

System and Parody: Notes Towards a Description of Two Aspects of the Theory of Translation of Russian Formalism

*Sistema e paródia: notas para uma
descrição de dois aspectos da teoria da
tradução do formalismo russo*

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Edição: RUS, Vol. 15. Nº 26
Publicação: Maio de 2024
Recebido em: 05/02/2024
Aceito em: 02/05/2024

<https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2317-4765.rus.2024.221756>

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*System and Parody: Notes Towards a Description of Two
Aspects of the Theory of Translation of Russian Formalism*
RUS, São Paulo, v. 15, n. 26, pp. 233-251, 2024.



System and Parody: Notes Towards a Description of Two Aspects of the Theory of Translation of Russian Formalism

*Cristian Cámara Outes**

Abstract: In this paper we look into the theoretical and aesthetic conceptions of Russian formalism and the way in which these were applied to the specific field of translation studies. The functions of translation are examined in the theoretical and historical-literary studies published by Viktor Shklovsky, Yuri Tynyanov and Boris Eikhenbaum between the years 1913 and 1928. As a result of this analysis, we find that two key terms in formalist considerations about translation are those of system and parody. Throughout the theoretical evolution of the school, we see the continuity of certain theoretical constants: systematic, dialectical and dynamic understanding of literary systems and a persistent discussion about the nature of the relationships between translation and writing. From this realisation, the conclusion is drawn that Russian formalism has not been sufficiently assimilated by contemporary scholars working in the field of Translation Studies, and that its fundamental ideas might still exert an enriching influence on research carried out today.

Resumo: Neste artigo analisamos as concepções teóricas e estéticas do formalismo russo e a forma como estas foram aplicadas ao campo específico dos estudos da tradução. As funções da tradução são examinadas nos estudos teóricos e histórico-literários publicados por Viktor Shklóvski, Iuri Tiniánov e Boris Eikhenbaum entre os anos de 1913 e 1928. Como resultado desta análise, percebemos que sistema e paródia são dois termos-chave nas considerações formalistas sobre tradução. Ao longo da evolução teórica da escola, vemos a continuidade de certas constantes teóricas: a compreensão sistemática, dialética e dinâmica dos sistemas literários e uma discussão persistente sobre a natureza das relações entre tradução e escrita. A partir desta constatação, conclui-se que o formalismo russo não foi suficientemente assimilado pelos estudiosos contemporâneos que trabalham no campo dos Estudos da Tradução, e que as suas ideias fundamentais podem ainda exercer uma influência enriquecedora na investigação realizada hoje.

Keywords: Translation theory; Theory of literature; Russian formalism; Literary systems; Parody; Viktor Sklovsky; Yuri Tynyanov; Boris Eikhenbaum

Palavras-chave: Teoria da tradução; Teoria da literatura; Formalismo russo; Sistemas literários; Paródia; Viktor Sklovski; Iuri Tiniánov; Boris Eikhenbaum

*On this account, no category of literary analysis (...) can be held stable.
The system is in constant motion; form is this motion's name.*

Ilya Kliger

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he evolution of Russian formalist literary theory presents an extraordinary coherence and continuity. In a nutshell, this continuity can be described as the extrapolation, during the 1920s, of the dissolving consequences of the initial term of deautomatisation towards broader and more general fields of analysis: genre theory, theory of history, conception of poetic semantics, aesthetic ontology or negative definition of the essence of literariness. As late as 1927, Boris Eikhenbaum underscored again the red thread that runs through all formalist theorising when he declared: “The permanent inadequacy between the transmental essence of art and language is the internal antinomy of art that governs its evolution” (1998, p. 49).

Within this consistent evolution, the outlining of the term “system” constitutes a fundamental milestone in the overcoming of the initial approach that focused somewhat unilaterally on strict phonocentrism and the isolated analysis of artistic procedures. The period between 1919 and 1921 can be considered the moment when formalist authors developed the conceptual foundations of a comprehensive theory of literature as a dynamic system, in which deautomatisation is promoted as a fundamental feature of the relations between forms both in the synchronic and diachronic levels. In 1919, Boris Eikhenbaum writes “On the artistic Word”; Viktor Shklovsky, “The Relationship between Devices of Plot Construction and General Devices of Style”; and Yuri Tynyanov “Dostoyevsky and Gogol: A Notes Towards a Theory of Parody” — published 1921 —, all of which contain references to the systematic-differential constitution of literary contexts (work, genre, epoch, etc.). In 1921, Shklovsky first published “Literature without a Plot: Rozanov”, which

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elaborates the characterisation of literary systems as teeming with energetic shifts between centre and periphery that came later to be generally regarded as canonical. Although in this article we are concerned mostly with the translation theory of Russian formalism, it appears essential to devote a brief mention to the conceptual foundations of the authors' general systematic conception, in order to establish the necessary framework for the subsequent analysis.

