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## Foreignization and domestication in the Croatian translations of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

The paper presents results of a diachronic study on foreignization and domestication in the three Croatian translations of Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The study identifies the translation strategies that may be termed as foreignizing or domesticating, compares the three translations in order to see to what extent those strategies are used in the different translations and whether there is a diachronic change. The linguistic, cultural, political and other implications of using one or the other strategy are considered.

**Key words:** foreignization; domestication; translation studies; diachronic.

### 1. Introduction

The terms foreignization and domestication were introduced into translation studies (TS) by Lawrence Venuti (1995). Although readily associated with Venuti, these terms do not represent new concepts. Domestication has been known at least since ancient Rome, and foreignization at least since the Classical and Romantic periods of German culture (Venuti 1998b: 240ff.). Foreignization and domestication are translation strategies, but also ethical categories because they include a certain degree of distortion of the original text. TS is naturally interested in translation strategies and their ethical implications, but the main question here is whether TS can benefit from the foreignization vs. domestication dichotomy, and if it can, in what way. The present paper seeks an objective way to test the plausibility and practical applicability of the domestication/foreignization dichotomy in TS.



## 2. Theoretical background

Domestication is a translation strategy of using „a transparent, fluent, ‘invisible’ style in order to minimize the foreignness of the TT [target text]” (Munday 2008: 144). By contrast, foreignization is not transparent and it eschews fluency for a more heterogeneous mix of discourses in order to signify the difference of the foreign text (Venuti 1995).

The conflict between domestication and foreignization is cultural/ political rather than just linguistic (Wang 2002: 24). In fact, we can only talk about domestication or foreignization when there are differences in cultural connotations between the source text (ST) and the TT (Yang 2010: 77). If there are no differences in cultural connotations, every translation is at the same time domesticating and foreignizing. It is domesticating because the TT is rendered in a domestic language of the target culture, and it is foreignizing because what is being translated and presented to the target culture is a text originating in a foreign language and culture. It is therefore not productive to maintain the dichotomy in cases without a change of cultural connotations. The conflict is not only cultural but also political. Venuti argues that the contemporary Anglo-American culture prefers domestication because of their imperialistic tendencies (“imperialistic abroad and xenophobic at home”, Venuti 1995: 17). He further claims that such practices make translators ‘invisible’ and negatively influence their social status (connected to the prevailing conception of authorship, where translation is seen as derivative and of secondary quality and importance) (Munday 2008: 144). Venuti thus strongly recommends the foreignizing method, which makes the translator ‘visible’, and which eventually should lead to the recognition of translators.

The domestication vs. foreignization dichotomy is comparable to another age-old dichotomy, namely that between free and literal translation. However, those two dichotomies are not synonymous. The free vs. literal dichotomy refers to linguistic form, while the domestication vs. foreignization dichotomy concerns the two cultures involved, i.e. whether an ST is adapted to the target culture, or the foreign cultural elements are preserved. According to Venuti (1998b: 240–241) the domestication strategy has been implemented at least since ancient Rome, when, as Nietzsche remarked, ‘translation was a form of conquest’ and Latin poets like Horace and Propertius translated Greek text ‘into the Roman present’.

The foreignization strategy can be traced back to the German culture of the Classical and Romantic periods, and it was formulated by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), the famous German philosopher and theologian. Schleiermacher (1813: 241–242) proposed two paths that ‘*der eigentliche Uebersetzer*’ can take:



“*Entweder der Uebersetzer läßt den Schriftsteller möglichst in Ruhe, und bewegt den Leser ihm entgegen; oder er läßt den Leser möglichst in Ruhe und bewegt den Schriftsteller ihm entgegen*” (1813: 47).<sup>1</sup> So, the aim of the translator is in either case to bring the author and the reader closer together. The first path, whereby the translator brings the reader closer to the author, is similar to Venuti's foreignizing translation. The translator tries to supply the reader with the understanding of the source language (SL) that the reader is lacking (ib. 47–48). This can be achieved by sticking as closely as possible to the wording of the ST, so that the translation would sound foreign to the reader. The second path, whereby the translator brings the author closer to the reader is similar to Venuti's domesticating translation. This strategy consists in making the foreign author speak (and write) like a domestic author would speak to his people (1813: 48).

