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Transposition: *Persuasion* and *Dead Souls* in 21st Century America

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This essay will elaborate on the transposing (shifting) of *Dead Souls* by Nikolai Gogol and *Persuasion* by Jane Austen into a single interwoven novel set mostly in contemporary Orange County and Manhattan.¹ I will then attempt to outline some corollaries of such a transposition, which include uncertainty in narration and voice as well as diversity in discourse. In such a narrative, the act of removing the characters from their early nineteenth-century setting, combining characters from two classics, intertwining their fate with the evolution of the English language and America reveals myriad similarities between Gogol, Austen and our time and space.

In general, my transposition from the Russian aims to reproduce the spirit, mindset and (im)poetry of Gogol, but on the basis of a personal understanding of these elements in English in the 21st century and not at all related to replicating the Russian (im)poetry in its 19th century setting. (It is however assumed that the Russian is predominantly poetic). Wherever possible I have also transferred the material traits, objects and events, however this was often not permitted due to the constraints of transposition (primarily unbridgeable differences between the present and past). In the new work tentatively titled *Dead Soul Persuasion (DSP)*, the sections derived from Gogol are intersticed with sections from Austen, which are transposed according to the same criteria, but also with the option of copying, if the language and plot from the Austen's time coincide with their counterparts in the new narrative.²

Here I will go through five aspects of transposing *Dead Souls* into this new context: the changing of character, the adaptation of setting, the multilayered text, the combination of character and the intangibility of voice. I have primarily adhered to the sentence as the basic unit in narration and indirect discourse, while handling direct discourse somewhat more freely. The reproduction of the sentence focuses on word count, poetry and assonance, but eschewing both meter and matching verb to verb, adjective to adjective, etc. In many cases the content of a sentence in the original has nothing in common with the new sentence except for a similar word count and different, yet existent (or nonexistent) assonance/poetry. Nonetheless, I have also tried to identify at least one idea underpinning the content and translated that idea to a parallel one. Otherwise, as many aspects as possible I have retained from the original work, but when Gogol heads off on a tangent about horses or sheets of rain lash the carriage and cause it to flip in the mud, it is difficult to transpose these descriptions or events to Orange County, California, with SUVs in the summer of 2003 where we start.

Two constraints, the shift from imperial Russia and England to Orange County and Manhattan along with the combination of two novels, are heavily implicated in the formation of the new narrative. The alterations required for this removal have an astonishingly minor effect on certain aspects of the original, while a major impact on others. Summarized, I might say that the transposition shows how the external, material sides of the entities have changed dramatically, but the mental and spiritual states have remained consistent, even if their form or scale has changed. Consequently, the transposition of these novels permits greater and closer replication of spiritual as opposed to material states.

The Metamorphosis of Character

Merging the two novels means that characters have to be combined to avoid an explosion of protagonists in the new narrative. They must assume one identity; bygone ones, like servants, must reinvent themselves; in some cases they may even change gender or class. In short the transposition of character takes different forms. In chapter three of the new narrative, which is transposed from chapter two of *Dead Souls*, we find four significant characters:

Joe Leaddus (a combination of Pavel Chichikov from *Dead Souls* and Mr. Wentworth

1 The first essay in this series appeared under <http://www.proz.com/doc/2428>

2 See first and next essay. Presently, such constraints have entailed that no more than a quarter of the sentences can be copied.

from *Persuasion*)

Mr. Friendly (a combination of Manilov from *Dead Souls* and Charles Musgrove from *Persuasion*)

Mary Friendly (a combination of Ms. Manilov from *Dead Souls* and Mary Musgrove from *Persuasion*)

Receptionist (adaptation of Petrushka)

With some protagonists, the evolution is minor. Leaddus differs only moderately from Chichikov in action, but quite significantly in character. He does not pay nearly as much attention to his appearance, for example, and in this gravitates toward Wentworth. Yet his bank business in derivatives, credit default swaps, collateralized debt obligations, although more concrete, still recalls the absurdity of Chichikov's deals to buy dead souls.

