

THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATING CULTURALLY-SPECIFIC ELEMENTS: THE CASE OF M. BULGAKOV'S *THE MASTER AND MARGARITA*

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Abstract: Mikhail Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita*, a highly complex and multi-levelled narrative, is a challenge for any translator. The emphasis in the current research is on the translation strategies used when translating culturally-specific elements, or historical *realia*, referred to as "Sovietisms," in three English translations of the novel by Glenny (1967), Pevear and Volokhonsky (1997) and Aplin (2008). Sovietisms refer to items characteristic of the Soviet discourse of the 1930s: word-formations of the non-standard "Soviet Russian." Bulgakov's language is sated with Soviet vocabulary, which refers to various cultural and socio-political elements of Soviet reality. Sovietisms occur at various levels (lexical, syntactic, stylistic and rhetorical) and should be carefully translated as a significant characteristic of Bulgakov's style. A complete domestication of Sovietisms may lead to a loss of a connotative meaning essential for understanding the context, while a foreignisation of these terms, which are most likely unknown to western readers, may disturb fluidity of reading and cause confusion. The purpose of this analysis, thus, is to illustrate the use of domesticating/foreignising strategies employed by Bulgakov's translators and to assess the translation choices. The comparative analysis employs the taxonomies suggested by Vlahov and Florin (1995) and Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/1989) as the grounds for the case study.

Keywords: Translation. Bulgakov. Soviet. Discourse. Culture.

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OS DESAFIOS NA TRADUÇÃO DE ITENS CULTURAIS ESPECÍFICOS: O CASO DE THE MASTER AND MARGARIDA DE MIKHAIL BULGAROV

Resumo: A obra *The Master and Margarida* de Mikhail Bulgakov, narrativa altamente complexa e com múltiplos níveis, é um desafio para todo tradutor. O foco deste artigo se situa nas estratégias de tradução utilizadas para traduzir os itens culturais específicos, ou os realia históricos, tratados como “sovietismos” em três traduções da obra para o inglês, realizadas por Glenny (1967), Pevear e Volokhonsky (1997) e Aplin (2008), respectivamente. Os sovietismos dizem respeito a elementos próprios do discurso soviético da década de 1930: formações de palavras do “Russo soviético” não padronizado. A linguagem de Bulgarov está constituída pelo vocabulário soviético que, por sua vez, refere-se a vários elementos culturais e sócio-políticos da realidade soviética. Sovietismos aparecem em vários níveis (lexicais, sintaxes, estilísticos e retóricos) e devem ser cuidadosamente traduzidos sendo uma característica significativa da escrita bulgakoviana. Uma domesticação completa dos sovietismos poderá levar à perda de um sentido conotativo essencial para a compreensão do contexto, enquanto a estrangeirização desses termos que, provavelmente, desconhecidos pelos leitores ocidentais, pode influenciar a fluidez da leitura e causar uma confusão. O objetivo dessa análise, portanto, é ilustrar o uso de estratégias domesticadoras/estrangeirizadoras pelos tradutores de Bulgarov para avaliar as escolhas de tradução. O estudo comparativo faz uso das taxionomias sugeridas por Vlahov e Florin (1995) e Vinay e Darbelnet (1958/1989) como fundamentos desse estudo de caso.

Palavras-chave: Tradução. Bulgakov. Soviético. Discurso. Cultura

I. Introduction

A universal method for perfect translation has yet to be found. It is difficult, if not impossible, even, to answer the question of what constitutes a *good* translation. That said, I, like many others, believe that a good translation should be faithful to the original, since any major changes, adaptations and omissions applied at any level of the narrative may influence the interpretative possibilities of the future readership. In this article, the intention is to provide a concrete example of a translation that seems to have neglected an

important linguistic and historic dimension and has instead focused purely on the level of plot.

This corpus-analysis is based on three English translations of Mikhail Bulgakov's major novel *The Master and Margarita*, which has been translated into English six times, thus offering a unique opportunity for scholars to follow translation tendencies over time. This comparative analysis focuses on domesticated and foreignised strategies used when translating culturally-specific elements in terms of closeness or divergence, revealing a more source- or target-oriented nature of retranslations.

