

“World in Vladimir Nabokov’s Words.” On Polish and Russian Translations of Wordplay in the Novel *Pnin*¹

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Abstract

The main aim of this paper is to identify procedures used for the rendition of wordplay in Vladimir Nabokov’s Pnin (1957). A comparative analysis of Polish (Anna Kołyszko, 1987) and Russian (Sergey Ilyin, 1993) translations is carried out. The main focus is placed on the unreliable narrator’s speech in which numerous examples of near-anagrams, near-homophones and agnominations may be found. In both translations, retaining near-anagrams and near-homophones appears to be the most challenging task. The reason for this are graphic and phonetic differences between the Polish and Russian language systems. However, they do not interfere with the re-creation of agnominations. Here, the translators achieve particularly fruitful results.

Introduction

Vladimir Nabokov (1899–1977) was a novelist, critic, poet and translator; one of the most popular writers in the 20th century. He achieved world renown as the author of the controversial novel *Lolita* – a story about a middle-aged professor, Humbert Humbert, falling in love with a twelve-year-old, Dolores Haze. Nevertheless, his literary legacy encompasses a broad range of novels, novellas and short stories written in his native language, Russian (such as *Mary; King, Queen, Knave; The Luzhin Defence; The Eye; Glory*) as well as in English (such as *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight; Bend Sinister; Lolita; Pnin, Pale Fire*).

Multifaceted analyses carried out by Russian, Polish and American researchers have gradually revealed unexplored areas of Nabokov’s works.² However, this does not mean that in the writer’s legacy there are no recurrent and prominent motifs. Among many themes present in the novels, Neill Cornwell (1999: 12) lists the recreation of lost love and childhood, memory, memories and knowledge. Vladimir A. Alexandrov (1991: 7) indicates the “otherworld” as a concept possessing metaphysical, aesthetical and ethical origins. In addition, the creation of art, immorality and timelessness are also viewed as hallmarks of Nabokov’s books (such as, among many, *Transparent Things* and *Invitation to a Beheading*).

Although there are various approaches to the writer’s legacy, most scholars emphasize the uniqueness of his masterpieces, and his inimitable individual narrative and aesthetic mode. Brown (1967: 281) labels Nabokov “a consummate master of style” who is capable of “more exquisite modulation, nuance, beauty and power than is any person who has written of his work” (1967: 281). As Cornwell (1999: 13) points out, Nabokov was aware of his linguistic abilities and took pride in “mastery of prose style in two languages” – Russian and English. It must be noted that he was one of the “white émigrés” whose exile began in 1917 after the Bolshevich Revolution. Nabokov then lived in Crimea (1917–1919), Eastern Europe (1919–1940), America (1940–1960) and Switzerland (1961–1977). From 1938, in his professional life, the process of “lingual transubstantiation” (Toker 1989) occurred. In order to gain an audience for his compositions he began to write exclusively in English. Bilingualism and biculturalism allowed him to disclose the infinite possibilities of language

and encouraged him to search for new, individual ways of expression. One of the most characteristic features of his style is wordplay.³ Ralph Ciancio emphasizes (1977: 520) that Nabokov's interest in this literary device was not motivated by the humorous effect they provide. The writer was attracted by their "coincidental logic, which heightens the artificiality of language" (1977: 520). Their accumulation in literary texts "strains the sense to the bursting point" (1977: 520). If Nabokov claims that he "thinks in images" (Nabokov 1973: 12), wordplay in his writings was to perform a function of "mirror images" because they split the outlook on the world (1977: 520). Wordplay, being both a textual and linguistic phenomenon, constitutes a real challenge for translators who work with Nabokov's prose. Furthermore, such a literary device forces them to seek the most acceptable strategies which will guarantee a relative similarity to the original text and proper reception of the translated works.

Corpus and Objectives

Among Nabokov's literary texts in which wordplay serves a semantic, constitutional and aesthetic role, *Pnin* (1957) occupies a special place. This is because of the motif of emigration vividly reflected in the figure of the main hero – Timofey Pnin, "a Russian emigrant whom fate has left dangling in the alien English language" (Besemeres 2000: 390). His "linguistic identity" is built up by mispronunciations, slips of the tongue and errors in English syntax. Moreover, his utterances are "a witty simultaneous interpreting for Anglophone readers of the language of his enduring, earliest, and to that degree, innermost self" (Besemeres 2000: 396) In a sense Pnin's speech is the language in which "Nabokov himself continued to think, and in his intimate circles, to speak, be heard and be deeply understood" (2000: 396).

Secondly, this book attracted attention because of the narrator who is, as Besemeres (2000: 397) states, a "simulacrum of Nabokov, a kind of glittering snakeskin the author sloughs off by the end of the narrative". He shares with Nabokov not only a patronymic, a profession and an ironic undertone but also predilections for games. This may be noticed both in the narrative technique – in the last chapter his identity is revealed and readers learn that he is coming to Cremona to "usurp Pnin's precariously held professorship" (2000: 394) – and in the narrator's language, characterized by various types of puns which determine his style of communication and his worldview.

The main aim of this article is to explore procedures used for the rendition of wordplay in Polish (Anna Kołyszko) and Russian (Sergey Ilyin) translations of *Pnin*. The main focus will be placed on the narrator's speech in which the most numerous wordplays are near-anagrams, near-homophones and agnominations. For this reason, a comparative analysis of the three texts will be conducted. The investigation covers the following stages:

1. Specifying examples of wordplay from the original text.
2. Determining the most numerous types of puns.
3. Comparing puns in the original with their counterparts in Polish and Russian.
4. Identifying solutions and strategies applied in the translations.

It must be stressed that in Poland there is only one version of *Pnin*, initially published in 1987.⁴ The first translation of *Pnin* which appeared in Russia was done by Gennady Barabtarlo (1949–2019) in collaboration with Nabokov's wife in 1989. The second translation was created by a writer and journalist Boris Nosik (1931–2015) in 1991. The most

recent version is by Sergey Ilyin (1945–2017), who translated it in 1987 for his wife. It must be stressed that this translation was not published until 1993 because of censorship and the conflict with Nabokov's son. I have chosen this version because of Ilyin's individual style, comprising both maximal faithfulness (*максимальная точность*) and stylistic perfection (*стилистическое совершенство*) (Yuzefovich: online).

