

# THE APPLICATION OF DOMESTICATION AND FOREIGNIZATION TRANSLATION STRATEGIES IN BULGARIAN-ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF IVAN VAZOV'S *EPIC OF THE FORGOTTEN*

*Yuliyana Zhelyazkova*  
*Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"*

The study offers an opportunity to examine and reflect on the problem of translating culture-specific items (CSIs) in the translation of poetry from a Slavic language (Bulgarian) into a Germanic language (English). The research aims to identify the procedures linked to domestication and foreignization in three of Ivan Vazov's odes – "Levski," "Paissy," and "The Volunteers at Shipka" from his poetic cycle *Epic of the Forgotten* (1881–1884) – and their translations by the English translator and journalist Peter Tempest (1976) and Mark Ripkowski (2017). Findings show that even though the most commonly employed procedure when translating expressive and authoritative texts is the literal translation which is linked to the approach of foreignization, it is by no means the only strategy employed by the translators of Vazov's odes. Tempest foreignized 85.19% CSIs and Ripkowski 79.46% CSIs.

**Keywords:** poetry translation, cultural translation, realia, domestication, foreignization

The focus in Translation Studies has moved to the cultural aspects of both the source and the target language. As a result, the translator is tasked with the puzzle of choosing a universally applicable strategy. One of the key aspects in the field is the translation of culture-specific items (CSIs), also known as realia.

The present study focuses on the analysis of domestication and foreignization translation strategies. Domestication and foreignization are two basic translation strategies termed by the American translation theorist Lawrence Venuti in his book *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* in 1995 who followed Schleiermacher's dualism, which reads: "Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author

towards him” (qtd. in Venuti/Венути 2008: 84). Basically, Venuti’s dichotomy can be regarded as an extension of the debate on word-for-word translation and free translation.

The corpus of literary works consists of three of Ivan Vazov’s odes – “Levski” („Левски“), “Paissy” („Паисий“), and “The Volunteers at Shipka” („Опълченците на Шипка“) from his poetic cycle *Epic of the Forgotten* (*Епопея на забравените*) – and their translations by Peter Tempest (1976) and Mark Ripkowski (2017).

A writer’s international reputation strongly depends on skilful translators who are able to “faithfully render [their] work into a major European language” (Moser/Мозер 1979: 91). Ivan Vazov, the greatest Bulgarian author, with his novel *Under the Yoke* (*Под иго*) being the most translated piece of Bulgarian literature, is undoubtedly known to many. In fact, “one must bear in mind that before Vazov no Bulgarian literature existed worth mentioning” (Werner/Вернер 1950: 243). *Under the Yoke* with already three English editions by 1959, might be the most published Bulgarian novel in foreign languages (Koteva/Котева 1959: 188 – 189, qtd. in Moser/Мозер 1979: 89), but his poems did not receive such popularity. In fact, his cycle *Epic of the Forgotten* has been translated only twice. Not only that, but the first translation, done by Peter Tempest (1976), was composed of only four of the twelve odes. In Tempest’s view, the heroic couplet – it was popularised by “the father of English poetry” Geoffrey Chaucer – is the only form that can truly do justice to “the Patriarch of Bulgarian literature.” It is not until four decades later that we see a complete translation of the entire cycle by Mark Ripkowski (2017). Since it is no easy task for a poet to extend his or her rhyming couplets over many lines merely because English, which is an uninflected language, tends to be poorer in rhyme, than, say, Bulgarian, it is hardly a surprise that Ripkowski executes his translation in free verse, “the default form in twentieth-century US poetry” (Jones/Джоунс 2012: 170).

The aim of the present study is to determine the dominant strategy (foreignization or domestication) for the translation of culture-specific items in Vazov’s odes. In order to fulfil the set goal, the study is designed to meet the following objectives: 1) to recognise culture-specific items (realia) in the source texts (STs) and 2) to identify the procedures the translators have used to render them in their target texts (TTs).

