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## ON THE IMAGE OF OUTER SPACE IN VICTOR KOLUPAEV'S SHORT PROSE AND ITS GERMAN TRANSLATIONS

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### **Abstract**

*The article presents the results of the research "Translation perception of Viktor Kolupaev's short prose in Germany". First, the authors present the traditional history of translations of the works of the Tomsk science fiction writer Viktor Dmitrievich Kolupaev (1936-2001). Secondly, they analyze the image of outer space in the stories "Žemčuzhina" [The Pearl] (1972), "Samyj bol'soj dom" [The Biggest House], "Kakie smešnye derev'â" [What Funny Trees] (1975), the novella "Kačeli Otšel'nika" [Hermit's Swing] (1972) and their German translations published in the period 1974-1988. The analyzed translations demonstrate a high degree of transfer of the poetics of Kolupaev's works. This study is the basis for continuing the study of Kolupaev's oeuvre in the future.*

**Keywords:** Russian literature, Viktor Kolupaev, Soviet science fiction, literary translation

### **Rezumat**

*În articol, sunt prezentate reflecții asupra tematicii „Percepția prin traducerea în germană a prozei scurte a lui Viktor Kolupaev”. Autorii prezintă, mai întâi de toate, istoria tradițională a traducerilor lucrărilor scriitorului fantast din Tomsk, Viktor Kolupaev (1936-2001), ca mai apoi să analizeze spațiul cosmic atât în poveștile acestuia („Žemčuzhina” [Perla] (1972), „Samyj bol'soj dom” [Cea mai mare casă], „Kakie smešnye derev'â” [Ce copaci amuzanți] (1975)), cât și în nuvela „Kačeli Otšel'nika” [Leagănul pustnicului] (1972), traduse toate în germană în perioada 1974-1988. Traducerile analizate demonstrează un grad ridicat de transfer al poeziei operelor lui Kolupaev și deschid noi orizonturi de cercetare.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** literatură rusă, Viktor Kolupaev, literatura sovietică de ficțiune, traducere literară

### **Introduction**

Viktor Kolupaev (1936-2001) is a science fiction writer from the city of Tomsk in Western Siberia. His oeuvre includes 50 short stories, 8 novellas, 3 novels, and 9 collections. In Soviet science fiction literature, Kolupaev is known as a lyrical author that touches upon the most important issues of humanity and encourages readers to think about urgent problems. Despite the fact that Kolupaev was not one of the leaders of science fiction at that

time, his works have repeatedly attracted the attention of translators from all over the world. Sweden, Germany, the USA, France, Poland, Spain, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Japan, Slovakia... readers of all these countries had a golden opportunity to see the world through the eyes of a Siberian, whose imagination takes them either to other planets or the next street.

The article aims at revealing the specifics of the image of outer space in Kolupaev's short prose and its German translations. For the first time space is examined in the works of the Tomsk science fiction writer. We have already partially considered the English and French receptions of his short prose (Nikonova & Morozova, 2019a). Until now, only the later work of the writer has been covered in Russian literary criticism. Irina Nikienko, a Tomsk scholar, examined the novel *Sokrat Sibirskih Afin* [Socrates of Siberian Athens] in a discursive and conceptual aspect (Nikienko, 2012), (Nikienko, 2014).

### **Publishing History of Translations in Germany**

Currently, the bibliography of translations of Kolupaev's works includes 15 foreign languages (English, Czech, Bulgarian, German, Slovak, Polish, Japanese, Portuguese, French, Spanish, Hungarian, Serbo-Croatian, Estonian, and Swedish). We emphasize that there is also the translation of the story "Raznocvetnoe sčast'e" [Colorful happiness] into Romanian in the anthology *Соната шарпелю де касэ* in 1983. By the number of translations, the first place is shared by English and Czech (18 translations), followed by Bulgarian (14 translations). The bibliography in German closes the top three with 13 translations.

German translators paid special attention to the short prose of the Soviet writer during the years of the existence of the USSR, namely in the period 1974-1988. No modern German translations have been found.

