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TRANSLATING A. BADIOU'S "LE SIÈCLE" AND THE PROBLEM OF MIGRATING KEY NOTIONS*

The paper is dedicated to the analysis of key notions in "Le Siècle" (The Century, 2005) by A. Badiou and its Russian translation (2016). For Badiou XX century is marked by the beginning of Russian Revolution and the end of the Soviet Empire. Thus, he looks for the voices that can represent the Century, so that the Century could speak for itself with their voices (Mandelstam, Celan, Pessoa, Brecht, Malevich). Many quotations from foreign poetry that were translated into French in the original text create both translingual and crossdiscursive interactions that allow the key notions (зверь 'beast', жестокость 'cruelty', совместность 'togetherness', чистка 'purge', настоящее 'present, real') to migrate. The correlation of poetical and philosophical discourses within one text provokes new translations of poetry to French. The Russian translator of Badiou's text, in his turn, has to make new translation of the previously translated texts, thus, in order to coordinate the key notions he bases the translation on several languages at the same time. The Russian version of The Century opens the discussion on the need of the consistency of the translation of key notions already introduced in Russian culture by previous texts.

Key words: migrating notions, Badiou, Mandelshtam, Le Siècle, Celan.

1. Introduction.

In 2005 Alain Badiou published a book named 'The Century' ('Le Siècle') aimed at presenting the idea of the Century as Thought by the Century Itself. This book is a summary of lectures delivered at the very end of the XXth century; namely, from 1998 to 2000. In 2016 there appeared my translation of 'Le Siècle', into Russian, made together with Maria Titova and Oleg Nikiforov.

2. The Problem.

Relying on the material of that translation, I will consider the problem of translating texts of mixed discourse type, primarily poetic and philosophical,

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but not only that. I will show that notions migrate from discourse to discourse and from language to language simultaneously, that these are similar and not infrequently interrelated processes, and only their reciprocal account can provide for translation correctness.

3. Badiou's Method and the Book *'Le Siècle'*.

The XXth century chronology is defined by Badiou as the time when the idea of the century seems to be most obvious – the century begins with the War of 1914–1918, the war that includes the October Revolution of 1917, and ends with the disintegration of the USSR and the completion of the Cold War. So, the 'Minor' Century (75 years) is on the whole "The Soviet Age" set out by means of such classic parameters as the World War and the October Revolution.

In defining his method of philosophical reflection on the XX century the philosopher says that he pushes away from "the voices and forms" in which the Century bears record of itself.

Especially important as documents are texts appealing to the sense of the century on behalf of its participants themselves; the notion of text is understood broadly enough, including both poetry as well as pictures, film episodes, performances, etc. Summoned to testify to the Century are Mandelstam, Malevich, Freud, Heidegger, Fernando Pessoa, Paul Celan, Saint-John Perse, André Breton, Brecht – their texts are recognized to be legal documents to investigate the issue of what the Century meant to the people Themselves.

4. Mandelstam. *The Beast*.

The second chapter of Badiou's book bears the name of the 'Beast'. Mandelstam's poem "The Century" is taken to be the model document of the century, and his metaphor 'Century – Beast' has moved from the poetic discourse to the philosophical discourse. The philosopher first makes the over-literal rendering of the metaphor giving, following Mandelstam a röntgenograph of the beast – the 'spine', the backbone, the 'warm cartilage', then unfolds it, and finally turns 'bestiality' into a philosophical predicate. Organic, not mechanistic, vision (characteristic of the XIXth century) is a duty and peculiarity of thought in the XX century. The Century is subjectivised as a live unity.

One more philosophical concept, a characteristic of the Century, introduced by Badiou is voluntarism – «...кто сумеет // заглянуть в твои зрачки...» ('... who will be able // to look into the pupils of your eye). History is a huge powerful beast, and it is necessary to make Her serve us, it is necessary to look in Her face. Badiou, on Mandelstam's behalf, puts an equal sign between life and History. The subject of the verse is identified with the problems of the Century, Century – Beast implies interconnection between vitality and voluntarism.

At the same time, according to Badiou, “Mandelstam’s Century – Beast is nothing else but the omnipresence of the split” provoking the ‘last and decisive battle’¹.

Although there exists a whole number of translations of “the Century” into French, in particular, translations by François Hérel and Henri Abril², A. Badiou made his own translation of O. Mandelstam’s poem³ specially for this book.

Badiou follows the strategy of appropriation – the philosopher must speak on the behalf of the poet, exactly what happens to the concepts of ‘zver’ *beast*, ‘zverinost’ *bestiality*, ‘svirepost’ *cruelty*.