English translations by Michael Glenny (Collins and Harvill Press 1967), Richard Pevear and Larisa Volokhonsky (Penguin Classics 1997), and Hugh Aplin (Oneworld Classics 2008) were chosen primarily because they allow for a diachronic comparison.¹ Though it would seem more logical to include the first translation of Bulgakov's novel, by Mirra Ginsburg also published in 1967, I chose Glenny's as the first "complete" translation into English. The problem is that in the first edition of the novel, prepared by Bulgakov's widow Elena Bulgakova and published in the literary magazine *Moscow* (11: 1966 and 1: 1967), almost twelve percent of the original manuscript (approximately sixty pages) was deleted by censors (Belobrovtsseva and Kulnus 2007 30).² Ginsburg only had access to the heavily censored version and, consequently, her translation misses a few censored sections. This makes Glenny the first English translator to have worked with the uncensored script of Bulgakov's novel.

Motives for retranslations have been thoroughly researched (Berman 1990, Brownlie 2006, Venuti 2003, Vanderschelden 2000), and yet it is hard to explain why Bulgakov's masterpiece

¹ Although it would be interesting to include other English translations of the novel by Ginsburg (1967), Burgin and O'Connor (1995) and Karpelson (2006), the limits of this paper do not allow it.

² The first uncensored version of the novel was released in 1975 by the publishing house YMCA-Press (Belobrovceva and Kulnus 2007 30).

attracted the attention of translators almost thirty years after Glenny's translations, when two subsequent retranslations appeared, one by Diana Burgin and Katherine O'Connor in 1995 (Vintage books), and another by Pevear and Volokhonsky (1997). I decided to include Pevear and Volokhonsky's translation in this analysis as theirs is the most often republished contemporary translation of the novel (republished in 2000, 2001, 2004, 2006 and 2007) and we may assume it has so far reached a broader audience than Burgin and O'Connor's translation. In the case of Pevear and Volokhonsky, the primary motif may have been, as per Venuti (2003 30), the "translator's personal appreciation of a text with no other reasons," while Aplin's case may have been related to the publisher's desire to produce a different translation of a book that had already been translated and published by another publisher (Gürçağlar 235). Hence, the difference in translation approach cannot be overlooked. In contrast, Glenny's translation, which is thoroughly domesticated, contains no explanatory notes and, according to Barratt, has "some three hundred examples of a mismatch between the Russian and the English [texts]" (1987 75), while both Pevear and Volokhonsky's and Aplin's translations present a more sober and scholarly approach to the translation, and contain comments to each chapter.

To address the challenge of translating culturally-specific elements, I chose one of the most distinctive features of Bulgakov's style, namely, Sovietisms – that is, culturally-, historically- and socially-specific terms from the Soviet speech of the 1930s brought into the Russian language through the discourse of revolution and the communist regime to describe different aspects of Soviet life (e.g. professions, institutions, propagandistic slogans, etc.). As with any other culturally-specific terms, Sovietisms carry important, though implicit, information, and extensive domestication of these national, cultural and social components would significantly change the interpretive coordinates.

Sovietisms constitute one of the most important stylistic features of Bulgakov's text and should not be ignored by any

translator. No translation of *The Master and Margarita* can be considered culturally successful without proper attention paid to the translation of *Sovietisms*, which should not be adapted or directly changed without explanation or comment. Simplification or neutralization of national, cultural and social components significantly changes the coordinates that help the reader to imagine a picture of an unknown way of life. If the English translation ignores these terms, an important historical perspective of the narrative, a precise and ironic depiction of life in Soviet Moscow, vanishes. Personal names, phraseological expressions, food and drink items, slogans, names of organisations and other *Sovietisms* in the translation should not lose their informative value, even though they have different connotations in the source text, which can hardly be transferred to the translation.

The analysis is carried out with the methodological help of Sergej Vlahov and Sidor Florin's categorisation of Sovietisms, along with Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet's methodology for analysis of translation shifts as used in the context of foreignising or domesticating tendencies. Each translation choice will be evaluated on the basis of rendering a denotative and a connotative meaning, in consideration of the target audience of English-speaking readers who are completely unfamiliar with most of the terms in question. As it is impossible to analyse all categories of Sovietisms used in Bulgakov's narrative and their translations within one study, the main part of the study consists of a comparative analysis of a few illustrative examples, thus offering a basis for further research into Sovietisms in English translations of Bulgakov's works.