Another type of transposition represents reinvention: a modern servant is different from Petrushka or Selafin. In the new narrative, Chichikov's servant Petrushka becomes a receptionist in the hotel where the main protagonist is staying. Consequently, the dirty pungent peasant that reads in *Dead Souls* metamorphoses into a primed, fashionable young woman who watches television in *Dead Soul Persuasion*:

| Gogol | Magarashack translation | Transposition ³ |
|---|---|---|
| <p>...Характера он был больше молчаливого, чем разговорчивого; имел даже благородное побуждение к просвещению, то есть чтению книг, содержанием которых не затруднялся; ему было совершенно все равно, похождение ли влюбленного героя, просто букварь или молитвенник, - он все читал с равным вниманием; если бы ему подвернули химию, он и от нее бы не отказался. Ему нравилось не то, о чем читал он, но больше самое чтение, или лучше сказать процесс самого чтения, что вот-де из букв вечно выходит какое-нибудь слово, которое иной раз черт знает что и значит. Это чтение совершалось более в лежачем положении в передней, на кровати и на тюфяке, сделавшемся от такого обстоятельства убитым и тоненьким, как лепешка. Кроме страсти к чтению, он имел еще два обыкновения, составлявшие две другие его характерические черты: Спать не раздеваясь, так, как есть, в том же сюртуке, и носить всегда с собою какой-то свой особенный воздух, своего собственного запаха, отзывавшийся несколько жилым покоем, так что достаточно было ему только</p> | <p>He was more taciturn than talkative by nature; he even had a noble urge for enlightenment, that is to say, for reading books, without bothering too much about their contents: it made no difference to him whether it was a tale about the adventures of a lovelorn swain or simply a primer or a prayer book - he read everything with equal attention; if someone had slipped a book of chemistry to him he would not have refused it. He like not so much what he read as the reading itself, or, to put it more precisely, the process of reading, the fact that the letters were always forming a word which sometimes meant the devil only knew what. His reading was mostly done in a recumbent position in the anteroom, on the bed and on the mattress which, as a result, became as flat and thin as a wafer. Apart from his passion for reading he had two more peculiarities which formed two other of his characteristic traits: he slept without undressing, just as he was, in the same coat, and he always carried about with him a peculiar atmosphere, a smell of his own, which recalled the stale air of a stuffy room, so that it was quite enough for him to fix up his bed somewhere, even in a room which had not been lived in</p> | <p>. . . By disposition she was more quiet than shy; felt the strong desire to learn and know, that is, to watch television even if she did not understand its content. That was irrelevant – sound bites on talk shows, just the news or reports – she watched it all with equal interest; if she switched to seagulls, she would enjoy them, too. She cared less for what she watched than for the watching itself, or, more precisely, the process of watching, how those scenes let her levitate to places that meant God knows what hardships in reality. All this watching in a slumped or reclining position on the couch in the livingroom left an imprint in the cushion like a shell.</p> <p>Besides her enjoyment of television, she had two habits that characterized her: sleeping as long as she could in the feathers and always wafting a special air, her special scent which sort of recalled domestic tranquility so all she had to do was walk by you, even on a dirty city street, with trash or garbage trucks, and it instantly seemed like a live mobile advertisement for the body shop. Joe was a thoroughly tolerant and pretty relaxed guy and, on his way through the pristine lobby that morning, only smiled and shook</p> |

3 Note: all the transpositions are derived from the Russian, not the translation.

| | | |
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| <p>пристроить где-нибудь свою кровать, хоть даже в необитаемой дотопе комнате, да перетащить туда шинель и пожитки, и уже казалось, что в этой комнате лет десять жили люди. Чичиков, будучи человек весьма щекотливый и даже в некоторых случаях привередливый, потянувши к себе воздух на свежий нос поутру, только помарщивался да встряхивал головою, приговаривая: «Ты, брат, черт тебя знает, потеешь, что ли. Сходил бы ты хоть в баню». (Г 43)</p> | <p>before, and to bring his overcoat and belongings there, for it to appear as if people had been living there for a dozen years. Chichikov, being an extremely particular and in some respects even fastidious person, could not help making a wry face as he inhaled the air in the morning while his nose was still unaccustomed to it, and, shaking his head, used to say: "Goodness only knows what's the matter with you, my dear fellow. You're sweating, aren't you? I wish you'd go to the baths once in a while." (M 29-30)</p> | <p>his head, saying: "You, my dear, smell like you just got out of the shower." (W 13)</p> |
|--|---|--|