Definition of wordplay

The notion *wordplay* has a long tradition; the concept has been in existence since antiquity. Initially, it was connected with Cicero, a Roman politician and lawyer (106 BC–43BC), and his study *Rhetorica ad Herrenium* where he introduces wordplay within the confines of a rhetorical notion – *traductio*: “[t]ransplacement (*traductio*) makes it possible for the same word to be frequently reintroduced, not only without offence to good taste, but even so as to render the style more elegant” (Cicero 1954: 279). According to Cicero, transplacement “refreshes” the words and bestows new meanings and linguistic contents upon them without interference in the style of an utterance.

Nowadays, wordplay is often described as a deliberate communicative strategy, the result of which is connected with producing a specific semantic or pragmatic effect. According to Delia Chiaro, wordplay is linked to humor, and thus she emphasizes that its main intention is to amuse and to provoke laughter. As she claims, this notion is very broad and comprises many conceits such as puns, spoonerisms, wisecracks and funny stories (Chiaro 1992: 4). This approach is shared by David Crystal who also treats wordplay as a specific literary device used for entertainment:

We play with language when we manipulate it as a source of enjoyment, either for ourselves or for the benefit of others. I mean “manipulate” literally: we take some linguistic feature – such as a word, a phrase, a sentence, a part of a word, a group of sounds, a series of letters – and make it do things it does not normally do. We are, in effect, bending and breaking the rules of the language. And if someone were to ask why we do it, the answer is simply: for fun (1998: 1).

In other words, manipulating linguistic forms, creating innovative and unconventional forms in order to provide a humorous effect is the essence of wordplay. This claim is in line with Gideon Toury's understanding of this phenomenon. He determines its communicative aims which are focused on attracting attention to the utterance (understood as a piece of organized language), achieving functional syncretism and producing laughter (Toury 1997: 273).

Joel Sherzer (1978: 336) and Louis Heller (1974: 271) present different standpoints because they ignore the entertaining aspect of wordplay and mainly concentrate on the ambiguity of its particular components – lexical items or phrases. The former describes wordplay as a form of speech play which consists in an unexpected blend of dissimilar and irrelevant meanings. The latter comes to a similar conclusion and sees in wordplay a representation of an “entire class of different patterns” (1974: 271). These constructions preserve identical structural characteristics in which a particular “manifesting mark” conveys more than one conceptual meaning (1974: 272).

A multitude of senses and connotations are also stressed in Bistra Alexieva's cognitive interpretation of the pun. For her, puns relate to knowledge domains and human experience which both motivate certain associations (Alexieva 1997: 138). For this reason, she defines the pun as a universal feature of language:

Punning is possible in any language insofar as it seems to be a universal feature of language to have words with more than one meaning (polysemy), different words with the same spelling or pronunciation (homographs and homophones), and words which are synonyms or near-synonyms while having different pragmatic meanings and evoking different associations. These features all exemplify the basic asymmetry between language and the extra-linguistic world it is used to denote: we cannot and do not expect languages to provide a separate sign for every single object or event in the extra-linguistic world. If a language capable of such one-to-one correspondence with the world existed, it would be an extremely unwieldy and inefficient instrument of communication, and an impossible one to learn in the first place. Therefore, language works with a relatively small repertory of signs (e.g. phonemes and words) that can however be combined in a multitude of ways to reflect the complexity of reality (Alexieva 1997: 138–139).

To put it another way, Alexieva argues that puns are inherent elements of language. Words possess “polysemic”, “homographic” and “homophonic” qualities which lead to a discrepancy between their literal and figurative meanings. According to Alexieva, a separate word, considered in terms of a sign (semiotic approach), does not represent only one referent in the world. Language, thanks to its ability to create complex systems and relations between signs, describes reality without a one-to-one relation between a linguistic sign and a specific object, so one sign, for instance, *zamek* in Polish may refer to *a castle*, *a zip*, and *a lock*.

Wordplay is also a subject of interest of Polish and Russian researchers. Janusz Sławiński defines it in the framework of a similarity of sound between certain lexemes aimed at stressing their “meaningful multivalence, mutual strangeness or relation, analogy or contrast” (*Podręczny słownik terminów literackich* 2000: 169). This interpretation clearly demonstrates that wordplay is viewed as both a phonetic and semantic phenomenon. In this context Sergey Vlakhov and Sider Florin's insight into puns deserves special mention. They identify the pun with a play on inadequacy between an ordinary sound of words and their extraordinary meaning. These theorists classify lexical expressions, whole masterpieces and epigrams as puns (Vlakhov, Florin 1980: 287).

As can be noticed, many scholars have approached the concept of wordplay from different angles. For the purpose of this article I will refer to Dirk Delabastita's theory. To give a precise and exhaustive definition of wordplay we should take into consideration various criteria such as: formal structure, semantic structure, underlying linguistic mechanism, and textual function. All these aspects are included in Dirk Delabastita's interpretation of this phenomenon:

Wordplay is the general name for the various *textual phenomena* in which structural features of the language(s) used are exploited in order to bring about a communicatively significant confrontation of two (or more) linguistic structures with more or less similar forms and more or less different meanings (1996: 4).

Being a textual phenomenon means that wordplay is subject to the structural attribute of language creating the “tangle of potential ambiguities and associations” (Delabastita 1996: 8). Such multiple structures do not appear in a “normal” discourse because their effectiveness depends on a special textual environment (context) which “extracts” their associative power.

As Delabastita points out, puns “exist” in a close relation with a context. He distinguishes two types: verbal and situational. The first, verbal, is conditioned by expectations of “grammatical well-formedness” (expected syntactic location of certain word structures), thematic coherence and coherence of phrases (titles, collocations, proverbs). The second, situational, context comprises dialogue situations in multimedia texts when a visual image co-occurs with a verbal text. Puns serve many different functions within the text. They produce humour, force the reader to pay greater attention and add persuasive force to a statement (Delabastita 1996: 3–4).

In the above-mentioned definition, Delabastita also emphasizes the “communicative significance” of puns resulting from a “collision” of two different linguistic items and their meanings. The interpretative aspect allows us to differentiate “real” wordplay, understood as an intentional linguistic operation, from an ordinary and accidental ambiguity. According to Delabastita, puns are deliberate linguistic procedures; however, their proper identification in certain texts is sometimes difficult, if not impossible. Among such utterances he enumerates: oral texts (a non-verbal context weakens the sense of word boundaries and word identity); experimental texts (an accumulation of ambivalence makes it impossible to recognize and establish the wordplay); older texts (time and convention are the main factors deforming the wordplay) (Delabastita 1996: 5).