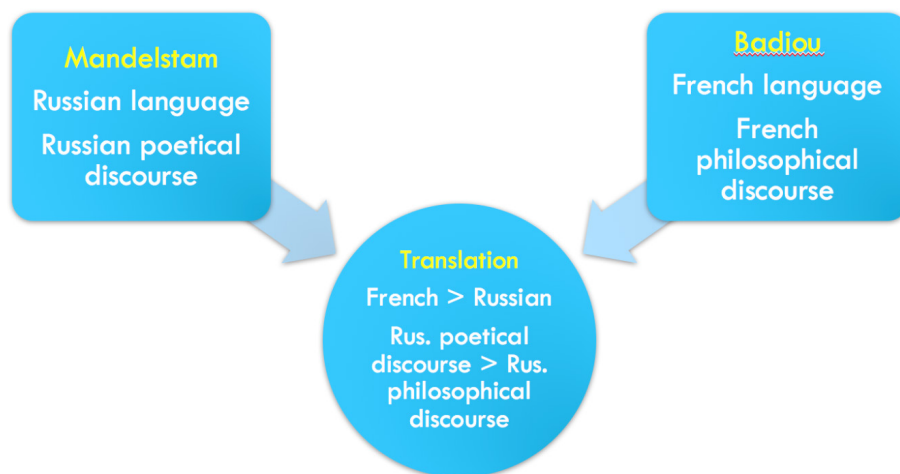
Note in passing that such a strategy is characteristic in general of citation in the philosophical discourse. The common way of recalling a poetic text by a philosopher is citing by memory, and, most frequently, a poetic text, if it is not cited as a whole, shows considerable coincidences with the original. The “mistakes” of philosophers are accounted for by that the philosopher, while appropriating the poetic text, makes it a kind of philosophical dictates, not only speaking in the words of the poet but also making the poet speak as a philosopher. The philosophical text, while incorporating the poetic text, seeks to avoid the role of the metatext; thus, in citing, notions migrate perfectly free. That is why in translating one discourse into another there arises the need of a new translation from language to language – the new translation will provide for this freedom of migration.

The principal migrating notion which must be translated is the word ‘beast’ itself. We can see that Badiou insists on the word *bête*. In other translations it is either *brute* (Kérel) or *fauve* (Abril). *Brute* does not suit Badiou because it immediately refers us not to the verbal but to figurative meaning of the word *beast*. In so doing, bestiality would immediately become the predicate of Century – Man, not Century – Beast. For Badiou, important is not only bestiality as ferocity, but the beast as a living organism. On the other hand, *fauve* is a predator while Mandelstam’s beast is cruel and weak at the same time, which gives the philosopher a chance to avoid evaluation in the characteristics of the Century.

Badiou, translating Mandelstam, in contrast to other translators, builds up a strict derivational series: *vertèbre* (vertebra), *vertebration* (spine), *vertebreure* (parasite). At this, in order to keep the consistency of the notions, the philosopher even goes as far as creating the occasional word *vertebreur*. The consistency of the notion appears more important for the philosopher than for the poet; however, the poet, if presented as philosopher, begins to speak in consistent notions.

The translator into Russian finds himself in a somewhat privileged position compared with Badiou, for we deal not with a translation of Mandelstam’s poem but with the original; so, translating a philosophical text we can use the predicates derived from the original text. Let us illustrate the interrelation of discourse and interlanguage transfers by the following schemes.

Scheme 1.



We understand Badiou's translation as the interdiscourse procedure but not as an interlanguage one.

5. Pessoa Bestiality and Ferocity.

The Beast and His predicates (organicity, ferocity, cruelty, violence) appear again in the chapter "Cruelty" ("Ferocity"?) devoted to Saint-John Perse⁴ and Fernando Pessoa, primarily to the "Ode of the Seas" of the latter. The "Ode of the Seas", the most famous poem of Pessoa, has not been translated into Russian before. The translation of Badiou's "Le Siècle" first made me translate the fragments quoted and then provoked to translate the entire "Ode", which was published as a separate bilingual book in 2016. So, Mandelstam's 'Century', through the text of Badiou, made a certain impact on Pessoa's translation too.

«О пираты! пираты!

