Echoes of Translation in Svetlana Alexievich's Narrative

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This paper explores the presence of translation in the work of Svetlana Alexievich, the Belarusian journalist and 2015 Nobel laureate in Literature. Amid the ongoing debate about whether her books should be categorized as fiction or non-fiction, we propose an alternative perspective on her cycle Voices from Utopia*, suggesting it can be viewed as a translation of Soviet history. By applying recent translation studies theories that broaden the definition of translation beyond mere interlingual transfer, we can observe how translation operates at various levels within her texts. This process involves not only the witnesses interviewed by the writer but also extends to the readers. Specifically, through a process of (self-) translation, the interviewees describe their lived experiences, and their voices become a polyphonic chorus that offers fresh insights on the history of the USSR. Alexievich translates these oral testimonies into written documents, which then undergo multiple retranslations due to the continuous changes in narratives, in which both her audience and the author herself are immersed. These translations and retranslations ensure the afterlife of original accounts and shape the way that the readers translate history by immersing themselves in a plurality of its versions. Seeing Alexievich's historical oeuvre as a continuous flow of translations that engage everyone—from the witnesses to the readers—opens up new ways to interpret her cycle.*

Keywords: Belarusian literature / Alexievich, Svetlana / documentary prose / Soviet history / autobiographical testimonies / translation / retranslation

Introduction

After the Belarusian journalist and writer Svetlana Alexievich won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2015,[1] academic circles have been engaged in ongoing debates about the literary classification of her polyphonic cycle *Voices from Utopia*, permeated by the traumatic memories of Soviet citizens.[2] While some scholars view her narratives as fiction, citing the frequent rewrites that the author incorporates into her works, others argue that they should be considered non-fiction and are useful for studying historical events such as World War II, the Soviet-Afghan War, the Chernobyl disaster, and the fall of the USSR. Currently, numerous studies focus on detailed comparative analyses of Alexievich's texts, aiming to determine the extent of her interventions and, based on this, to classify the literary genre she employs. The issue of genre attribution is further complicated by the writer's refusal to release the original tape recordings of her interviews with (former) Soviet citizens—witnesses to the grim chapters of USSR history—leaving scholars to speculate about their contents.

In light of the controversy surrounding the fiction versus non-fiction nature of her narrative, it is worth recalling Bella Brodzki's observation: "By reading genre through the lens of translation, … all our methods of literary classification are subject to critical review and are reinvigorated as a result" (Brodzki 13). Indeed, applying this translational approach to Alexievich's writings can uncover a whole new range of interpretations of *Voices from Utopia*.

This paper aims to thoroughly explore Svetlana Alexievich's work from the perspective of translation studies. Moving beyond the traditional fiction/non-fiction dichotomy and drawing on recent translation theories that view translation as a ubiquitous phenomenon, we will demonstrate how her book series can be re-evaluated through a translational lens to reveal new readings.

Thus, after examining some of the numerous research articles on the genre of the Nobel laureate's oeuvre and reflecting on the ubiquity of

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[2] The cycle consists of five books: *The Unwomanly Face of War* (*У войны не женское лицо*), published in 1984; *Last Witnesses* (*Последние свидетели*), published in 1985; *Zinky Boys* (*Цинковые мальчики*), published in 1990; *Voices from Chernobyl* (*Чернобыльская молитва*), published in 1997; and *Secondhand Time* (*Время секонд хэнд*), published in 2013.

translation, we will conduct a translation studies analysis of her literary legacy. We will illustrate how the often-invisible translational work manifests in her texts on multiple levels, emerging in various creative and interpretative practices related to her work. Ultimately, we will peel back the layers of her narrative to unveil the diverse aspects of translation presence, embodied by the witnesses, the readers, and the author herself.

Exploring the genre of Alexievich's oeuvre

"In her [Alexievich's] books she uses interviews to create a collage of a wide range of voices. With her 'documentary novels,' Svetlana Alexievich, who is a journalist, moves in the boundary between reporting and fiction" (Nobel Prize Outreach). With these words, featured on the official Nobel Prize website, the Swedish Academy defines the literary genre of the award-winning author, highlighting the documentary aspect of her work. It is worth noting that this text has become a reference for researchers writing about Alexievich. The primary difference between their approaches lies in how they define and explain the boundary between journalism and fiction in the Belarusian writer's narrative.