Puns are objects of interest in various disciplines: semiotics, semantics, pragmatics and cognitive poetics. This results in many definitions describing them in a narrow (Sławiński) and a wide (Delabastita) sense. Some researchers underline their aim to produce amusement, others elaborate on their function in depicting reality. Regardless of the different effects they produce, most scholars are unanimous in claiming that wordplay is mainly a textual element based on ambiguity. In this context Delabastita’s approach seems to capture their essence in a more flexible way.

Classification of wordplay

There are many classifications of puns which take into account their different aspects (Sławiński 2000: 150; Leppihalme 1997: 8; Delabastita 1996: 8). However, the theoretical framework for this article will be the typology created by Jurgen Bodenstein, who provides it only for Nabokov’s works.

Examining Vladimir Nabokov’s texts, Bodenstein emphasizes the powerfulness of words that are, as he says, “harlequins playing a variety of roles simultaneously” (1977: 122). Sometimes they are “amusing buffoons” and “quick-witted clowns”, another time they “behave” as “powerful magicians”. Moreover, their nature has a penchant for playing with illusion and real life. Thus, the receiver is exposed to a multitude of interpretations of the reality that surrounds Nabokov’s characters.

Bodenstein (1977: 130–156) categorizes puns in the writer’s masterpieces into eleven “fixed” types:

1. **Palindromes** – words, sentences, verses, that can be read forward as well as backward, or in a reverse order with the same effects and meanings.

2. **Anagrams** – words or phrases made by a transposition or rearrangements of the letters of another word or phrase.
 - **exact anagrams** – a group of words that do not occur separately but in a sequence; they are created in order to stress their semantic relationship in the context.
 - **near anagrams and transpositions of letters** – a group of words which appear in close proximity to each other to display their morphological resemblance.
3. **Spoonerism** – initial vowels or consonants of two words are exchanged with each other.
4. **Deceptive constituents** – an isolation from the body of a word of elements which exist in the text as a separate word.
5. **Spacing** – dividing words into separate constituents.
6. **Agnomination** – the echoing of a sound of one word in another in a close relationship with it (as in the same sentence).
7. **Homonymy and polysemy**
 - **implicit homonymy and polysemy** – the ambiguity of the meaning of words is not verbally expressed but implied by the context or the situation.
 - **explicit homonymy and polysemy** – multiple meanings of a given word are foregrounded by the repetition of the same word in a different sense.
8. **Punning correspondence** – group of words in which two of them stand in a particular relationship resulting from their semantic or phonological correspondence.
9. **Etymological wordplay** – placing words in a correspondence which indicates their common etymological origins.
10. **Multilingual wordplay** – the display of a phonological resemblance between English and French or Russian words.
11. **Onomastics** – giving fictional characters names that describe their nature, appearance or behavior.

It must be stressed that this typology does not contain all types of wordplays which may be found in *Pnin*. For example, homophony (the linguistic phenomenon where words with different etymology have the same pronunciation) one of the most widespread puns in Nabokov's book is omitted. Due to this fact, in this article Bodenstein's classification will be complemented and some instances of homophones (next to anagrams and agnominations) will be analyzed.

General procedures for translating wordplay

Translation of wordplay touches upon a fundamental issue about its translatability and untranslatability. Considering this question, Delabastita pays attention to the way we understand the process of translation:

As is well known, theoretical as well as critical discussions of the translation of wordplay usually revolve round the question whether wordplay is “translatable” at all. Logically speaking this question makes sense only if one has in mind an implicit or

explicit a priori definition of what “translation” or “a translation” is. Indeed, while no one will deny that wordplay in a source text is amenable to various forms of interlingual processing, the obstacle is usually that the kind of processes that wordplay will lend itself to cannot be reconciled with the scholar’s preconceived criteria of what constitutes (“good” or “genuine”) translation (1991: 146).

As he points out, wordplay involves some inter- and intralingual operations which do not correspond to the general norms of translation established by theoreticians because of the ambiguity that they produce.

Delabastita states that in a situation where wordplay does not play an important role in the ST it may be entirely omitted in order to avoid awkward formulations and expressions. However, in most cases puns constitute a meaningful element of the original texts. They serve many functions: create the poetics of a masterpiece, become a characteristic feature of a writer’s idiolect or part of a hero’s vernacular. Thus, translators are obliged to preserve wordplay in the TT. Undoubtedly, they should take into consideration not only its linguistic complexity and cultural and intertextual traits, but also its semantic structure. Delabastita (1996: 13–14) proposes several methods that can be applied in the process of translating wordplay.

1. **PUN ⇒ PUN**: a pun in the ST (language) is replaced with a pun in the TT (language). Such a procedure may introduce modifications either in the structural or semantic layer of wordplay.
2. **PUN ⇒ NON-PUN**: a pun is translated by means of non-punning phrases and expressions. Explicit and implicit meanings of the pun may be partially or entirely retained.
3. **PUN ⇒ RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICE**: a pun is substituted for a rhetorical device that is related to wordplay (such as alliteration, repetition, irony, paradox).
4. **PUN ⇒ ZERO**: omission of wordplay in the TT.
5. **PUN ST ⇒ PUN TT**: the ST pun and its “immediate environment” are transferred into the TT.
6. **NON-PUN ⇒ PUN**: the translator inserts a pun in a position where the ST has no wordplay. It is used to compensate for the loss of a pun elsewhere in the TT.
7. **ZERO ⇒ PUN**: introduction of a new pun which does not occur in the ST. It can be an unjustified procedure or may serve the function of a compensatory device.
8. **EDITORIAL TECHNIQUE**: explanatory footnotes, endnotes or comments in forewords.

Delabastita (1996: 14) emphasizes that not all these procedures have to occur in their “pure form”; in other words, they can be mixed depending on the ST as well as the source-pun characteristics. Despite various problems with rendering wordplay, he makes some observations about their reproducibility. He states that wordplays based on sound similarity are easier to transpose in historically related languages. To exemplify this he provides puns in Dutch and English:

- (1) Dutch: Het belang van Ernst.
English: *The Importance of Being Earnest.
*the play by Oscar Wilde.