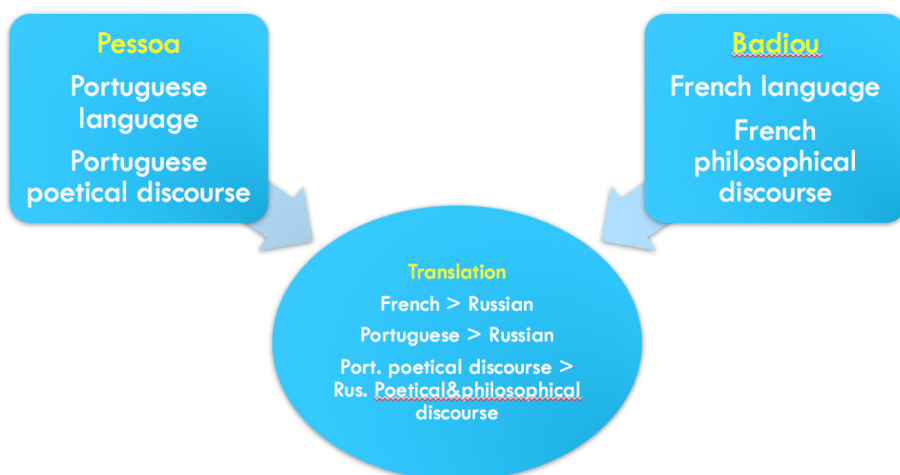
Томление по запретному слито со **зверством**

Томление по вещам абсолютно **сви́репым** и мерзким...» (Pessoa)

Ferocity in Russian (*svirepost'*) is more connected with the idea of the beast or 'Man as beast' than the abstract 'cruelty' (*zhestokost'*). In contrast to the word '*svirepyi*', '*zhestokiy*' in Russian may refer solely to a human being, but not to an animal. It is possible to say '*zhestokaya krasavitsa*' ('cruel beauty') but hardly ever '*zhestokaya sobaka*' ('cruel dog'); on the other hand, if we speak of a tyrant, or dictator, he may be both cruel and ferocious.

Evidently, in order to provide migration of this predicate of the Century between philosophical, political and poetic discourses as well as between the three languages (Russian, French and Portuguese), it would be tempting to translate the title of the chapter "Cruautés" as "Svirepost'", for the chapter "Zhestokost'" would hardly appeal to the semantics of the Beast and Mandelstam.

However, there exists one more discourse interference taken root in the culture of translating *Théâtre de la Cruauté* by Artaud as “Teatr Zhestokosti”, and it would be fair to take this into consideration. Badiou does mention Artaud, though Artaud is not the hero of his text, and the editor insisted on translating the title of the chapter as ‘Zhestokosti’. Here we can see a certain problem of the rigidity of notions to translation, which, to a certain extent, prevents establishing interdiscourse and interlanguage connections, prevents notion migration within the text.



(The same scheme is applicable to Brecht's translations)

Translation of the poetic text of Pessoa into Russian is made within the framework of poetico-philosophical discourse. From the very beginning this translation may be a source of philosophical discourse. The interdiscourse transfer lies in the potential, and in translating the philosophical text of Badiou this potential is being actualized, and thus, the interlanguage and interdiscourse transfer will be accomplished. On the other hand, interfering in the translation of Badiou's philosophical text is the third language (Portuguese).

6. Malevich and the Purge.

Another hero of the Century is Malevich and the migrating predicate of the Century and Revolution – the “Purge”. The main idea of the Century is recognized “passion for the real” (*passion du real*), but this is also a “passion for the present” as *passion du the present* (OR *passion au present*). All the *roitnesses of the Century* live in the awareness of the historicity of the events and their personal historicity, in the awareness of the moment of true beginning, real beginning. The Century understands itself as both nihilism and the Dionysian approval; It thinks of Itself both as an end, decadence, and, at the same time, as an absolute beginning. The Century combines the motives of end and beginning by a non-dialectal liason, that is why, according to Badiou,

to end and to start remain two irreconcilable objectives of the Century. The Century, possessed by the passion for the real, is at the same time the age of destruction not only in politics but also in art and science.

Formalisation as a search for pure form, being a means of achieving the real present, is attended by the idea of *purge*; in the XXth century attempts are being made “to purify ... the present (in art, science) from any, spatial or numerical, intuitive imaginary through the axioms and formalism”.

That is why the search for the real is always combined with distrust, with the suspicion that the past found may turn out to be just a simulation, not enough real. Distrust for the present calls for the necessity to constantly conduct purge.

Badiou refers to Hegel's thoughts, his reflections on the revolutionary terror interpreting them in the following way: “The present (*réel*), understood in its absolute randomness, is never real enough not to be a suspect in the pretense”.