The development of the systematic conception seems to have been a collective enterprise in which it is difficult to establish clear precedence and chronological priorities (who said what first or who took the cue from who). Moreover, it is revealing that in Eikhenbaum's texts prior to his conversion to formalism (which we can date to the joyful text "Discourse on Criticism", published on 12 May 1918), we find numerous anticipations of the later systematic conception. In 1914, in a review of the republication of the Russian translation of the *Outpourings of an Art-Loving Friar* (or.: 1797; rus. tr.: 1826), by W. Wackenroeder, Eikhenbaum deplores the circumstance that the present age lacks an adequate understanding of Romantic poetry as a set of "interweaving lines" ("skreshchivaiushchye linii") (1987, p. 291). In the article "On Chekhov", published in 1916, he defines Chekhov's production in terms not of genius or internal psychological dispositions, but rather of his relative position within the historical-literary evolution, and thus defines him as an "epigone" of the realist generation (1987, p. 318), with which he tries to break away by various formal means. The notion of epigonism, stripped of evaluative colouring, would later become crucial in formalist analyses. These prefigurations point to the fact that Eikhenbaum as well, just like the authors he studies, is a "complex knot" ("slozhny uzel") (1987, p. 371), and that formalist theory derives from earlier elements and influences subjected to reaccentuation and transformation.

In the above-mentioned text "On the Artistic Word" we can concretely point out the moment when the initial phonocentric orientation, involved yet in a degree of Dionysian essentialism, gives way to a description of the displacements between systems. Undoubtedly, poetry here continues to consist of a "struggle with the material" that is at the same time a generator of meanings and a revivifier of the world, just as in previous accounts by Shklovsky concerning zaum futurist poetry. But it so happens that the concept of "formal difficulty" has become relative to historical contexts. The case in point, which later became the trademark of the school, is that of Pushkin's work. In contrast to the rhetoricism and convolutedness of previous poetry, Pushkin is characterised by his facility and proximity to colloquial language:

This does not mean at all that the progress or development of poetic language is in all cases determined by the degree of its approximation to the spoken language. Poetic language always remains a language completely conventional, self-contained, with its own traditions and its own special internal history. The complex rhetorical style is replaced by a "simplified" style, which in its development leads to the formation of a new "complexity" (1987, 338-339).

This in no way represents a pendulum swing as stipulated by the German formalist H. Wöllflin between two poles as those of Classicism and Baroque. Instead, according to Eikhenbaum, "any element of the material can stand out as a form-giving dominant" (*formoobrazyiushchaya dominanta*)" (1987 [1923], p. 430). Formal-literary change is properly unpredictable and hazardous and depends on the sum of correlations present in a system. Indeed, depending on the period, it can respond to incitements external to the literary evolutionary system, coming from other artistic or extra-artistic "series" (sociological, economic, ideological, institutional and other types). But nevertheless it will depend on the repertory of forms available in the system to acquire expression, and must necessarily incorporate a component of rupture and transgression in order to consolidate as a relevant "literary fact". In the words of the opponent of formalism Pavel Medveded, the essence of literature is reduced to its differential quality: "mere difference from" (1994 [1928], pp. 184). Or as Shklovsky explains already in 1919: "the work of art is perceived only on the background and through its association with other works of art. The form of the work of art is determined by its relation to other previously existing forms. The material of the work of art is invariably underlined and accentuated. Not only parody, but generally any work of art is created in parallel and in opposition to a previous model. A new form does not appear to express a new content, but to replace an old form that has lost its artisticity" (1919, p. 120).

This kind of consideration required a thorough descriptive analysis of the constitution of the systems of the past ("dynamic archaeology"), in order to establish the relations of force and the set of "interweaving lines" at play. Moreover, the rigorous constructivist character of formalist' epistemology of history advocated that changes in the present of the researcher involve transformations in the meaning of past texts, but this must be left for another occasion. The fact is that only a thorough description of a system as a whole makes it possible to recognise how a given work deviates from the dominant conventions and on which previous models it relies to effect this displacement. Formalist texts are replete with such detailed analyses of the emergence

and expansion of a new formal constructive principle that replaces a previous one that had already exhausted its aesthetic effectiveness. As an example, we can mention the article that Eikhenbaum devotes to the poet Fyodor Sologub. Sologub entered the literary scene in 1883, "only five years after the death of Nekrasov", who with his realist-oriented poetry and colloquial intonation had struck a tremendous blow to classical poetry:

It seemed that these beautiful traditions could no longer be resurrected, that Fet would be the last one to sing delicate poems about love, and that only people from the older generation would take the trouble to listen to them. However, historical dynamics and dialectics are more complicated than it usually seems. In fact, at that time a new return to intimate lyricism and small forms was already taking shape. A new revival of the lyrical magic of the word, of the lyrical "enchantment", that had retained its strength in the poems of Tyutchev and Fet at a time when it was appreciated by few. (...). The poems of Fyodor Sologub belong to the same lyrical style, albeit complicated and transformed. (1987 [1924], p. 371).

