone who has been "made [. . .] out to be a madman" (170). A litterateur, who "mostly [does] translations from the French for booksellers" (170-71), and whose portrait was once painted "on account of the two symmetrical warts on his forehead" (170), Dostoevsky's narrator is a man full of contradictions. He starts off by calling himself "a timid fellow" (170), only to assert a few moments later that he "ha[s] a nasty disposition" (171). Now he expresses his intention of "do[ing] a collection of Voltaire's bon mots," and now we see him abandoning sophisticated, deeply philosophical thoughts in order to make a mental note to consult Suvorin's Almanac[29] with the purpose of determining whether or not it is "a sin to throw bread crumbs on the ground" (174). Ivan Ivanovich is also a man whose sobriety appears to be frequently called into question (170), "whose face seems to border on insanity" (170), and who is "beginning to hear some strange things" (172). Since his use of language reflects the contradictions inherent in his character, it has to be taken into account in the interest of an accurate portrayal of Ivan Ivanovich in a foreign language.

The most striking inconsistency in the way the narrator uses language lies in his predilection for mixing colloquialisms with utterances full of euphemistic and formal lexicon. For instance, when describing his portrait, he quotes the painter as saying that "the two symmetrical warts on his forehead [constitute] a phenomenon of nature" (171)—"феномен" (2: 235). He then voices his disapproval of this statement insisting that "they [painters] don't have any ideas [. . .], so now they go on about these phenomena" (171). The Russian reads

"Идеи-то нет, так они теперь на феноменах выезжают" (2: 235). "Выехать на ком-чём" is a pejorative colloquial expression used to mean "to utilize somebody else's work or a certain circumstance to one's own advantage" (Ozhegov 105). This expression is out of keeping with the style of "a literary man" (170), and Lantz's "they go on about these phenomena" (171) captures its colloquial nature much better than Brasol's "they try to make phenomena work for them" (44). Another interesting colloquial turn of phrase appears at the very beginning of "Bobok." Dostoevsky's narrator opens the story in a very direct, informal manner: "The other day Semyon Ardalonovich up and said to me, 'Ivan Ivanych, tell me, for Heaven's sake, will there ever be a day when you'll be sober?'" (170). "Up and said to me" (170) is quite an accurate translation of the highly idiomatic Russian "мне как раз" (2: 234). The Dative case with which the first person singular pronoun "я" is used here suggests that "I" is the direct object of a verb. "Раз" is used as a predicate to refer to "a fast and abrupt action (e.g., to hit, to catch, to throw)" (Ozhegov 589). Of course, Semyon Ardalyonovich performs none of the above-mentioned actions on Ivan Ivanovich. Yet what he says to him, and the way he says it, must feel like a slap in the face, especially because the first name and the patronymic, which Semyon Ardalyonovich uses to address Ivan Ivanovich, are followed by the informal singular "you"—"ты." This is a very interesting inconsistency. It appears that the mysterious Semyon Ardalyonovich is Ivan Ivanovich's superior, for otherwise he would have omitted the patronymic and called him simply "Ivan." At the same time, the nature of the "strange thing" (170), i.e., the comment concerning Ivan Ivanovich's alleged partiality for alcohol somehow precludes formal niceties.

It is, then, as if Semyon Ardalyonovich had started talking to Ivan Ivanovich in a respectful manner and, suddenly realizing that all he wants to do is admonish the latter for perpetual drunkenness, he decided to withhold this formal respect on the assumption that Ivan

Ivanovich does not deserve it. Lantz seems to see this sudden switch from a formal to an informal mode of address. Limited by the universal "you" in English, he decides to change "Ivan Ivanovich" (Иван Иванович),—the formal patronymic used by Dostoevsky (2: 234)—into "Ivan Ivanych" (Иван Иваныч) a less formal, shorter variant. Brasol does not pay much attention to the linguistic subtleties in the opening of the story. While they do not appear significant at first glance, they play a very important part as elements of characterization. Very much like the Underground Man and the pawnbroker in "The Meek One," Ivan Ivanovich is an unreliable narrator. Neither what he says nor how he chooses to say it is consistent and uniform. He constantly oscillates between sanity and madness, sobriety and drunkenness, and literary and colloquial language. Dostoevsky needs this kind of narrator to describe something as extraordinary as a conversation of corpses.

While a general evaluation of the metaphysical and ethical implications of this conversation was provided in this study as part of the introduction to "Bobok," some light also needs to be shed on the social aspects of the Dance of Death in the story. As has already been stressed, the Diary was conceived by Dostoevsky as an all-Russian, social forum. Although far from advancing leftist ideas, in the Diary Dostoevsky discovers and develops a podium from which to deliver severe social critique. Since it is "social" and not "socialist," it does not concern itself with economic inequality, private ownership, class struggle, etc. Yet one can easily see how "Bobok" could have been used by the Soviet political propaganda as Dostoevsky's unequivocal condemnation of the pre-1917 Russian class society. The majority of the corpses making their appearance in the story are members of the intelligentsia represented by civil servants and aristocrats. A baron, a Privy Councilor, and a Major-general are those most prominent among them. With very few exceptions, they are swindlers, debauchees, and

opportunists. The worse their respective moral records in the previous life, the stronger stench they produce in the grave. The latest addition to the sepulchral society of hedonists shown in "Bobok," baron Klinevich, smells so bad that he had to be buried "in a sealed coffin" (180).

Although they vow to "arrange things on an entirely new basis" (182-83), the corpses cannot avoid copying certain patterns form their previous life. The disagreement between General Pervoiedov and the Privy Councilor Tarasevich concerning rank testifies to their extreme class-consciousness even on the other side of the grave. A recent arrival at the cemetery, Tarasevich is at some point approached by Pervoiedov's obsequious minion Lebeziatnikov and encouraged to make Pervoiedov's acquaintance. Since he outranks the General, Tarasevich haughtily refuses the invitation by asking that Lebeziatnikov "leave [him] in peace" (179). Nor does the General try to force his friendship on a personage as important as the Privy Councillor, for he asks Lebeziatnikov to "let [Tarasevich] be" (179).

Both Brasol and Lantz capture the class-consciousness of the civil servants quite accurately in their translations. The task of translating "Bobok" becomes more difficult, however, when a merchant enters the stage. Neither a member of intelligentsia nor an aristocrat, the merchant is depicted as the proverbial odd man out. We learn that his is "a rough, masculine voice" (175), and that he has been buried among his social betters against his own will. In fact, as he tells Avdotia Ignatevna—"apparently [a lady] [. . .] from high society" (175)—, "[he] wouldn't have lain next to her for anything, not for gold of any colour" (175). The dislike which the merchant and Avdotia Ignatevna feel for one another is fuelled by an aristocrat's contempt for a petty bourgeois and by the bourgeois's inability to collect the money which the aristocrat owes him. Despite the merchant's attempt at reconciliation, Avdotia Ignatevna repeatedly accuses him of having bad manners and "reek[ing] to high heaven" (176). In addition to having

different sets of values, the lady and the merchant express themselves in different ways. This can easily be seen in the Russian, where the merchant's language is "mimicked scornfully" (175) by the lady. What irritates her most is the solemn way in which he talks about life and death, and the frequency with which he refers to God, sin, and the Last Judgement.

From the perspective of a sophisticated lady, the merchant's pronouncements are dull and uneducated. She especially objects to his use of archaic phrasing and lexicon. It seems to be obvious that her materialist outlook dismisses what she considers the shopkeeper's cheap and ignorant religiosity, but she mocks not so much his convictions as the manner in which he voices them. This is not very clear in translation, because the sentence "Мы оба достигли предела и пред Судом Божим во гресех равны" (2: 239) is very difficult to express in another language. While both Lantz's "We've both come to the end of our days, and we are equal in sin before God's judgement" (175) and Brasol's "We both have reached the limit, and before God's judgement we are equal in our sins" (48) indicate the grave mood of the Russian by resorting to a rhythmical, chant-like pattern, the translators seem to be less successful at indicating Avdotia Ignatevna's dislike for the archaic phrase "во гресех равны" (2: 239), which harks back to Old Church Slavonic. For, when she repeats it with a mocking tone, she points the sting of her wit not at the idea that she—an elegant lady—and he—a shopkeeper of no consequence—will be judged for their sins in the same way, but at the archaic nature of the collocation "во гресех." In her "sophisticated" Russian it would be "в грехах," and the conservative, old-fashioned language of the shopkeeper both intensifies her prejudice against him and nullifies her interest in a discussion of things religious.