Obviously, translation into such languages also requires some structural transformations. However, the interference in the source-pun is rather mild and superficial in comparison with distant languages.

As opposed to phonetic puns, the translation of polysemous wordplay, regardless of membership of a language family, occasionally introduces fewer changes. Delabastita believes that this is mainly caused by the extralinguistic reality the polysemous pun is embedded in. As he states, the sentence “Diplomats will betray anything except their emotions” may be rendered in any language because it shows a common attitude towards representatives of foreign policy institutions. Interlingual borrowings exemplify other phenomena allowing for a higher degree of wordplay reproducibility. Being part of the pun, such elements are common to both the source and the target audience, as is shown in examples such as: TRANS SPORT (trans/sport+transport) and LARGO (large+cargo) (1996: 15).

Wor(l)dplay and their translations in *Pnin*

In *Pnin*, by depicting the eponymous character, situations and events, the language is a tool which serves the narrator to characterize the world externally. However, key words, tropes, and grammatical structures used in these descriptions also provide an insight into his own worldview. Analysis of *Pnin* confirms that wordplay, next to alliteration⁵, is the dominant device in the narrator’s speech. It determines his “playful” and puzzling nature and introduces an ambiguity which paradoxically does not always trigger laughter. Interestingly enough, the most numerous group consists of near-anagrams (35%), near-homophones (25%) and agnominations (20%). Other puns (onomastics – 7%, etymological – 4%, spacing – 3 % deceptive constituents – 3%, multilingual wordplay – 2%, homonymy – 1%) are represented by single examples or they are simply absent (punning correspondence – 0%, spoonerisms – 0%, palindromes – 0%).⁶

Generally speaking, wordplay in *Pnin* may be divided into those which are possible to recreate and those which are impossible to recreate. The terms *translatable* and *untranslatable* are intentionally not used here because in most cases the translators are able to preserve their “visible” senses, i.e. semantic information. This is achievable by a literal translation when the translator follows the ST only lexically. Unfortunately, this “flattens” the style of the original and consequently introduces changes into the narrator’s worldview. As concerns the “invisible senses”, they are hidden behind the form of the wordplay and are rarely revealed in the analysed translations. On the one hand, failure in recreating puns in the translations may be justified by differences between language systems which force the translators to seek other solutions in their native languages. Consequently they frequently have to make a decision whether to focus on the content or the form. Anagrams perfectly illustrate this dilemma since a faithful translation simply cannot be provided.

Near-Anagrams

In *Pnin* anagrams are not easy to detect because they are placed in phrases where one component is reflected in another only when the letters are rearranged. Also of interest is the fact that the majority of expressions with anagrams are metaphors, and this is an additional obstacle in the process of interpretation and deverbilization as is shown in Table 1:

No.	ST (1957)	TT in Polish (1993)	Procedures	TT in Russian (2012)	Procedure
a	rocket of an asterisk, the flare of a "sic!" (129).	bomba w postaci ostatniej kropki, błysk ostatniego „sic!” (131).	PUN ⇔ NON-PUN	звездчатая шутиха, воспламененное „sic!” (130).	PUN ⇔ NON-PUN
b	to entomb ten more [languages] (7).	[pamięć] była gotowa pogrzebać kolejnych dziesięć [języków] (9).	PUN ⇔ NON-PUN	[память] и готова была похоронить еще десять [языков] (8).	PUN ⇔ NON-PUN
c	The piquancy of these pinnacles and the merry, somewhat even inebriated air the mansion had of having been composed of several smaller Northern Villas (112).	Pikanteria wieżyczek i zabawny lub wręcz podchmielony wygląd rezydencji składającej się z kilku mniejszych „will północy... (114).	PUN ⇔ NON-PUN	разгульный облик, приобретенный особняком оттого, что его составляли несколько „северных вилл” поменьше, поднятых на воздух и каким-то образом сколоченных воедино (113).	PUN ⇔ NON-PUN
d	they waited for some mysterious deliverance to arrive a throbbing boat from beyond the hopeless sea (99).	wypatrując przybycia tajemniczej ekipy ratunkowej w rozkołysanej szalupie od strony morza nie pozostawiającego nadziei (101).	PUN ⇔ NON-PUN	ожидая стука моторной лодки, в которой явится за ними из безнадежного моря их загадочный спаситель (100).	PUN ⇔ NON-PUN

Table 1. Near-anagrams with a transposition of letters

The first passage about the final stage of Pnin's research very vividly sketches both the moment itself and the feelings accompanying it. Moreover, the narrator draws a parallel between an asterisk and a rocket. Probably the ground for this juxtaposition is the orientational metaphor HAPPINESS IS UP; EXCITEMENT IS UP, perfectly depicting Pnin's state. However, a visual resemblance between the objects can be also noticed because of the "starry shape" both of the asterisk and the single lights produced after the explosion.

The original expression "t³he fla¹r⁵e⁴ of a s²i⁶c⁷" mirrors the word "asterisk". In both translations this characteristic effect vanishes. Kołyszko domesticates the asterisk by replacing it with a full stop. This alludes to the popular Polish saying *postawić ostatnią kropkę nad i* which means to follow through. In English there is no such fixed phrase which might have served as the source for the narrator's metaphor. Kołyszko's text completely loses the original image. She not only "naturalizes" the text marker, but also chooses the counterpart *bomb* for the polysemous *rocket*; *bomb*, in comparison to the firework, evokes different associations. Fireworks allude to a celebration and rather positive emotions such as joy. A bomb refers to annihilation and despair. In her translation, a partial correspondence at the semantic level may be observed. With regard to the connotative level, completely different images are created. By contrast, in the Russian version this specific character disappears. What is more, Ilyin chooses a generalized equivalent *звездчатая шутиха* (a pinwheel of light) which is much closer to the original image. Firstly, he underlines its characteristic shape, and secondly approximates the image to the ST. A similar technique aimed at "compressing" the content is visible in the rendering of *a flare of a sic* as *воспламененное sic!*. Here, he "adjectivizes" the noun and attributes to it new properties "of being burned". In this case, Kołyszko also follows the original but retains the grammatical form of the word, although she has a tendency to supplement the narrator's utterances. In this short extract she does this twice by introducing *w postaci* (in the form of) when describing the asterisk and *ostatni* (the last) to underline that the *sic* will be the last word written in Pnin's research. The narrators in the original and in the translations conceptualize the original images differently, which is mainly visible in the modification of the source and target domains.