Nekrasov had inherited Pushkin's colloquial intonation, but combined it with a realist orientation and "low", "anti-poetic" lexicon and themes. He had inherited Pushkin as much as he had fought with him. Thanks to this he had created a poetic construction dominant from the 1840s to the 1880s. At this time, the poetic verbal series had yielded to the novel the dominant position in the literary system (Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Chekhov), painting occupied the top position in the system of the arts, and the arts as a whole exhibited an orientation towards political discourse. Tyutchev himself had also inherited and fought with Pushkin, but inherited and fought different things. Throughout this period, both Tyutchev and Fet were considered poets of little significance and practically dilettantes. From the early 1880s onwards, the internal evolutionary logic of poetry itself promoted a shift that would soon give birth to symbolist poetry. Tyutchev and Fet acquired a renewed significance for young poets, poetry regained its canonised throne from prose, music became the model to follow, and the arts as a whole turned their backs on everyday reality and social issues and became absorbed in researching their own components. But nothing can prevent that, in a later development of the system, Tyutchev and Fet fall out again from grace and become irrelevant, poetry and prose exchange positions, or a new art appears as a pole of attraction (say, cinema), etc.

Literary evolution as a "change of systems" is a process in which everything is in motion and in constant conflicting shifts. It is characterised by non-linearity and marked negativity or differential significance. In a new system, the canonical authors,

themes, genres, etc., of the previous system become secondary. In their place appear others that most often come from "minor lines" and peripheral zones of the previous system, albeit complexified and transformed in these shifts. The meaning of the works of the past, but also of the works of every present, depends entirely on the interpretative forces that successively appropriate them. Basil Lvoff has elaborated in convincing terms on this very notion of differential significance for Russian formalism: "The kind of meaning at issue is not that of a single work taken in and of itself; what matters is systemic meaning, which arises in comparison: of a single work with all the other works, of a certain genre with all the others, of a national literature with Weltliteratur and, finally, of the system of literature as a whole with other systems" (2021, p. 32).

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In a recapitulatory text of 1927, explaining the achievements and main features of the formal method, Boris Tomashevsky wrote:

This notion of the internal determination of literary evolution has particularly attracted researchers' attention toward national factors in literary revolutions (...). International relations are the object of scrupulous study, but in describing the transmission of ideas and literary facts from one country to another, the main preoccupation is to clarify what national factors have led to a recourse to foreign models (...). Thus the influence of Dostoevskii and Tolstoy on the French novel is a problem in the national evolution of the French novel, and not at all a fact imposed from outside (...). The assimilation of foreign elements is essentially an act of preliminary adaptation. Literary translation should therefore be studied as a constitutive element of the literature of each nation (2003, pp. 362-363).

Admittedly, the central relevance of translations and translational phenomena in formalist texts has not been very often observed in recent times, but from the "contemporaries' perspective" it was an undeniable fact that could not be overlooked (in this paper we follow the line of opinion that sees Tomashevsky and other members of the Moscow Linguistic Circle more as "contemporaries" than as fully-fledged members of the formalist school). In the analysis of historical dynamism and the concrete description of system change, translation always plays a major role as a plastic force that enters into the struggles of the epoch. It is one of the sources from which can be

extracted new “discoveries”, in the sense that Eikhenbaum confers to the term: “The creation of new forms is not an act of invention, but of discovery, because these forms existed in a hidden way in the forms of preceeding epochs” (1924, p. 14). Whether it is a study of the evolutionary significance of a particular author, or the configuration of an epoch, or the emergence of a particular procedure or genre, translation always appears as an essential element. Russian formalism's conception of literature is eminently transnational and comparative. In this sense, formalist analyses address from an innovative angle numerous aspects that resonate in contemporary discussions in Translation Studies.