Examining academic research reveals a range of proposed definitions for Alexievich's works. These include terms such as "documentary prose" (Brintlinger 197), "documentary novel" (Jones 234), "literary journalism" (Nurczynski 87), "testimonial literature" (Lugarić Vukas 19), "fictional testimony" (González González 147), or "collective testimony" (Marchesini 313). Some of these publications explicitly state their authors' stances on the (non-)fictional elements within Alexievich's work, either supporting or challenging its (non-)fictional dimension.

The historical accuracy of Alexievich's narratives has been the subject of critique from many scholars. For instance, G. Ackerman and F. Lemarchand strongly criticize how she manages her sources. According to them, she distorts testimonies for artistic purposes, rewriting them to present emotionally charged portrayals in her prose. Consequently, they contend that Alexievich's oeuvre should be classified as literature rather than journalism (Ackerman and Lemarchand). A. Karpusheva also concludes that "Svetlana Alexievich's prose is a work of literature rather than oral history or journalism" (Karpusheva 22). Meanwhile, S. Pinkham argues that the author alters facts by changing the ages and names of characters, as well as making substantial modifications to

some narratives. As a result, the writer herself diminishes the historical value of her work, something she is aware of (Pinkham).

H. Myers identifies "additions and deletions, as well as rewording and rephrasing; [a]nother common change involves moving a word or phrase from one place to another, or, less common, moving a monologue from one chapter to another" (Myers 304). Similarly, I. Hniadzko points out some inconsistencies: alterations in content, changes in names and ages, added paragraphs, etc. As she concludes, Alexievich's works are "fiction based on non-fictional events and, to some extent, on authentic oral histories" (Hniadzko 207).

While it is essential to recognize the intricate nature of Alexievich's "novels in voices," categorizing them within a specific genre becomes even more challenging when we grapple with the ambiguous boundaries between fiction and non-fiction. Drawing a line between these two categories is increasingly difficult, as the distinction between fictional and non-fictional elements in literature appears to be highly relative and influenced by specific contexts. Given this complexity, we propose to approach *Voices from Utopia* from a different perspective, exploring the cycle through the lens of translation in its broadest sense.

The ubiquity of translation

Before delving into Alexievich's literary legacy, it is important to explain why the concept of translation is a fitting framework for examining her writings. According to recent translation theories, translation today is far more than just the process of transferring text between languages; it is an all-encompassing ubiquitous phenomenon (Blumczynski), invariably present in our daily activities. Thanks to the insights of scholars such as S. Nergaard and S. Arduini, we recognize that translation "is a universal and characteristic aspect of our contemporary world … [that] must be understood as a transformative representation across cultures and individuals" (Nergaard and Arduini 12).

As M. C. Á. Vidal Claramonte observes, at every moment, through every action we take, whether consciously or unconsciously, we are engaged in translation (Vidal Claramonte, *Traducción* 20). Translation "encompasses the fundamental human processes of becoming, being, change, and cognition" (Bassnett and Johnston 186). It is our means of connecting with both external realities and our inner experiences. Each day, we translate our thoughts; in essence, translation allows us to maintain dialogues with ourselves and with others (Bassnett 1). In a

sense, this expanded notion of translation is rooted in the idea of interpretation, as each new interpretation gives rise to a new translation—one that complements the original, as Borges illustrated in "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*" (Borges 444–450).

Understanding translation in its broadest sense—beyond mere interlingual transfer—reveals its presence in previously unimagined realms, such as history and memory. Recent theories that advocate for an epistemological convergence between translation studies and historiography suggest that history itself is a translation of the past (Alonzi; Vidal Claramonte, *La traducción* and "Translating"), one of many possible translations, always reflecting the voice of its historian-translator. Likewise, memory is permeated by translative processes that enable us to articulate and preserve our recollections, safeguarding them from oblivion (Brodzki).