It must be stressed that transformation is not consistently used by the translators. There are examples where they faithfully reproduce metaphors. But even if they do so, they are not able to "save" the anagrams. This is shown when the narrator briefly characterizes the students attending Pnin's lectures. When he mentions Charles McBeth, he emphasizes his remarkable memory which *entombs ten more* (languages). Interestingly enough, as in the previous example, the word *entomb* may be produced from the phrase "t³e¹n² m⁵o⁴re". However, this is noticeable on the graphical level only when the numbered letters are "reshuffled". If we try to do the same with phonetic symbols presenting how these words should be spoken, there will be a fundamental difference since the phrase *ten more* is pronounced as /tenmɔ:/ whereas *entomb* as /m'tu:m/. When it comes to the metaphorical picture conveyed by this extract, the schemata of a FUNERAL immediately appears in readers' minds. Language is perceived by the narrator as a dead body interred in a grave or a tomb. Memory is cast as a performer of this action. In both TTs this metaphor and its elements do not change. In both versions dictionary equivalents are used: *pogrzebać* (to bury) and *похоронить*, respectively.

Another example (1c) in which the anagram is not preserved and an object is attributed with traits reserved for human beings may be found in the extract describing Cook's Castle – "a three-storey brick-and-timber mansion built around 1860 and partly

rebuilt half a century later” (Nabokov 1957: 77). The narrator calls this building *ugly* and highlights its *mongrel style*. Its “unassimilated roofs, half-hearted gables, cornices, rustic quoins, and other projections sticking out on all sides” (Nabokov 1957: 77) make the castle look bizarre to the narrator. This results in the activation of numerous associations, one of the most astonishing being a comparison of its unconventional look to having drunk too much alcohol. To express this juxtaposition, the narrator uses the phrase *inebriated air*. Again, after the transposition of certain letters from the word “inebr³i²a¹ted”, the lexeme *air* may be arranged. It must be noticed that here the narrator is playing not only with the graphic representation but also with the sense of the word *air*. Except for its common meaning “the mixture of gases that surrounds the earth and that we breathe” (*CED*: online), it also refers to “manners and appearance” (*CED*: online). This “trick” is captured by the translators who reproduce the oddity of the mansion in their TTs. However, their characteristics vary one from another. Kołyszko selects the equivalent *podchmielony* which fully corresponds with the original. Ilyin interprets this fragment slightly differently and introduces a dissipated look (*разгульный облик*) that refers to a lifestyle of spending too much time enjoying physical pleasures and harmful activities such as drinking a lot of alcohol (*CED*: online). In a sense, this counterpart may be viewed as a hyperonym.

The translators do not always follow the original rigidly. In the group of anagrams there are also cases when the initial message is considerably changed in the TTs. This is shown in the last example (1d) in which Pnin dreams about escaping from the *chimerical palace* and waiting on shore with his dead friend for deliverance. This may be deciphered in terms of Pnin’s getaway from Bolshevik Russia, and shows how devastating emigration is for him. Even after years of living in a foreign country, he cannot overcome this experience. Again, in portraying this situation the narrator plays with the readers because the letters in “deli³v⁴e⁵r²a¹n^{ce}” after their rearrangement form the word *arrive*. Unfortunately, the TTs do not achieve this “puzzle effect” and do not offer readers the pleasure of searching and solving. What is more, sometimes the translators’ propose their own individual interpretation. For instance, in the Polish version the verb *wypatrywać* suggests that Pnin is impatiently awaiting rescue, whereas the original does not inform us about his state of mind. The second discrepancy concerns the way the translators elucidate the object which is awaited. In the ST a throbbing boat is mentioned so readers may only suspect who is coming to save Pnin and his friend. Nevertheless, the translators decide to name the object and in Kołyszko’s variant it is *tajemnicza ekipa ratunkowa* (a mysterious rescue team), whereas Ilyin replaces it with a single rescuer.

Near-homophony

In *Pnin*, the narrator plays not only with the graphic elements, but also with both sound and meaning. It must be noted that the examples in Table 2 contain near-homophones which do not produce the exact phonic effect, although they give an illusion of similarity:

No.	ST (1957)	TT in Polish (1993)	Procedures	TT in Russian (2012)	Procedures
a	and said hullo	i powiedziała	PUN ⇔	и успела (...)	PUN ⇔ NON-

	(eyebrows up, eyes roaming), a hollow quiet greeted her (27).	halo , powitała ją głucha cisza (28).	NON-PUN	сказать „алло”, ее приветствовала гулкая тишина (26).	PUN
b	finding a shred of sweet seaweed (33).	znajdował strzęp słodkiego glonu (35).	PUN ⇔ NON-PUN	находя лакомый кусочек водоросли (34).	PUN ⇔ NON-PUN
c	dipped his hand deep into the foam (157).	zanurzył rękę głęboko w pianie (158).	PUN ⇔ NON-PUN	глубоко окунул руку в пену (156).	PUN ⇔ CONSONANCE
d	He glued himself to its eyelet – and forthwith left, cured of whatever had ailed him. (62).	przywarł do łezki w rękawiczce , po czym opuścił poczekalnię, wyleczony z wszelkich dolegliwości , jakie mu przedtem dokuczały (161).	PUN ⇔ NON-PUN	Он приник к круглой выемке в перчатке и тотчас ушел, разом исцелившись от своего неведомого недуга (159).	PUN ⇔ CONSONANCE

Table 2. Near-homophones

In the first extract, a seemingly ordinary scene, in which Joan answers Pnin's telephone, is shown. Interestingly, it is not provided in the form of a dialogue between the interlocutors but it is quoted by the narrator who admits:

Technically speaking, the narrator's art of integrating telephone conversations still lags far behind that of rendering dialogues conducted from room to room, or from window to window across some narrow blue alley in an ancient town with water so precious, and the misery of donkeys, and rugs for sale, and minarets, and foreigners and melons, and the vibrant morning echoes (Nabokov 1957: 27).