The roles of translations in target systems are multiple, multifunctional, and multidirectional. On many occasions, indeed, translations are called upon to help introduce innovations into systems which, for various reasons, are reluctant to it. In other words, translations appear as useful tools in the effort of a new literary generation to deautomatise worn-out forms. But this is not always the case, and analyses show that translations perform the most diverse tasks. One might even say that there is a certain indifferentiation between translations and original works, and both are considered on an equal footing.

In a 1923 text Shklovsky notes: “Sterne was perceived in Russian Romanticism in its purely thematic aspect, while in Germany at the same time he was perceived as a constructive principle, that is to say, it acquired from him that which in any case it was to develop autonomously” (1990, p. 76). Sterne’s work was assimilated in two different ways in two contemporary systems, Russian and German, according to the respective evolutionary needs of each. In Germany it became a force that contributed to the development of the fragmentary novel of Jean Paul Richter and E.T.A. Hoffmann, of enormous evolutionary importance for the later European novel. The same result occurred in Russia almost a century later with Vasily Rozanov, not due to Sterne's direct influence, but to an indirect influence, through his impact on a “minor line” of Russian prose, subordinate and peripheral, the line of Rtsy, Shperk and Goboruch-Otrok, of which Rozanov was the “canonizer” (1990, p. 76). The least that can be said is that, in this brief passing mention, we find the convoluted paths and various temporalities of affectation of translations. Sterne's influence on German Romanticism is a direct, straightforward influence, of the kind we

usually have in mind when we think of translation. Sterne's influence on Rozanov is delayed and subterranean, a second moment influence, mixed with other local elements with which he has lived through a process of fermentation. It is not clear whether we have a term at the moment a term to refer this particular type of distant affectation. However, it is worth drawing attention to the fact that Shklovsky does not even consider it necessary to mention that he is talking about translations or foreign influences: he is talking about formal innovation and literary change as such.

Similarly, in the book Eikhenbaum devotes to the study of the evolution of nineteenth-century Russian poetry (*Melodics of Russian Verse*, 1922), or in the books where he engages with individual authors (*Anna Akhmatova*, 1922; *The Young Tolstoy*, 1924; *Lermontov: A Study in Literary-Historical Evaluation*, 1924), translation is always "as a force that enters in the general dynamics of the epoch", as a fundamental element of the historical process that unfolds "not as a single line of facts, but in the complex form of interweaving and contradiction of various traditions and methods, whose struggle with each other is what constitutes the epoch (1924, p. 14). For example (one example among many), as I have already mentioned, Tyutchev is the continuator of Pushkin and the rival of Nekrasov, and also of Lermontov, each of whom prolongs different elements of the master's poetry. At the same time, Tyutchev fights tooth and nail against Pushkin, and in this struggle he draws on both local and foreign traditions: "In Tyutchev's poetry we observe an interesting combination of Russian lyric poetry traditions (Derzhavin and Zhukovsky) and German influences (Novalis, Heine and others). The usual understanding of Tyutchev as Pushkin's direct heir is a historical-literary error. Linear and mechanical heredities do not exist either in literature or generally in art" (1922, pp. 77-78). If we move backwards, one of the poets mentioned on whom Tyutchev relies to wrestle with Pushkin is Zhukovsky, "one of the most difficult problems in the history of Russian poetry" (Id., p. 30), and himself another poet who relied heavily on translations to constitute his style. Zhukovsky's historical task was to displace Lomonosov's neoclassical poetry, to move from a rhetorical and philosophically-erudite poetry to a still elevated but subjective and intimate poetry: "Thanks to his translations of German and English ballads (Schiller, Uhland, Southey), he began to free himself from the elements of the meditative ode of the Gray type, and developed and strengthened his technique" (Id., p. 53). In other words, if we recapitulate this short passage: Tyutchev makes use of both translations and poets of local translation, in particular Zhukovsky, but Zhukovsky in its turn was already traversed by translations. Not only that, but in the following argumentation we see that Zhukovsky mobilised certain

translations in order to combat other translations of a different kind against Pushkin, and in this struggle he draws on both local and foreign traditions: "In Tyutchev's poetry we observe an interesting combination of Russian lyric poetry traditions (Derzhavin and Zhukovsky) and German influences (Novalis, Heine and others). The usual understanding of Tyutchev as Pushkin's direct heir is a historical-literary error. Linear and mechanical heredities do not exist either in literature or generally in art" (1922, pp. 77-78). If we move backwards, one of the poets mentioned on whom Tyutchev relies to wrestle with Pushkin is Zhukovsky, "one of the most difficult problems in the history of Russian poetry" (Id., p. 30), and himself another poet who relied heavily on translations to constitute his style. Zhukovsky's historical task was to displace Lomonosov's neoclassical poetry, to move from a rhetorical and philosophically-erudite poetry to a still elevated but subjective and intimate poetry: "Thanks to his translations of German and English ballads (Schiller, Uhland, Southey), he began to free himself from the elements of the meditative ode of the Gray type, and developed and strengthened his technique" (Id., p. 53). In other words, if we recapitulate this short passage: Tyutchev makes use of both translations and poets of local translation, in particular Zhukovsky, but Zhukovsky in its turn was already traversed by translations. Not only that, but in the following argumentation we see that Zhukovsky mobilised certain translations in order to combat other translations of a different sign. And it will be better to not even get started with Lomonosov, or we might risk get lost in translations without any hope of ever finding the way out.