Gogol's Petrushka has become a woman because two people will "serve" the banker: the hotel receptionist (above) and a chauffeur. Whereas Petrushka reads, this hotel receptionist entertains herself with television, but what she does with the TV closely resembles Petrushka's relationship to his entertainment: repeat, fail to understand, enjoy the process, be equally disposed to different programs, etc. In other words, we see that the mode of entertainment has changed, yet the character's interaction with this entertainment has not. This is a pattern that has already cropped up repeatedly in the first thirteen chapters (I am in the midst of the first draft): the physical form is different, but the essence of the act is similar. When we return to the physical realm, two other superficial characteristics of Gogol's peasant also completely lose their relevance in the present. The service providers of a contemporary businessman or banker do not sleep without undressing and do not smell bad. This stamp of person exists, but not in Leaddus's environment. Again, however, sleeping habits and smell are very prominent in Orange County – only different ones: the receptionist sleeps as long as possible and wafts an especially fragrant air, which prompts a reaction: «Ты, брат, черт тебя знает, потеешь, что ли. Сходил бы ты хоть в баню» and "You, my dear, smell like you just got out of the shower."

A Superimposed Setting

Moving from rural Russia in the early nineteenth century to Orange County L.A. in the twenty-first means a rider will see different sites from her mode of transportation. This is especially prominent in carriage scenes from *Dead Souls*:

| Gogol | Magarshack translation | Transposition |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Несколько мужиков, по обыкновению, зевали, сидя на лавках перед воротами в своих овчинных тулупах. Бабы с толстыми лицами и перевязанными грудями смотрели из верхних окон; из нижних глядел теленок или высовывала слепую морду свою свинья. Словом, виды известные. Проехавши пятнадцатую версту, он вспомнил, что здесь по словам Манилова, должна быть его деревня, но и шестнадцатая</p> | <p>As usual a few peasants in their sheepskin coats sat gaping on benches in front of the gates. Peasant women with fat faces and tightly bound bosoms were looking out of the upper windows; out of the lower ones a calf stared or a pig thrust out its blind snout. In short, the scenes were familiar enough. Having driven past the tenth milestone, Chichikov remembered that according to Manilov his village should be somewhere near. But the eleventh milestone flew past and still there</p> | <p>Once outside the city, gas customers dazed at their tanks under high plastic roofs. Women with flabby faces and kids trailing in tow carried bags of chips; the children each had a can in one hand and a bar in the other. Nothing new. What seemed like thirty miles later, he remembered that Mr. Friendly said his house was around here. However, after a few more miles flew by, his house was still not visible, and if it weren't for a couple at another gas station, they probably wouldn't</p> |

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| верста пролетела мимо, а деревни все не было видно, и если бы не два мужика, появившиеся навстречу, то вряд ли бы довелось им потрафить на лад. На вопрос, далеко ли деревня Заманиловка, мужики сняли шляпы, и один из них, бывший поумнее и носивший бороду клином, отвечал... (DS 44) | was no sign of the village, and if two peasants had not happened to pass by on the road they would scarcely have got on the right track. Asked how far the village Zamanilovka was, the peasants took off their caps and one of them with a wedge-shaped beard, who was more intelligent, replied... (M 31-2) | have escaped the constantly resetting navigator. To their question about the Laguna street, the woman apologized profusely, but her helpful and more knowledgeable special friend replied... (W 14) |
|--|---|---|

Leaddus rides in an SUV rather than a carriage, and the people he sees through the window are not peasants sitting on benches, though they might well be women with flabby faces. For the most part, Leaddus is not going to see anything but trees and fields and houses, maybe a farm with livestock, but when he does see Californians in the kind of detail we find in Gogol, it must be at a gas station or (sub)urban stop. The farm with livestock is far removed from the highway or street, and the site is by no means "well-known" (известно) today as it was for the narrator then. Well-known is something else now: overweight men and women entering and exiting the convenient store at a gas station carrying bags of chips, sodas, etc. Here we have a case of something classified as "well-known" to many minds, that is, a well-known phenomenon forming our conception of the present, but the content of that "well-known" has changed.