II. Methodology: definition and translation of Sovietisms

Since various terminology is used when defining the term,³ I will use the seminal works (in Russian) by Vlahov and Florin (1980, 2008) on translating *realia*, specifically as presented in the chapter entirely devoted to *Sovietisms* and the methods of translating them. In Vlahov and Florin's methodological research, *Sovietisms* are rendered a sub-category of "*realia*," "words or word-formations that name subjects, facts and objects characteristic of life, a mode of life, culture, social development of one nation and unclear or completely unknown to another, which express a national and/or historical *kolorit*"² (Vlahov and Florin 1980 47).⁴ Consequently, a translation of any *Sovietism* should render "three connotative levels: national, historical and social"⁵ (Vlahov and Florin 1980 143), while the translator should keep in mind that the information contained in a *Sovietism* is clear only to Soviet readers, or to readers from other socialist countries who experienced life under a communist regime. The same information is usually confusing for readers "out of our camp"⁶ (Vlahov and Florin 143).

Vlahov and Florin divided *Sovietisms* into three categories:

1. *Sovietism-realia* characteristic of the Soviet Union (e.g. *совхоз*, *неотложка*, *ЖЭК*, *целинник*, *стахановец*) should always be translated considering the absence of equivalents in the target readers' culture but also considering the common fact that readers from Socialist countries in any case have a more extensive knowledge about the USSR in comparison with readers from capitalist countries;

³ Several important studies on *Sovietisms* were also published in English, e.g. H. Hodkinson's *Doubletalk* (1955), a glossary of words and expression of Soviet and other communist usage; R. N. Carew Hant's *A Guide to Communist Jargon*; M. Waller's *The Language of Communism* (1972), and I. Korten's *Vocabulary of Soviet Society and Culture. A Selected Guide to Russian Words, Idioms, and Expressions of the Post-Stalin Era, 1953-1991* (1992).

⁴ All Russian quotes are translated by the author.

2. *Regional Sovietisms*, which usually do not differ from national terms in any socialist country and are usually translated to the languages of the socialist countries with corresponding equivalents by methods of a transliteration and a calque;
3. *International Sovietisms* (e.g. Совет, спутник, большевик) are so well-known that they do not require additional explanations and are translated by transcription (Vlakhov and Florin 144-145)

In the current analysis, we will focus on the translations of Sovietisms-realia. Though it is possible in most cases to transfer the denotative meaning of *Sovietisms* fairly closely, Vlakhov and Florin state that nothing guarantees that the connotative meaning will also be fully transferred, and the terms may be substituted with “a word or a formation with zero connotation” (89: 1980). While in several cases, a connotative meaning is partly transferred, not all connotations attached to *Sovietisms* can be rendered within the text, and comments are usually required.

As terminology to define translation strategies for culture-specific items is not unified and the number and specifics vary from one source to another, I will use Vinay and Darbelnet's (1958, 1989) taxonomy, which, in my opinion, should still be considered one of the most helpful models to classify the principal linguistic operations that translators perform. It is clearly structured and though it may seem slightly dated, I will illustrate that it has been successfully adopted by other scholars of translation who use similar distinctions and sometimes similar terms. Vinay and Darbelnet proposed seven methods that are sufficient for the analysis of the translation shift at the micro-textual level and cover most of the *parameters*, *methods* or *strategies* suggested in subsequent studies, namely: (a) borrowing; (b) calque; (c) literal translation as foreignising methods, and (d) transposition; (e) modulation; (f) adaptation, and (g) equivalence as domesticating.

III. Translation strategies used when translating Sovietisms-*realia*

I will start with the analysis of translating compounds that one would expect to be translated by calques. Hence, the results of the analysed examples showed that, though the use of calques prevails, other translation strategies were also employed in a few cases.

Translating by calques occurs consistently in all three translations in the cases of two compounds – “Госбанк” (Bulgakov 576) [a state bank] is rendered by all translators as “a state bank” (Glenny 98, Pevear and Volokhonsky 209, and Aplin 211) and “Интурист” (Bulgakov 1988 461) [a foreign tourist] as a “foreign tourist” (Glenny 19, Pevear and Volokhonsky 15, and Aplin 13). Though both examples allow for relatively “unproblematic” calquing that is to a large extent familiar to readers, the connotative meaning of compounds as important lexical characteristics of the Soviet discourse is lost and all three translations in these cases are affected by the loss of a lexical variation.

Other compounds are translated differently. Thus, in the following example only Pevear and Volokhonsky tended to follow the source text as closely as possible by using a transliteration when translating the compound “финдиректор” (Bulgakov 476) [the head of the box’s office]. Glenny used a literal translation, “treasurer” (1967 56), whereas the others prioritized the form and content of the source text by employing foreignising strategies of calquing and transliteration; only in Pevear and Volokhonsky’s translation “findirektor” (92) is this combined with an extra-textual gloss (403), which seems unnecessary, as the word “director” means the same in English and in Russian and neither should the stem “fin” confuse readers. The calquing “Financial Director” (103) offered by Aplin transfers the meaning well but fails to re-create the effect of the source term.