In this agonistic conception of influence, Eikhenbaum repeatedly insists on the consideration of literary works as heterogeneous mixtures, as a collage of elements of different procedences that constantly enter into new relations. The literary work is an intersection of components (thematic, phonic, metric, stylistic) which come from other places and acquire new meanings when entering new formal contexts. According to the author, through a combination between different things "new subordinate trends are formed and appear new interweavings between traditions, which prepare future revivals of verse" (1922, p. 78).

If we move now to the article "O. Henry and the Theory of Novel" (1925), we will find other functions at play for translations. The text does not focus solely on the diachronic development of one domestic system, but on the significance of the same element, the work of the American writer O. Henry (1862-1910), in two different literary systems, American and Russian. In the contemporary situation of Russian literature in the mid-twenties, Eikhenbaum notes the tremendous importance that translations have acquired, "Russia has suddenly become a country of translations" (1987, p. 366), due to a crisis in local production. In

this case, according to Eikhenbaum, the volume of translated literature comes to "fill a gap", while the crisis in which domestic production is plunged finds a resolution. This volume of translated literature, therefore, does not intervene to point out new development possibilities, promote new combinations and hybridisms, but has rather an exclusively "entertainment" character. It is made up of novels (mainly American and English, somewhat less German and French) to be "read on the train", and therefore does not belong to the subsystem of artistic literature as such, but to that of commercial literature, with which it entertains changing relations in each period. Within this specific context, the formidable success of O. Henry's translations comes from a completely different source. They stand out from the rest of the translated novels in the sense that they appear "on demand" (*po zakazu*), and reveal new possibilities for difficult plot construction. This is the case even if –or because of–, as Eikhenbaum explains, these short stories have a completely different significance in Russia and the United States. In the latter, "Henry's stories, of course, constitute the result of a long and uninterrupted culture of this genre (...). In Russia these stories appeared outside of these national-historical links and, consequently, they were perceived differently (...). In this very particular –and often false– way, foreign literature is refracted through local tradition" (2004 [1925], online).

The notion of refraction is not a very common term in formalist texts to tackle the change of meaning of formal elements when passing from one system to another. However, the phenomenon itself is very frequent. One of the moments when it seems most pregnant with consequences is Yuri Tynyanov's detailed analysis of Tyutchev's Russian translations of H. Heine's poems:

In this way, in two different languages (...) it is given as if one and the same thing. This would be the case if in verbal art the fundamental importance rested only on the meaning, and not also on the coloration, if the poetic image were only referential, and not also verbal (...). Against the background of Derzhavin, the image of Tyutchev acquires an archaic, ode-like tone (...). In this way, the genesis of Tyutchev's poem comes indeed from Heine's poem. However, here we have two different arts. (...) Heine's ballad has been transformed into a march, with elements of chorus and dialogue (...). The differential quality of Heine's poem is the colloquial brevity of the periods and the simplicity of the lexicon; the differential quality of Tyutchev is the pathos, the rhetorical building of the periods and the archaizing lexicon" (1977 [1921], pp. 32-34).

The refraction is observed here as a productive process. The strenuous attempt on the part of Tyutchev to preserve identity, as a result of the application of the dialectical laws of self-creation of forms, turns out to be a production of difference. No matter how much Tyutchev tried to convey all the characteristic features of the style of the original, the final product is not a transposition but a Russian poem, a verbal object that makes sense only in the context of the target system. The translation of a German poem by Tyutchev, and perhaps any possible translation, results in the creation of a different poem pertaining to a different evolutive system: "foreign art was an impulse for Tyutchev, a pretext for the creation of works whose tradition goes back to eighteenth-century Russian poetry" (1977, p. 37).