For Schleiermacher, foreignization and domestication are binary opposites, and he explicitly claims they must not be mixed; the translator has to opt for one or the other method and then be consistent in its use. Combining the two methods would lead to unreliable results; the author and the reader could completely miss each other (Schleiermacher 1813: 47). By contrast, Venuti states that domestication and foreignization are ‘heuristic concepts designed to promote thinking and research’ rather than binary opposites: the meaning of domestication or foreignization is relative to the specific cultural setting, and the terms may change meaning across time and location (Munday: 145–146). For example, in a culture where ‘foreignization’ is the default strategy, ‘domestication’ would be a form of resistance, and there is a reversal of terms.

Both Schleiermacher and Venuti advocate foreignizing translation, but for different reasons. Schleiermacher advocates foreignizing method because of (a) his intended readership and (b) because it can benefit the target language (TL). The readers that he has in mind are ‘lovers and connoisseurs’, which are familiar with a foreign language but still feel it as foreign (Schleiermacher 1813: 51). The foreignizing method can benefit the TL in that it puts the language in motion, so that it can develop and prosper and fully unfold its own strength (1813: 69). Schleiermacher is explicitly against the domesticating method because he thinks that the thought and its expression cannot be separated. A man cannot be separated from his language; there is no way to make a foreign author speak the domestic language as if it were his own. Thus, it seems that the main reason Schleiermacher is opposed to domestication is that it is impossible because of the language relativism. The

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<sup>1</sup> 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.



reason Venuti is opposed to domestication is not because it is impossible, but because it is unfair. According to Venuti (1995: 20), domestication involves 'an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values.' Foreign cultural values are excluded, i.e. adapted to fit into the domestic value system. Another negative consequence of domestication, according to Venuti, is that it makes the translator invisible because the translation reads like an original. Venuti therefore prefers foreignization, as a form of resistance to the 'violent, ethnocentric' (Anglo-American) cultural values. Schleiermacher does not talk about resistance, nor is he concerned with improving the social status of the translator. Taking all above into consideration, we may conclude that although Venuti's and Schleiermacher's views on translation carry some resemblance, they are in many ways divergent, especially ideologically.

In the contemporary international translation field, it was Eugene Nida who first advocated domestication (Yang 2010: 78). Nida differentiated between 'formal' and 'dynamic' (functional) equivalence. While 'formal equivalence' strives to preserve form as well as content, 'dynamic equivalence' aims at producing in translation an equivalent effect on the target readers that the original text had on the original readers. Nida preferred 'dynamic equivalence,' mostly because he was dealing with Bible translation, where the most important thing is to successfully carry the message through, disregarding the form of the message.

Both domestication and foreignization implicate manipulation of the text: "Translation is, of course, a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way" (Venuti 1995: General editors' preface). Therefore, from the ethical point of view, both strategies are equally biased. Whether one or the other strategy will be applied depends on variables such as the purpose of the translation (Skopos), the status of the receiving literary system (polysystem theory), i.e. the power relations between the source and the target literary systems, and other variables of the historical, social and cultural setting in which the translation takes place. In order to see why a certain strategy is used in a certain context, we have to turn to the analysis of real translations.

### 3. Methodology

For the purpose of this research I used one ST in English and its three different translations in Croatian, which were done in different periods by different translators. The corpus thus consists of the following texts:



- ST = Oscar Wilde: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, first published as a book in 1891 (The Project Gutenberg E-Book 2008)
- TT1 = Oscar Wilde: *Dorian Gray*, translated by Dr. Artur Schneider, 1920. Zagreb: St. Kugli
- TT2 = Oscar Wilde: *Slika Dorian Gray*, translated by Zlatko Gorjan, 1953. Koprivnica: Šareni dućan (reissue 2000)
- TT3 = Oscar Wilde: *Slika Dorian Gray*, translated by Zdenko Novački, 1987. Zagreb: Mladost

The following aims and objectives were pursued: (a) to identify the translation strategies and procedures in the Croatian translations of *Dorian Gray* that may be termed as foreignizing or domesticating, (b) to identify the textual elements that are subject to foreignization or domestication, (c) to compare the translations in order to see to what extent the foreignizing and domesticating strategies are used in the different translations and whether there is a diachronic change, (d) to reflect upon the possible linguistic, cultural, political and other implications of using one or the other strategy, (e) to test the plausibility and practical applicability of the domestication/foreignization dichotomy in TS.