Given this context, Alexievich's cycle emerges as a defining translation of the Soviet era. It represents one of numerous efforts to translate Soviet history, offering a personal and nuanced view of events that contrasts sharply with the official translations, produced by the government. Crafted from "bottom-up" polyphonic narratives, it involves not only the author and her witnesses but also the readers, who all play a role in translating the history of the USSR.

Testimonies in *Voices from Utopia* as (self-)translations

To identify the practice of translation within Alexievich's texts, we need to first examine the function of the interviewees in her work and explain why they can be regarded as translators, and even self-translators. According to new translation theory, translation is a vital mechanism for memory (Brodzki) and plays a key role in shaping the personal narratives individuals present about their lives. Through this translative process, the interviewees bring the past into the present, articulating their memories and traumas. These narratives can be seen as translations of their experiences.

While the act of translation may be painful for Alexievich's confidants, it is also significant, as it transforms the hidden into the visible, preserves memory from being forgotten (Brodzki), from its imminent death, and, in Walter Benjamin's terms, ensures its "afterlife,"[3] an

[3] Benjamin's "afterlife" concept is complex and warrants detailed research (see Robinson). In this paper, we adopt Brodzki's interpretation of this concept as the preservation of memory from being forgotten through an act of translation.

ongoing life of the source "text." These translations of personal histories are imperfect, fragmented, and constantly influenced by prevailing narratives. They provide alternative perspectives to official historiography and bring private experiences into the public sphere. Given the ever-changing nature of memory, these translations are never static or definitive; they both reveal and conceal, selectively highlighting certain details and silencing others. The witness-translators shape their accounts based on their audience and the peculiarities of the time in which they testify. In different circumstances, their translations of reality would likely shift in focus.

Having endured the horrors of the twentieth century, these once-silenced subalterns choose to share their experiences with Alexievich, or, in other words, to translate them. These translations not only allow the writer to craft a new version of the past but also provide therapeutic benefits for the witnesses (LaCapra; Stoicea). By verbalizing their trauma, they diminish the overwhelming power and toxicity of their traumatic memories.

Finally, the complex process of testifying can be examined through the lens of self-translation, which involves narrating one's life experiences (Baxter 222). In order to better understand this term, K. Bennett encourages us to distinguish between "translation *by* the self (originally written in another language) and translation *of* the self" (Bennett 7). The idea of self-translation as a translation of the self refers to the act of introspection, revisiting the past to perceive oneself as the Other, and translating that identity into the present. In essence, the Nobel laureate's mosaic of individual testimonies reveals a multitude of subaltern voices practicing self-translation, conveying their painful experiences. And this polyphonic chorus is orchestrated by a singular translator, Svetlana Alexievich.

Svetlana Alexievich and the art of translation

The writer's role as a translator is evident in multiple aspects. First, it is essential to recognize that her books do not present the original testimonies but rather her own translations of them from oral to written form (Nurczynski). This process inevitably results in the loss of some original details while simultaneously infusing the text with new meanings and interpretations that Alexievich introduces through her intralinguistic translation. At the same time, the author occasionally performs interlinguistic translations into Russian, given that some of her

sources speak Belarusian or Ukrainian (Marchesini 318). Furthermore, her periodic parenthetical notes on her interlocutor's behavior—such as "crying," "laughing," or "falling silent"—resemble translator's notes, inserting her own voice into the narrative.

In essence, Alexievich's work represents a translation of reality—the history of the subalterns that would not have come to light without her involvement. Treating memories as if they were relics, the author performs an act of *translatio*, transferring the witnesses' memories to others. In her translational work, she seeks to capture the viewpoint of the subaltern, or *homo sovieticus*, and examines the world through a postcolonial perspective. It is for this reason that S. A. Oushakine characterizes her as a "postcolonial writer" (Oushakine 10).

Like any translator, Alexievich inhabits a metaphorical boundary between two worlds: that of her interlocutors and her own. Through her approach to the Other, whom she does not always fully understand, the author strives to communicate the lived experiences she has collected. She is a historian par excellence, and as such also reveals her role as a translator (Alonzi; Vidal Claramonte, *La traducción*), since "[history is] a narrative, a text that translates reality, and … the author of the historical text is the translator … of the events that took place" (Vidal Claramonte, "Translating" 69–70). By mediating between the past and the present, she embodies the temporal dimension of the translational process. This way, the writer creates a connection between the witness and the reader.