At times, however, not even the content has changed in 200 years: after observing the aforementioned scene in *Dead Souls*, Chichikov gets lost. With a GPS system in 2003, the only way to get lost is if your system keeps resetting and sending you in circles. This odd malfunctioning then might lead to the old-fashioned approach of asking someone for directions, which continues with something I definitely recall: a man pretending to know more than he does and giving incorrect information. Apparently this occurred in Gogol's Russia as it still occurs today. The essence of what happens to Leaddus coincides two hundred years apart: either directly or by way of transposition.

The Past Haunting of the Palimpsest

There are many untransposed similarities between Gogol's time at the beginning of the nineteenth century and ours at the beginning of the twenty-first. Manilov in *Dead Souls* is a character that could largely jet two hundred years into the present. Not only because the narration and portrayal of Manilov is prejudiced by the narrator's sympathies, but also because the nice guy with no character exists in our time.

Reinforcing the observation that consciousness two hundred years old remains relevant today while the physical surroundings have transformed, the new novel in general shows that character lets itself be transposed quite well. Here is an example with Manilov, also from chapter two in *Dead Souls* and chapter three in *Dead Soul Persuasions*:

| Gogol | Magarshack translation | Transposition |
|---|--|---|
| На взгляд он был человек видный; Черты лица его были не лишны приятности, но в эту приятность, казалось, чересчур было передано сахару; в приемах и оборотах его было что-то заискивающее расположения и знакомства. Он улыбался заманчиво, был белокур, с голубыми глазами. В первую минуту разговора с ним не можешь не сказать: «Какой приятный и добрый человек!» В следующую за тем минуту | In appearance he was an impressive-looking man; his features were rather pleasant, but this pleasantness, one could not help feeling, had much too much sugar in it; in his manners and turns of speech there was something that seemed to be asking ingratiatingly for favours and friendship. He smiled seductively. He had fair hair and his eyes were light blue. During the first minute of conversation with him, you could not help | By nature he was an amicable guy; his general mannerisms were not lacking in appeal, but this appeal was brimming with practice; in his greeting and rejoinders you see the marks of familiarity and routine. He smiled heartily, hands in his pockets, eyes on the ground. Within a couple minutes of talking with him you can't help but say: "What a nice, good guy!" The next few minutes you don't say anything, but a minute later you say: "What |

ничего не скажешь, а в третью скажешь: «Черт знает что такое!» - и отойдешь подальше; если же не отойдешь, почувствуешь скуку смертельную. От него не дождешься никакого живого или хоть даже заносчивого слова, какое можешь услышать почти от всякого если коснешься задирающего его предмета. У всякого есть свой задор: у одного задор обратился на борзых собак; другому кажется, что он сильный любитель музыки и удивительно чувствует все глубокие места в ней; третий мастер лихо пообедать; четвертый сыграть рол хоть одним вершком повыше той, которая ему назначена; пятый, с желанием более ограниченным, спит и грезит о том, как бы пройтись на гулянье с флигель-адъютантом, напоказ своим приятелям, знакомым и даже незнакомым... - словом, у всякого есть свое, но у Манилова ничего не было. (DS 47)

saying, 'What a kind and pleasant person!' During the following minute you would say nothing, and during the third you would say, 'Damned if I can make him out!' and you would get away from him as far as you could, for if not, you would be bored to death. You would never hear a single stimulating or even arrogant word from him, such as you might hear from almost anyone if you touched on a subject that concerned him deeply. Everyone has his own craze: one is crazy about Borzoi dogs; another believes that he is a great lover of music and is marvelously sensitive to its most profound passages; a third is a past master at dining and wining; a fourth is all for playing a part in the world which is at least one degree higher than the one he has been cut out for; a fifth, whose desires are more limited, dreams about going walking on the promenade with an aide-de-camp of the Emperor to show off to his friends, acquaintances, and strangers, too... in short, every man has his own idiosyncrasies, but Manilov had nothing. (M 34)

the hell is this!?" - and step back; and if you don't step back, you'll feel deathly bored. Since you never get a lively or even startling word as you will hear from the authoritarians if you touch on a subject that interests them. Everyone has their niche: yours is pet dogs; mine seems to be amusing myself with Gogol and Austen and oddly transposing all the essential parts in them; his expertise is in convincing and selling; hers is driven by the desire to contribute a little more; the slacker's, a little less modest, is to dream about writing books and becoming famous to prove the uniqueness of his opinions, showing off to his friends, family and even strangers - in other words, everyone has something, but Friendly had nothing. (W 15)