## 4. Analysis

### 4.1. *Looking for signs of foreignization and domestication in the corpus*

At the outset of the analysis we have to set the criteria for assigning a certain translation procedure to the category of domesticating or foreignizing translation. According to Munday (2008: 145), the procedures distinctive of foreignization are a close adherence to the ST structure and syntax, calques, archaisms, modern colloquialisms and alternative spellings. By contrast, domestication involves the conscious adoption of a fluent, natural-sounding TL style, the adaptation of TT to conform to target discourse types, the removal of SL realia and preferences (Zare-Behtash and Firoozkoobi 2009: 1577). From the above we can extrapolate that the textual elements in which it is possible to find evidence of foreignization or domestication include both the lexis and the syntax. On the lexical level, the elements to look for are certainly culture-specific items (CSIs), loanwords, calques, archaisms, colloquialisms, idioms, metaphors. On the syntactical level the relevant elements are word order and syntactic constructions. To this, we may add the textual level and the paratextual level. At the textual level we may look for signs of explicitation (indicates a domesticizing approach). At the paratextual level of interest are notes



(footnotes or endnotes), preface, afterword and other paratexts. The most obvious and the most revealing of the above-listed elements are arguably the so-called culture-specific items, which we shall analyze first.

## 4.2. *Culture-specific items (CSIs)*

There are various taxonomies of CSIs, but most authors identify CSIs with items such as local institutions, streets, historical figures, place names (toponyms), personal names (anthroponyms), periodicals, works of art etc. (Aixelá 1996: 57). Aixelá defines CSIs dynamically, i.e. an item can be seen as culture-specific only in relation to another language, in which that item is unknown or has a different value. CSIs can also change their status over time because objects, habits or values once restricted to one community can come to be shared by others (1996: 58). Nevertheless, according to Aixelá (1996: 59), there are two *a priori* categories of CSIs: proper nouns and common expressions (objects, institutions, habits, opinions etc.).

In dealing with CSIs, translators use different translation procedures. We have divided the procedures into domesticating and foreignizing, and the nomenclature is based on Aixelá (1996: 61–64) and Newmark (1988: 75–77).

### 4.2.1. *Domesticating procedures*

1) **Limited universalization** (substitution by a less specific CSI): macaroni → *dandy* (TT2)

‘Macaroni’ is “[a] well-traveled young Englishman of the 18th and 19th centuries who affected foreign customs and manners”.<sup>2</sup> In TT2 it was translated as ‘dandy’, which is still specific to English culture, but closer to a Croatian reader.

2) **Absolute universalization** (substitution by a neutral reference): hansom → *kočija* (TT2)

‘Hansom’ is “[a] two-wheeled covered carriage with the driver’s seat above and behind.”<sup>3</sup> TT2 translated it as *kočija*, literally ‘a carriage’.

3) **Naturalization** (substitution by a CSI specific for the target culture; in Newmark (1988: 76): cultural equivalent): Rosalind → *Rozalinda*

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/macaroni>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/hansom>.



The English-specific name 'Rosalind' is translated in TT1 by a domesticated version of the same name.

4) **Deletion**: It is not fit for you to see, sir. → *Onakva kakva je sada, ona nije mjesto za vas.*

The specifically English title 'sir' was deleted in translation.

5) **Synonymy** (translation by a synonym or parallel reference to avoid repeating the CSI) (Aixelá 1996: 63) is not represented in the corpus.

#### 4.2.2. Foreignizing procedures

1) **Transference**: the odour of lilas blanc → *miris lilas blanc* (TT2&TT3)

The CSI is reproduced in its original form.

2) **Orthographic adaptation**: debút → *debi* (TT2)

The CSI is adapted to the TL pronunciation and spelling, i.e. it is transcribed.

3) **Pre-established translation**: the yellow piazza of Perugia → *žuti trg u Perugiji* (TT1&TT2&TT3). This is a substitution of the CSI by a translation that is previously established by convention within the intertextual corpus of the TL.

4) **Through-translation** (calque): garden-party → *vrtna zabava* (TT2&TT3)

Each element of the compound noun is translated literally.

5) **Extratextual gloss**: footnote, endnote, glossary

This is a supplementary procedure; it supplements almost any procedure, giving explanation of the meaning or implications of the CSI outside the text.

6) **Intratextual gloss**: at the Orleans → *u Orleans-klubu*

Similar to the above, except that the explanation of the CSI is incorporated into the text, so as not to disturb the reader's attention.

#### 4.2.3. The distribution of the procedures in the corpus

In order to get a picture of the distribution of domesticating and foreignizing procedures in translating CSIs, 72 CSIs, i.e. their translations in TT1, TT2 and TT3 were analyzed. As shown in Table 1, foreignizing procedures prevail in all three TTs. TT1 uses foreignizing procedures the most frequently, with a ratio of 1:4, which means that out of 5 CSIs only one is domesticated. TT3 shows similar



though slightly lower ratio (1:3.5), and TT2 uses domestication more frequently, with every third CSI domesticated (1:2). Although the ratio differs in TT1, TT2 and TT3, it is clear that foreignization is the preferred strategy for translating CSIs in the corpus.