At an extra-linguistic (cultural) level, the analysis is focused on finding cultural elements in the STs and later comparing them closely with their corresponding translated TTs. Word lists were generated from the STs and investigated, instances of culture-specific items were noted, collected, and analysed in the term of practical models proposed by various scholars. Culture-specific items may include any of the following: proper nouns such as character names and toponyms, historical and religious figures, traditional festivals, food, organisations, customs, and material artefacts, etc. They are objects, concepts, behaviour, or systems of classification only known to the original culture and alien to the receiving culture (Franco Aixelá 1996; Newmark 2001/2008; Vlahov and Florin 1980). In the process of determining the present culture-specific items, categories proposed by Newmark (2008) and Vlahov and Florin (1980) were considered and applied in the study (see table 1).

*Table 1. Taxonomy of CSIs*

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<b>Proposed by P. Newmark (Newmark/Нюмарк 2008: 95)</b>
1. <b>Ecology</b> (flora, fauna, winds, plains, hills)
2. <b>Material culture</b> (food, clothes, houses and towns, transport)
3. <b>Social culture</b> (work and leisure)
4. <b>Organisations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts, ideas</b> (political and administrative, religious, artistic)
5. <b>Gestures and habits</b>

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<b>Proposed by Vlahov and Florin (Влахов, Флорин/Vlahov, Florin 1980: 51 – 56)</b>
1. <b>Geographic realia</b> (physical geography, manmade objects, endemic species)
2. <b>Ethnographic realia</b> (everyday life, work, art and culture, ethnic characterisations, measures and money)
3. <b>Politics and society</b> (administrative divisions, bodies and functions, political and social life, military realia)

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As is evident from such classifications, the field of CSIs is vast enough to pose serious problems to translators, regardless of the particular kind of text they are dealing with. Whether it comes to prose translation or poetry translation, the ability to offer a readable

and accurate version of an ST ultimately comes down to one thing: the competence to render culture-specific items.

After a thorough study of the STs, a total of 63 culture-specific items were found (see table 2).

*Table 2. CSIs in the STs*

<i>Levski</i>		<i>Paisii</i>		<i>Shipka</i>	
CSIs	Freq.	CSIs	Freq.	CSIs	Freq.
Апостол	1	Атон, -ски	2	Балкан	2
Голгота	1	Беломорски	1	Батак	1
Дякон	1	Борис	1	Беласица	1
иго	1	Будин	1	душмански	1
Исус	1	Бяло море	1	Ксеркс	1
Коломб	1	Византия	1	опълченци	2
Левски	3	дамаскин	1	Радецки	1
Прометей	1	Дурацо	1	раи	1
Симон	1	Елада	1	спартанци	1
Сократ	1	Елин	1	Столетов	1
тропари	1	Иван Рилски	1	Сюлейман	1
херувико	1	Крум	1	Термопили	1
Хус	2	Никифор	1	хекатомба	1
царете	1	Паисий	2	царят	1
Юда	1	Патмос	1	Шипка	2
		Преслав	1		
		Самуил	1		
		Светогорец	2		
		Симеон цар	1		
		словене	1		
		угри	1		
		цар Асен	1		
		цар	1		
		цар Шишман	1		
Total	18	Total	27	Total	18

Foreignization and domestication are two opposite views of how languages and cultures can communicate with the smallest possible loss of meaning and colour. Basically, translation experts are divided into two camps: those who think that translators should preserve the specific elements of the source language and culture, and those who believe that translators should localise their texts and adapt them to the target language and culture.

As Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet (2000), Javier Franco Aixelá (1996), Malcolm Harvey (2003), James Hobbs (2004) and Zohre Owji (2013) demonstrate, foreignization, which places emphasis on the source language (SL) and source culture (SC), can be applied through several basic procedures: 1) literal translation; 2) borrowing; 3) orthographic adaptation (transcription and transliteration); 4) extra-textual gloss; and 5) calque.

Domestication, as the studies of Sergey Vlahov and Sider Florin (1980), Javier Franco Aixelá (1996), Peter Newmark (2008), Georges L. Bastin (2020), Malcolm Harvey (2003), and Eugene Nida (1964) show, is usually implemented through the following procedures: 1) idiomatic translation; 2) approximation; 3) deletion; 4) addition (intra-textual gloss); 5) cultural equivalent; 6) replacing a coined SL item by a familiar TL item; 7) functional equivalent; 8) synonymy; and 9) coinage.