Although Manilov can retain much of his character in the new setting, this does not mean a literal translation is possible. The context for Friendly (derived from Manilov), as throughout *Dead Soul Persuasion*, entails a narrator with her contemporary means of narration. So mine does not describe Friendly as an equivalent of видный, чересчур передано сахару (translated above as "impressive" and "too much sugar in it") nor does it use or attempt to recreate such complex interwoven clauses on the whole. Instead, the syntactic diversity emerges in the subtleties and fine points of the English language. To emphasize: whereas Russian has the ability to place almost any word in any place in the sentence for extensive linguistic variety, English has the accepted practice of employing a more standardized sentence whose slight modifications create commensurate diversity due to their subtle prominence.

When I begin to superimpose my language and content on Gogol's template, the translation of Chichikov's world collides with Gogol's original as well as other translations: the juxtaposing of my deviant translation of a sentence counters the other present translations of such a sentence and the original text. In this act of transposition, however, the language and context differ. We have one original sentence in Russian, with two very different derivatives of this sentence. In terms of translation, the inevitable failure of either my sentence or say Magarshack's sentence to propitiate the critics of translation parallels the inability of one interpretation of the narration to supersede another, as opposed e.g. to a sentence written in the original and thus treated as irreproachable. Different translations illustrate the divergence of the mental sphere, which we know most prominently from the untransposed, mostly present tense discourse throughout Russian. But this divergence in translation is then coupled with ambiguity in transposition. In terms of narration, it is impossible for my narrator in the transposed text to free himself from Gogol's while it is also impossible for Gogol's narrator to retain authority over the narration of the transposed context. Hence an interpretive divergence also occurs in the act of narration, and when this act is viewed in comparison with the original text, Gogol's narration tells the diegesis (story) of the present at the same time as my narration is telling the diegesis, since the narration belongs to both my narrator and his by way of transposition. Finally, in terms of discourse, the underlying voice of the transposed characters as well as the narrator not only creates ambiguity, but each declaration represents a response to two different

diegetic experiences: one in the past, one in the present.

Let us take a look at the duality of the sentences in the last cited passage. I have followed Gogol's structure: the first sentence here (На взгляд...) also begins with an adverbial (By nature); the following sentence begins with the subject, albeit with less specification by eliminating the genitive (лица); the third begins with a personal pronoun as subject along the lines of the original. Overall the effect is what adverts, as both Gogol and I narrate in transposition, but only Gogol narrates in translation:

| Magarshack translation | Transposition |
|--|---|
| In appearance he was an impressive-looking man; his features were rather pleasant, but this pleasantness, one could not help feeling, had much too much sugar in it; in his manners and turns of speech there was something that seemed to be asking ingratiatingly for favours and friendship. He smiled seductively. He had fair hair and his eyes were light blue. During the first minute of conversation with him, you could not help saying... | By nature he was an amicable guy; his general mannerisms were not lacking in appeal, but this appeal was brimming with practice; in his greeting and rejoinders you see the marks of familiarity and routine. He smiled heartily, hands in his pockets, eyes on the ground. Within a couple minutes of talking with him you can't help but say... |

This translation by Magarshack inevitably encounters the constraints of any attempt to mold a Russian text into the English language. First, the clauses, second, the repetition of a structure (He smiled... He had...), third, peculiar English (pleasantness had too much sugar) enter the translation by force or by accident on account of the incompatibility of the two languages and the requirements of translation. But most importantly, in translation, unless there is another subtext, the author's narrator remains the sole voice in translated narration, as the translator cannot assert himself by deviating from the original's prescribed framework. The act of transposition, on the other hand, allows for nearly complete freedom in how these passages are handled, ultimately letting Gogol's text be reshaped according to my English. All the same, however, the Russian source colors the new text, and nowhere will this be more evident than in comparing the Austen and Gogol sections of this new novel. While I have smoothed out the Russian, replaced the frequent use of "be" with different verbs in English (for the passage above) and completely altered the meaning in some cases, even supplanting "sugar" with "practice," – this does not nullify Gogol's unique voice. By backgrounding the original's narration and discourse, the transposition significantly reduces the difficulty an English reader has hearing Gogol's voice, and simultaneously reinforces, even underlines, the penetration of Gogol's text into the present: through the servant-receptionist's learning and knowing or the idea of the well-known event or the characterless man. The voice in narration is not solely Gogol's, my voice is there too, and the voices will increase with the interweaving of Austen: transposition creates uncertainty and extremes.