3

According to J. Munday, one of the most characteristic features of the current situation in translation studies is the great variety of definitions that exist regarding the question "what is translation?": "However, such definitions still do not answer the questions of the limits of translation, and the boundaries between translation, adaptation, version, transcreation, etc. (...). Such contradictory attempts at definition highlight the difficulty, and even futility, of expecting watertight categories for what might be viewed as a cline of strategies under the overarching term of translation" (2009, p. 7). In contemporary translation studies there is something like a central lack of definition, the very term translation is questioned as a reality endowed with an objective and indisputable consistency: "the category of translation is vague and unhelpful" (BASSNETT, 1998, 38). According to Rita Copeland, translation does not exist as such, "it does not have an absolute trans-historical meaning»" (1995, p. 222). Instead, the focus of interest has been turned to a whole series of liminal, marginal, hybrid, unlocatable phenomena, about which it cannot be assured with certainty that they are a translation or something else. In the words of Sherry Simon, one of the pressing tasks facing the present is that of "developing a vocabulary in translation studies that acknowledges the continuum of writing practices" (2007, p. 107).

Today we have numerous terminological proposals to refer to this continuum of writing practices, which together emphasize the intrinsically productive nature of translations, and therefore tend to overthrow or deconstruct, to a greater or lesser extent, an inherited dichotomy opposing the values, places and processes of the original and the copy. Sukanta Chanduri has written that each work is immersed in a constant transformative intertextual flow: "Every work therefore becomes the site of an ongoing intertextual process involving works before and after itself (...). Translation in the accustomed sense, out of one language into another, is the most radical of these displacements" (2007, pp. 87-89). Haroldo de Campos has the same kind of processes in mind when he opts for the terms of "transcreation" or "tropical plagiarism" (1996, p. 32), while Paolo Valesio recurs to the notion of "transpoetry": "poetry, in short, is never attested in a stable position: it is in movement, in a fluid situation of continuous translatio or traductio (...). The activity of poetry is always in some way a translation process" (1996, p. 32). According to M. Tymoczko, we are dealing here with general trait that defines the epoch:

It is a curious fact of contemporary literary studies that very different branches of literary theory have converged on the same insight: every telling is a retelling. Deconstruction, as well as its critical progenitors, has been at pains to point that the writers do not simply create original texts, to a great extent every literary text is dependent on texts that have gone before and, moreover, literature is as much about literature as about life. There are not only text and context, but a fabric of intertextualities that links texts to other literary works, both textual predecessors and contemporaries. Thus, a literary work, like a translation, depends on previous texts: neither is an "original semantic unity", both are "derivative and heterogeneous". Every writing is a rewriting (1999, p. 41).

One could say that we find here at work the schema of the transfer from uncles to nephews. Contemporary translation studies, since the so-called "cultural turn" of the 1980s and 1990s, define themselves in opposition to the essentialist, isolationist, dichotomist and logocentric doctrines of the linguistic paradigm of translation theory in the second half of the 20th century (R. Jakobson, E. Nida, J. Catford, J.P. Vinay and J. Darbelnet, and others). In this movement of departure and deviation, they return to the positions of modernist translation theory (E. Pound, P. Valéry, W. Benjamin, J. Mukařovský, J. L. Borges, and others), i.e. the kind of considerations that had remained in a secondary or peripheral position from the 1950s to the 1980s (O. Paz, H. Friedrich, Peter Szondi, H. Meschonnic, and others). Of course, it is a transformed return, and one that has the

peculiar trait of the downright neglect of the past. But systems are indeed entitled to amnesia, and forgetting can have enriching and productive consequences, as Nietzsche already explained. Incidentally, current social infatuation with innocuous AI technologies would seem to correspond better to a simplistic translation theory such as the one provided by the linguistic paradigm, but we ascertain that this is not the case. Social factors may influence the evolution of other discursive systems, but not necessarily and not always.

Be it as it may, it remains true that even within the modernist moment the translational theses of Russian formalism occupy a position of extreme radicalism. We will contend now that the notion of parody and parodistic processes elaborated by Russian formalists might effectively be ranked among the terms used to refer the "continuum of writing practices". As early as 1919, Eikhenbaum published an article dealing with the book of stories *The Tales of the Late Ivan Petrovich Belkin*. The author notes that these stories have come down to his time as a "mystery", as something properly unreadable. Already Bielinsky despaired of the book because he could see no way to squeeze any edifying philosophy out of it, and around the same time Nadezhny exclaimed in bewilderment "What is all this supposed to mean?" ("K chemu vsyo eto?"). And yet, in the moment when they were first published, according to Pushkin's own account, "Baratinsky burst out laughing as he read them". It happens that it is all a play with the narrative genres of the time and the breaking of conventions: "in these novels things do not end up as one might expect at first. They all precisely parody traditional plot schemes (...). Thus the *Belkin Tales* are organised around a single device - a sudden denouement or an unexpected twist of familiar plot schemes" (1987, p. 344). The original parodic construction assumes that the reader will be able to make a double reading, a reading that keeps before the eyes at the same time the model and the comic deviation from it. At a later point, however, the "double bottom" disappears and is forgotten, ceases to be palpable, and these stories begin to be read as "normal stories", stories with a single plane. But in the original context its evolutionary significance was all contained in the transgressive moment back and forth, encapsulated in a certain inbetweenness: "psychology again plays no role (...). It is again all about movement, about composition, about unfolding (*razviertyvanii*). The beginning is given in the spirit of the sentimental short stories by Karamzin. But these stories are used here as a kind of background against which Pushkin's deviations from tradition stand out" (Id., p. 346). And already here, in its first critical appearance, parody slides towards acquiring a much more general descriptive value:

