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VICTOR TOPOROV'S TRANSLATIONS OF DUTCH POETRY (1946–2013)

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Victor Toporov (1946–2013) was a brilliant literary critic and writer of the “sixties” generation, who decided during his school years “not to fit into any system” and to maintain his independence. In 1969 he graduated from the department of German Philology of Leningrad State University; being a creative person he suffered from the absence of freedom of the press as he could not publish his own poems. As a result, he found a niche for himself in translating poetry. Many of his translations from German and English are both true to original texts and sound like quality Russian verses. But the situation with translations from Dutch is different. Comparing the source and target texts we come to the conclusion that the translator sought to create vivid and colorful Russian poems, without sticking to the original text. In particular, many of his translations of Lucebert's poems are so far from the Dutch originals that they can be considered a case of literary mystification similar to the hoax of Vladimir Lifshitz (1913–1978), who published his own poems and passed them off as translations of works by a non-existent British poet James Clifford. Toporov's translations from Dutch have a perfect form (a clear rhythm, vivid rhymes), their vocabulary is very informal, and he often uses bold neologisms.

Keywords: Dutch poetry, poetry translation, Victor Toporov, Bredero, Lucebert.

The translations of Viktor Toporov from the Dutch language are one of the brightest and most idiomatic chapters in the history of translation in our country. Speaking about his poetic translations, it is impossible not to recall the popular phrase of Vasily Zhukovsky that a translator in prose is a slave, a translator in verse is a rival. To understand the “Topo-

rov effect”, before turning to a comparison of the Dutch and Russian texts, it is necessary to at least briefly outline the multifaceted creativity and the special place of this outstanding author in the literary world of Leningrad and St. Petersburg.

Victor Toporov was a poet, translator, literary critic, essayist, publisher (after Perestroika he worked as editor-in-chief of the publishing house “Limbus-Press”), founder of literary awards (among others, the “National bestseller” award), author of brilliantly tart epigrams, and a serious chess player. He thought of himself as a “newspaper writer” [Toporov, 2018, p. 6]. Playing on his own surname, he named his column in the newspaper “Smena” “Literary Axe”: his literary criticism has always been devastating. Among Toporov’s books the most popular is *Double Bottom* with a self-explanatory subtitle “Confessions of a scandal-maker” [Toporov, 1999]. “Toporov had the reputation of an acrimonious ridiculist whose words and epigrams created during long kitchen gatherings were repeated throughout the city”, Gennadi Sosenko writes about him [Sosenko, 2014], a Dutch Grandmaster and a friend of the future author in the chess club for schoolchildren in the Leningrad Palace of Pioneers. Toporov, however, with his ruthless self-irony, describes his own role in the human community even more harshly. Recounting how, in the sixth grade, he suddenly got tired of studying, he writes: “I, as I understand it retroactively, have suddenly grown dissatisfied with the idea of fitting into a system, any system, for a long time anyway. In class, I’ve fully mastered the art of performing two roles at once: that of a leader and a jacket, which I retain in various circles to this day” [Toporov, 1999].

The reluctance to fit into any system and to obey any rules seems to have been the most important driving force of Toporov-Literator. He told of his reasons for turning to the translation of poetry in his interview with Elena Kalashnikova: “I wrote poems, but I understood that no one would ever publish them; I was engaged in philology, but, on the one hand, I recoiled from academic science and on the other, with my temperament, I did not have any prospects in it. At the junction of these two rather successful occupations, poetic translation seemed only natural. Among the people who advised me to translate was Brodsky” [Kalashnikova, 2001].

There are three comments on the above quotation. Firstly, he refused to publish his own poems, which he had written since a young age. He bequeathed them to his daughter Aglaya so that they could be published

after his death [Toporov, 2015, p. 5–6]. Secondly, the future translator's acquaintance with "academic science" was undoubtedly deep, as it took place during his studies at the Department of German Philology, Leningrad State University (1964–1969), which was famous for teaching fundamental theoretical disciplines. Thirdly, the good relations between Brodsky and Toporov were well-founded: back in 1964, Toporov's mother, a well-known Leningrad lawyer, "defended at the famous trial the "infamous parasite" Joseph Brodsky, and the Nobel Prize laureate at every opportunity sent her greetings from a faraway New York" [Sosonko, 2014].

Toporov translated both poems and prose. His prose translations, as far as we know, were only from English and German, including such masterpieces as "The Watcher" by Charles Maclean (1999) and "The Seventh Royale" by Donald Stanwood (2000). The number of languages from which Toporov translated poems was wider and included Danish and Dutch. As far as we know, he never used interlinear crib. Dutch poetry held a very special place in his translation work: in the 1970-80s, by our estimates, about 1000 lines of his translations of Dutch and Flemish poets were published in various collections [Scheltiens, 2003, p. 266].