The Metaphysical Thread of Combined Protagonists

In some cases I sought an abstract character trait to link a past protagonist to his present counterpart. Whereas Manilov embodies the popularized laziness of a landowner in the nineteenth century, his reincarnation two hundred years later as Charles Friendly in a new country finds him obsessed with cutting costs and increasing efficiency.

Friendly has the energy, but he also has an obsession like his predecessor Manilov: only his obsession consists of frugality. Again I have preferred to parallel obsession to obsession, rather than actual thought to thought. Friendly could be a wealthy, lazy businessman and dream of all sorts of enervating convenience like Manilov, but not my preference for a quintessentially American characteristic to reverberate off the hallmark of laziness in nineteenth century Oblomovs shaped this transposition of obsession. The combination of Manilov with Charles Musgrove from *Persuasion* also determined the evolution of this new character. Such laziness is antithetical to Mr. Musgrove and while there will be many differences between the Gogolian narrator's portrayal of this new character, Charles Friendly, and the Austenian narrator's portrayal of him, I felt that laziness was going too far:

| Gogol | Magarshack translation | Transposition |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Иногда, глядя с крыльца на двор и на пруд, говорил он о том, как бы хорошо было, если бы вдруг от дома провести подземный ход или через пруд выстроить каменный мост, на котором бы были по обеим сторонам лавки, и чтобы в них сидели купцы и продавали разные мелкие товары, нужные для крестьян. При этом глаза его делались чрезвычайно сладкими и лицо принимало самое довольное выражение... В его кабинете всегда лежала какая-то книжка, заложенная закладкою на четырнадцатой странице, которую он постоянно читал уже два года. (47)</p> | <p>Sometimes as he stood on the front steps gazing at the yard and the pond, he used to say what a good idea it would be if a subterranean passage could be tunneled from the house, or a stone bridge built over the pond with shops on each side of it and shopkeepers sitting in them selling all sorts of small articles required by the peasants. As he said this, a look of the utmost sweetness would appear in his eyes and his face would assume a most contented expression... In his study there was always some book lying about with a marker on the fourteenth page, a book he had been reading continuously for the last two years. (M 35)</p> | <p>Sometimes as he looked from the porch to his yard and pond, he would lament how good it would be if suddenly they invented an automatic weeder or built a cleaning submarine for the pool so nobody would have to deal with the maintenance, and so costs would be cut and all the small tools that the caretakers needed superfluous. Which made his eyes extremely kind, and his face assumed a very satisfied expression... In his livingroom he always left a different book with a ribbon in the middle, though he read very little.</p> |

Manilov is so lazy that he wants to obtain all the necessities of life without going beyond his pond. Such a mentality is far removed from Charles Musgrove in *Persuasion*. Since the transposed narrative in this case takes place in California and the protagonist transposed from these two figures is now the son of the Orange County mayor, it is extremely unlikely in the 21st century of America that he exhibits as much laziness as Gogol's Manilov. He might like leisure, he is probably pleasant as we saw in section a) here, but if his thoughts dwell on something related to his property and something typical of his class as with Manilov, then it is likely for such a hedge fund manager to think about cutting costs.

In many cases it was not necessary to look so far for continuity. The central protagonists Joe Leaddus and Anne Eliot were both surprisingly easy to transport into the present because they did not require much combination. Leaddus is derived from Chichikov (DS) and Mr. Wentworth (P), but Mr. Wentworth is largely a polite suitor in *Persuasion*, while a figure like Anne Eliot does not appear in *Dead Souls*. Furthermore, Leaddus-Chichikov-Wentworth's main interest in all three novel's can easily be his career followed by society, whereas Anne's primary interest is relationships and family/friends. These priorities lend themselves as well to 19th century England and Russia as to 21st century America.