The parodization (*parodirovanie*) of plot schemes, the incongruity with their traditional movement is a frequent phenomenon in literature. Artistic thinking often works according to the laws of calambour: it employs traditional arrangements that have strong associations connected to them, but then something unexpected, something "accidental" is introduced, destroying the mechanical development of the plot scheme. The traditional formula is thus given a new meaning (1987, p. 347).

Once again, this formulation of the transgressive literary movement was already present earlier in Eikhenbaum, in his texts of the pre-formalist period. In particular, in his critique of the traditional concept of "influence" as employed by the methodology of positivist historicism. Zamiatin's early texts are a departure from the strong narrator of Andreiev's novels, in them the narrator disappears and gives way to a "teller" embedded in the narration. In this procedure, Zamiatin follows the line of Leskov and above all Remizov: "Remizov can be felt in the very rhythm of his style. But it is very likely that this is not a simple imitation, but a more organic connection. For a beginning author this can only be helpful (1987 [1913], p. 291). When considering the relations between Pushkin and figures such as Byron and Chateaubriand, Eikhenbaum reproaches the notion of influence as insufficient: "it is not the fact of the influence itself that is important, but its character, its meaning" (1987 [1914], p. 388). And in discussing the reception of Wackenroeder's book in Russian Romantic poetry he outlines an opposition between the terms of "borrowing" and "correlation": "We have not yet moved beyond the study of actual borrowings, and the meaning of these borrowings, their fundamental principles, have not been studied, the question of correlations has not even yet been adequately posed" (1987 [1914], p. 299). Parody comes to refer, with a particular slant, to the very thing that the young Eikhenbaum was looking for earlier through the terms of "organic connection" and "correlation". The elucidation of such correlative relations in their precise character must become the "central task of literary history" (Id., p. 300). As we have mentioned above, at practically the same time Shklovsky asserted: "Not only parody, but generally any work of art is created in parallel and in opposition to a previous model"; and Yuri Tynyanov undertook a detailed study of the relations of parodisation: positive parodisation in "Dostoevsky and Gogol. Towards a Theory of Parody", and negative parodization in "Nekrasov's Poetic Forms" (1921).

In the text "Nekrasov's Poetic Forms" (1921), Tynyanov begins by opposing the traditional conception of parody as a restricted procedure of exclusively comic-burlesque character. Instead, in the author's opinion, parody should be promoted as a fundamental procedure within the dialectical substitution of

literary trends, and thus acquire an inescapable historical-descriptive value. Parody has two functions, mechanization of a previous construction and new reorganization of the elements in a different construction. For this reason, it allows for an analytical breakdown of what the term deautomatization conceptualized as a single movement. The moment Nekrasov enters the Russian poetic system in the forties of the nineteenth century, the system is dominated by imitators and epigones of Pushkin and Lermontov. Imitation, adaptation and epigonism would be in this case formal transfers without change of function. In order to break with the dominant poetic modes, at first, Nekrasov parodies them by introducing prosaisms into the canonical metrical structures (thus merging the levels of high and low). It is only in a second moment that Nekrasov creates a new poetic construction in which the presence of previous elements is no longer perceptible:

The essence of his parody is not in the mockery of the parodied, but in the very perceptibility of the displacement (*sdvig*) of the old form through the introduction of prosaic themes and lexicon. While this form is still linked to an earlier work (...) the oscillation between the two works, which arises as a result of such a kind of parody, produces a comic effect. But as soon as the perceptibility of the other work disappears, the question of the introduction of new stylistic elements into old forms obtains a resolution. Nekrasov's parody (like many other types of poetic parody) juxtaposed rhythmic-stylistic figures of the "high" style with "low" themes and lexicon. But with the destruction of the self-evident parody, a series of elements that hitherto were alien to the elevated style became entrenched into it (1977 [1921], p. 24).