The narrator is aware of the poor quality of the rendered telephone conversations. Probably, he not only misrepresents their content but also distorts their form. If we take into consideration his unreliability and his nature of being a joker, we can assume that he does it on purpose. By juxtaposing the words *hullo* /hə'loʊ/ and *hollow* /'hɒləʊ/, he emphasizes the specific way in which Joan pronounces the greeting. Unfortunately, in the translations the phonic resemblance is not recreated. However, the translators do achieve an unexpected semantic result. They do not translate *hollow quiet* literally but replace it with idioms *głucha cisza* (deafening silence) in Polish and *гулкая тишина* in Russian. Using such fixed phrases in the TTs even better conveys the linguistic behaviours of the two language users – a strong-

minded American woman and a migrant, whose lack of immediate response confirms that he is not as confident when speaking a foreign language as when using his mother tongue.

Keeping to the subject of a tongue, but in its “anatomical” sense, we may turn to example (2b). Pnin’s experiences after receiving a dental prosthesis have been analysed in the previous section devoted to alliteration. Linguistically, apart from these and onomatopoeic expressions which imitate sounds produced by a tongue, there are also the homophones *sweet* /swi:t/ and *seaweed* /'si:wi:d/. It must be remembered that the narrator is comparing Pnin’s tongue to *a fat, slide seal* and conceptualizes his mouth as an ocean where rocks, coves, and sea plants can be found. The translations describe the same elements and follow the general sense. Kołyszko renders the lexemes literally as *słodki glon*; Ilyin conveys the expression as *лакомый кусочек водоросли* (tasty shred of seaweed). In both cases minor shifts in meaning of certain lexical units may be noted. The Polish translator takes advantage of a specific type of seaweed – algae, considered as its hyponym. Instead of the adjective *sweet*, the Russian translator chooses the word *tasty* which does not determine the exact flavour. In the ST, the narrator exhibits his synaesthetic abilities which, by the way, he shares with Nabokov. He successfully unifies the sound (made by the tongue), vision (seaweed evokes associations with the colour green) and taste (sweetness). Even though the last two sensual impressions are successfully conveyed in the TTs, the phonetic impressions still remain neglected. This causes not only a loss of the musicality and homophonic qualities, but also leads to changes in the linguistic construction of the narrator’s personality.

A perfect illustration of depriving him of traits such as wit and brilliance is offered in (2c) and (2d). This time the narrator is retelling the situation in which Pnin washes the dishes. It takes place after the conversation with the superior who notifies him of his dismissal. Again, the narrator decides to play with the sound of the verb *dipped* /dɪpt/ and the adjective *deep* /di:p/. A similar pronunciation of these words is not marked in the TTs. In the Polish version a preponderance for semantic treatment is noticeable and results in a complete reduction of the sound effect. Meanwhile, Ilyin turns the homophony into a consonance. He changes the quality of the sound and exposes the consonant /k/ by repeating it three times throughout the passage.

The narrator in *Pnin* is gifted with remarkable perceptiveness. Thanks to this, he notices the smallest details of the world and gives them their own shape and meaning. At the beginning of the last chapter he relates his first meeting with Pnin’s family, specifically with Timofey’s father – a respected oculist. In anticipation of the appointment, he notices the spouses. When the husband leaves, a young officer comes to the woman and kisses her hand. Initially he is surprised by this fact, yet his subtle reflections allow the readers to guess that the couple are having an affair. The narrator vividly juxtaposes words with a similar pronunciation, which provides the scene with an amusing tone. The first word, the *eyelet* /'aɪlət/, is a decorative element, a small hole with thread around the edge as part of a design (CED: online). The ornament adorns the lady’s glove. The second one represents an old-fashioned verb *to ail* (ailed) /eɪld/ and pertains to being ill (CED: online). The statement that the officer gets rid of his ailments after the conversation may be deciphered as ironic. The translation procedure used in this passage erases a sonic parallelism introducing a humorous undertone to the incident. Both Kołyszko and Ilyin do not find a one-word equivalent for the verb *to ail* so they clarify it. Similarly to the previous example, the Polish version is faithful on the semantic level, whereas the Russian version attempts to preserve the rhythm of the original. By adding the adjective *круглый* (round), Ilyin favours a /k/ sound. Moreover, he

also introduces the alliterative doublet *неведомый недуг* (mysterious ailment) and, just like the narrator, plays with the sound and creates a diverting result.

Agnominations

While translation procedures applied in the Polish and Russian translations do not always reproduce Nabokov's semantic and phonetic experiments, in *Pnin* agnominations are those puns whose rendering may be viewed as a successful achievement. Contrary to alliteration, in agnominations whole lexical units are repeated rather than separate sounds. On the phonetic level, they produce a characteristic echoing effect. The initial lexical units (a base) are gradually reduced to smaller pieces. Consequently, all the repeated words have meanings that do not cover the same semantic field. The target versions demonstrate that both translators do not always expect to provide a literal translation, which sometimes does not meet either the readers' demands or the author's intention. Semantic adequacy then yields to aesthetic form. Occasionally, calques are created; however, their phonetic and semantic convergence with the original is coincidental and based on their etymological correspondence.

No.	ST (1957)	TT in Polish (1993)	Procedures	TT in Russian (2012)	Procedures
a	the Ashcan School or the Cache Cache School or the Cancan School (88).	Twierdził, że nie istnieje nic takiego, jak szkoła Ashcan , szkoła Cache-Cache lub szkoła Cancan (89).	PUN ⇒ PUN	Он учил, что не существует ни Мусорной школы, ни Мизерной школы, ни школы Мазутной (87).	PUN ⇒ RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICE
b	all kinds of things, seascapes , escapes , capas (86).	najrozmaitsze rzeczy: pejzaże , wojaże , jeże... (85).	PUN ⇒ PUN	должны находить, всякую всячину: побег , поморье , полуостров (87).	PUN ⇒ RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICE
c	neurotic tree trunks, erotic galoshes (86).	neurotyczne pnie drzew, erotyczne kalosze (85).	PUN ⇒ PUN	невротические стволы, эротические галоши (87).	PUN ⇒ PUN
d	rosewood sofa, morose etageres (114).	romantyczna sofa z palisandru, posępne etażerki (115).	PUN ⇒ NON-PUN	романтический палисандровый диван, угрюмые этажерки (116).	PUN ⇒ NON-PUN
e	he had little experience in manoeuvring on rutty narrow roads,	miał niewielkie doświadczenie w manewrowaniu pojazdem na	PUN ⇒ PUN	он не обладал значительным опытом маневрирования на узких,	PUN ⇒ PUN

with ditches and even ravines (113).	wyjeżdżonych wąskich drózkach z przepastnymi rowami a nawet parowami (112).		ухабистых дорогах со рвами и чуть ли не оврагами по обеим сторонам (111).	
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Table 3. Agnominations