Undoubtedly, the international political situation of that time played an important role in the dissemination of Soviet literature in Germany. At the end of World War II, two new states were created on the territory of Germany - the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), under the influence of the alliance of Western countries (the USA, Great Britain, France) and the Soviet Union, respectively. Soviet science fiction was published in the GDR from the very beginning of its creation. The works of Ivan Efremov, Aleksey Tolstoy, Sergey Snegov were in demand among German readers. In the 1970s, new works by the Strugatsky brothers, Stanislaw Lem, as well as anthologies of Eastern European (Polish, Czech, Czechoslovak) and Soviet writers appeared. Sonja Fritzsche, a German scholar, notes in *Science Fiction Literature in East Germany* (2006) that the Soviet space program influenced the creation of science fiction literature by German authors: "In 1958, The Soviet Union sponsored a prize competition, in order to encourage authors to write more science fiction. According to

Herta Hein and Karin Ludwig, this competition also led to increased interest in the genre in East Germany” (Fritzsche, 2006, p. 100).

One of the most significant events for the GDR, according to Fritzsche, was the flight of the Soviet pilot-cosmonaut Valery Bykovsky and the German cosmonaut-researcher Sigmund Jähn to the orbital scientific station *Salyut-6*. After this expedition, Jähn was nicknamed “the German Gagarin”: he became the first German in space, the only pilot-cosmonaut of the GDR. The participation in the Soviet space mission allowed the authorities to create a new reason for the pride of the nation; children's literature and the media were the main tools of spreading the idea: “The well-known children's TV program *Das Sandmännchen* created its own cartoon space dock before cutting to a live shot of Sigmund Jähn on Soyuz 31. There, he symbolically introduced a stuffed Sandmann to his Soviet counterpart, a tiny, female bear named Misha” (Fritzsche, 2006, p. 191).

Note that the prevalence of Soviet literature and, in particular, science fiction was explained not only by the political situation, but also by the current situation of the publishing market. The publication of Western fiction in the GDR remained at a low level, as there was a high cost of licenses for these works: “Publishers had to use their limited amount of hard currency to purchase the rights from the West. The review process cost editors like Redlin and, later Erik Simon, not only money, but also “pounds of nerves, powers of persuasion, and clever tactics,” in order to convince authorities of the value of “decadent, late bourgeois literature” (Fritzsche, 2006, p. 176).

We should pay attention to the publication of Soviet literature on the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany. It is mistakenly believed that it was not possible for readers to get the works of Soviet writers. In “Literatur der Bundesrepublik in der UdSSR - Sowjetliteratur in der Bundesrepublik 1974-1976” (1977), which is devoted to the publishing history of Soviet literature in the Federal Republic of Germany and the literature of the Federal Republic of Germany in the USSR, Hübner noted that there was a high demand on the works of Soviet writers in West Germany: “Die Tatsache, daß bestimmte Werke (zum Beispiel Solschenizyn) Bestseller werden, hat seinen Grund nicht in einer Steuerung durch westliche Verlage, sondern in der Nachfrage, die von den Verlegern marktpolitisch genutzt wird. Umgekehrt ist an die sowjetische Seite der von ihr selbst erhobene Vorwurf der politischen Einseitigkeit zu richten: In der Sowjetunion werden Werke eindeutig primär unter politischen Gesichtspunkten von staatlichen Organen für die Publikation ausgewählt” (Hübner, 1977, p. 988).

Translations of Kolupaev's works were prepared and published in two major publishing houses of the GDR specializing in science fiction - *Das Neue Berlin* and *Verlag Neues Leben*: “The Freie Deutsche Jugend (Free German

Youth, FDJ) owned the Verlag Neues Leben, one of the primary science fiction publishers. Books appearing with the Verlag Neues Leben targeted young readers ten to twenty-five years of age. The other main producer of science fiction, Verlag Das Neue Berlin (New Berlin Publishers) was charged with creating a profile for the new capital city" (Fritsche, 2006, pp. 93-94).