There are no other tools to attest to the present really being the present; the only way to this effect may be fiction: “All subjective categories of the revolutionary policy or the policy of absolutism, such as ‘persuasion’, ‘fidelity’, ‘class consciousness’, ‘obedience to the Party’, ‘revolutionary zeal’ and the like, are marked with doubt: isn't that what is classified as the present (*reel*) only a likeness? Hence, the need for public purge of the relationship between a category and its referent, the need for purge among those who reckon among the category, the purge in the ranks of the revolutionaries”⁵.

Relations between a category and its referent – this idea permeates, the entire XXth century; built on the idea of formalisation are many models in mathematics and semiotics. Thus, the purge becomes one of the main slogans of the century. The purge also became the principal slogan of artistic activity.

The frightening word *purge* familiar to the readers first of all by Stalinist purges turns into a term denominating one of the main predicates of the Century. On peut tenter de reconstruire la scène politique des grandes purges (80).

In that way, we see the obvious subordination of the category of revolution to philosophical and aesthetic categories. The notion migrates between the discourses of politics – art – philosophy – science. The purge is both a political purge and pure art – *l'art pur*.

Derivational series are formed.

Purge – épurer – l'épuration.

Чистка – очистить – чистка

Russian gives an even clearer formula than French, as the words relating to political purges and philosophical ones often coincide.

Cleaning is associated with the passion for the new, Purge as passion for the new is one of the main motives of Malevich.

The idea of distraction and purge is revealed in Malevich on his famous canvas of the ‘White Square on the White Background’ which Badiou pronounces to be “the apogee of purge in painting”. The purge reveals itself through the exclusion of colour and shape leaving only a geometric hint that retains a minimal difference.

Not long before the creation of the “White Square” Malevich writes a poem in which, indeed, one can find as the key words the principal analysed predicates of the Century witnessed by Malevich; these are the dictates of novelty, of the new formalization (*не повторять себя, новое рождение, новый день, изчертится тебе новое* = not to repeat oneself, a new birth, a new day, to find contours of the new), passion for the present, acting here and now (*мысль твоя сейчас воспримет* = *your thought is now going to perceive*), a break, a destruction, a finality, a seared for the absolute form (*Если что-либо в действе / твоём напоминает тебе уже деянное прошлое / и говорит мне голос нового рождения: / Сотри, замолчи, туши*), purge (*очисть слух свой и сотри старые дни*), deduction, the extraction of the difference and differences (*услышать дыхание нового дня в пустыне*).

*Старайся не повторять себя, ни в иконе, ни
в картине ни в слове. Если что-либо в действе
твоём напоминает тебе уже деянное прошлое
и говорит мне голос нового рождения:
Сотри, замолчи, туши скорее если это огонь,
Чтобы легче были подолы мысли твоих
и не заржавели.
Чтобы услышать дыхание нового дня в пустыне,
Очисти слух свой и сотри старые дни, ибо
только тогда ты будешь чувствительный и белый ибо
в мудрость темным, лежат на платье твоём
и дыханием волны изчертится тебе новое,
Мысль твоя сейчас воспримет очертания и наложит
печати поступи твоей.*

(K. Malevich).

As Badiou comes to the use of the previously existing translation of Malevich, there emerges a disaccordance.

Lave ton ouïe, efface les jour anciens... (87)

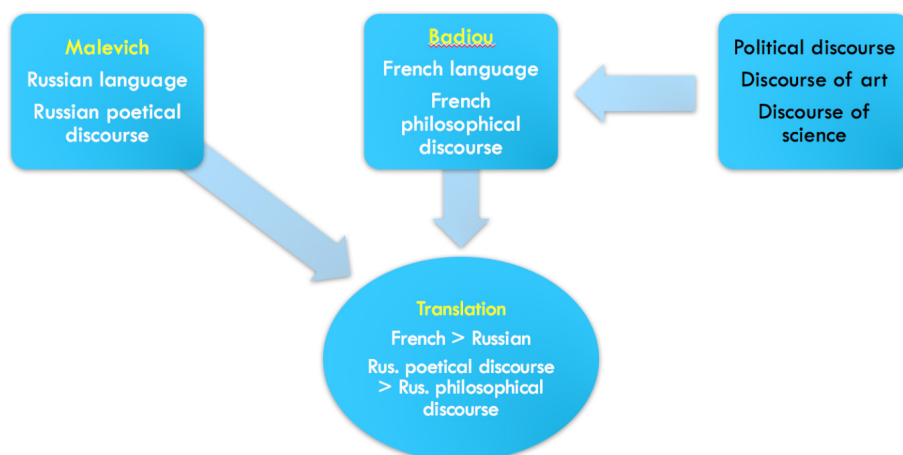
Очисти слух свой и сотри старые дни (78)

Badiou is obliged to use the participle *lavée* following the ready-made French translation in which the Russian *ochist'* (purge, clean) is so rendered although he would evidently like to use the verb from the number of migrating notions – “*épurer*”.