The found CSIs (see table 2 above) were compared carefully with their correspondences in the translated TTs. After the comparison, the translators' choices were found and noted down as qualitative data to show the ratio of domestication to foreignization in the TTs. In some instances, the translators have used more than one procedure to translate a single CSI. Tables 3a and 3b show all the possible procedures, and the times each one has been used by each translator.

**Table 3a. Breakdown of Translation Strategies**

Procedures	Freq.	%
<b>Foreignization Procedures:</b>		
<i>Literal translation</i>	65	42.20%
<i>Orthographic adaptation</i>	44	28.57%
<i>Extra-textual gloss</i>	18	11.69%
Total:	127	82.46%
<b>Domestication Procedures:</b>		
<i>Synonymy</i>	7	4.55%
<i>Naturalization</i>	13	8.44%
<i>Deletion</i>	3	1.95%
<i>Intra-textual gloss (addition)</i>	4	2.60%
Total:	27	17.54%
Grand Total:	154	100%

**Table 3b. Breakdown of Translation Strategies by Each Translator**

Procedures	Tempest		Ripkowski	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
<b>Foreignization Approach:</b>				
<i>Literal translation</i>	34	41.98%	31	42.47%
<i>Orthographic adaptation</i>	22	27.16%	22	30.14%
<i>Extra-textual gloss</i>	13	16.05%	5	6.85%
Total:	69	85.19%	58	79.46%

<b>Domestication Approach:</b>				
<i>Synonymy</i>	4	4.94%	3	4.11%
<i>Naturalisation</i>	5	6.17%	8	10.95%
<i>Deletion</i>	1	1.23%	2	2.74%
<i>Intra-textual gloss (addition)</i>	2	2.47%	2	2.74%
Total:	12	14.81%	15	20.54%
Grand Total:	81	100%	73	100%

The results clearly show that the prevailing translation procedures for dealing with CSIs employed by both translators fall into the foreignization approach. Both Tempest (85.19%) and Ripkowski (79.46%) preferred to retain the cultural elements with a major prevalence towards the Literal procedure (41.98% and 42.47%, respectively) and the Orthographic adaptation procedure (27.16% and 30.14%, respectively). Tempest reaches a higher percentage (85.19%) because of providing more information enclosed in paratextual materials, 13 endnotes, while Ripkowski inserts only 5 footnotes (see table 4).

*Table 4. Breakdown of Paratexts*

Types of Paratexts	Tempest's Translations	Ripkowski's Translations	
		Print	Kindle
Foreword	1	–	1
Footnotes	–	–	5
Endnotes	13	–	–
Back cover blurb	–	1	–
Illustrations	10	1	2
Reminiscences	17	–	–

Now let us start with foreignization. When Tempest and Ripkowski apply this translation strategy in their translations of Vazov's odes, it is obvious that they want to stay "faithful" to the STs and preserve their cultural aspect. The procedures of foreignization are most often used when dealing with proper nouns. For example, Franco Aixelá's orthographic adaptation (transcription and transliteration) is employed when the transfer of CSIs is between different alphabets

(Franco Aixela/Франко Ехела 1996: 61). We can illustrate this with the following examples from the translations of Vazov's odes: Левски becomes Levski, and Иван Рилски, Шишман, Самуил, and Симеон become Ivan Rilski, Shishman, Samuil, and Simeon, respectively. Hence, proper nouns denoting names of people and places should be preserved instead of offering a target language version of, say, Simon for Simeon or Ivan O'Rila for Ivan Rilski.

Both Ripkowski and Tempest use paratexts as an extra-textual gloss: another foreignizing procedure (Franco Aixelá/Франко Ехела 1996: 62). Excessive usage of footnotes in poems, however, might be "off-putting" warns Bassnett (Bassnett/Баснет 2011: 119). Translator's forewords, footnotes, and endnotes are all used by the translators of Vazov's odes to provide relevant historical and cultural background. Furthermore, it is observed that orthographic adaptation and literal translation are used side by side with intra-textual/extra-textual glosses.