Naturally, details like that can only be revealed during a parallel reading of the original and a translation. Those reading either text in isolation need not concern themselves with them.

It seems, however, that the general optimism regarding the possibility of translation as such so prevalent in today's translation studies has its source in a refusal to engage in such parallel readings of texts. This is not to say that translation is ultimately impossible or that it should not be practiced. If we were to read the story of the humble shopkeeper and the conceited female aristocrat as a parable, its message might be that a persevering translator aware of his limitations comes across as more appealing than a translation theorist trained according to the principles of what Harold Bloom (4) calls "the school of resentment." The view of this analysis is that it is impossible to be a good translator without embracing the idea of **un**translatability of certain words, expressions, and concepts. Thus, The Diary of a Writer and A Writer's Diary can be seen as two testimonies to the fact that a good translation comprises as many little successes as failures, and that all translators are equal in their failure to say absolutely everything exactly the way the original says it.

CHAPTER III A Fictional Epistle

3.1 Dostoevsky and Journalistic Ethics

A discussion of "Bobok" as part of A Writer's Diary would be incomplete without at least a brief consideration of "A Half-Letter from a 'Certain Person'"—an emotionally intense, fictional epistle, allegedly sent to the editor of The Citizen by the "same 'person' [. . .] who has already once distinguished himself in The Citizen on the subject of graves" (195), i.e., Ivan Ivanovich—the narrator of "Bobok." "A Half-Letter" appeared in the Diary almost immediately after "Bobok," following a brief review of Leskov's story "The Sealed Angel." Dostoevsky appears to have taken to the fictional narrator of "Bobok," for he decides to use his potential also

in "A Half-Letter." The Certain Person's penchant for "sending letters to the editor [. . .], giving advice and admonitions, criticizing things, and pointing out the way" (171), provides Dostoevsky with an opportunity to send a letter to himself, the editor, and to frame the letter in the way he imagines that Ivan Ivanovich would have framed it.

"A Half-Letter" is an original literary mystification that allowed Dostoevsky to comment on some of the issues that had arisen in connection with the Diary as a new literary, journalistic, and social phenomenon. These included the attacks levelled at the Diary by the competition—most notably the liberal daily Голос (The Voice) and the monthly Отечественные записки (Notes of the Fatherland) (Lantz 761-2, 763-4)—, the expectations of readers, and the question of journalistic ethics. The "Letter" is a breathless tirade in which the Certain Person accuses the editor of The Citizen, i.e., Dostoevsky himself, of waging a futile war against the editor of an unspecified rival periodical—a war whose main battlefield is "a column spattered with [. . .] saliva and ink" (199). The author of the letter points out that the editor is too preoccupied with the conflict to realize that he is only "a shaggy [. . .] mongrel" (199) hired by the owner of his newspaper in order to be set on his rival—the owner of another newspaper. The alleged sender proceeds to describe a scenario in which, despite his whole-hearted engagement in a campaign of mud-slinging, the editor unexpectedly loses his job after his employer "has made up with his rival publisher" (203).

As a self-mocking tirade in the epistolary form, "A Half-Letter" does not explicitly tackle any criticism of the Diary published in the rival newspapers. According to what Dostoevsky claims,

> All the journalistic racket we heard after the appearance of the first issue of The Citizen this [1873] year—all the fury unprecedented in literature, the intolerance

> and the simple minded methods of attack—stopped two or three weeks ago just as suddenly and inexplicably as it began. (195)

In addition, Dostoevsky states that if "[he] were to take it into [his] head to answer anyone, [he] could manage to do it [him]self, without [the Certain Person's] help (195). We are also told that the editor is "printing [the letter] simply to be rid of [the Certain Person]," that "this person appears [his] resolute defender against [his] supposed literary enemies," and that, although "[the author of the letter] purports to admonish [the editor's] enemies [. . .]," he, in fact, "attacks [the editor] in a tone whose energy and fury [he] [has] never encountered, even among his 'enemies'" (195).

3.2 A Letter to Oneself, or a Personality Split on Demand

Strange logic appears to be at work here. If the editor believes that the Certain Person is bent on damaging his reputation, why has he agreed to publish the letter? Surely, the advantage gained by getting rid of someone does not outweigh the disadvantages of being publicly attacked with vicious verbal abuse. Even if it did, however, far from falling out of the picture (i.e., being rid of), the author of a publication will generally fall *into* it, and remain there for some time. Finally, if the editor can manage answering criticism, why does he allow another person to do it for him? These questions are fundamental to the very concept of "A Half-Letter." In it Dostoevsky appears as Fyodor Dostoevsky the editor of The Citizen and the author of A Writer's Diary. In addition to these two functions, he also becomes Dostoevsky the literary character. The all-too-often repeated dictum that warns against the danger of confusing the speaker of a literary work with its author seems to have been deliberately challenged by Dostoevsky in "A Half Letter." Of course, like Dostoevsky himself, one could argue that the Certain Person

"exhorts some imaginary columnist, and his exhortation is general enough to be applicable to columnists of all periods and all nations" (197). Yet we need to ask ourselves just how constructive this kind of attempt to universalize "A Half-Letter" would be? For one thing, it would necessitate the removal of the text from the Diary and a de-contextualization that could potentially render it incomprehensible. Despite his purported desire to make the contents of the letter "general," Dostoevsky anticipates this kind of removal in the very title of the text. It is not "A Letter" but "A Half-Letter," because the editor "simply took a scissors, cut off the first half of [the Person's] letter, and returned it to him" (197). Moreover the editor/narrator states that,

> The author was very firm in his wish that I should not begin his half-letter after a full stop but insisted that I begin right in the middle of a sentence, just where I had cut it off with the scissors, as if to say, 'Let them see how they mutilated me.' (197)

This insistence on being mutilated is quite remarkable. The fact that "A Half-Letter" starts in the middle of a sentence with the word "and" obliges Dostoevsky to place it in a sub-context within the larger context of the Diary. He does that by prefacing it with the editor's introduction. Interestingly enough, this requires a repetition of the title. As a result, both the introduction and the letter proper are titled "A Half-Letter from a 'Certain Person.'" Is this a simple stylistic error, or did Dostoevsky repeat the title deliberately? If he did, what could his purpose have been? I would like to suggest that the repetition *was* deliberate. The introduction to the issue of the half-letter is important because an entry in the Diary that opened with "[. . .] and does the word 'swine' truly contain such magical and alluring meaning that you at once take it to apply to yourself?" would have a disorienting effect on the reader regardless whether the reader was implied, ideal, or otherwise. Yet this conclusion is so obvious as not to invite further

inquiry. What does is the possibility that the introduction to the "Letter" bearing the same title as the actual letter complements the "Letter" also at the level of what might be called artistic composition. For it could be convincingly argued that one half-letter and another half-letter together make one full letter, especially since we know that they were both written by the same person. The really difficult question is why this person needed an artistic double in order to comment on the implications of publishing a diary as a series of instalments in a literary journal. After all, other issues of the journal indicate that Dostoevsky feels equally comfortable speaking as Dostoevsky, and voicing his convictions openly enough to make enemies both among his contemporaries and, potentially, much of the posterity. Why play this elaborate quasi-literary game in which the editor is forced to accept humiliating input from "A Silent Observer"? There are many possible answers. First, Dostoevsky fully realizes the potential offered by the format of a fictional letter created out of a fictional disagreement between two personas, both of whom are half-fictional and half-real. As has already been mentioned, Dostoevsky the editor of The Citizen and Dostoevsky the narrator very clearly inscribed themselves into "A Half-Letter," and it does not make much sense to pretend that they are not there. Also the "Certain Person" appears to be a combination of two half-persons. One of them is a fictional contributor to the Diary—an artistic persona whose very essence consists in being obnoxious, moralizing, and irritating. The other half is Dostoevsky himself: the same Dostoevsky whose portrait was painted by Perov in 1872 and who expresses in "Bobok" the oddly self-conscious view that his is a "sickly face that seems to border on insanity" (170). Whether or not Dostoevsky's sanity should be called into question in the context of the enterprise of composing the Diary is not the subject of this inquiry. In any case, the statement that "the cleverest of all is the one who calls himself a fool at least once a month" (171), uttered by the narrator in "Bobok," would seriously

undermine the validity of this kind of hypothesis. If "Bobok" and "A Half-Letter" reveal any traces of schizophrenia, it is schizophrenia engineered artificially and used on purpose to stimulate discussion of the Diary as a literary, journalistic, and civic venture.