«Le deuxième point est cette ouïe qui doit être lavée pour trouver les contours». (88)

Второе – это то, что нужно очистить слух, чтобы изчертить новое. (77)

For the philosopher, correlation of notions has been established. But for the reader of the original French text it is not so evident. In the translation into Russian, these migrating notions are brought to conformity because of being expressed by derivatives.



Here the operation of interdiscourse and interlanguage translation is performed in 2 steps.

1. At first migrating notions should be agreed upon.
2. Then the general translation procedure should be carried out.

The interlanguage interaction occurs with the consideration of the interdiscourse transfer which is made by Badiou.

In contrast to Mandelstam's case, Badiou does not make an interlanguage translation, but (his) interdiscourse transfers are more extensive and include transfers between the discourses of art, politics and science.

The difference between the migration of notions by Malevich and by Mandelstam also lies in who is responsible for notion consistency. When Badiou makes his own translation he takes the responsibility for himself. In Malevich's case, responsible for the consistency of notions is the translator.

7. *Mitsammen and Celan.*

And finally – *Mitsammen* from Celan's "Anabasis" is one of those words that express a very important notion of togetherness or collectivity as understood by the XX Century.

The famous word *Mitsammen* is absent in dictionaries, but there have been attempts to explain it through Yiddish, attempts obviously partial to Celan, but in Yiddish this word is also absent. What is it? German slang? Yiddish? An occasional word? Jewish – German? (Jewish – German is, for instance, the language of Celan's "A Talk in the Mountains").

Whole articles are devoted to *Mitsammen* (Die Bedeutung des Mitsammen). What is characteristic is that the author writes *Mitsammen* with a capital letter justifiably paying attention to the fact that it is not a preposition but rather a key concept.

On the one hand, the origin and status of the word are obscure, on the other, the word is absolutely clear and does not look occasional. Celan's text not merely slips by the conventional meanings of the words, it leaves unclear to what extent the words belong or do not belong to the language. This is the type of word with unexpressed occasionality. It is accomplished in this text as the experience of openness, it 'comes to be' freely.

Mitsammen is a formula of impossible communication, but not of the impossibility of communication. Nothing betokens communication, but suddenly this Mitsammen happens, the impossible communication becomes possible. Togetherness is accomplished not through the language (it is not proclaimed) but through the direct opening in the silent.

There is one more poem by Celan "In Eins" which expresses the same concept of togetherness by different words. Derrida's article on Celan's Shibboleth is devoted to this poem. This poem not only brings together different languages, but there is a pre-Babylonian language, a certain unit, an interlanguage idiom.

Derrida, in contrast to Badiou, does not translate the text on principle, but cites the ready-made translations. And again, in contrast to Badiou, he thinks like a bilingual person and uses the original text.

If Derrida thinks philosophical concept in a multilingualistic space Badiou accomplishes an interdiscourse and interlanguage transfer.

Mark Belorusetz translates In Eins as 'voyedino', and Lapitski in translating Derrida's "Shibboleth" also conveys In Eins as 'voyedino'.

The translation of both In Eins and Mitsammen as 'voyedino', or even as 'vmesty'e' ('together'), does not look adequate, since 'voyedino' implies a kind of fusion before the formation of the whole, a kind of bringing something together on the common ground, although there is nothing like this either in 'In Eins' or 'Mitsammen'.

Togetherness is an important revolutionary notion that still remained topical in France in the 1960s; such a togetherness implies the joining of people as a kind of on-going event, but not unifying on some common ground.

From the viewpoint of togetherness, it is very important that Mitsammen does not suggest eliminating or implanting a difference between I and We. I is not subject to We, neither is I identical with We. In Eins as well as Mitsammen is a certain lent of unity which covers like a certain revolutionary event. We translate Mitsammen as 'v odnom' ('in one') on principle; so may also be translated In Eins.

АНАБАСИС

Это

тесно меж стен вписанное
неудобоходимое-истинное
восхождение вспять
в светлое-сердцем Сбылось.

