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The literary scholar and translator, Efim Etkind (1918-1999), was an important Soviet-era translation theorist who is still little known in the English-speaking world.¹ While other prominent Soviet translation works, *Vysokoe iskusstvo* [A High Art] by Kornei Chukovskii (1882-1969) and *Vvedenie v teoriiu perevoda* [Introduction to Translation Theory] by Andrei Fedorov (1906-1997), have become accessible in English – the former through Lauren Leighton's translation (1984), the latter thanks to Brian Baer (2021) – Etkind's insights into the use of comparative stylistics in poetry translation have not yet reached an anglophone readership.

One reason for this situation is that, within a few years of the publication of his masterwork *Poeziia i perevod* [Poetry and Translation] in 1963, Etkind was neglected within his home country: he gained notoriety as a dissident and was ultimately exiled abroad in 1974, after which his work could no longer be promoted by Soviet translation thinkers. Another notable reason for Etkind's lack of recognition in the English-speaking world is that, from October 1974, he became thoroughly integrated into French academia (Bethea 2001). After retiring in 1986, he continued his existing contacts within German literary circles (*ibid*), yet he published little in German and almost nothing in English in his lifetime. He thus remained as invisible to English-speaking translation studies as if he had stayed in the Soviet Union.

Etkind stands out for the originality of his translation thinking, which placed high demands of ultimate translatability on poetry translation. Through examples of best practice and more doubtful practice, he shows how verse translation can convey rhyming patterns, meter, a feel for the original, and other aspects, though choices often have to be made about which elements to prioritize. Etkind's characteristic approach, comparative stylistics, focused on the contrasting linguistic features of the languages in question. Building on the Russian Formalists' application of linguistic analysis to literary texts, Etkind examined translations for the techniques that enabled transfer of poetic features. Notably, Chukovskii advised readers seeking a more scholarly work than *Vysokoe iskusstvo*, his own entertaining, popularizing classic, which appeared in several editions between 1941 and 1968, to refer to Etkind. *Poeziia i perevod* is indeed methodical, full of convincing case studies and, at the same time, has a light touch.

¹ In English, see Friedberg (1997) and Bethea (2001). In Russian, see Neiman (2017) and Iasnov (2018).

Etkind's translation theory is notably more independent of the Soviet context than work by other Soviet translators of his generation. It evidences his disinterest in things distinctively Soviet, as he placed himself in a broader European cultural tradition. This seemingly apolitical approach was itself a deeply political statement in that time and place, and evoked the regime's suspicion. Etkind had already found himself labelled with the Soviet euphemism of 'cosmopolitan', meaning Jewish and implying a lack of patriotism, when, in 1949, he was sent into internal exile during the anti-cosmopolitan campaign.² Through his selection of material to discuss in *Poeziia i perevod*, Etkind showed his allegiance to fellow Jews and others cast out by the Soviet state: Jewish author Heinrich Heine; Jewish translators (Samuil Marshak, Benedikt Livshits, Osip Mandel'stam, Boris Pasternak); and the poet and critic Nikolai Gumilev, who was executed as a monarchist in 1919. By identifying consistently with outsiders and exploiting the cultural liberalization of the period known as the 'Thaw,' Etkind pushed the boundaries of what could be said about translation in the Soviet Union.

One of Etkind's heroes of translation was returning Gulag survivor Tatiana Gnedich, who had begun translating Byron's *Don Juan* from memory during her imprisonment. Etkind devoted several pages of *Poeziia i perevod* to Gnedich's poetic *podvig* [feat] (1963:179-180, 214-222). Praising her work, let alone mentioning her experience at the camp, was a strong statement of solidarity. Another of Etkind's heroes was Mikhail Lozinskii, who prepared meticulously for his translation of Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, with folder after folder of literary, cultural, and biographical information, as Etkind described in his chapter on "Poetry and Science" (ibid: 185-190). By extolling Lozinskii, Etkind argued that there was no replacement for detailed research, unlike the more spontaneous Chukovskii, who was persuaded that the translator could find a 'key,' a shortcut to unlock a translation.

Etkind's approach was also in opposition to Ivan Kashkin's 'realist' translation, derived from the official Soviet aesthetic program known as Socialist Realism. Kashkin believed a translator should edify Soviet readers by translating as if the author was a Soviet (1954) and recreating the text (1959) – in other words, an extreme case of what Venuti describes as domestication (1995). Etkind, however, promoted translation of the author's original intent into Russian, rather than into 'Soviet.'

² See Pinkus (1984) for the connection between the campaign against 'cosmopolitanism' and anti-Semitism.

It is hoped that this introduction to Etkind's work will whet the reader's appetite to find out more about Etkind's contribution to translation theory. In particular, his application of comparative stylistics to verse translation remains as fresh and relevant as when it was written, even in the age of neural machine translation.

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