As for domestication, Tempest and Ripkowski use it to avoid negative associations due to cultural differences; to avoid repetition; and when there is already an available culturally accepted equivalent. The procedures that clearly testify to the relevance of domestication in the texts are: 1) synonymy, 2) naturalization, and 4) addition (or intra-textual gloss).

For instance, Tempest first uses "O glorious gallows!" for "О, бe-сило славно" and then switches to "O glorious scaffold" and "holy scaffold" in his translation of "Levski." We can speculate that the use of synonymy is intentional for gallows are known only for hanging, while the scaffold is also an erected arrangement. By putting Levski on an erected arrangement, we see him higher, as an important person on stage, and closer to the skies, as a saint. Another possibility is that the translator has tried to escape from the negative connotation of the word *gallows*, for it is associated with undignified death and punishment for treason in the TC. Furthermore, the translator chooses synonymy to fit the metre or rhyme of the translation.

Another procedure related to the domestication approach is the intra-textual gloss (additions) which is like an extra-textual gloss, but the translator brings it as "an indistinct part of the text, usually so as not to disturb the readers' attention" (Franco Aixelá/Франко Ехела



1996: 62). The procedure also serves to fill in an ellipsis, especially when there are problems with parallelism; to specify the meaning in order to avoid ambiguity or misleading interpretation; or to insert an agent when switching from passive to active voice, but not to raise the latter's status from implicit to explicit. Some additions are linguistically bound to the characteristics of the TL; for example, Bulgarian differentiates from English in its proneness to ellipsis, and English, unlike Bulgarian, must always have a subject. Such additions always increase the amount of redundancy in a text. However, it should be noted that nothing is really added to the semantic content (Nida/Нида 1964: 231). Therefore, according to Nida, if an addition adds new semantic content, it should be considered an error, and the translator should be criticised for his or her whimsical volition. Here are some examples of intra-textual gloss found in Ripkowski, "Paisii:" 1) "how their mighty laws were respected from the lands of Budin / to the woods of Athos Mount" for „че от славний Будин до светий Атон / бил е припознаван нашият закон;“<sup>1</sup> 2) "Read and gain knowledge about Tsar Shishman and the / fall of our kingdom under the Ottoman rule" for „четете и знайте кой бе цар Шишман / и как нашто царство сториха го плян;“<sup>2</sup> 3) "Read and gain knowledge from what I have written, / a factual collection of many scripts, books and sources" for „Четете и знайте, що съм аз писал, / от много сказанья и книги събрал;“<sup>3</sup> and 4) "who was carrying a flickering candle through the darkness of this age, / to give at least one spark and inflame the Bulgarian national consciousness" for „и фърляше тайно през мрака тогаз / най-първата искра в народната сваят.“<sup>4</sup>

Examples 3 and 4, i.e. *factual*, *source*, *a flickering candle*, and *inflame*, according to Nida, should be regarded as unacceptable additions.

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<sup>1</sup> that from the glorious Budin to the St. Athos / our law has been recognized (my transl.)

<sup>2</sup> read and know who Tsar Shishman was / and how our realm they have enthralled (my transl.)

<sup>3</sup> Read and know what I have written / from many a tale and book I have collected (my transl.)

<sup>4</sup> and he kindled secretly through the darkness then / the very first spark within the nation's consciousness (my transl.)

Now, here is an example of intra-textual gloss in Tempest, “Paissy:” “Read how Kroum beat Nicephorus, lined / His skull with silver and drank from it wine” for „как се Крум преславний с Никифора би / и из черепа му руйно вино пи.“<sup>5</sup>

In Tempest’s case, the addition does provide new information and is, therefore, deemed “unacceptable.” However, with this insertion, he proves to be more familiar with Bulgarian history than Ripkowski is. Many of the additions made by Ripkowski and Tempest are the result of free and often, but not always, wrong interpretations of metaphors in the ST, as demonstrated by Tempest’s example. The scope of the current study, however, does not include an analysis of metaphors due to time and volume constraints. Thus, Maria Tymoczko rightfully suggests that the translator’s task is to present implicit information “either through explicit inclusion in the translation or through paratextual devices” (Тимочко/Тимочко 1999: 26).