Furthermore, we should not overlook her background in journalism and her extensive media career. Alexievich belongs to a profession deeply intertwined with ongoing translation processes, as noted by scholars such as E. Bielsa and S. Bassnett. In this context, it is useful to reference Ryszard Kapuściński, a journalist and writer who operated in a genre comparable to Alexievich's. Known for his literary journalism, he stated that "translator" was the most fitting description of his work (Kapuściński 21).

Although it is expected that Alexievich's writings reflect a supposed fidelity to the original testimonies—or, in other words, maintain a direct equivalence to what the witnesses expressed—research in translation studies reveals that this expectation is unrealistic and unattainable. In the context of historical texts, the "original" is lost to us, making it necessary to engage with the past through its various versions, which embody its own set of interpretations. Within these interpretations, the author should keep fidelity to her own understanding of the original voices. Since translation is an inherently interpretive act, Alexievich manipulates the collected material much like any translator would.

In her work, as in that of any translator, the audience plays an important role. It is crucial to consider for whom Alexievich is translating and who constitutes the audience ready to engage with stories of trauma and pain. For instance, translating historical events for a Soviet citizen from the 1980s is quite different from translating for contemporary readers who have grown up in the post-Soviet era. Additionally, the perspective shifts depending on whether the audience is European or American—who might have limited knowledge of Soviet realities—versus residents of former Eastern bloc countries like Hungary or Poland, who may have collective memories of traumatic events related to the USSR.

On the other hand, regardless of differing viewpoints, we believe that Alexievich's translator's voice is present in her work. Much like in translated texts, the notion of the writer's supposed invisibility is outdated, as her influence is apparent in every sentence and punctuation mark. Additionally, it is crucial to recognize that the Belarusian journalist does not craft her narratives in a vacuum: her translations are acts of ideological positioning that also involve various collaborators, such as editors, proofreaders, and readers.

Beyond providing therapeutic effects for the witnesses (LaCapra; Stoicea), the translations undertaken by the author also serve as a means of healing her own trauma. The events she describes in her books are deeply intertwined with her personal traumatic experiences. As Alexievich recounts, she lost both her maternal grandfather and paternal grandmother during World War II, and eleven other relatives were burned alive (Alexievich, *U vojny* 7–8). While covering the Soviet-Afghan War as a journalist, she faced unimaginable horrors and distress, even fainting at the sight of human remains after an explosion (Alexievich, *Cinkovye mal'čiki* 25). She expressed that, given what she had witnessed, she would never visit a military museum again (26).

The Chernobyl disaster had a great impact across much of Belarus, including the region where the writer's family resided. Since the catastrophe, there has been an increase in cancer cases. According to the author, her mother lost her vision due to the fallout from the nuclear accident (Alexievich, "Moja edinstvennaja žizn'"). The collapse of the USSR also represents a personal trauma for Alexievich, as the young writer's manuscripts reveal a loyalty to communist principles. Furthermore, it is worth noting that in many of her writings, the Nobel laureate reflects on the nearness of death. In this regard, it is particularly poignant that her sister died of cancer at just 35 years old (Naumčik 126).

Drawing from memory studies theories, the Belarusian journalist assumes the role of a secondary witness (Laub) and sometimes even a

primary witness, as she directly experiences and recounts certain historical events. By translating others' recollections into narrative form and providing an ethically engaged interpretation, her role as a secondary witness resembles that of a translator (Deane-Cox). Additionally, her work on World War II can be related to the concept of postmemory (Hirsch), which involves the transmission of trauma across generations, influenced by the experiences of her grandparents and parents who lived through the war. To heal this intergenerational emotional scar, she turns to the accounts of war survivors to construct a narrative that encompasses both their traumatic memories and her own.