In *Pnin*, apart from the eponymous character, the narrator also sketches Victor, Pnin's son. He considers him a very intelligent and gifted person who does not respect most of his teachers. However, one of them – Professor Lake – exerts a great influence on the young student. He is acclaimed by Victor because of his belief that the most important quality in art is the individual talent of its creator. He objects to being an advocate of popular trends and an adherent of certain movements and schools. To emphasize his contempt for them, the narrator enumerates insignificant schools such as the *Ashcan School*, *Cache Cache School* and *Can Can School* (3a). He plays with their names by splitting the first proper name into the syllables *ash* and *can* and then repeating them in the following words. This sequence provides the narrator's utterance with a specific rhythm. In addition, two of the schools contain references to culture. For instance, *Ashcan School* was an artistic movement in the United States popular in the early 20th century. It was known for works portraying scenes of daily life in New York, often in poorer neighbourhoods of the city (Jeansonne 1997: 4). *The Can Can* is associated with a high-energy, physically demanding dance that became a popular music hall dance in the 1840s, continuing in popularity in French cabaret to this day (Christout 1998: 52). *Cache Cache* is not related to any area of culture. However, linguistically it represents a repetition of the near-anagram formed from *Ashcan*, and *cache* is a homophone of *cash*.

In Kołyszko's translation these names are simply transferred into Polish. As a result, in the TT their "cultural informativeness" is decreased because probably not all TRs have access to their context. The *Can Can* may be an exception since it is familiar to Polish recipients. The proper pronunciation of these words (*Ashcan* and *Cache*) may be also problematic so the "echo" effect may remain unnoticed. Moreover, the general strategy applied by the translator in the translation of puns, which is domestication, in this particular case is abandoned. Probably, this is because for the first time the onomastic element serves as a specific wordplay. Retaining the phrase in its original form intensifies its strangeness. This would have been partially eliminated if the translator had provided a footnote referring to the American art movement or even the pronunciation of the names.

Ilyin uses a very different strategy that relies on making the pun more approachable to Russian recipients. He domesticates the phrase by inventing his own names for schools. His schools start with a repetitive consonant /m/ and create the following sequence: *мусорный* (related to garbage), *мизерный* (miserable) and *мазутный* (related to heavy, low quality fuel oil). On the one hand, in comparison to Kołyszko, Ilyin reinforces the national colour of the TT. On the other hand, these terms evoke certain associations. For example, garbage may allude to uselessness and *mazut* to blackness. Applying such concepts to a school influences its negative image. On the aesthetic level, Ilyin's translation appears to be more vivid and figurative. Even though he does not use pure agnominations, the alliterative chains he creates help to preserve the aesthetic power of the original.

In the novel, the narrator serves as Nabokov's *alter ego*. The writer hides behind him and marks his presence in his utterances. They both share the same opinions about cultural and social life in America. They discuss social phenomena by means of sarcasm or irony. In his characteristics of Victor, the narrator depicts him as artistically inclined. These predilections affect the way he perceives the world. His exaggerated sensitivity and avoiding people lead his parents (Liza and Eric Wind) to be worried about him. In order to diagnose the mental disorder Victor is suffering from, they decide on various psychological tests. When none of these tests provide satisfactory results, they realize that what Victor has is an artistic soul. In this fragment, Nabokov presents himself as a bitter opponent of the psychoanalytic interpretation of art and of the human psyche. The following comment expressed in *Strong Opinions* trenchantly depicts the novelist's attitude:

Freudism and all it has tainted with its grotesque implications and methods appears to me to be one of the vilest deceits practiced by people on themselves and on others. I reject it utterly, along with a few other medieval items still adored by the ignorant, the conventional or the very sick (Nabokov 1973: 23–24).

In other words, Nabokov defines Freudism as a medieval and harmful theory which detects sexual overtones in simple and common gestures and situations. He argues that it creates a “vulgar, disgusting and primitive world” (Nabokov 1973: 23) because it is mainly based on biological issues. He states that healing mental disorders with the help of ancient myths is nonsense and distorts reality. Furthermore, Nabokov also objects to the application of this method in the interpretation of his works. In the preface to the novel *Bend Sinister*, he writes: “All my books should be stamped Freudians, Keep Out” (Nabokov 1974: 12). When, in *Pnin*, the narrator mentions a psychological test called the Rorschach test in which the subject's perception of inkblots is analyzed, he sarcastically gives readers to understand that this method is ineffective because it does not take into consideration individual personalities. He distinguishes certain associations that the inkblots should evoke in children's minds and at the same time plays with the sound of such words as: *seascapes*, *escapes*, *capes* (3b).

In the Polish translation, Kołyszko recreates the repetition of certain sounds. She accents the sound /z/, characteristic for the Polish language, which provides the passage with coarseness and resonance. Moreover, she tries to save the original vividness and substitutes the SL images with approximate images in the TT. For example, she exchanges *seascapes* for *landscapes*. The difference between the objects depicted in such works is obvious. Whereas the first one prioritizes the sea and its views, the second one exposes the land. The same modification is used in *escape* substituted by *voyage*. Despite the fact that they both are connected with changing place and movement, they are caused by different external factors. *Escape* suggests a compulsive dislocation on account of danger or persecution; it is an act of breaking free from confinement. In the Polish version, the constraint is eliminated because the voyage signifies rather a free decision and personal commitment. Although the analyzed concepts, to some extent, belong to the same semantic fields (PAINTINGS, DISLOCATION), the last concept does not correspond with the original. The Polish translator resolves to elude the geographical term *capes*. If it had been translated literally into Polish as *przylądek*, it would not have provided the relevant morphological repetition of the syllable *-ze* at the end of the phrase. The dictionary equivalent would have been too long and would have destroyed the syllable arrangement, which in the original is 2+2+1. In addition,

the prominent /rz/ occurs in the first syllable which would have totally distorted the flow of the expression. Introducing *jeże* (hedgehogs) is a well-chosen option. It is shorter and retains the sound and rhythm parallelism. Ilyin deals with this passage in a different way. He resorts to the exploitation of the morphological derivation by adding the alliterative prefix “po-“ (*no-*) to stem words: *run* (*бег*), *sea* (*море*) and *island* (*остров*). He achieves denotative equivalence in replicating these models at the cost of the quality of the pun.