In conclusion, our opinion differs from Nida’s with the belief that sometimes adding to the semantic content of the message is necessary, particularly when translators want to produce fluent translations with preserved cultural specificity but without disturbing the reader’s flow with too many footnotes and endnotes.

Of course, the study will not be complete if we do not address some of the differences of choices made by both translators that are worth mentioning. Differences can be found in the very title of the third ode under investigation: Tempest used the literal procedure and translated the title as *The Volunteers at Shipka*, while Ripkowski naturalised the title with a transposition – *The Resistance at Shipka*. While we cannot rightly point whose translation is more acceptable due to the etymology of the word *опълченец* (volunteer), the origin of which is the verb *опълчвам се* (to resist), a loss of meaning is evident. Another loss in the same ode can be found in Ripkowski’s translation of „Търчете! Тамо са раите!“ as “Keep pushing! The enemy is up there!” when he could have used the linguistic and cultural term *rayahs*.

There is also a discrepancy in the transliteration of some of the proper nouns between Tempest’s and Ripkowski’s texts (e.g., Paissy

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<sup>5</sup> how Krum the glorious with Nicephorus fought / and from his skull he drank ruddy wine (my transl.)

vs. Paisii, Assen vs. Asen, and Kroum vs. Krum). This could be due to the fact that Ripkowski translated them using the so-called Streamlined System, which has been mandatory for public use since the adoption of the Transliteration Act<sup>6</sup> in 2009, although in “Paisii” he translated Беласица as Belasica instead of Belasitsa, probably misled by the article of the same name in Wikipedia<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, both translators preserved the Bulgarian names of people and places by employing the Orthographic adaptation procedure.

Furthermore, translations of texts with such great merit should be not only entertaining but also educative and informative. For the only way to close the gap between cultures, such as the one dividing Eastern and Western Europe, is to make the reader of the TT familiar with the ST’s history, customs, and traditions. Therefore, it was no surprise that the translations were accompanied by prefaces, footnotes, endnotes, and even reminiscences and illustrations. Both translators gave further information on the author and the culture of the STs. However, Tempest’s paratextual materials are significantly more comprehensive than those of Ripkowski. We could easily attribute this to the fact that Tempest published his translations with a more resourceful publisher in the source country. Finally, analysing the footnotes and endnotes, we could speculate about the translators’ expertise and their knowledge in Bulgarian history and culture. For example, a footnote in Ripkowski’s “Paisii,” reads, “To avoid a raft of footnotes it should suffice to say the following are all reference to key events in Bulgarian history” and provides disappointingly vague information.

In conclusion, both translators used mostly but not exclusively the foreignization approach when manipulating the cultural elements found in the original texts, thus bringing the reader closer to the source culture and fulfilling the educative and informative purposes all translations should serve. Therefore, it is virtually impossible and practically inexpedient to stick solely to one translation strategy, regardless of its pros and cons.

Paradoxically, even though their approaches were basically the same, their translations differ. Nevertheless, both translators

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<sup>6</sup> Transliteration Act, State Gazette # 19, 13 March 2009.

<sup>7</sup> See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belasica>.

demonstrated their knowledge of Bulgarian history and culture not only with their translations of difficult words (realia) but also with their paratextual materials, such as footnotes and endnotes (foreignizing procedure). Nevertheless, Tempest seems to have been more acquainted with the details of the particular events and personages mentioned in the STs. Obviously, this is so because of his personal and professional interest in the East European Studies and his life in Bulgaria (the source culture). In other words, almost all culture-specific items are subject to foreignization, preserving the local colour of the original texts (only) insofar as it is technically possible. However, the end results in poetry translation will always depend on the translators' training, poetry-reading and poetry-writing skills, knowledge of the SL and TL cultures, personal views and ideology.

Finally, professionals, such as Peter Tempest and Mark Ripkowski, debunk the myth of poetry's "untranslatability" by showing that doing translation work is merely a matter of skill and theoretical proficiency.

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