Moreover, it is important to recognize that Alexievich's books depict World War II, the Soviet-Afghan conflict, the Chernobyl disaster, and the pre-dissolution image of the USSR as *lieux de mémoire*, following P. Nora's concept. Through her work, the writer seeks to reframe these events, offering a new historical perspective that aims to deepen our understanding and challenge prevailing interpretations of these phenomena. By leveraging the testimonies of the subalterns, she, as a secondary witness, endeavors to undermine the mythic narratives promoted by official history concerning Soviet *lieux de mémoire*.

Through a polyphony of voices, the author unravels a multifaceted trauma endured by her former compatriots. This polyphony itself represents the act of translation—complex, fragmented, and fluid—that provides the reader with diverse perspectives on the past. In this translational process, the writer seeks to transcend rigid historical facts, using emotions as her primary tool for translation. She emphasizes "experiences of the soul,"[4] believing that these emotional dimensions hold the true essence of traumatic events (Alexievich, "Nas učat"). Her goal is to capture and convey the feelings and experiences of others, preserving their lived realities (Alexievich, "Žizn'"). In this effort, she relies on her informants to share the sensations and emotions associated with the physical experiences of significant events.

The role of Alexievich's retranslations

Given the dynamic nature of translation, Alexievich continues translating the experiences she has collected even after her books are published. This results in retranslations, which are rewritings of her initial translation of reality. Through this continuous process of retranslation—an

[4] All translations from Russian into English included in this paper are by the author.

endeavor that naturally brings about changes—she ensures that the "afterlife," in the Benjaminian sense, of the original work is preserved.

According to the author, "we … are dealing with shadows, with versions. … The document itself does not exist. We are writing the history of our soul, the history of how we change, of how we move" (Alexievich, "Žizn'"). Her "originals"—or "documents," as she calls them—are not static or definitive texts. Each new reading and retranslation imbue them with new meanings, enhancing their depth. The testimonies she collects undergo modifications over time: "[T]hey are not set in stone, nor are they permanent, they are continuously revised" (Alexievich, "Nas učat"). Additionally, the witnesses sometimes agree to modify their statements years after their first interviews with her; by changing certain details, they construct new realities. In the words of the Nobel laureate, "[d]ocuments are living creatures—they change as we change" (Alexievich, "Nobel Lecture"). As long as the person is alive, they remember and add information.

The author admits that she is in a constant state of movement (Alexievich, "Žizn'"), which is reflected in her work. "My books are the current truth of my present understanding of the world," she states (qtd. in Tolokolnikova). Consequently, both her initial translations and later retranslations are profoundly shaped by her *habitus* and personal experiences.

Although Alexievich frequently makes ongoing adjustments to her work, the most substantial rewriting took place in the early twenty-first century. There are two key reasons behind this. First, her books on World War II, *The Unwomanly Face of War* and *Last Witnesses,* needed a comprehensive overhaul—their content required significant changes—for their reissue internationally. Originally published in 1984 and 1985, respectively, both texts were seen as outdated and had undergone heavy censorship at the time. Second, following the perestroika and the subsequent period of transformation, former Soviets experienced a newfound sense of freedom, leading to a reassessment of their history. Alexievich wanted to reflect this shift in her writing, capturing the essence of this historical transition in her narrative.

In addition to the reasons previously discussed, Alexievich may have had other important motivations for retranslating her works. We believe that her immigration to Europe significantly influenced not only her approach to contemporary reality but also her historical perspective. In various interviews, the Nobel laureate has praised Europeans, particularly noting their treatment of immigrants. For instance, she was moved by a barefoot march in Italy in support of refugees, which led her to

comment: "Yes, this is Europe, before which [post-Soviets] must stand in awe and reflect: why are we so savage?" (Alexievich and Sokurov). Her several years of residence in European countries undoubtedly shaped her worldview, allowing her to explore the subtleties of cultures distinct from the Soviet context and enabling her to distance herself from the traumatic legacy of the USSR to view it with a fresh perspective.