Table 1. The distribution of procedures used to translate CSIs in TT1, TT2 and TT3 (72 CSIs analyzed).

	TT1	TT2	TT3
1) domesticating procedures	19.4%	36%	22.2%
2) foreignizing procedures	80.6%	64%	77.8%
ratio 1:2	1 : 4	1 : 2	1 : 3.5

#### 4.2.4 Anthroponyms

Personal names are mostly transferred: *Isabella*, *Sybil*. TT2 and TT3 frequently supplement the name with an explanatory footnote. This procedure (transference + footnote) is common for names of historical persons. Some names are orthographically adapted, i.e. are spelled phonetically: *Klodion* (Clodion). Some names are naturalized: *Rozalinda* (Rosalind). In some cases, a pre-established translation is used: *Louis Četrnaesti* (Louis Quatorze; but TT1: transference). Orthographic adaptation, naturalization and pre-established translation are used mostly for fictional characters (e.g. from Shakespeare), or famous historical people.

Personal titles, when used in front of a name, are always transferred (and capitalized) in TT1: *Pripovijedajte mi nešto o Mr. Dorianu Grayu. Njegova je susjeda bila Mrs. Vandeleur*. However, when used without the name, they are translated as *gospodin* or *gospodja*. This leads to a conclusion that the title such as Mr., Mrs. or Miss, when in front of a name, is seen as an integral part of the name. Since those titles are known in Croatian culture, their transference provides a foreign flavor without being incomprehensible. By contrast, TT2 & 3 always translate personal titles (e.g. *gospodin Dorian Gray*, *gospođa Vandeleur*). TT1 transfers aristocratic titles as well: *Lady Gwendolen. Njoj nalijevo sjedio je Mr. Erskine of Treadley. Sir Thomas*. TT2 & 3 also transfer aristocratic titles, but without capitalization: *lady Gwendolen, sir Thomas*. 'Mr. Erskine of Treadley' is translated in TT2&3 by the conventional *gospodin Erskine od Treadleya*. Since English aristocratic titles are





also widely known in Croatian culture, their transference gives us a flavor of English aristocracy without risking incomprehensibility.

#### 4.2.5. *Toponyms*

A transfer of English syntax can be observed in the translations of place names: ST 'at a West End club' TT1 *u jednom West End klubu*; TT2 *u West End-klubu*; TT3 *klubu u West Endu*. ST has a noun 'West End' modifying the noun 'club'. TT1 copies the same pattern. TT2 adds a hyphen to make a compound noun (a compromise solution), while TT3 adapts the syntax to Croatian.<sup>4</sup> TT1 exhibits curious cases of making a compound noun with a hyphen, where the ST had NOUN + PREPOSITIONAL CONSTRUCTION: 'exhibition at the Dudley' – *za Dudley-izložbu*. There are also cases of incorporating a gloss into the (hyphenated) compound: 'the Churchill' – *Churchill-kluba* – *u Churchill-klubu* – *u Churchill klubu* (TT3 no hyphen; N modifying a N); 'to Victoria' TT1 *do Victoria-kolodvora*.

#### 4.2.6. *Peculiarities of TT1*

One of the immediately conspicuous features of TT1 is that it does not have a single footnote, and no paratexts (e.g. foreword, afterword, note on the author etc.). We can assume that this was the norm at the time, but it has to be confirmed. Interestingly, TT1 has the translator's name on the front cover page, which is rare even by today's standards. The translator's 'visibility' in TT1 goes in hand with the fact that TT1 is the most foreignizing of the three translations. Putting the translator's name on the book cover is a foreignizing strategy; the publisher makes it clear for the reader that s/he is reading a translation, a novel that was originally written in another language. TT2&TT3 mention the translator's name on the first inside page of the book, which is the current norm. TT2 also makes translator visible by adding a note on the translator at the end of the book.