In an interview with Elena Kalashnikova, Toporov speaks about three types of translations he was engaged in (our numeration, IM, SR): "(1) There are translations in which my translation skills, as I understand it, are extremely high, there are quite a few such works... These are "Lara", an early translation from Byron, and "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" by Wilde, poems by Goethe. (2) Also, there are poems which I have put through my own mind, which I translated instead of writing my own. They are very dear to me. These include translations from Gottfried Benn, Paul Celan, Wystan Hugh Auden, and the Dutchman Lucebert, three quarters of which was created by me. For these works, the professional judgment ranged from "brilliant success" to "total failure". (3) Should it be just a commercial order, I try to make sure that the translation is normal, no more than that" [Kalashnikova, 2001].

Indeed, many translations that Toporov assigned to the first type have been masterfully done, which is not difficult to see by comparing them with other translations of the same poems. Thus, in the 80s, a selection of tapewritten translations of *The Raven* by Edgar Poe, without any indication of the translators, was circulating in Leningrad so that readers could rate the translations. Later, the names of the translators and the points they scored were reported. Toporov received the high-

est marks, leaving behind Dmitry Merezhkovsky, Konstantin Balmont, Valery Brusov, and many others. His translations are distinguished by the technical impeccability of the verse, lucky findings in translation, and proximity to the original both in spirit and in letter.

Translations from the “Dutchman Lucebert”, were assigned by the translator to the second category and he admitted that when working on them, he sought more self-expression than accuracy. This group, as we will try to show, includes most of his translations of Dutch poets. The very choice of authors to translate is quite significant. Besides the poet and artist Lucebert (1924–1994), whose shocking performances in front of the Amsterdam public in the 1950s and 1960s caused scandals, and whose paintings were exhibited at the Hermitage in the 21st century [Michajlova, 2013, p. 222–226], it is necessary to name two more authors, from whose works more than a hundred lines were translated by Toporov: a Flemish writer Hugo Claus (1929–2008) and a Dutch poet of the 17th century Gerbrand Adriaenzoon Bredero (1585–1618). Russian Wikipedia, though somewhat simplifying his image, characterizes Claus in the following way: “Anarchist in his political views, rebel by temperament, irreconcilable critic of traditionalism in life, politics, religion, and culture”¹. The lyrical hero of Bredero is a simple fellow, who likes to have fun in a company of friends, an unsuccessful lover, who is rude, full of self-irony, and turns his thoughts to God in difficult moments. In the end, it is impossible to forget Toporov’s translations of the so-called “Songs of the Geuzen” — rousing verses that urged the participants of the Dutch uprising of the 16th century to fight against the Spanish oppressors. All these authors are united by their rebellious spirit, their “reluctance to fit into the system”, which was characteristic of the Leningrad translator.

When asked by Elena Kalashnikova whether his translation style changed over the years, Toporov answered: “No, it didn’t. <...> All the creative techniques I invented during my active translation studies, that is, at the age of 23–35. Now I can resort only to them, I am no longer looking for new ones” [Kalashnikova, 2001].

We shall try to identify the main “creative techniques” in three of Toporov’s translations. The Tables 1–3 below contain fragments from the source text and their interlinear crib. The published translation is provided below.

¹ https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Клаус,_Хюго

Table 1. The Songs of the Geuzen “De tiende penning” (“Tenth token”)

<p>De Spaensche hoochmoet valsch en boos, Sandt v een Beudel God- deloos, Om v Godloos te maken, Gods woort rooft hy door menschen gloos, En wil v tghelt ontscha- ken.</p>	<p>Испанское высокомерие лживое и злое Шлет вам безбожного палача, Чтобы и вас сделать без- божниками, Он крадет слово Божье, давая ему человеческие комментарии, И хочет забрать ваши деньги.</p>	<p>Spanish arrogance lying and evil Sends you a godless execu- tioner, To make you godless, too, He steals God’s word by giving him human com- mentary, And he wants to take your money.</p>
<p>Want gheeftmen dick van thienen een, Daer blijft ten lesten een noch gheen, Woll mach den Herder stillen, Dees Wolf is met Woll noch Melck te vreen, Hy wil de schaepkens vil- len.</p>	<p>Потому что если часто давать от десяти один, То в конце концов не останется ни одного, Пастух довольствуется шерстью, А этому волку шерсти и молока мало, Он хочет содрать с ове- чек шкуру.</p>	<p>Because if you often give ten to one, In the end, there won’t be one left, The shepherd is satisfied with the wool, And this wolf doesn’t have enough wool and milk, He wants to skin a sheep.</p>

Испанцы Вешателя шлют,
И тот, верша неправый суд,
Ярится, как Антихрист.
Он идолов расставил тут
И наши деньги вытряс.
<...>

Десятой долею, подлец,
Он разоряет нас вконец,
Казня еще суровой.
Уже не шерсти от овец —
Пастушьей хочет крови.