When analyzing Alexievich's retranslations, it is essential to take into account her direct experiences with the Soviet-Afghan war, the Chernobyl disaster, and the eventual collapse of the USSR. As a witness to the fall of the Soviet Empire and the disintegration of communist ideology, she gained a profound perspective that fundamentally altered her approach to revisiting and reinterpreting the testimonies she had collected over the decades. Her experiences in Afghanistan and her presence at Chernobyl influenced her subsequent writing and rewritings. Witnessing the harsh realities of war, observing human bodies shattered, understanding the fragility of humans as biological beings, and confronting the diminished value of life—these experiences collectively transformed her view of her earlier work.

It is likely that her own traumatic experiences influenced the course of her retranslations. In an interview, the author reflects on this, stating: "Now I would write a different book about the war, delving more into human nature, into darkness, into the subconscious. I would be very interested in … the biological human being" (Alexievich, "Moja edinstvennaja žizn'"). She further clarifies her focus in the latest edition of *Zinky Boys*, noting her interest in "the body, the human body, as a link between nature and history, between the animal and language. All physical details are important" (Alexievich, *Cinkovye mal'čiki* 25).

In her retranslations, Alexievich places a stronger emphasis on reinforcing the anti-war message, aiming to generate a visceral repulsion toward the idea of war, even among those in the military: "I want to write a book about war that induces nausea, that makes even the mere thought of war disgusting. That it would seem absurd. That it would make the generals themselves vomit" (Alexievich, *U vojny* 17). To achieve this, she relies on the emotional dimension of the testimonies. By highlighting the emotions and traumas of her subjects, Alexievich seeks to (re)translate history in a way that deeply resonates with readers and moves them. In this sense, some researchers aptly place *Voices from Utopia* within the context of the so-called "emotional turn" see Karpusheva).

The majority of the revisions are made by the author in her early works on World War II. While the initial editions of these books presented an

anti-war message interlaced with emotional elements, they also carried patriotic overtones. The patriotic sentiments from the 1980s, as seen in *The Unwomanly Face of War* and *Last Witnesses*, gradually lost their emotional resonance over the years due to changes in the post-Soviet political landscape and the growth of the readership. To maintain a strong emotional impact, Alexievich had to update her approach, offering a fresh perspective on the testimonies and placing greater emphasis on the brutal realities of war and the profound traumas it causes.

The writer's *habitus*—a set of dispositions that shape and organize her approach to viewing the world, behaving in it, interpreting her surroundings, and interacting with prevailing narratives (see Bourdieu 87–109)—is essential for understanding *Voices from Utopia*. Alexievich's translations and retranslations emerge as provisional visions of the past, embedded in a process of recontextualization. The author operates in accordance with the prevailing ideology and dominant poetic of each rewriting period (Lefevere). In other words, what inspires her—and her readers—in the 1980s may seem outdated twenty years later.

Interpretive readings: the reader as translator

In her translations, the writer aims not only to reflect on her own understanding and present her current version of the past but also to tailor her historical perspective to resonate with her audience. This reader-centered approach aligns with current principles in translation studies. After delving into the recollected testimonies, readers assume the role of secondary witnesses (Laub), engaging with and comprehending the painful and traumatic experiences described. Consequently, readers become translators themselves, crafting their own interpretations of the past based on Alexievich's oeuvre and other sources. Thus, the process of translation comes full circle: after the author transitions the testimonies from the private to the public sphere, readers translate these messages and return them to the private realm through their personal understanding.

Just as Alexievich's narrative and the writer herself are in a state of constant motion, so too are her readers. Their interpretations of history shift over time. With her growing international acclaim, her audience has expanded and diversified well beyond the post-Soviet realm. To keep her readers engaged, Alexievich persists in using her main translation tool—emotions—but she sometimes adjusts her approach. Specifically, she aims to replace patriotic passages from her first books with poignant scenes that reveal the profound trauma endured by the

Soviet people. As is common in literature addressing traumatic experiences, the impact of the message needs to be convincing, and its effectiveness is paramount (Hron xvii).

The emotional depth and powerful impact of Alexievich's narrative are widely acknowledged by readers. For example, Sophie Benech, a French translator of some of her works, observes that the Nobel laureate's stories convey profound suffering, which the translator also feels during the translation process (Benech). Similarly, the director of a Belarusian theatrical adaptation of *Secondhand Time* notes that the emotional weight of the text was so intense that it led some actresses to weep during rehearsals (Naumčik 410). Furthermore, Xavi Ayén, a Spanish journalist who interviewed Alexievich in 2015, remarks that "[r]eaders of her books need to take breaks; sometimes they have to put them aside to catch their breath or to cry, because the intensity of the pain and the emotion they evoke makes it hard to continue reading" (Alexievich, "Putin").