Calques and semi-calques are also used by a few translators when rendering the term “сверхмолния” (Bulgakov 478) [super-lightning], an ironic rendering of the normal молния [lightning]

meaning priority telegram. It is important not to lose the ironic connotations in the translation, as in this case Bulgakov makes fun of the exaggerations that add to the humour of accounts of Soviet life. In Soviet public discourse, the results were always “the best,” the success “extraordinary,” the people “the luckiest” and the courts “the fairest.” The context is also important as the word is used several times in a passage in which one of the protagonists receives one “super-lightning” after another. Since, in transliterated form, the term is only meaningful to a Russian reader of the English translation, none of the translators decided to use transliteration, though Pevear and Volokhonsky strictly followed another foreignising principle by using a calque modified not merely by the intra-textual gloss: “a super-lightning telegram” (107), which should suffice to illustrate the original’s connotative meaning, but also by an extra-textual gloss (404), while Aplin opted for the calquing “super-lightning” (122) without any explanation. Glenny used the adaptation “priority telegram” (56), transferring the denotative meaning but losing the ironic connotations which would be difficult to figure out from the context.

The strategy of transliteration occurs when translating one of numerous Sovietisms that refer to an important attribute of a communal flat. This is mentioned in the second part of the novel, in which Bulgakov introduces Margarita, who lives with her husband in a large apartment with a great deal of privacy – a true luxury in Stalinist Moscow. However, in spite of material well-being, Margarita is unhappy without her lover, the Master. In a short passage crucial to understanding Margarita’s character and the motives for her further actions, Bulgakov explains that Margarita was never forced to face the challenges of living in a communal flat (a challenge almost all women living in the Soviet Union struggled through every day) by stating that she never had to touch a “примус” (Bulgakov 584) [a little one-burner kerosene (paraffin) stove]. Though the word existed before, it was in Soviet times that it acquired a new semantic sense and became one of the most significant features associated with the tiny kitchen of a communal

flat. All translators but Glenny rendered the term by implying a familiar foreignised strategy of a transliteration combined with an intra-textual gloss. Glenny's opting for "Margarita never had *to cook*" (113) is a transposition (a shift of a grammatical category, namely of a class), whereby he replaces a noun with the verb "to cook," also transferring the meaning well; hence, a transposition does not help to solve the problem of deleting a foreign cultural context, a common strategy in Glenny's translation. Pevear and Volokhonsky used the modified transliteration "primus stove" (217) and provided an extensive extra-textual gloss earlier in the text (64). Aplin's transliteration "a Primus" (222) without any explanations strictly follows the principle of foreignisation, though the use of a capital letter is rather confusing since it implies that "Primus" may be a personal name or a brand.

Transliteration is also used in the following example. In Bulgakov's works, we often find a discrepancy between the traditional semantics of a word used before the revolution and "the semantics of a new prevailing linguistic model" (Verch 2010 138–139 acquired through propagandistic Soviet rhetoric. To be able to recognise Bulgakov's "double talk," the reader should be familiar with both meanings. An interesting example occurs in the part where Ivan Bezdomniy, who has just witnessed the death of his friend Professor Berlioz, unsuccessfully chases Satan through the labyrinth of Moscow's streets. After appearing in Griboedov's restaurant, wearing only underwear and holding a candle in his hand, Bezdomniy is put in a mental hospital. Ivan is certain that he has been falsely diagnosed as insane and offends his friend Riukhin, who brought him to the mental hospital, by using another typically Soviet term, "кулачок" [a derogatory and diminutive term in the Soviet discourse used for a prosperous peasant liquidated in the 1930s], a semantic Sovietism that acquired the function of a swearword in Stalin's era. Though all translators used the transliteration "kulak," in this case (Glenny 36, Pevear and Volokhonsky 81, and Aplin 67), we find an extra-textual gloss only in Pevear and Volokhonsky's (403) translation. It is hard

to expect the western reader to be familiar with the nuances of the term “kulak.” In this context, it is used as an insult, whereas in pre-revolutionary speech, “kulak” designated a wealthy and prosperous farmer. In Soviet colloquial discourse, meanwhile, “kulak” acquired the new sense of “an enemy.” It is difficult to understand without additional comment that Bulgakov ironically refers to a brainwashing system introduced in the Soviet state, one that resulted in distortions of words’ meanings and thus in the deformation of the Russian language. Ivan does not realize that the word “kulak” had had a positive meaning, because he remembers it only from propagandistic slogans. As in the previous case, the translation should illustrate Ivan’s intention to offend his friend by questioning his proletarian identity and by using a word with distinctly negative connotations. Another problem not addressed equally by the translators is the derivative diminutive form “кулачок” used in the second part of Ivan’s statement (Bulgakov 444), which brings with it a very clear derogatory meaning that needs to be reflected. Pevear and Volokhonsky indicated the diminutive form with the modifying adjectives “little” and Aplin with “petty,” while Glenny ignored this problem.