Dostoevsky claims in "A Half-Letter" that he has no enemies. Nor indeed does he need any, able as he is to create such a strong rhetorical case against his own activity as the editor of The Citizen and the author of the Diary. Bakhtin's theory concerning the polyphony present in Dostoevsky's writing may be a cliché now, but it still seems to be easily applicable to "A Half-Letter." Two distinct voices sing one tune there. Yet, if we listen to it carefully enough, we will not only notice that each of the voices splits further into two sub-voices, but also that the tune that is being sung is an expression of carefully engineered cacophony: a discourse full of contradictions, inconsistencies, and strong emotions. As is usual in Dostoevsky's writing, it does not provide conclusions, but covers the pros and cons of a single issue to an equal extent.

"A Half-Letter" presents the translator with two distinct challenges. One lies in recapturing the style of the piece in another language; the other consists in making some important glimpses of Dostoevsky's Russia meaningful to a non-Russian reader. Since "A Half-Letter" is not narrated directly by Dostoevsky the editor of The Citizen but by a specially devised persona, Dostoevsky takes particular care to give this persona a distinctive voice: an original mode of expression. In order to deliver his critique of what he considers improper journalistic practices, the Silent Observer adopts a formal, patronizing tone. In the introduction to his epistle we are told that "[w]hen he addresses his exhortation to the columnist he uses the 'thou' form as in the classical odes" (197). Russian, however, makes no distinction between "you" and "thou." In addition to being used in the classical Russian odes, (such as, for instance, those written in the eighteenth century by Lomonosov), to address important personages, the word "ты" which

appears in the original, is also the usual second person singular pronoun. This double function of the word creates substantial interpretative difficulties. Since "ты"—the informal "you"—can be used in Russian to address persons whose status is equal and/or inferior to that of the speaker, one could easily argue that, instead of showing him respect, the narrator is actually patronizing the editor:

> [. . .] you know very well that you have no ideas of your own, never mind principles. Or have you, perhaps, after so many years of excitement and savouring the stench of your success, at last imagined that you have an idea or are capable of having principles? If such is the case, then how can you count on my respect? (199)

Since the letter's purpose is to admonish and not to praise the editor, the word "ты" is uttered from a position of authority and emphasizes the narrator's unceremonious tone.

While Lantz decides against using "thou" in his translation, Brasol embraces the idea that "thou" is a good English equivalent of "ты." For the sake of consistency, Brasol also finds himself obliged to use the derivatives of "thou"—"thine" and "thee," to replace "have" with "hast," "are" with "art," "shall" with "shalt," as well as putting the archaic endings "-st" and "-est" on all the third person singular verbs in the Present Simple Tense. "You pass" becomes "thou passest" (68), "you seize"—"thou seizest" (72), and "you run"—"thou runnest" (73). The attempt to give the letter's language an ode-like touch in English takes Brasol even as far as changing the endings of all third person singular verbs. "Turns" becomes "turneth" (72), "says"—"saith" (72), and "thanks"—"thanketh" (73). This uncompromisingly consistent use of archaic forms gives Brasol's translation an unpleasantly anachronistic air. Unlike the Russian original and Lantz's translation, Brasol's rendition does not read well: it feels forced and

strangely out of place within the larger context of the Diary. The abundance of archaisms in Brasol's text shifts the focus from the text's contents onto the archaisms themselves, resulting in a translation that is "overdone" to the point of appearing grotesque—one that might be called a parody of a translation. On the other hand, the flexibility with which Lantz approached the task of translating "A Half-Letter" resulted in an English version that is highly readable. His decision *not* to use "thou" in the letter proper but to replace it with "you" helped Lantz avoid falling into the trap of attempting to translate what is not translatable.

Lantz's translation also surpasses Brasol's in its rendition of what could be termed Russian cultural content. The narrator ends his verbal onslaught with a particularly powerful metaphor that depicts the quarrel between the editor and his rival journalist as "endless, drunken, senseless carnival" (203) during which they behave like "two mindless drunkards in peasant coats" (203), "wallowing in the dirty brown snow of [the] capital" and "thrashing about and shouting hoarsely at each other with all [their] might" (204). The key image in this scene is that of degradation. Since the journalists stoop to arguing with each other in a vicious and incoherent manner, the narrator tells us, they are no better than "the common people [who] are drinking themselves into the last stages of ugliness" during the "pre-Lenten carnival" (203). Used by Lantz to translate the Russian word "масленица" (2: 270), this term tells the English-speaking reader more about the context in which the quarrel in question takes place than Brasol's "butter-week" (73). The word "carnival" communicates the essence of the activity mentioned by Dostoevsky's narrator. Ozhegov traces the custom in question to pre-Christin times and defines "масленица" as "the ancient Slavic rite of seeing off the winter, from which survive the customs of making pancakes and holding festivities" (312). Without expressing disapproval of the concept of the carnival itself, Dostoevsky's narrator stresses the negative aspects of the manner

in which it is observed at the end of the nineteenth century: drunkenness and unproductive brawls. Furthermore, he draws a parallel between the way in which the pre-Lenten carnival is celebrated in nineteenth-century Russia and the manner in which the two journalists carry out their polemic: "When I read your columns I cannot help but imagine a kind of endless, drunken senseless carnival that has gone on in our literature for too long already" (203). Properly to appreciate this metaphor in translation, one needs to realize the element of the carnivalesque in the image provided at the end of "A Half-Letter." The rival journalists, the narrator says, have entered a trance whose main purpose is heaping verbal abuse on each other instead of engaging in sober intellectual exchange.

Another important cultural detail neglected by Brasol relates to an article of clothing which negatively defines the opponents to the same extent as does the intoxication induced carnival. The key Russian word here is "халат" (2: 270)—"an item of clothing worn at home or at work, which does up from top to bottom" (Ozhegov 789). Since "халат" is a specifically Russian garment, it is virtually impossible to translate the word satisfactorily into English. Yet it is a very important element of characterization in the text. For Dostoevsky not only mentions that the two quarrelling drunkards are wearing this kind of clothing, but also uses the derogatory term "халатник" (2: 270) to refer to each of the persons participating in the quarrel. Neither Brasol nor Lantz manages to come up with an English word capable of conveying the sense of the word "халатник." If it did exist in English, it would mean "the one who wears a coat." Lantz overcomes the difficulty by translating "пьяные халатники" (2: 270), i.e., "drunk wearers of coats" as "drunkards in peasant coats" (203). Later on the same page, Dostoevsky's "халатник" becomes "the peasant." Dostoevsky, however, does not say that the drunkards are peasants. In the original, they are two representatives of what he describes collectively as

"чёрный народ" (270), i.e., "the black (=dark) masses"—members of "the unprivileged, exploited social classes" (Ozhegov 809). Since the setting of the event under discussion is St. Petersburg, the drunkards are more likely to be poor city dwellers than peasants. Still, Lantz manages to convey the moral degradation of the arguing journalists. By failing to conduct themselves professionally, they turn out to be no better than the members of the class which they despise placed in an ambience that they find equally unprepossessing. They are like peasants "crowding around the taverns" (203).

Brasol is less successful in dealing with the word "халат." He imagines the drunkards as wearing "torn dressing gown[s] [. . .] assemble[d] in crowds in front of saloons" (73). It is probably as difficult to visualize saloons in nineteenth-century Russia as it is to conceive of individuals wearing dressing gowns in places other than the bedroom, the living room, and the washroom. This choice of vocabulary in English creates an irrelevantly comic effect, especially since in Brasol's translation the individuals in question are neither peasants nor other impoverished members of society. The phrase "drunken dressing-gown peddlers" (73) not only fails to indicate their social status in relation to that of the journalists but also introduces further interpretative difficulties. Since the noun "dressing-gown" immediately precedes the noun "peddlers," one is not quite sure whether the dressing gown is what these individuals wear or what they peddle, i.e., sell.