By harnessing extreme emotional intensity, the author seeks to cultivate a critical awareness in her readers and create an anti-war message potent enough to provoke even the military. Her objective is to prevent the repetition of historical traumas by translating painful memories of the past, engaging the reader emotionally, and revitalizing the original text. In this manner, Alexievich aims to preserve marginalized memories, hoping that her translations will not only stir profound emotions but also evolve into transformative emotional experiences.

Conclusions

The concept of translation acts as a central theme throughout Alexievich's work, appearing in multiple layers of the text. In her cycle *Voices from Utopia*, historical witnesses, guided by the Belarusian author, translate their memories and emotions from the past to share their experiences of trauma. Through their interviews, they not only shape their version of events but also translate their lived experiences into narrative form, engaging in a process of self-translation.

The writer orchestrates this process as a masterful translator, who, after collecting the data, translates oral testimonies into literary works. Following the initial publication, she continually revisits and retranslates the texts due to shifts in the surrounding metanarratives and changes in her own *habitus*. Emotion is her primary tool: she frames the translation of Soviet history as an emotional experience. As readers engage with the

accounts provided by Alexievich's interlocutors, they too become part of this emotional journey. This immersive process, filled with poignant messages, influences their understanding of the past, encourages them to see history through a dramatic lens, and invites them to translate historical events in innovative ways.

Interpreting Alexievich's work as an emotional translation of historical events sheds light on the reasons behind her revisions. As a translator, she cannot produce a perfect equivalent of the original but must stay faithful to her own rendition of the past, making her ongoing retranslations a logical response to changing contexts. Just as translations evolve to suit new environments, her reinterpretations of historical narratives are shaped by the contemporary times and the audiences they reach. Emotions bridge the gap from the witness to the reader; Alexievich's priority is to keep her audience emotionally engaged, ensuring that the original's impact endures.

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Odmevi prevoda v pripovedih Svetlane Aleksijevič

Ključne besede: beloruska književnost / Aleksijevič, Svetlana / dokumentarna proza / sovjetska zgodovina / avtobiografska pričevanja / prevod / ponovni prevod

Razprava raziskuje prisotnost prevoda v delu Svetlane Aleksijevič, beloruske novinarke in Nobelove nagrajenke za književnost (2015). Sredi razpravljanja o tem, ali je treba njene knjige kategorizirati kot leposlovje ali neleposlovje, predlagamo alternativni pogled na njen cikel *Glasovi iz utopije*, ki ga je mogoče razumeti tudi kot prevod sovjetske zgodovine. Z uporabo sodobnih teorij prevajanja, ki širijo definicijo prevoda onkraj zgolj medjezikovnega prenosa, lahko opazimo, kako prevod v njenih besedilih deluje na različnih ravneh. Ta proces ne vključuje samo prič, s katerimi se pogovarja pisateljica, ampak se razširi tudi na bralce. Natančneje, intervjuvanci s procesom (samo)prevajanja opisujejo svoje preživete izkušnje, njihovi glasovi pa postanejo polifoni zbor, ki ponuja sveže vpoglede v zgodovino ZSSR. Aleksijevič ta ustna pričevanja prevaja v pisne dokumente, ki so nato podvrženi večkratnim ponovnim prevodom zaradi nenehnih sprememb v pripovedih, v katere sta potopljena tako avtoričino občinstvo kot avtorica sama. Ti prevodi in ponovni prevodi pričevanjem zagotavljajo posmrtno življenje in vplivajo na to, kako bralci prevajajo zgodovino in se potopijo v množico njenih različic. Razumevanje zgodovinskega opusa Svetlane Aleksijevič kot nenehnega toka prevodov, ki pritegnejo vse, od prič do bralcev, odpira nove možnosti za interpretacijo njenega cikla.

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