The *Das Neue Berlin* publishing house, which, according to the recollections of one of the editors E. Redlin, was more autonomous, published five collections, including stories from the Tomsk science fiction writer: *Fenster zur Unendlichkeit* (1974), *Der Schaukel des Eremiten. Phantastische Erzählungen* (1977, 1979, 1985), *Lichtjahr 2* (1981), *Lichtspruch nach Tau* (1986), *Das elektronische Glück* (1982). In this case, the collection of *Der Schaukel des Eremiten. Phantastische Erzählungen*, three times reprinted, includes Kolupaev's stories only.

The *Das Neues Leben* publishing house has prepared two anthologies *Der Weg zur Amalthea* (1979, 1982) and *Der Wurfspieß des Odysseus* (1981). The translation of the story "The Seventh Model" was published in 1988 in the Soviet monthly magazine *Sowjetliteratur*.

A common criterion for the selection of authors for all anthologies was the desire to show Soviet science fiction literature from different angles. For example, for the compilers of the collection *Fenster zur Unendlichkeit* it was important to show not only popular authors: "Unsere Auswahl vereint Schriftsteller mit bekannten Namen, die in der DDR bereits verlegt wurden, wie etwa Mejerow, Warschawski, Grigorjew, Larionowa und die Brüder Strugazki, mit jungen, nachgewachsenen Autoren, die hier erstmals vorgestellt werden" (*Fenster zur Unendlichkeit*, 1974, p. 6).

Hannelore Menke, Gisela Frankenberg, Klaus Dieter Goll translated Kolupaev's works into German. We would like to highlight two translators Dr. Eva-Maria Pitsch and Helga Gutshe who more than once turned to Kolupaev's prose: Pitsch translated 7 works that have entered into a separate collection of *Die Schaukel des Eremiten*, Gutshe translated 2 stories for anthologies on Soviet fiction, *Lichtjahr 2* and *Das elektronische Glück*.

The translations we have analyzed for this study are examples of translation accuracy and adequacy. This is primarily due to the involvement of highly qualified translation personnel specializing in Soviet literature from the publishing houses: Menke is the author and translator of the anthologies of Soviet science fiction *Genie auf Bestellung. Humoristisch - phantastische Erzählungen* (1982), *Notlandung auf dem Tschompot* (1983), and Frankenberg's bibliography contains translations of Kir Bulychev's works, as well as the novel Alexander Belyaev's *Čelovek-amfibiâ* [Amphibian Man]. Pitsch is known for her scientific work on the works of Dostoevsky and publications about the history of Russian art; Gutsche is famous for translations of the Strugatsky brothers' stories *Ponedel'nik načinaetsâ v subbotu* [Monday begins on Saturday] and *Povest' o družbe i nedružbe* [The Story of Friendship and

Unfriendliness], and works of Dmitri Bilenkin. Goll is known for his translations of the works of Kir Bulychev, Vladimir Sanin, etc.

At the same time, the intensive development of the theory and methodology of translation in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century caused the high level of training of translators. In 1972, James Holmes stated the need to recognize the theory of translation as a separate scientific discipline. In addition, many theoretical works on the theory and practice of translation appeared (for example, Andrey Fedorov's *Vvedenie v teoriû perevoda* [Introduction to the theory of translation] (1953), Vilen Komissarov's *Slovo o perevode* [A Word about Translation] (1973) and *Lingvistika perevoda* [Linguistics of Translation] (1980).

Based on the material of translations and the author's concept, the main spatial images were identified - urban space and outer space.