Там.

Слого- и
волнорезы, море-
цветы, в даль —
в невидаль — вдающиеся.

Потом:
бакенов,
стонущих бакенов строй,
с теми
дивно-секундно скачущими
дыхательными рефlekсами —: свето-
колокольные тоны (донн-,
динн-, одинн-,
unde suspirat
cor), —
из-
изнывающие,
взывающие, наши.

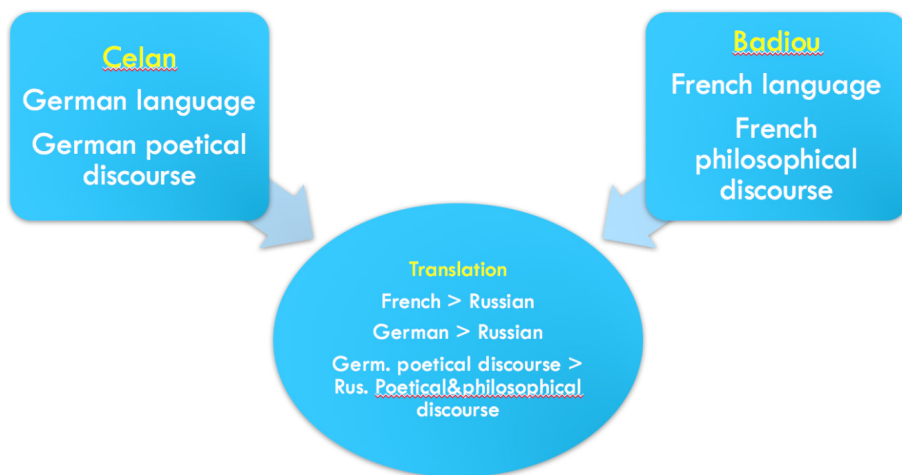
Видимое, Слышимое,
освобождаясь —
Свод-Слово:

В-Одном.

Перевод с немецкого А. Прокопьева, Т. Баскаковой, Н. Азаровой

The word Mitsammen, migrating from the poetical discourse to the philosophical one, acquires the ability to express one of the key concepts of the revolutionary consciousness of the XXth century most adequately. We can also see how the migrating notion starts going beyond the boundaries of one national language.

The operation of translation exists in the space between three languages and translation is being made on the basis of the interaction of the three languages. The interdiscourse transition and transfer between the three languages may be shown by the following scheme.



This scheme is analogous to the translation of Pessoa, with the only difference being that there had already been other translations that were unable to provide for transfer to the philosophical discourse. This situation is a mirror reflection of the operations of Badiou in the case of Mandelstam. The new translation of the 'Anabasis' was made by me together with T. Baskakova and A. Prokopiev on the same reasons that Badiou made his own translation of Mandelstam regardless of those already existing.

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Наталија Азарова

ВРАЋАЊЕ РУСКЕ РЕВОЛУЦИЈЕ ПРЕКО ПРЕВОДА:
ПРОБЛЕМ МИГРАЦИОНИХ ПОЈМОВА
(НА МАТЕРИЈАЛУ ПРЕВОДА А. БАДЈУА ПЕСМЕ «ВЕК»
О. МАНДЕЉШТАМА)

Резиме

Чланак је посвећен анализи појмова у „Le Siècle“ (The Century, 2005) А. Бадјуа и његовом преводу на руски језик (2016). За Бадјуа су почетак и крај XX века омеђени руском револуцијом и крахом Совјетске империје. На тај начин он тражи гласове који могу да представљају век, како би Век могао да говори сам за себе својим гласовима (Мандељштам, Целан, Песоа, Брехт, Маљевич). Многи цитати из стране поезије, који су били преведени на француски језик у оригиналном тексту, не стварају само транслингвистичке него и унакрсне асоцијације, омогућавајући да се користе кључни појмови (звер „зверь“, суровост „жестокость“, заједништво „единения“, чистка „чистки“, садашњост „настоящее“) за миграцију. Спој песничког и филозофског дискурса у једном тексту провоцира нове преводе поезије на француски језик. Руски преводац текста Бадјуа са своје стране морао је да начини нови превод раније преведених текстова како би довео у везу кључне појмове, истовремено заснивајући свој превод на неколико језика. Руска верзија „Века“ отвара дискусију о неопходности усаглашавања превода кључних појмова, који су већ били уведени у руску културу претходним текстовима.

Кључне речи: миграциони појмови, Бадју, Мандељштам, „Век“, Целан.