The weaknesses of Brasol's translation of "A Half-Letter" are quite apparent after it has been juxtaposed with the Russian and with Lantz's translation. Yet, it is more difficult to pinpoint the reasons that made Brasol produce such an inadequate translation. After all, his shortcomings as a translator are far less obvious in the purely journalistic sections of the Diary. It appears, however, that at least two factors contributed to this poor translation. The first was

Brasol's failure to work out a method capable of aiding him through the process of rendering Dostoevsky's experimental form into English. Brasol's decision to replace "you" with "thou" throughout the text had far-reaching consequences and in the end it proved to have a negative impact on the translation. The second factor was disregard for detail. It resulted in a translation devoid of Russian cultural content. Since the latter is absent from the translation, it is difficult to see why Dostoevsky's narrator uses the concept of the drunken winter carnival in his discourse or how the appearance of the two drunkards engaged in a quarrel can have moral implications for the polemics among journalists in nineteenth-century Russia.

CHAPTER IV A Semi-Fictional Sketch

4.1 "A Hundred-Year-Old Woman" as a Plotless Story

One of the objects of the present study is contextualizing what so far has been seen chiefly as separate texts published over a period of time. As was established earlier with regard to "The Meek One," it is often necessary to read carefully the segments that precede and follow a particular text in order to see that the elements of the Diary are interconnected. Yet it can also be suggested that some components of the Diary have affinities with others even though they do not come directly before or after them. In fact, in a number of cases they not only follow each other with a few months' delay, but discuss unrelated issues. Thus, they often belong together simply because they are examples of a particular genre which Dostoevsky tries to develop by means of the Diary. Translating them presents obstacles that may be difficult to overcome. Judging by Brasol's and Lantz's translations of the Diary, the genre that seems to be extremely challenging to an English translator is that of the semi-fictional sketch. In this category belong the two

descriptions of crimes contained in Chapter 3 of the 1873 instalment of the Diary titled "Environment" and "The Boy at Christ's Christmas Party" and "A Hundred-Year-Old Woman"—published in the January and March issues of the 1876 instalments of the Diary respectively. In the conclusion to "A Hundred-Year-Old Woman" Dostoevsky points at the difficulty accompanying the writing of such a little sketch:

> Well, still, this is just an inconsequential little scene without a story. True enough, one sets out to recount something with a bit of interest in it from the things heard in the course of a month, but when you sit down to write it turns out to be quite impossible to retell or is irrelevant, or it's simply a case of "not telling everything you know," and so in the end you're left with only little things such as this with no story to them. (394)

Indeed, the element of plot is minimal in each of these sketches. They tell no stories but rather present highly dramatized vignettes: a fourteen-month-old baby losing its hand under the stream of boiling water, a desperate woman hanging herself after years of beastly torture at the hands of her husband, a six-year-old freezing to death on a Christmas Eve, and a centenarian dying suddenly but peacefully among her grand- and great-grandchildren. Dostoevsky generally wrote them to support views or convictions which he made public by means with the help of the Diary. Thus, the description of the horrendous physical abuse in "Environment" reinforces Dostoevsky's indignation at the lenient verdict pronounced by the jury on the guilty husband. Similarly, Dostoevsky's strong protest against the imagined acquittal of the mother who put her baby's hand under the open tap of a samovar is reinforced by a brief sketch highlighting the mother's cruelty on the one hand and the baby's defencelessness on the other. In other cases such sketches are simply fictional extensions of single ideas and not Dostoevsky's versions of

what really happened. In the opening of "The Boy" Dostoevsky states that he "made [the story] up [. . .] imagining that it really happened somewhere, sometime" (310), and "A Hundred-Year-Old Woman" develops the idea that occurred to Dostoevsky after his wife gave him the account of coming across a very old woman in a St. Petersburg street (Lantz 777). Having learned that the woman was on her way to "have dinner at [her] granddaughter's" (389), Dostoevsky provides a description of her meeting with the granddaughter's family and guests. The casual conversation they hold is rather short and its most remarkable feature is probably her dying in the middle of it. Her death astonishes everybody present, but it is in no way disturbing. We are told that "the neighbour women [summoned up] for help [with the corpse] [. . .] rush over at once, almost pleased to hear the news, sighing and exclaiming," and that in "the very moment of the deaths of these hundred-year-old men and women there is something that seems touching and peaceful, something that seems even solemn and calming" (394). The sketch could be interpreted as Dostoevsky's attempt to communicate this "something." Affection emanates from the description of the woman. We learn that "her eyes [. . .] seem to radiate warmth" and that, when offered a five-kopeck coin, "she took [it] with such dignity, not at all like charity but as if from politeness or the goodness of her heart" (390).

These and other purely descriptive elements of the sketch were rendered into English quite successfully by both Brasol and Lantz. What proved to be more difficult to translate well was the conversations which the woman has with her relatives and the lady whom she meets on her way to her granddaughter's. Through these conversations Dostoevsky constructs the personality of the centenarian, and her appeal as the main character depends heavily not so much on what she says, but on how she says it. Not unlike in "The Boy," in "A Hundred-Year-Old Woman" Dostoevsky amasses a prodigious number of diminutives to illustrate the opinion that

"such very aged women almost always have some very close kinship with children: they themselves become very much like children in their hearts, and sometimes exactly the same" (391). Yet in addition to helping Dostoevsky portray the woman as childlike, diminutives such as "старушка" (1: 105) (old woman) instead of "старуха," "солнышко" (1: 105) (sun) instead of "солнце," "скамеечка" (1: 105) (bench) instead of "скамейка," and many others, also accentuate the pleasantly friendly atmosphere that accompanies the meeting of the two women. The conversation is permeated with tenderness on both sides as youth and old age unexpectedly meet each other.

Even though "старушка" could theoretically be differentiated from "старуха" by the use of the adjective "little" to indicate the diminutive form, the atmosphere of the encounter between the women would still be very difficult to recapture in English—a language with limited power to create diminutives. Putting the word "little" in front of every noun hardly solves the problem here. "Старушка" does not necessarily mean "a little old woman," "скамеечка" is not always "a little bench" or "a benchy," and "солнышко" is certainly not "a little sun." Besides, in Russian the use of synonyms extends beyond nouns. Dostoevsky's text abounds with diminutives formed of adjectives. "Старенькая" (1: 105) (old), "родненькая" (1: 106) (dear), "маленькая" (1: 105) (little), and "чистенькая" (1: 105) (clean) are but few examples of diminutive forms of adjectives which Dostoevsky uses to give the women's conversation a special touch of familiarity and friendliness. Even though English restricts the two translators, it has to be noted that they both appear to have realized the importance of diminutives in the original. "Granny"—the default English word used by Lantz—seems to be a good equivalent of the Russian "бабушка" (1: 105), even though a stranger would be very unlikely to address a female centenarian as "granny" in an English-speaking country. Lantz manages to provide a number of

other English words that translate Russian diminutives quite accurately. "Башмачки" (1: 105) (little shoes) become "tiny wee shoes" (390) and "детки" (1: 105) (children)—"wee ones" (390). Brasol too makes an effort to acknowledge the importance of diminutives in his version of the sketch. "Родненькая" (dear) becomes "dearie" and "солнышко" (sun)—"the friendly sun" (241).

4.2 Informal Conviviality in Russian and English

While both Brasol and Lantz are moderately successful at translating the diminutives in "A Hundred-Year-Old Woman," one feature of the original prevents them from showing the full force of feeling that characterizes the conversation of the two women in the Russian. That feature is the informal first person singular mode of address which the women use in the original. It is very interesting that they adopt it automatically. The explanation for it seems to lie in the fact that the great age difference between them is immediately obvious to each woman, as is also the difference in social status. This is how Dostoevsky's narrator describes the old woman:

> She was a tiny little thing, neat but dressed in old clothes, a townswoman probably, with a cane and a pale, yellow face, colourless lips, and her skin stretched dryly over her bones like a mummy. (389)