### **The Image of Outer Space in Kolupaev's Short Stories**

In Soviet culture, the topic of outer space was essential. First, this was expressed in the great desire of the party leaders to master the unattainable outer space. As a result, the space program of the USSR began to be implemented in 1955. Literature was undoubtedly one of the tools for popularizing these ideas. Even at the first All-Union Congress of Writers of the USSR in 1934, Leonid Leonov noted that at future world congresses of socialist literature "on the agenda will be not only issues that interpret the birth of a new person, but also issues of a powerful struggle against the elements, an ever-increasing expansion of activities man in space" (First All-Russian Congress of Soviet Writers of the USSR, 1934, p. 151). At the same time, science fiction writers were given a special task - to depict the future of the world in their works, in particular to anticipate and describe technical discoveries: "We do not yet know all the smallest consequences that life will derive from these conditions (of socialism - *I.M.*). However, isn't it an interesting challenge to try to deduce these consequences? This is one of the most important tasks of a science fiction book" (Ibid.). Thus, the images of outer space and spacecraft became symbols of a bright Future for the Soviet people.

Outer space and space objects are one of the central spatial images in Kolupaev's short prose. The characters of his stories coexist not only in the writer's native city of Tomsk (Ust-Mansk or Fomsk), but also in distant corners of the Universe. Images related to the space theme make up about 40% of all short science fiction prose.

We have revealed the image of outer space in the following Kolupaev's works:

- *the cycle of seven stories* "Kapitan Gromoveržca" [Captain of the Thunder God] ("O, moda" [Oh, Fashion] (1982), "Priklûçeniâ na Ferre" [The Ad-

venture on the Ferra] (1982), "Striguny" [Strigons] (1980), "Deficit informacii" [The Lack of Information] (1982), "Isklûčenie" [Exception] (1980), "Poûšij les" [The Singing Forest] (1972), "Obyčnyj den" [Ordinary Day] (1984));

- *the short stories* "Neudačnaâ èkspediciâ" [Unsuccessful Expedition] (1966), "Vesna sveta" [Spring of Light] (1972), "Žemčužina" [The Pearl] (1971), "Zvězdy" [Stars] (1974), "Samyj bol'soj dom" [The Biggest House] (1974), "Oborotnaâ storona" [The Back Side] (1974), "Dve letâšie strely" [Two Flying Arrows] (1975), "Kakie smešnye derev'â" [What Funny Trees] (1975), "Lûbov' k Zemle" [Love for the Earth] (1975), "Molčanie" [Silence] (1977), "Iûn" [June] (1982), and "Sed'maâ model'" [The Seventh Model] (1982);

- *the novellas* "Kačeli otšel'nika" [The Hermit's Swing] (1972) and "Tolstâk nad mirom" [The Fat Man Above the World] (1980).

Outer space is represented in Kolupaev's short stories in different ways: first, through the image of space objects (planets, stars); secondly, through expeditions to the outer space or to the Earth, which in turn perform a plot function; third, through the image of a spaceship; fourthly, through the creation of artificial planets in the framework of laboratory research.

We divide the identified names of space objects in Kolupaev's short prose into four groups. The first group includes the existing astrononyms: Earth in all works, Mars in "Molčanie", the alpha constellation of the Northern Crown Gemma in "Žemčužina". Note that the Tomsk science fiction writer does not refer to the trip to the moon, traditional for Soviet science fiction. The second group includes fictional astrononyms borrowed from foreign languages: *Agricole-4* (from Latin *agricola* 'farmer') in "Oborotnaâ storona", *Ferra* (from Latin *ferrum* 'iron') in "Priklûčeniâ na Ferre", *Penta* (from Greek *penta-* 'multiple of five') in "Striguny", *Selga* (from Latvian 'open sea') in "Isklûčenie", *Teva* (from Hebrew *teva* 'nature') in "O, moda", *Lemza* (from Ukrainian *lamtsi* 'valenki, felt boots'; from Lithuanian 'a slow, sluggish person') in "Deficit informacii". The third group includes the author's astronomy: *Carambunia* in "Poûšij les" and *Otshel'nika* [Hermit] in "Kačeli otšel'nika". In the fourth group, which includes special cases, we include the name of the planet *Tola*, which is an abbreviated version of the word 'trinitrotoluene', a high explosive. In this case, such a name correlates with the anti-militarist intention of the work, as well as with the well known cruiser *Fat Man*, named after the US atomic bomb. It seems that the predominance of foreign words in the names of stars and planets forms the 'friend or foe' paradigm. The author emphasizes the unknown and uncommonness of outer space.