The Intangibility of Voice

Notwithstanding the changes in people, time and space, the irony in Gogol's narrator still penetrates the transposition. If not in the characterization of nice Manilov, then certainly in his mockery of Mrs. Manilov's education. The irony, far sharper than in Austen, is felt throughout the Gogol sections:

| Gogol | Magarshack translation | Transposition |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Но все это предметы низкие, А Манилова воспитана хорошо. А хорошее воспитание, как известно, получается в пансионах. А в пансионах, как известно, три главные предмета составляют основу человеческих добродетелей: французский язык, необходимый для счастья</p> | <p>But all these things were too trivial and Mrs. Manilov was well brought-up. And, as we all know, a good education is to be obtained in young ladies' boarding schools, and, as we also know, in young ladies' boarding schools three principal subjects constitute the foundation of all human virtues:</p> | <p>But these are all minor subjects, and Mrs. Friendly has a good education, and we all know that you get a good education at college. And as we know in these colleges three subjects form the basis for a successful life: active participation, which is absolutely necessary for happiness in the family, choice, to take the</p> |

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| <p>семейственной жизни, фортепьяно, для доставления приятных минут супругу, и, наконец, собственно хозяйственная часть: вязание кошельков и других сюрпризов.</p> | <p>the French language is indispensable for the happiness of family life, the pianoforte to provide agreeable moments for husbands, and, finally, domestic science proper, such as the knitting of purses and other surprises. (M 36)</p> | <p>initiative later with your spouse, and finally the pragmatic part: obtaining a degree and then promising employment.</p> |
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The narrator of each passage outlines the typical education for a young woman, the ritualized project for turning out accomplished adults, even if there is no harm or better solution. Whether it critiques the programmatic nature of this process or exposes the essence of something usually described differently as “exploration” or “finding yourself,” the reconstruction of the passage with a slight shift in context, content and syntax has almost no effect on the irony. Furthermore, the transposition of the process for producing adults may even draw out the irony because Gogol’s voice enters our context.

As I mentioned in the section on the past haunting, this transposition (en) counters the original text and established translations in what appears like a counter-representation. In Russian we find the starkest juxtaposing of counter-representation in discourse because the narrator and characters discourse in an equal temporal framework (the present tense of narratorial commentary, direct discourse and indirect discourse). The most prominent place for insidious counter-representation in English is in ambiguous narration where the indirect discourse of a character may be indistinguishable from the narration of the narrator (both in the past tense). It is self-evident that two entities will represent their space and time differently, but the transposition of a text gives birth to a perpetually mutating source for the text and thereby enables the present to discourse and narrate the past, while also empowering Gogol’s narrator and characters to discourse and narrate our present, two hundred years after their existence. Gogol’s narration of the servant-receptionist and Mrs. Mary Manilov-Friendly can ironize the act of watching TV or obtaining a college education, although Gogol’s narrator lived before television and college for all. That is, by using *Dead Souls* and *Persuasion* and the ideas and language in these narratives as a template for a new novel in the present, some aspects show continuity, primarily mental/spiritual ones as I have outlined here, while others take on different, but parallel forms. These similar and parallel forms mean that Gogol’s narrator and characters are assuming a position in this new narrative just as the transposed narrator(s) and characters are following or rejecting the being of 200 years back by their continuity or severance with past phenomena. In a conventional translation, this does not occur: there the divergence exists between one translation and another, but the original author hardly comments on the present and the translator’s text is both inferior to the original and unable to address it.

Conclusion: Corollaries of Transposition

The five points outlined here – modernizing character, shifting the setting, text overlaying text, the combination of character and the retention of the original’s voice – allow Gogol’s pseudorealistic phantasmagoria to shape our perspective on contemporary Orange County & Manhattan. This may be possible by just reading *Dead Souls* in the original. But besides meandering through a foreign context and idiom, it might not be apparent how similar twenty-first century America is to Gogol’s depiction of 19th century Russia. In part, this is because you will compare your view of contemporary America with Gogol’s view of imperial Russia. It probably doesn’t occur to you to look at our surroundings through Gogol’s eye. Second of all, as we regularly observe, the best way to retain belief in the perfection of your own society is to perceive a critique of another, especially a wildly exaggerated tale from an unindustrialized country in the 19th century. These two limitations vanish with the transposition of the narrative: the reader is literally forced to view contemporary America through Gogol’s lens and wonder about a critique of her surroundings. It is possible that she will dispute the new narrative, say it is “a stretch” or worse, but still the transposed text requires her to ask questions: What does a past author see in my world? How do I resemble someone from the early 19th century? To what extent is my environment related?

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