Although we do not know how the young woman struck the centenarian, Dostoevsky establishes at the very beginning of the sketch that the person who told him the story is "дама" (1: 104), i.e., "a lady." Ozhegov (146) defines "дама" as "a woman from usually affluent circles of city intelligentsia." It is reasonable to suppose that, in contrast to the old woman, the lady in question would have been dressed in relatively fashionable and new clothes. This difference in physical appearance would have been enough for the lady to assume a superior air when dealing

with the old woman. Indeed, "good woman" (Brasol 240) and "my good woman" (Lantz 389) may well come across as rather patronizing terms of address in English. The Russian word used by the lady to address the old woman is "старушка"—a diminutive of "старуха" (old woman). There is not a shade of patronizing in this word. In fact, Pushkin uses it in the well known poem "Зимний вечер" ("Winter Evening") to address his beloved nanny Arina Rodyonovna. Yet even if there were no tradition of using the word "старушка" as a term of endearment in Russian, an English version of it would need to be emotionally warmer and informal in order to be consistent with the other markers of affectionate informality in the women's conversation in the original. Before we enumerate and consider them in more detail, we need to explain the reasons which prevented the young lady from assuming a patronizing tone with the old woman despite the latter's lower status. Likewise, the old woman's refusal to feel intimidated before a social better needs to be briefly reflected upon. Two reasons come to mind that explain the friendly informality of the exchange. First, the lady appears to be a very approachable person. When musing about the fact that the old woman took the five-kopeck coin offered her even though "she had not been reduced to begging," the lady surmises that the centenarian "was very pleased that someone should strike up a conversation with her, an old woman, and not only talk to her but even show some loving concern for her" (390). This loving concern immediately dispersed any timidity which the old woman may have potentially experienced upon meeting the lady. The other factor that was instrumental in establishing the friendly rapport between the women was the age difference itself. The old woman's being over a hundred years old and still showing signs of vitality caused the lady subconsciously to admire her and to show her kind regard even despite the fact that she was not wearing rich apparel, and that she was obviously a member of a lower social class. The class barrier immediately melted between the women as soon as the

centenarian realized that she was old enough to be the lady's grand- , or possibly even great-grandmother. The lady must have felt the same way about the age difference between them. Therefore, friendly informality became for both women a means of vicarious enjoyment of a grandmother-granddaughter interaction for a brief moment. That they were total strangers became immaterial as soon as each of them embraced this unique opportunity to exchange signs of mutual love and respect.

The fact that the lady and the old woman are "equals" for a short spell is less evident in the two English translations than it is in the original. The English "you" unfortunately blurs out the difference between the various "yous" in the Russian. Without looking simultaneously at the original we are unable to realize that both women call each other "ты" (1: 105)—the informal "you," and not "вы"—its formal variant. Aside from that, English also erases the marker of informality that exists in the Russian verb forms. Those, naturally, need to agree with the pronoun "ты." Let us look at two passages from Lantz's translation of "A Hundred-Year-Old Woman." The first one comes from the conversation of the two women; the second is part of the old woman's exchange with her granddaughter's guest.

> "'Are you tired, my good woman?' I asked.
>
> "'I do get tired, my dear [. . .]'
>
> "'So you're on your way to have dinner?'
>
> "'Indeed I am, my dear [. . .].' 'And where might you be going?' (389-90)

and

> "Oh, but I'm tired out! Now who's this you have here?"

> "Do you mean me?" asks the guest laughing. "Don't tell me you didn't recognize me, Maria Maximovna! Why, a couple of years ago you and I were planning to go out into the woods to look for mushrooms."
>
> "Oh, now I know who you are. What a tease! I know who you are, only I just can't place your name, but I remember [. . .]." (391)

"So you're on your way to have dinner" is the English translation of "Это ты, бабушка, пообедать идешь?" (1: 105) and "Don't tell me you didn't recognize me, Maria Maximovna" (394) is Lantz's version of "Что, Марья Максимовна, неужто нас не признали?" (1: 107). When reading only the English, we do not notice that "ты [. . .] идешь" (1: 105) is a familiar way of saying "you are going," one used to talk to persons with whom the speaker is on first-name terms. In formal contexts, "вы идёте" is more appropriate. In English, however, "you are going" would be used in both cases. If it were not for the presence of the first name and the patronymic—Maria Maximovna—we would not notice that in the second passage the speaker begins addressing the old woman as "вы"—the formal "you." "Вы [. . .] не растёте нимало" (1: 107) is different from "ты не растёшь нимало." Yet in English both would be rendered as "you do[ ]n't seem to grow at all" (392). Although a crucial indicator of the nature of the relationship between the two characters in the Russian, this subtlety has to be irretrievably lost in translation. However, the second excerpt has in store another curious detail that is not accessible to those reading only one of the English versions. While the young lady is using "ты" consistently in her conversation with the old woman, and while the old woman is also consistent about addressing her granddaughter's guest as "ты," the guest at one point allows himself a switch from "вы" to "ты." This switch cannot be noticed in the English version, where the same "you" is used to translate "вы" and "ты":

> "Well now, Maria Maximovna, I've been wanting to ask you why it is that a venerable old lady like yourself just doesn't seem to grow at all?" the guest teases. (391-2)

The "you" in "I've been wanting to ask you" is the informal second person pronoun "ты." Its single occurrence in the dialogue between the old woman and the guest suggests that he too occasionally finds himself addressing her in an informal manner—precisely the way a grandson would address his grandmother—even though he does remember to show her due respect by using "вы" with the third person plural verbs most of the time, and by frequently mentioning her first name and patronymic.

One other aspect of the sketch that does not translate well is its local social "flavour." Having established that the old lady was probably "a townswoman" and that her clothes, although old, were neat, Dostoevsky proceeds to portray her granddaughter's family. Needless to say, the old woman and her relatives had better fit together to some extent as regards their social status, world outlook, and even the manner of speaking. In that connection, we are told the following:

> Her granddaughters, and perhaps her great-granddaughters (still she calls them all granddaughters) are probably tradespeople of some sort, married women, of course, or else she would not be going to have dinner with them. They live in a basement and maybe they rent a barber's shop as well; they are poor people, of course, yet they eat well and observe the proprieties. (391)

In order to create what he calls "a plausible little scene" (391), Dostoevsky completes this description of the setting by stating that the old woman's "granddaughter is probably the barber's wife," and that "the barber[ ] is not yet an old man—about thirty-five, perhaps—and has the

dignity of his trade, even though the trade may be a frivolous one; and of course he's wearing a frock coat as greasy as a pancake" (391). A truly Gogolian touch follows in which the narrator tells us that he "never saw a barber dressed any other way" and that "the collars of [barbers'] coats always look as if they had been rolled in flour" (391). All this sets the stage for the old woman's visit with her relatives. Since her relatives "live in a basement," are poor but "eat well and observe the proprieties," and because they are members of a barber's household, we somehow expect them to speak about particular things and in a particular manner. While no verbal abuse is likely to occur in the dialogue, it would be unreasonable to suppose that in their basement they discuss elevated matters or that they use literary language. Quite predictably, the conversation turns out to be rather prosaic. The old woman exchanges a few jocular remarks with the guest, enquires about her great-grandson's new coat, and relates the story of meeting the young lady and receiving the five-kopeck coin. The real power of the basement scene lies in the way the basement dwellers express themselves. Their lexicon is full of colloquial and non-standard words and their utterances are made up of long run-on sentences. Here is an example:

> "Смотри, Максимовна, какое построили, ведь шесть рублей, как одна копеечка, дешевле, говорят нам у Прохорыча, теперь и начинать не стоит, сами, говорят, потом слезьми заплачете, а уж эдакому износу нет." (1: 108)
>
> "Look at that, Granny, what a job we did; six rubles exactly. They were telling us over at Prokhorych's that it's not worth starting the job for less; you'd regret it afterward, they said; but there's no end of wear in this one." (392)

The most remarkable thing about this long string of words in which the woman's granddaughter talks about her son's new coat is that what should have been transcribed as five separate sentences becomes one long sentence punctuated with nine commas. At least four of

them should have been replaced by periods, exclamation points, or, at least, semicolons. Lantz and Brasol do precisely that. Their translations of this excerpt, however, fail to preserve the uneducated spontaneity with which the barber's wife talks about the coat in the original.

Both the passage in question and other parts of the conversation at the granddaughter's contain numerous words that characterize the speakers as unsophisticated, uneducated individuals. Having no intention to criticize or ridicule their manner of speaking, Dostoevsky uses such lexicon to add a touch of authenticity to those fascinating literary representations of some specimens of "poor folk." Instead of "узнать" (to recognize), the granddaughter's guest says "признать" (1: 107), instead of "устала" (you got tired), the host says "пристала" (1: 108), and instead of "пойти" (to go), he says "пойтить" (1: 109). Although Brasol and Lantz take great pains to indicate the illiteracy of the poor people in the sketch, their speech in English somehow comes across as more educated and correct than it is in the original. It might be argued that the two translations could be improved by the use of lexicon that is traditionally associated with non-standard varieties of English. Thus, the sketch could be placed in a different cultural reality. On the other hand, we need to ask ourselves whether this kind of approach would not entirely defeat its purpose. After all, the text's language is that spoken in a basement in nineteenth-century St. Petersburg and not, for instance, the colourful world of black English related by Mark Twain in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1885). As was demonstrated earlier, Brasol's use of "saloons" rather than "taverns" and "dressing-gowns" rather than "peasant coats" created a grotesquely incongruous English text. It seems, then, that it is often safer to sacrifice certain subtleties in a translation than to attempt the risky venture of transplanting them onto a foreign linguistic and cultural soil. In their translations of "A Hundred-Year-Old Woman" Brasol and Lantz appear to have done their best to be safe.