Apart from transference and substitution, rendering agnominations may take other forms. Translation methods will not be the same in each case. Their implementation is conditioned by the morphological, grammatical and semantic features of the source units. In *Pnin*, there are examples of agnominations which simply do not pose translatorial challenges. Their etymological and current forms and the meanings in English are almost the same, or approximate, as in other languages (3c). The fragment concerning psychological tests contains lexical units (*neurotic – erotic*) that originate from Greek. *Neurotic* derives from *neuron* and means affected by neurosis, *erotic* comes from *erotikos* and designates something caused by passionate love. These notions refer to inner states in which human beings may remain. They also perfectly fit the general psychoanalytic context and maintain the humorous sneer. The translators decide to incorporate them into the TTs as these concepts are also widely used in their native languages. They change them according to grammatical and morphological rules – so in the Polish version it is *neurotyczny – erotyczny*, in Russian *невротический – эротический*. Consequently, they coincidentally retain the illusion of a similarity between them.

Such an illusion may be violated when the endeavour for semantic appropriateness is tenacious and blinds the translators to the aesthetic value of the original. This is visible in rendering the words *rosewood* and *morose* (3d). Their apparent likeness lies in the same root – *rose* – epitomizing love, romance, and pleasant feelings. However, these associations are faulty when the same root becomes a part of *mo-rose*. Now, the prefix *mo-* makes the *rose* in the new phrase attain a different meaning. The initial images are displaced by sadness and gloominess. Russian and Polish versions do not provide readers with the effect of astonishment resulting from the “false semantic” of the rose. The translators introduce dictionary equivalents *romantyczny* (romantic) – *posępny* (gloomy) and *романтический – угрюмый*, which, to some degree, present contrasting feelings but phonetically do not emulate any sounds.

In translation practice, it is hard for translators to create a better effect than the author does. There are such instances in *Pnin*. One of them is illustrated in the fragment about Pnin’s driving lessons (3e). The enumeration of the elements of the landscape: ruddy narrow roads, ravines and ditches, gives readers the impression that they are sitting in Pnin’s car and are passing by all these objects. This extract also has a characteristic rhythm created by the sound /r/ which imitates the whirr of the engine in Pnin’s car. Anagrams in this fragment are based on the phonetic resemblance between two lexemes *maneuvering* /mə'nu:vərɪŋ/ and *ravines* /rə'vi:nz/. Both translators introduce a significant modification by adding a third word which is a stem word for the two other components. In the Polish translation it is the lexeme *rów*, in the Russian it is *ров*; both designate a ditch whose occurrence may be noted also in the original. The amplification of this device leads to the following sequence: *manew-row-anie*, *row-ami*, *pa-row-ami* in the Polish version and *маневри-ров-ание*, *рва-ми*, *овр-агам* in the Russian. It must be noted that on account of morphological and grammatical varieties in the Russian translation, there is no exact repetition of the mentioned lexeme. The form of the second component is motivated by the grammatical category of the instrumental case. The

third element is a near-anagram which, after rearranging its letters, changes into the word *po6*.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to identify procedures used for conveying wordplay in Polish and Russian translations of *Pnin* by Vladimir Nabokov. The analysis comprised three groups of puns which dominate in the narrator's speech – near-anagrams, near-homophones and agnominations.

The investigation shows that near-anagrams appear to be an insurmountable obstacle. In both TTs there are no examples in which they are retained. This may have been dictated by structural differences in the Polish and Russian languages. Another barrier in their reproduction is their metaphorical provenance because the translators should keep a full correspondence between the source and the target domains in the original and their “translational” counterparts. However, this is not the only aim to be fulfilled since the concepts or schemata produced by certain metaphors should also be concurrent. The translators strive for a literal translation rather than for linguistic experiments, but such an approach has its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, readers receive a semantically equivalent and reliable text. On the other hand, they only partially become familiar with the mind style of the narrator, since very often characteristic elements of his speech (the anagrams) are lost.

Translation of puns based on phonological properties of language was also a challenging task. The translators do not always have the opportunity to use all the sound effects characteristic of Polish and Russian. Sometimes they use devices such as consonance or alliteration; however, they do not attain the same “pun-related quality” as the original. In this situation, Kołyszko and Ilyin turn to a general strategy which is to draw a semantic parallel between the ST and the TT. Such a solution is highly appropriate because very often finding the “phonetic” equivalent in the TLs is impossible.

The rendition of agnominations brings the most fruitful results. For the first time, the general strategy is precisely formulated. In most cases puns are domesticated, but it does not interfere with the content of the novel. This group of puns gives the translators more freedom and does not limit their native languages. The translators successfully turn to procedures based on word formation. They stretch the words by adding prefixes, and opt for the preservation of a regularity of rhythm and poetic force. They use all the grammatical and lexical resources which are at their respective languages' disposal.

Notes:

1 The inspiration for this article is the book *Świat za słowami Vladimira Nabokova. Gry i zabawy słowne* by Anna Ginter (2003).

2 See: Nosik 1995, Averin 1999, Besemeres 2000, Bodenstein 1977, Casmier 2004, Toker 1989, Naiman 2010, Dragunoiu 2011, Vries, Jonhson 2006, Glyn 2011, Ginter 2003; 2015, Baczewska-Murdzek 2012; 2016, NDiaye 2013, Ułanek 2018; 2019.

3 In this article the words “pun” and “wordplay” are used interchangeably.

4 This does not mean that only Kołyszko has translated Nabokov's prose. Polish translators of Nabokov include: Leszek Engelking, Robert Stiller, Eugenia Siemaszkiewicz, Michał Kłobukowski

and Stanisław Barańczak. Anna Kołyszko (1953–2009) rendered three of Nabokov's novels – *Pnin*, *Look at the Harlequins!* and *Splendor*.

5 See my article: Sounds that Create the Image. On Polish and Russian Translations of Alliteration in *Pnin* by Vladimir Nabokov. 2019. In *Tertium. Półrocznik Językoznawczy*, 2019.

6 Statistics are mine.

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