[The Songs of the Geuzen, 1974, p. 434]

We see that the translator brilliantly reproduces the combative spirit of 16th century songs, preserves the meter (iambic tetrameter and trimeter) and stanza (aaBaB). The use of modern colloquialisms (“wiper”, “scoundrel”, “finally”) makes the text sound very vivid. The main factual background of the original (existence of religious and economic contradictions between Catholic Spaniards and Protestant

Dutchmen, introduction of the alcabala tax) is conveyed truthfully, whereas the striking metaphor - comparison of a Spaniard with a wolf, who, in contrast to a shepherd, pulls off a sheep's skin - is enhanced to an extreme degree, as if it is doubled: a Spanish wolf threatens the life of the shepherd himself.

Table 2. Gerbrand Bredero. Boeren-gezelschap (“The fest of farmers”)

<p>Arend Pieter Gijzen, met Mieuwes, Jaap, en Leen, en Klaasje, en Kloentje, die trokken samen heen naar 't dorp van Vinkeveen; wangt ouwe Frangs, die gaf z'n gangs, die werd er of'ereên.</p>	<p>Аренд Питер Гейзен, с Мивесом, Йапом и Леном, и Класьен, и Клунтье, все вместе отправились в деревню в районе Винкевейн, потому что старый Франс отдал своего гуся всем на забаву².</p>	<p>Arend Pieter Gijzen with Mieuwes, Jaap and Leen, and Klaasje and Kloentje all went together to a village in the Vinkeveen area, because old Frans gave his goose away for everyone's amusement.</p>
<p>Arend Pieter Gijzen die was zo rein in 't bruin, z'n hoed met bloemfluwiel die zat hem vrij wat kuin, wat scheefjes en wat schuin, zodat ze bloot, ternauwernood stongd hallef op z'n kruin.</p>	<p>Аренд Питер Гейзен был одет по моде в коричневое, его шляпа с бархатным цветком сидела у него на голове изящно немного набекрень и наискосок, так что она едва-едва, только наполовину прикрывала макушку.</p>	<p>Arend Pieter Gijzen was dressed fashionably in brown, his hat with a velvet flower was sat gracefully on his head a bit tilted and on the slant so it barely, only half-covered the top of the head.</p>

Арендт Питер Гейзен, друзья и кумовья
 Затеяли пирушку в сторонке от жнивья –
 На травке, у ручья.
 Кому бутыль, чтоб лечь в ковыль,
 А им — нужна бадья.

Арендт Питер Гейзен — на что уж пить мастак —
 Знай льет из штофа в шляпу, да не нальет никак,
 Чуть стоя на ногах.

² Gansafrijden, ganstrekken — “riding the goose”, “goose stretching”, a Dutch folk pastime: a competition where participants had to pull off the head of a goose fastened to a rope stretched between trees. It was forbidden in 1920 [Michajlova, 2013, p. 170].

Кончатъ пора, кто пьем с утра,
 Лужайка не кабак!

[Bredero, 1983, p.121]

The translator preserves the form of the Dutch poem: a peculiar rhythm (iambus with regular alternation of six, three, and four-meter lines) and rhyming (a stanza of five lines, of which the first, second, third, and fifth are bound with one rhyme and the fourth is semi-rhymed). The original technique of Bredero — a long rendering of the characters throughout the poem aims at creating the impression that it is a story of a real event, on the one hand, and the effect of a populous and crowded event, on the other. Toporov in the first verse somewhat weakens these effects by naming only the three names of the main character. But he adds an extra letter “t” to the first name, so it looks more exotic and Dutch, referring to the spelling of the name “Rembrandt”. As for the content, in addition to the name of the main character, there is only one word in the translation that has a match in the original: it is “hat” in the second stanza. All the other elements of the set-up, including the picture of fashionably dressed townspeople coming to a village festival, disappear completely from the text and are replaced by the picture of a drinking party. In the original, stanzas 3, 4, and 5 describe the outfits of Arend(t)’s companions, local peasants, and village girls who came to the festival, and only in stanza 6 (i.e. in the second half of the poem) begins the story of the merry meeting.

Thus, the translator carefully copies the form of the original in this poem and preserves and develops only one main idea from the content — the danger of excessive drinking of alcohol — leaving out all social, ethnographic, historical, and cultural motives.