The inconsistent use of the strategy of transliteration occurs when translating the name of the drink, Абрай-Дюрсо, [the famous Soviet champagne], rendered as “Abrau-Durso” in all translations but Glenny’s, which uses the strategy of adaptation by deleting the name of the champagne: “champagne bottle” (111). Surprisingly, in Pevear and Volokhonsky’s translation, the term is incorrectly modified with an addition inside the text, “wine” (212). The transliteration “Abrau-Durso” without additions was used by Aplin (215).

As the following example illustrates, transliteration or semi-transliteration does not always guarantee a successful rendering of a term. The Sovietism “пилатчина” (Bulgakov 515) [a contemptuous description of the Master’s work by one of the critics] used by the Master when talking about negative reviews he was given by critics after the publication of his novel on Pontius Pilate, was equally

semi-transliterated by all translators as “pilatism” (Glenny 112, Pevear and Volokhonsky 144, and Aplin 144). However, no extra-textual gloss can be found in any of the three translations. The problem is that an English-speaking reader is most likely unaware of the word-formation process in the Soviet Union, whereby the suffix “chin” was usually attached to Sovietisms that described a negative, even an insulting, term. The English suffix “ism” (implying state, system of doctrines) does not illustrate the negative connotations attached to the original word, and these are crucial for illustrating how the Master’s lifework was destroyed by the critics.

Literal translation occurs consistently in only one example from the novel’s sixth chapter. There, a communal flat – a distinctive phenomenon of the early Soviet epoch, namely, a flat shared by several families who used the same kitchen and toilet facilities – is mentioned. One of the main attributes of a communal flat, having a “common kitchen” (a place shared by all the tenants of a communal flat), is referred to in a dialogue between two friends who are discussing Griboedov’s House, where MASSOLIT’s main office is based. There is a magnificent restaurant in the building, which can only be visited by the members of MASSOLIT, a privileged group of proletarian writers who could enjoy a wide range of rare dishes of which common Soviet people could not even dream. While discussing various delicious courses served at Griboedov’s, one of the friends, Amvrosy, states that it is impossible to cook something as delicious *as perch au naturel* in an overcrowded “общей кухне” (Bulgakov 434) [communal kitchen] where each family has just enough space for a small stove. It should be noted that Bulgakov’s ironic response to social inequality in Soviet society may easily be overlooked if the reader is unfamiliar with the conceptual meaning of the term “communal flat.” Glenny’s partly literal translation “in the kitchen you share with half a dozen other people!” (31) conveys the original meaning well, yet is deformed by being combined with an extensive intra-textual gloss which – even if necessary – could have been shortened to a “shared kitchen.” The use of “shared” would suffice to signify that the place was used by several people

and would make Amvrosy's statement about the impossibility of cooking in such conditions logical. Another problem with Glenny's translation is the number ("half a dozen people"), as a communal kitchen may have been shared by up to ten families.

The literal translation "communal kitchen at home" used by the other translators (Pevear and Volokhonsky 70, and Aplin 66) is combined with an extra-textual gloss only in Pevear and Volokhonsky's translation (64); this gloss explains the context to a reader unfamiliar with the housing shortage in the Soviet Union. Readers of Aplin's translation should recognize the allusion attached to the term even without the translator's help.

In the following case, all the translators decided to use a literal translation combined with an intra-textual gloss. In the first chapter, Woland mentions to Professor Berlioz that his head will be cut off by "КОМСОМОЛКА" [a female member of the Young Communist League]. Surprisingly, neither of the translators decided to use a transliteration, which could have been combined with an intra-textual gloss. As the Sovietism "Komsomol" may easily be classified as an international term, Glenny presumably considered it well-known to English readers, translating "a Russian woman, a member of the Komsomol" (1967 11), though in such cases, it is always difficult to evaluate the readers' knowledge of the foreign discourse. Pevear and Volokhonsky used a similar strategy "[...] a Russian woman, a Komsomol girl" (8), offering an extra-textual gloss (399), yet the parallel use of a "woman" and a "girl" may lead the readers to the assumption that they are two different people. Aplin's version – which reads "a Russian woman in the Communist League of Youth" (10) – is one of the few cases in his translations when a foreign element is not transliterated or calqued, but adapted.