TT1 often uses foreignizing strategies, such as transference, orthographic adaptation and naturalization, for words that are not culture-specific: *party*, *kaprisa* (caprice), *amizirati* (amuse), *simpatizirati* (sympathize), *simpatija prema* (sympathy with), *ekskvizitna* (exquisite), *imaginacija*, *nil*, *apsorbirati*, *coroner*, *infamna* (infamous), *faktorije* (factories), *taylor-made* (tailor-made). These words may seem exaggerated and unnecessary, still they are transparent, which just adds to the foreign 'flavor'. This is just the type of lexical borrowing Croatian language scholars are always complaining about. It should be noted that this was 1920, which shows

<sup>4</sup> Compare the current debate over cases such as *Zagreb film festival* vs. *Zagrebački filmski festival*.



(a) that lexical borrowing of that kind is not a recent invention, and (b) that it was even more pronounced in 1920 than it is today.

### **4.3. Analysis of other elements (metaphors, syntax)**

Due to the lack of space, we cannot analyze other textual elements as thoroughly as we did with CSIs; a few general observations will have to suffice. Metaphors, i.e. their treatment in translation can be a good indicator of the degree of domestication or foreignization. Based on an extensive and detailed analysis of the translation of metaphors in *Dorian Gray*,<sup>5</sup> we have strong evidence confirming the results of the analysis of the CSIs. On the whole, most of the metaphors are preserved in translation (82%), while some of the metaphors are paraphrased (17%). Deletion is, on average, very uncommon (<1%). TT1 and TT2 are very similar in their strategies, while TT2 again stands out. In TT2 there are fewer cases of literal translation, more paraphrases and creative solutions, which confirms that TT2 is more domesticating than TT1 and TT3.

The syntax was not analyzed thoroughly, but the preliminary analysis did not show anything unusual in the syntactic structure of TT1, TT2 and TT3; in all of them syntax follows the rules of the TL.

## **5. Conclusions**

The case study has shown that it is possible to isolate the textual elements which are subject to domestication or foreignization, both on the lexical and the syntactic level. Based on the analysis of such elements, we can assess the degree of domestication or foreignization in a translation. In our corpus, following mostly from the analysis of CSIs, foreignization prevails (TT1 the most foreignizing: 80.6% of F-solutions, TT2 the least: 64% of F-solutions). In addition, there seems to be a diachronic change, showing a growing tendency towards more domestication. There are many possible explanatory variables. Translation strategy in general reflects the social and cultural trend in the contemporary society. This general premise leads to a conclusion that our society is quite open for (or at least tolerant towards) receiving foreign cultural elements, in this case British, it has been like that for at least a century, and it still is. On the other hand, if contemporary translations exhibit a growing tendency towards domestication, the conclusion follows that our society is gradually closing in, trying to isolate itself from the foreign influences as much as

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<sup>5</sup> For details see: Schmidt, Goran. 2012. *A Cognitive-linguistic Approach to the Translation of Metaphor from English into Croatian*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Osijek.



possible. However, we should not ignore the element of power, i.e. the relationship between the source and the target language. In these times, when English is taking over as a *lingua franca*, it is only natural that ‘small’ cultures like the Croatian are trying to protect their language against English in order to keep their identity. In any case, analyses of the type presented here can reveal the real state of affairs in cultural policies, and they can do it objectively.

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### **POSTRANJIVANJE I PODOMAĆIVANJE U HRVATSKIM PRIJEVODIMA ROMANA OSCARA WILDEA *SLIKA DORIANA GRAYA***

Istraživanje je provedeno na tri hrvatska prijevoda „Doriana Graya“, koji su objavljeni 1920., 1953. i 1987. godine. Pojmove postranjivanje (forenizacija) i podomaćivanje (domestikacija) uveo je američki translatolog i prevoditelj Lawrence Venuti. Te dvije strategije odnose se kako na izbor teksta za prevođenje tako i na prevodilačke metode. Domestikacija znači prevođenje transparentnim, tečnim, „nevidljivim“ stilom, kako bi se smanjila „stranost“ prijevoda. Forenizacija s druge strane znači izbor stranog teksta i metoda koje su u opoziciji prema dominantnim kulturnim vrijednostima ciljnog jezika. Ciljevi istraživanja uključuju identifikaciju prijevodnih strategija (ili elemenata) koje možemo označiti kao postranjivanje ili podomaćivanje, a zatim usporedbu tih elemenata u tri prijevoda kako bismo vidjeli koliko je pojedina strategija zastupljena u pojedinom prijevodu i postoji li dijakronijska promjena. Raspravlja se i o lingvističkim, kulturnim, političkim i drugim implikacijama korištenja jedne ili druge strategije.

**Ključne riječi:** postranjivanje (forenizacija); podomaćivanje (domestikacija); translatologija; dijakronijski.