In a later text from 1928 that remained unpublished until 1977, "On Parody", Tynyanov returned to this term and elaborated on the same theses as before: "parody is an evolutionary phenomenon of extraordinary importance (...). The history of parody is linked most closely with the evolution of literature (...). The history of Russian parody still awaits its researchers" (1977, pp. 296-309). There is no doubt that Tynyanov was the member of the formalist group most committed to the study of parody and the one who most developed the term theoretically. However, at this point in order to draw our last conclusions we would like to turn again to the playful Shklovsky.

In his article "Eugene Onegin (Pushkin and Sterne)" (1923), Shklovsky starts with a simile between works of art and icebergs. The underwater part of icebergs endures a progressive erosion, and then suddenly at a certain moment they "overturn" and thus offer a completely different view: "no longer pointed but flat-

surfaced". Then he continues: "Literary works have the same fate. From time to time our understanding of them is overturned: something that was funny becomes tragic, something that was beautiful is perceived as banal. It is as if the artistic work is written anew" (2004 [1923], pp. 175-176). In order to illustrate this phenomenon, Shklovsky provides a series of examples: the symbolist's reading of Gogol (from realism to hallucination) and then a number of shifts in the reception of Shakespeare: Johnson, Voltaire, the Romantic theatre, Goethe, Aleksandr Sumarokov, and the new *mise-en-scenes* by contemporary directors such as Tairov and Radlov: "A new Shakespeare was perceived every time" (Id., p. 176).

Possibly, the most interesting aspect in this enumeration concocted by Shklovsky is what we could call again a certain indistinction. In this passage we find an enumeration of different *estrategias* or procedures of productive reception of Shakespeare, a kind of reception that transforms our perception of the original work. Among them we can mention the literary criticism, or perhaps what we would call now literary history (Johnson and Voltaire); also literary influence (the case of the reception of Shakespeare in European Romantic theatre); and different *stagings* or *mise-en-scene* (those of Radlov and Tairov).

Among these *estrategias*, we also find a mention to a translation proper, that of the neoclassicist Aleksandr Sumarokov of *Hamlet* (1745), which Shklovsky's translator Emily Finer explains in a note that was of an extraordinarily adaptative character: the play ends well and Hamlet and Ofelia get married (!). This is very much in line with the detailed attention that formalists devoted to translations and the multiple functions they play within the evolution of literary systems.

However, in the light of all the previous considerations concerning the phenomenon of parody, we could find a remarkable item in the composition of this list. Amidst all the other cases, Shklovsky has introduced also an original literary work, and by the way none other than the *Wilhelm Meister*. According to Shklovski, in this novel Goethe wanted to "re-fashion" *Hamlet*.

In the light of the above, our claim is that Shklovsky was perfectly conscious of what he was doing here and which were the implications of including an original work such as this one in one rank with all the other *estrategias* mentioned, from criticism to influence and translation proper. In fact, it was just the logical consequence of the previous work both on parody and on the notion of work as dynamic construction where materials proceeding from very different places collide in a tense, unresolved ("excentric") manner.

Put briefly: Shklovsky is referring here to the essential *secundarity* of all writing, to a special energetics of writing that

implies that all writing is rewriting. There is no such a thing as first original writing and then (chronologically and ontologically) different kinds of rewriting (as for example would have it contemporary authors such as André Lefevere or Gideon Toury, despite their occasional iconoclastic posturing, still very much under the influence of the dichotomic modes of thinking of previous structuralistic paradigm). Translation in this sense, according to the formalist standpoint, is a production of verbal artifacts no different than any other kind of writing.

This is something quite new and provocative, and very much in line with many things that contemporary scholars in translation studies are telling us. But it is also –according to the formalist scheme of archaism and/ as innovation–, something rather ancient: a return to a humanist and rethorical conception of *imitatio autoris* as general mimetology that we can find clearly expressed in, for example, the *Antotaciones a la poesía de Garcilaso* (1580) by Fernando de Herrera.

In recent times we have perhaps been too absorbed by the idea that the whole of literary and translation thinking of the past can be subsumed under the label of the history of logocentrism. The ancients, according to Tynyanov, knew better than us. The idea of a millenary "Platonic figure of translation", of translation as "embellishing restitution of meaning" (BERMAN, 2004, p. 248), despite all its analytical virtues and its capacity to make us think, projects an excessive continuity into the fabric of the past, compels us to view our conceptual traditions in an oversimplified way. One of the merits of formalism and the notion of parody as formal-literary creativity is that it invites us to engage with the past again as a problem.

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