Literal translation also occurs in the fifth chapter, when Woland's servant Behemoth accuses Stepa Likhodeev, a director of the Variette theatre, of using his "казенную машину," (Bulgakov 458) [an official car], a car with a driver that was usually given to highly positioned functionaries. While other translators used the

literal translation “a government car” (Pevear and Volokhonsky 96) or “an official car” (Aplin 83), which functions well because the term should also be familiar to Western readers, Glenny mistranslated the term by using a “free car” (45), thus losing an important connotation: the implication that Stepa enjoyed privileges the majority of the Soviet people did not have.

A literal translation would also be the best choice in the case of translating the Sovietism “гражданин” [a citizen], mentioned for the first time in the beginning of the first chapter when “двое граждан [two citizens] (Bulgakov 386) appear at Patriarch’s Ponds. Bulgakov introduces Soviet Moscow as the setting of the novel not only by mentioning a famous location (Patriarch’s Ponds) but also by using a typical Soviet term of address. Pevear and Volokhonsky (7) and Aplin (5) opted for the literal translation “two citizens,” which functions perfectly well, as it is clear from the context in which the “two citizens” are. Glenny’s (4) generalized adaptation of “two men” makes a familiar setting more elusive.

Even more problematic is the omission of the official form of address, which occurs in the translations of “Товарищ дежурный” (Bulgakov 446) [a comrade dispatcher]. The omission of “comrade” in Glenny’s translation “Now look, everybody” (34) means a loss of one of the most significant features of Soviet speech. Consequently, Glenny’s translation fails to re-create the official register, as it is also hard to imagine a Soviet citizen calling a police officer and not using the official form of address. The other literal translations – “Comrade officer-on-duty [...]” by Pevear and Volokhonsky (70), and “Comrade duty officer [...]” by Aplin (84) – transfer the meaning well, though they do not signify clearly that this is a telephone conversation.

IV. Conclusion

The analysis comprises fourteen examples, the results of which demonstrated that Glenny opted for domesticating tendencies of (a)

transliteration, (b) semi-calque, and (c) calque to a greater extent than Pevear and Volokhonsky or Aplin. Thus, Glenny's translation minimized the foreignness of Bulgakov's narrative to a greater extent than more contemporary translations, offering fluent, undisturbed reading for the English-speaking audience, albeit while almost completely erasing the foreign "spirit." The inclusion of foreignising elements illustrates how Pevear and Volokhonsky and Aplin successfully highlighted the foreign nature of the source text.

The denotative meaning is usually transferred well in all translations, though Glenny's version demonstrates more contextual deviances from the original than do the other translations. Sovietisms have been lost to some degree in Glenny's translation and so the resulting text comes across as linguistically inaccurate and less informative. Though English readers are told the same story, there is hardly anything they can learn about the Soviet epoch. All the evidence suggests that Glenny considered Sovietisms too difficult for English readers unfamiliar with Soviet discourse and decided to avoid "overloading" his translation with footnotes and explanations. This was probably the motivation behind his complete avoidance of one of the most interesting aspects of Bulgakov's style. The main problem with Glenny's translations of Sovietisms is also a lack of additional explanations and comments that would explain unknown references and expand the translation, offering more interpretative options to the reader who should have some information about the source culture to be able to interpret unfamiliar expressions and terms.

In the other two translations, connotative meanings are partly preserved through the use of foreignising strategies or intra- and extra-textual glosses, which proved to be sufficient for giving readers adequate information without completely deleting Sovietisms.

One major difference between Pevear and Volokhonsky's and Aplin's translations is in the use of intra- and extra-textual glosses. Here, the question of subjectivity in evaluating the background of the readership and defining the criteria for "unfamiliar" arises. Glenny did not use any comments, while apparently Pevear and

Volokhonsky considered their target readers' knowledge about Soviet culture insufficient, as twenty-seven out of their one hundred and seventy-five comments explain Sovietisms. Aplin's translation contained one hundred and thirty-one glosses, but a mere seven Sovietisms are explained there. It is also not always clear which selection criteria Aplin used, as, for instance, most Sovietisms that would normally require explanations were not included in the comments – unlike personal and biblical names, which the translator apparently considered unfamiliar.

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