CHAPTER V The Feullieton as Lexicographic Narrative

5.1 "What Does the Word 'Striutsky' Mean?"

So far this analysis has only dealt with fictional and semi-fictional components of the Diary. Whether highly polished or quickly sketched, the works discussed until now are all finished pieces of narrative or descriptive fiction. In Chapter 1 of the November 1877 instalment of the Diary one can find two interesting stories that focus not on events and persons but on words. The two sections in question are "What Does the Word 'Striutsky' Mean" and "The History of the Verb 'Stushevatsia.'" The pretext for explaining the word "striutsky" was provided by "several inquiries from Moscow and the provinces as to its meaning" which were sent to Dostoevsky after he "[had] used the [. . .] word [. . .] two or three times" (1188) in the Diary. The short discussion of the word "stushevatsia" that follows Dostoevsky's analysis of "striutsky" is a reflection apropos "the origin and use of new words" (1183). This focus on one word at a time reminds us that, aside from considering broad political, social, and cultural phenomena, the Diary also serves as a writer's "microscope": a tool with which to look closely at details. In this particular case, these details concern the meaning of two different words. Dostoevsky provides extended definitions of the words "striutsky" and "stushevatsia." Those are similar in that they contain not only lists of synonyms for each word but also examples of contexts in which the words are likely to occur. However, the strategies which Dostoevsky uses to discuss each word re diametrically different. They reflect the differences in the usage of the words. In addition to being "used [. . .] by literary people of all sorts" the word "stushevatsia" may, according to Dostoevsky, be found in "scientific treatises, dissertations, and philosophical works [. . .] [,] in

official government papers, reports, proceedings of meetings, and even in official instructions" (1183). "Striutsky," on the other hand is, we are told, a word used "exclusively by the common folk and, it seems, only in Petersburg" (1183). Since Dostoevsky does not know the genealogy of the word "striutsky," in his discussion of it he contends himself with outlining a typical situation in which it could be used:

> On a holiday evening some drunken people are shouting on the street; one hears a quarrel, a frenzied cry for the police; from the midst of the tightly packed crowd one can clearly make out someone's protesting, imploring, complaining, and threatening voice. There's a lot of fake anger. You go up to find out what is going on. In reply, people wave their hands and walk away: "It's nothing; just the striutskys." (1182)

This passage provides an illustration of the concept of "striutsky-ism." Without it Dostoevsky's definition of the word would be just a sum total of negative adjectives that describe a "striutsky" as someone who is, among other things, "shallow, worthless, and insignificant" (1182).

5.2 "The History of the Verb 'Stushevatsia'"

Unlike "striutsky," the verb "stushevatsia" has, according to Dostoevsky, no novelty value. He begins his reflection about it by admitting that "everyone knows it, everyone understands it, [and] everyone uses it" (1183). What is the point talking about it then? Dostoevsky manages to make the issue intriguing by stating that

> In the whole of Russia there is only one person who knows the exact origin of this word, the time it was coined, and the time it first appeared in literature. That

> person is I, because it was I who introduced and used this word in literature for the first time. (1183)

The suspense which this statement creates is relieved gradually. Before explaining the word's origin Dostoevsky reminisces about a private reading of his story "The Double: The Adventures of Mr. Goliadkin" (1846). We are told that the reading took place at Belinsky's and that Turgenev was one of the listeners. This factual information seems to be very important to Dostoevsky because he feels that, in order fully to legitimize his personal claim to the word, he needs to provide the names of those who witnessed the word's first appearance in literature. Finally, the story's denouement unfolds in which Dostoevsky tells us that "the word 'stushevatsia' means to disappear [. . .] gradually, sinking imperceptibly into nothingness" (1184), that the expression originated in the Main School of Military Engineering (attended by him from 1838 to 1843) and that the term was "borrowed from shading [the details in the drawings of military plans], that is, from the gradual fading of a shade, the transition from dark *to naught*" (1186). Why does Dostoevsky take all the trouble of explaining the two words in this chapter? The answer does not appear until its end, where he says,

> In the course of my literary career, what I've liked *most* is the fact that I managed to introduce an entirely new word into the Russian language; and whenever I encounter that word in print I'm always very pleased; and so now you'll understand why I thought it possible to devote a special chapter to describing such a trifle. (1186)

Yet are we to believe that Dostoevsky introduces new words into the Russian language only for personal gratification? The ending of the section on "striutskys" provides a more plausible explanation:

> For one whose business is words, the attraction of this word lies in the shade of contempt with which the People use it to designate precisely such worthless, senseless, loudmouthed, careless, trashy fellows showing off in their meaningless rage. There are a lot of creatures of that sort in educated circles as well, and also in the highest circles—isn't that so? They are not necessarily drunkards in worn-out shoes; but that is often the only difference. How can one resist sometimes calling these higher-ups "striutskys" as well, the more so that the word is right there, tempting you with that shade of contempt with which the People utter it? (1183)

The conclusion was quoted here at length because it both clarifies and legitimizes the chapter of the Diary which deals with the two words. Like in many other parts of the Diary, Dostoevsky is looking here for a common platform for "educated circles" and the People.[30] While "stushevatsia" was coined by university students, i.e., intellectuals and aspiring intellectuals, "'striutsky, striutskys' is not used in educated circles but exclusively by the common folk" (1181). By providing an in-depth analysis of the word "striutsky" Dostoevsky is trying to promote the word also in educated circles. He dwells on its ability to denote contempt and encourages its use to describe not only "drunkards in worn-out shoes" but also "higher-ups" (1183). The notion that the People could and should be looked upon as the source of linguistic inspiration for intellectuals was not first suggested by Dostoevsky. Pushkin seems to have pioneered the use of the language of the lower classes in Russian literature. The freshness of Dostoevsky's approach to the issue consists in the fact that he is promoting the word "striutsky" very consciously and with a full realization that, in doing so, he is challenging the idea that the People are unable to make meaningful intellectual contributions to the Russian culture at large.

In Dostoevsky's view, "the shade of contempt with which the People use [the word]" (1183) is a sufficient reason for introducing "striutsky" into the lexicon of Russian literature. It is also worth noting that in his article Dostoevsky stresses the word's potential to move from the local lexicon of the Petersburg of the lower classes into the area of literary, i.e., standard, Russian. Dostoevsky strongly believes that such transfer is possible as long as other writers follow his suggestion and start "inserting" the word into their works. As we find out form the section on the verb "stushevatsia," Dostoevsky subscribes to the view that writers are instrumental in introducing new words into the language, while at the same time his admission that the word "stushevatsia" "did not take root and enter literature all at once; [but] it did so very gradually and imperceptibly" (1185), stresses the fact that using a new word in literature does not automatically guarantee that it will be assimilated into the language.