All used astronomy plays an important role in creating a holistic image of outer space. In "Priklûčeniâ na Ferre", the name of the planet is reflected in the characteristics of the inhabitants, the ferricans, who feed exclusively on

iron: They did not eat plant and animal food at all. They ate iron! Other metals and alloys could also. However, most of all they ate iron (Kolupaev, 2017b, p. 402). In "Striguny", "Oborotnaâ storona", and "Kačeli otšel'nika", astronomers describe the planets themselves: *Penta* that has a five-digit meaning in its name, is a star; *Agricole-4*, suitable for human settlement in the future, correlates with the traditional human activity - agriculture, and *Hermit* is uninhabited.

The absence of a name for a space object also has a poetic function. In most cases, the names do not have uninhabited planets, which, in turn, are perceived by the heroes either negatively/hostilely (Unknown planets in "Tolstâk nad mirom" and "Kakie smešnye derev'â"), or neutral (planets as objects of further research, settlement people in "Vesna sveta" and "Dve letâšie strely").

As for the names of spaceships, here Kolupaev prefers mythological and ancient characters (the ship *Cleopatra* in "Oborotnaâ storona"; the ship *Prometheus-6* in "Lûbov' k Zemle"; the ship *Thunderer* in "Kapitan Gromoveržca". The exceptions were "Molčanie" and "Tolstâk nad mirom" where the names of space equipment represented the main characters (He traveled on the *Mysl'* [Thought], She - on the *Nežnost'* [Tenderness]) or realities (Fat Man, a nuclear bomb of the USA).

The toponymy of outer space in Kolupaev's short prose is extensive. It seems that the used toponyms in most cases emphasize the difference between the outer space and the world of people. Outer space is presented as either neutral or negatively colored. The land and home for Kolupaev's characters are a preferred space to alien worlds.

In the story "Žemčuzina", published in German translation as "Das Juwel" in *Der Schaukel des Eremiten*, the image of outer space is represented as real physical space through the use of cosmonyms and astronomers (galaxy, Milky Way, stars *Deneb*, *Algol*, *Mizar* and *Alcor*, *Sirius*, *Vega*, *Gemma*, *Betelgeuse*), as well as astronomical terms (spiral galaxy, galactic arm, globular clusters, galactic disk, supernova). However, from the point of view of the characters, outer space is ambivalent: on the one hand, Space is a mesmerizing world that causes them a state of slight intoxication, on the other; it becomes an ordinary space for Kolupaev's eccentric heroes, namely a store where you can buy Christmas decorations. In "Das Juwel" cosmonyms and terms are rendered using transliterations or calques: Milky Way - Milchstraße, Deneb - Deneb, Algol - Algol, Mizar - Mizar; eine spiralförmige Galaxis [spiral galaxy], kugelförmige Gebilde [globular formations], Supernovae [supernovae]. The image of outer space is fully represented for the German readership from the point of view of the author-narrator and the main characters.

The stories "Samyj bol'šoj dom" (1974) and "Kakie smešnye derev'â" (1975) became the materials of our research earlier (Morozova, 2017a;

Morozova, 2017b), but their German translations will be considered for the first time.

The cosmic spatial image in “Samyj bol’šoj dom” is contrasted with the image of the Earth. Unlike the story *Pearl* in this work, the Space is a dim, uninteresting object: “The viewing screen is open only one third and dim points of the stars are visible in it” (Kolupaev, 2017, p. 486). The planet Earth evokes a wider range of emotions for the main character, the girl Elves, which is compared to the space of the house: “- Is it true that there is a carpet below when you fly on a glider? She asks everyone. <...> - Is it true that the sky looks like a blue ceiling? Remember, Mom, you told me about the biggest house?” (Kolupaev, 2017a, p. 494). Because the description of the earthly space is represented through the child's worldview, there is diminutive-affectionate vocabulary in her speech (“rečka” [a little river], “svetlâčki” [little fireflies], “listiki” [little leaves], “zverûški” [little animals], “lesočki” [little forests], “ručeeek” [little brook]). As a result, the girl perceives the Earth, on the one hand, as a large space (the largest house). However, diminutive words recreated the image of a dear, beloved home. In the German translation, this characteristic was preserved by adding the suffixes *-chen* and *-lein* (little leaves - Blättchen, little brooks - Bächlein) or the adjective ‘klein’ (little fireflies - Kleinen Zichtern, little animals - kleinen Tieren, little houses - kleine Häusern). When translating the title of the story, the translator doubles the scale of the Earth's space: Pitsch uses the superlative adjective ‘groß’ and adds the pronoun ‘all’. Thus, in the German translation “Samyj bol’šoj dom” the spatial images of the Earth and the Outer Space are fully explicated.