Table 3. Lucebert. *aan de kinderen* (“To children”)

kinderen der roomse schoot kromgefluisterd door gereformeerde dood neem af het kruis sta op	дети (святого) римского (католического) лона покоренные шепотом реформатской смерти снимите крест встаньте	children of the (Holy) Roman (Catholic) creed subdued by a whisper of reformatory death take off the cross and stand up
kneed aardse duiven uit het dagelijks brood	слепите земных/мирских голубей из хлеба насущ- ного/повседневного	make earthly/worldly pigeons out of daily bread.

This most famous poem by Lucebert was translated twice: in 1977 by Victor Toporov and in 1999 by Dmitry Zaks:

если и бессмертны ваши души
это ли причина бить баклуши
божий дух не высеет пшеницы
и сикстинская за вас не разродится
[Lucebert, 1977, p. 307]

отпрыски римского лона
реформаторской смертью нашептанные наветы
сними крест распрями колена
из насущного хлеба слепи голубиные крылья светлые
[Lucebert, 1999, p. 358].

The Dutch source, in which literally every word involves a certain word game and has a “double meaning”, seems to be untranslatable. We have previously analyzed the play of words in this poem [Michajlova 2007, p. 128]. We shall consider here only one line as an example: *neem af het kruis sta op*. The line uses the reverse word order (should have: *neem het kruis af sta op*), which is a sign of a hidden meaning. The first four words can be understood as “take off the cross (from the neck)”, but there is undoubtedly a reference to the gospel story of the descent from the cross (Kruisafneming), while the last two words literally mean “get up”, but they also refer to the Easter greeting of Christus is opgestaan “Christ is risen”.

Toporov creates a vivid and witty poem with the general theme “God helps those who help themselves”. The poem by Zaks is extremely difficult to comprehend, the play of words is indistinct, and with all the closeness to the original, it produces an impression of a “loosey-goosey” poem.

The abovementioned and many other translations of Bredero and Lucebert by Toporov are so far from the original verses of these poets that they can be viewed as a case of literary mystification similar to that of Vladimir Lifshitz (1913–1978), who published his own poems, passing them off as translations of the English battle poet James Clifford [Losev, 2001]. In the absence of freedom of speech, such mystifications seem to be one of the few opportunities for creative artists to express themselves.

Let us try to list the translation principles and “creative techniques” of Toporov as a translator.

1. Creation of measured verses with clear rhythm, vivid rhymes, witty word play, and vocal writing.
2. The use of conversational tonality, modern colloquialisms, and bold neologisms: the use of words that attempt to surprise.
3. Enhancement of original highlights, both in content and form.
4. Liberal treatment of the content: lyricism, metaphysics, and religious motives disappear in the translations of poems; instead, the translator willingly adds descriptions of fights, drinking, rough lovemaking, as well as visceral images and anarchist ideas.

These translations, as a whole, testify to the translator's undoubted skill, inner freedom, and fearlessness — positive properties that compensate for the unjustified lack of piety in relation to his foreign fellow penmen. The vivid memorable poems he created seem to awaken readers' interest in the originals more than the more accurate, but sometimes completely colourless, translations of Dutch poetry by other translators.

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**ВИКТОР ТОПОРОВ (1946–2013) —
ПЕРЕВОДЧИК НИДЕРЛАНДСКОЙ ПОЭЗИИ**

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В. Л. Топоров (1946–2013) был ярким литературным критиком и писателем поколения «шестидесятников», уже в школьные годы принявшим для себя решение «не вписываться ни в какую систему» и во всем сохранять независимость. Закончив немецкое отделение ЛГУ и ощущая потребность в поэтическом творчестве, в условиях отсутствия свободы печати нашел для себя нишу в поэтическом переводе. Множество его переводов немецкой и английской поэзии сочетают техническое мастерство с близостью к оригиналу. Для перевода с «редкого» нидерландского языка В. Л. Топоров отбирал поэтов, отличающихся мятежным духом и потому близких ему. Анализ этих переводов, их сопоставление с текстами-источниками показывает, что переводчик стремился создать яркие и запоминающиеся русские стихи, не придавая значения вопросу о близости к оригиналу. В частности, многие его переводы Люсеберта (1924–1994) настолько далеки от реальных стихов этого нидерландского поэта, что их в большой мере можно считать случаем литературной мистификации, подобной мистификации Владимира Лифшица (1913–1978), который публиковал свои собственные стихи, выдавая их за переводы английского поэта-фронтовика Джеймса Клиффорда. В. Л. Топоров не отрицал, что голландца Люсеберта «на три четверти выдумал». Для переводов В. Л. Топорова характерна чеканность формы (четкий ритм, яркие рифмы, звукопись), использование стилистически сниженной лексики, смелых

неологизмов. Основной переводческий прием — это усугубление броских элементов оригинала как в содержании, так и в форме.

Ключевые слова: нидерландская поэзия, поэтический перевод, В. Л. Топоров, Бредеро, Люсеберт.

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