Although Dostoevsky calls his reflection on the history and meaning of words "a trifle" (1186), its occurrence in the Diary testifies to his desire as author to place diverse material in context. Nowhere in the Diary does it seem to be more visible than at the level of a single word. For words, Dostoevsky convinces us in these two short chapters, only appear meaningless if they are considered in isolation from their context. In fact, a closer look at a lexical item reveals that words exist as quasi-organic entities. Although they may be associated with a specific "habitat" (e.g. that of the People of Petersburg), they can and should be transplanted across the different varieties of language. By placing "stushevatsia" next to "striutsky" Dostoevsky covertly suggests that, when consciously "nursed" a little by writers, the latter will flourish in the language to the same extent as "stushevatsia." As the definitions of the two words grow in length and depth, the task of explaining them takes on new meaning, and the number of links between the passages and the Diary increases. Apart from supporting the philosophy of the People contained in the

Diary, the sections establish a strong temporal connection not only with the earlier instalments of the Diary but also with the very beginning of Dostoevsky's career as a writer. At the same time, his discussion of both words either implicitly or explicitly projects into the future. Indeed, the present necessarily implies the existence of the past and the future. The past for the word "striutsky" means "the two years of publishing the Diary" during which Dostoevsky has "used the rather obscure word 'striutsky' two or three times and [has] had several inquiries from Moscow and the provinces as to its meaning" (1181). The present is the detailed discussion of the word's meaning; the future entails the possibility of "calling [. . .] higher-ups 'striutskys.'" The three-dimensional temporality of the word "stushevatsia" seems to be equally clear. Like "striutsky," it has a present because Dostoevsky is looking at it closely in the here-and-now of the Diary, i.e., in November 1877. Its past unfolds together with the history of Dostoevsky's growth as a writer. Still more interesting, however, is the way in which Dostoevsky projects his discussion of the second word into the future when he says,

> I have written with such seriousness and at such length on the history of such an unimportant little word only for the sake of some future scholar compiling a Russian dictionary—some future Dahl. (1186)

This "future Dahl"[31] may well be S. I. Ozhegov, who in 1963 includes in his dictionary these two definitions of the verb "stushevatsia": "1. to disappear unnoticeably, to remove oneself entirely from a place. 2. to become timid and confused." Simultaneously, the lexicographer qualifies the first meaning of the verb as colloquial and old-fashioned (766). Dostoevsky could not, of course, foresee that within a hundred years the meaning in which he uses the word would be marked as old-fashioned and that it would acquire one additional meaning. Yet his suggestion that a writer performs the double function of reviver and preserver of words has not lost its

validity. The very fact that Dostoevsky tells a personalized story of "stushevatsia" changes our perception of the word. From now on, we may view it as both colloquial and old-fashioned, but it will be for us—first and foremost—a "Dostoevsky" word.

Dostoevsky's focus on detail in this chapter and his attempt to get to the very "bottom" of meaning makes the two short analyses both interesting and challenging material for a translator. Since the latter's job also entails explaining meaning, the task of translating the two sections could be seen as involving meta-explanation, i.e., explaining explanations. In this process attention to detail is paramount, as is also willingness meticulously to render various subtleties into English. If artistic licence may be desirable in relation to the fictional sections of the Diary, precision and strict adherence to the original are more important here. The first problematic English word one notices in Brasol's translation of "What Does the Word 'Striutsky' Mean" is the pejorative adjective "plebeian" which he uses to translate the word "простонародное" (3: 397) in "слово 'стрюцкий, стрюцкие' есть слово простонародное" (3: 397)—"The word 'strutzky' is a plebeian word" (Brasol 880). In the English, the word "plebeian" creates unnecessary distance between Dostoevsky and the social group whose language he is discussing. If he had wanted to keep aloof from the People, he would not have chosen to promote an item that belonged to their vocabulary. The challenge here lies in finding an English word or phrase that clearly denotes the social group which Dostoevsky has in mind without, however, expressing contempt for this group. Lantz translates the sentence as "The word 'striutsky, striutskys' is not used in educated circles" (1181). Being uneducated was in the Russia of Dostoevsky part and parcel of belonging to the stratum of "простонародье," and it did not necessarily qualify a person negatively. In fact, as Dostoevsky goes on to explain in his article, there is a lesson to be learned from those known as "uneducated" that concerns the use of the word "striutsky." Lantz

seems to have given more thought to Dostoevsky's concept of the Russian lower classes, and his translation of the above-mentioned sentence fits the context of Dostoevsky's argument better than Brasol's.

A simultaneous comparative reading of the three texts will provide an English translator with other insights. The most important of them seems to be the one that deals with the potential difficulties presented by the nature of the Russian verb. The following is a passage in which Dostoevsky discusses the process whereby the non-reflexive verb "стушевать"—"to shade" came to be used as the reflexive "стушеваться"—"to shade oneself out/away."

> Все планы чертились и *оттушёвывались* тушью, все старались добиться, между прочим, уменья хорошо *стушёвывать* данную плоскость, с тёмного на светлое, на белое и на нет: хорошая стушёвка придавала рисунку щеголеватость. И вдруг у нас в классе заговорили: "где такой-то?—Э, куда-то *стушевался*!"—Или, например, разговаривают двое товарищей, одному надо заниматься: "ну говорит один, садящийся за книги, другому,—ты теперь *стушуйся*." Или говорит например верхнеклассник новопоступившему из низшего класса: "я вас давеча звал, куда вы изволили *стушеваться*?" (3: 403). (emphasis added)
>
> All the plans were drawn and shaded in India ink and, among other things, everyone tried to learn how to shade a given surface well, from dark to light to white—to naught; good shading gave the drawing a stylish look. And suddenly, people in class began to ask: "Where's so-and-so?" "Ah, he's disappeared ('stushevalsia') somewhere." Or, say, two friends were talking and one would say to the other as he took up his books, "now you'd better disappear ('stushevaisia'

> [sic])." Or a senior student would say to a first-year newcomer, "I was calling you just now; where did you manage to disappear ('stushevatsia')?" (1186).

The verbs italicized in the excerpt from the original are all derivatives of "тушевать"—"to shade." It has to be noted that "тушевать," as well as "оттушёвывать" and "стушёвывать," which also appear in the passage, are all imperfectives, i.e., in the Russian they indicate that the verbs' actions have not been completed. The prefix "с-" needs to be added to "тушевать" in order to turn it into a perfective. The interfixes "-ё-" and "-ёвы-" have to be replaced by "-е-" in the words "оттушёвывать" and "стушёвывать" to obtain the perfectives "оттушевать" and "стушевать" respectively. "Стушевать" is, of course, of greater relevance to this discussion than "оттушевать." However, they are both important in that they turn our attention to the distinction between the imperfective and the perfective aspect of the verb in Russian. As we can discover by reading the original alongside the two English translations, the transition from the imperfective to the perfective was an important stage in the process of coining the new word "stushevatsia." Brasol and Lantz make an effort to explain the history of this coinage to the English-speaking reader as thoroughly as possible. Yet, due to the fact that the movement from the imperfective to the perfective is not recorded in the English text, its reader can form but a vague idea of the progression from "shad[ing] a given surface" (1186) to the verb "stushevatsia." All the more so as both Lantz and Brasol fail to signal in their respective translations still another stage in the development of the new word: the transition from the non-reflexive form "стушевать" to the reflexive "стушеваться." Since Brasol uses the word "vanish" and Lantz the word "disappear" to render the imperative "стушуйся," when relying only on one of the English translations, we cannot see clearly the importance of non-reflexivity vs. reflexivity in the new coinage. Although Lantz and Brasol try to make the word "стушеваться" more meaningful to

an English-speaking reader by transliterating it as "stushevatsia," the usefulness of this strategy from the point of view of a reader who has no Russian is rather doubtful. Perhaps it would have been more beneficial to "stretch" the English language to a degree by opting for an original usage such as "shade yourself out/away" to indicate the imperative "стушуйся"? Walter Benjamin advocates this kind of approach when he states,

> It is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work. For the sake of pure language he breaks through decayed barriers of his own language. Luther, Voss, Hölderlin, and George have extended the boundaries of the German language. (22)

This guideline is the centre around which Benjamin's theory of translation gravitates and, therefore, it seems to be too radical to be readily applicable in its full force. Yet, the concept of breaking the boundaries of the target language certainly deserves some attention in the context of what has been said regarding the difficulties that Brasol and Lantz encountered when trying to render the verb "stushevatsia." Here may be a boundary waiting to be extended.

The above analysis of Chapter 1 of the November 1877 section of the Diary was included in this critical study of the two English translations of Dostoevsky's work in order to consider some potential difficulties presented by a genre that may be called lexicographic narrative. The two words Dostoevsky discusses become the heroes of this narrative. The translator's task is ensuring that they come across as such also in translation. The English-speaking reader needs to see the full power of the word "striutsky" to characterize individuals negatively in order to appreciate the importance Dostoevsky attaches to the common people as creators of lexical items that are deemed worth using in literature. Similarly, to provide insight into Dostoevsky's

fondness for the verb "stushevatsia," a translation needs to follow closely all of the stages of its development as outlined in Dostoevsky's description.