“Kakiye smeshnyye derev’ya” is interesting by its spatio-temporal organization, namely by the presence of three chronotopes. On the one hand, the opposition of the planets realizes the ‘friend or foe’ paradigm, which expresses the frightening absurdity of war. On the other hand, the reality in which the soldier Vasily fights and dies on the battlefield is accompanied by a dimension in which he is the father and traveler of the Cosmos. The universe in the consciousness of the character is not divorced from the realities of his life, but is its projection, that is, the space of the Cosmos is a continuation and alternative to the soldier's inner world. In particular, the changes in the names of the children confirmed this: Valentina becomes Vina, Alexander turns into Sandro, and Zoya becomes Oza. The German translation *Was für komische Bäume* is characterized by the absence of translation additions or omissions: the description of the planet, expressed in the form of funny trees, and the plot of the hallucination, in which the space theme is manifested, have been preserved. As a result, the translator was able to convey successfully the spatial image of the Cosmos and the anti-war issues of the original text.

In “Kačeli otšel’nika” outer space is represented in the form of the planet Hermit. It is presented rather negatively colored: the planet is not suitable



for life; ominous selva and fauna inhabit it. In addition, throughout its territory there are zones with different speed of time, which again makes it unacceptable for the life of people. As a result, this outer space appears "alien" and even dangerous for humans. In "Die Schaukel des Eremiten", the image of the Hermit's planet was conveyed fully and adequately both in the title (die Schaukel des Eremiten - the Hermit's Swing) and in the transfer of the landscape: "Auf dem Eremiten herrschten ewiger Frühling und ewiger Sommer. Vom Äquator nach Norden und Süden zu erstreckte sich Tausende von Kilometern, bedrohend und finster, die Selva, ein undurchdringliches Dickicht" (Kolupaev, 1974, pp. 145-146).

### Conclusion

Critics often quoted the phrase of Kolupaev "The one who lived unnoticed lived well". However, the writer has influenced the history of Russian literature a lot. He was able to show other science fiction, for which it is uncharacteristic to have only an entertainment function and remain a second-class genre. His works are a vivid example of how the image of everyday life with fantastic elements are representing serious philosophical problems.

The consideration of the genre paradigm of science fiction literature in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has determined the works of Kolupaev as a soft science fiction. Based on the study of the traditional history and the context of the creation of translations of Soviet science fiction literature in Germany, in particular Kolupaev's works, we conclude that the increased interest in them was due to the international political situation and the influence of the image of cosmonautics of the USSR on the publishing world of the GDR. The translations we have analyzed demonstrate a high degree of transfer of the poetics of Kolupaev's works. Such success became possible due to the attraction of highly qualified translation personnel, the active development of translation studies as a science, which does not cause difficulties in translation terms to the language and the style of the works of the Tomsk science fiction writer. Based on German-language sources, we can also talk about the existence of one of the mainstream Russian-international literary ties, which consists in the predominance of Soviet science fiction literature as translated literature on the territory of the GDR, and, as a result, the creation of a corpus of precedent texts.

This study is the basis for continuing the study of Kolupaev's oeuvre in the future. The research of his works is a promising direction focused on studying not only the poetics, but also the translation reception of science fiction writers in other foreign languages.

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