CHAPTER VI Conclusion

This discussion of the two English translations of selections from the Diary is offered as an invitation to similar comparative readings of works in translation. The Diary was chosen as object for this analysis for a number of reasons. First, its very nature poses unique problems for a translator. The complicated structure comprising a host of genres calls for a user of English who is flexible and versatile as well as willing to experiment with language. The many genres of the Diary need to be re-created in translation in order to enable the English-speaking reader to notice the generic complexity of the work. Second, within the language of each genre exists a number of registers: formal, colloquial, "uneducated," etc. These need to be correctly identified and, wherever possible, rendered into English. Third, the translator cannot lose sight of the fact that the Diary is a very personal piece of writing and that Dostoevsky uses it to express a set of specific beliefs, views, and convictions. While it is tempting to "read" oneself into the text of what one is reading, in the case of the Diary this will be done at the cost of obscuring the text's strong authorial voice. Lastly, when attempting a translation of the Diary, one has to bear in mind that—despite appearing to be a random collection of texts—the work is a cohesive whole: discourse subjugated to a number of guiding principles. The most important of them consists in its author's desire to bring things and people together. The things are, of course, the numerous experiments in the field of genre; the people are all past, present, and future readers of the Diary and Dostoevsky himself as its main driving force, a compelling personality: simultaneously the author and the hero of his own discourse.

This analysis of A Writer's Diary in relation to The Diary of a Writer and Дневник писателя was born out of a conviction that a case study of this kind must not limit itself to general statements regarding a comparative reading of the works in question, but that it should have a strong focus on textual detail. Detailed comparisons of specific words and expressions were, therefore, drawn to create a database that later proved useful in the process of formulating the principles operating both at the level of a translation of a selection from the Diary as well as that of a translation of the Diary as a whole. For instance, it was shown that Lantz's decision to capitalize the word "people" had important implications not only for the section "What Does the Word 'Striutsky' Mean" or for the sketch "A Hundred-Year-Old Woman," but also for the English-language reader's perception of Dostoevsky's portrayal of the uneducated classes throughout the Diary.

Due to the nature of the task undertaken in this study as well as the methodology employed in its execution, only a limited number of texts could be considered. At the same time, the stress on detail produced a substantial body of textual evidence in support of the study's main theses. It is hoped that the present analysis constitutes a step toward possible practical applications of translation studies. Of value to the discipline may be, for example, some of the conclusions which this analysis reached as regards certain fields of interaction between Russian and English to be discovered in the course of an intensive reading of Dostoevsky's original alongside its two translations. The problematic nature of Russian diminutives and the potential difficulties presented by the Russian verb are two very clear examples of zones in which the original interacts with its translations in ways which, while being interesting, are not necessarily desirable—at least from the point of view of a potential translator.

Another important conclusion reached in the process of comparing the translations with the original is that the translator's thorough command of both the source and the target language is only one of the tools needed in the craft. As this study has repeatedly demonstrated, the translator also needs sophisticated analytical skills, the most important of which is the ability to read and consider the source text carefully. Although it is inevitable that each of us reads and understands texts differently, translators should at least aim for readings that are as impartial as possible. The assumption that such a reading is impossible is as counterproductive (not to say "harmful") as the one according to which translation itself is impossible.

This study is neither comprehensive in its scope nor dogmatic in its thrust. It is not intended as the final word on translation, nor is it meant to provoke extreme reactions from the community of translatologists and literary scholars. It grew out of a passion for reading literary works in the original moderated by a realization that the phenomenon of translation has been not only unavoidable but also useful and necessary in the process of creation and steady development of the so-called "world literature." It is hoped that, by offering a number of reflections on the ways in which two translators chose to render a challenging Russian text into English, this analysis will contribute to the process of bridging the gap between the theory and practice of translation.

Although an attempt has been made to shape this investigation so that its usefulness extends beyond a comparative study of Russian texts and their English translations, it has to be admitted that this project is concerned with Dostoevsky to the same extent as it is focussed on translation studies and comparative literature problematics. The fact that the Diary has gone through two English translations, and that these translations are being used by the constantly growing body of Dostoevsky scholarship in English, has important implications for the reception

of Dostoevsky in the English-speaking world. While Dostoevsky's position in the pantheon of world writers has long been secured, it will be interesting to see how the perception of his output changes with the growing awareness that the Diary is an important part of this output. Although this inquiry does not presume to equal in importance the considerable efforts of Brasol and Lantz or the extremely valuable contributions of Grishin and Morson, its author nevertheless feels proud to participate in bringing the Diary to the attention of all those who admire Dostoevsky's art and who, in their willingness to continue exploring it, are ready to work toward collapsing all the barriers that separate us from it—be these caused by language, ideology, or religious, national, and cultural affiliations.

Endnotes

[1] Whenever possible, this analysis provides the original Russian in the titles of and quotations from Dostoevsky's works. Occasionally, however, transliteration is used in relation to Russian words that have frequently been transliterated. These typically include Russian family names (Grishin, Ivanovich, etc.) as well as titles of literary works such as "Bobok" or Dnevnik pisatelia

[2] My translation.

[3] The Diary's formal "newness" or originality has been discussed by Grishin (1966, 1968) and Morson (1981, 1989).

[4] "Fyodor Dostoevsky." Encyclopaedia Britannica on CD-ROM, 1998.

[5] For a more detailed discussion of the genres of the Diary see D. V. Grishin's Genres of The Diary of a Writer by F. M. Dostoevsky, Melbourne, 1968.

[6] See Mochulsky (1967), p. 540.

[7] Dostoevsky's insistence on a single, author-imposed interpretation of a text is best illustrated in Chapter 4 of the Diary for the year 1874 (pp. 146-155 in Lantz), which contains his reflections concerning the "incorrect" reading of his story "The Crocodile" (1865).

[8] Thus, Dostoevsky creates for his own purposes what Jonathan Culler (in Suleiman 1980, p. 53) excoriates as "an ideal reader or a super-reader."

[9] Unless indicated otherwise, all English quotations come from the translation by Kenneth Lantz.

[10] The almost palpable "presence" of characters in the text that was one of the objectives of nineteenth-century Realist fiction.

[11] For a comprehensive introduction to translation studies see Snell-Hornby (1995).

[12] See Melby (1995) p. 10.

[13] As this study proceeds to demonstrate, in his translation Lantz shows the thoroughness and flexibility demanded from a translator by modern translation theory.

[14] This work has become a canonical text in the West and is often preferred to Dostoevsky's purely novelistic output. Recently, it has been incessantly discussed it the post-modernist context.

[15] "Кроткая" appeared as (or to quote Dostoevsky) "in lieu" of the November 1876 issue of Дневник писателя.

[16] The most important of them seems to be a divided personality, earlier discussed by Dostoevsky in the Double, Notes from Underground, and Crime and Punishment.

[17] The very rough English equivalents of these are "sir; Mr." and "madam; Mrs./Ms." respectively.

[18] "We'll talk [. . .] you know [. . .] say something!" My translation.

[19] "Let me kiss your dress [. . .] I want to pray to you like this all my life." My translation.

[20] See, for example, Newmark (1988, p. 5) and Nida (1964, pp. 154-5).

[21] This view acknowledges the assumption that, to a large extent, a translation is an original creation of the translator, eloquently articulated by Benjamin in "The Task of the Translator."

[22] "Fyodor Dostoevsky," Encyclopaedia Britannica on CD-ROM, 1998.

[23] In С. И. Ожегов, Словарь русского языка. Москва: Государственное издательство иностранных и национальных словарей, 1963. p. 529.

[24] All English translations of the quotations from Словарь русского языка are mine.

[25] "To guzzle up," "to put away," "to gulp down," "to bolt," and "to wolf" are some of them.

[26] Professor Petro strengthens this argument with his comment that, unlike German and Slavic languages, English uses the verb "to eat" both in relation to humans and animals. This makes the verb "жрать" very difficult to translate into English.

[27] A classic work on the subtleties of irony in literature has been Wayne C. Booth's A Rhetoric of Irony. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1974.

[28] With the exception of direct quotations from Brasol and Lantz, this study uses the more common ("-ich") variant of transliteration in names such as "Ivanovich," "Ardalyonovich,"etc.

[29] Lantz's (767) describes The Almanac as "A reference book and compilation of facts about Russia," and adds that its "fourth section dealt with popular customs and beliefs."

[30] Lantz's rendition of the word "народ" as "the People" is used hereafter in the body of the text to indicate that the author considers this rendition accurate.

[31] (1801-1872). A famous Russian lexicographer, ethnographer, and author.

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