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# “Le soleil de France”: Warm Translations of Guy de Maupassant in Works by Isaak Babel’ and Ivan Bunin

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“*Le soleil de France*”:

Warm Translations of Guy de Maupassant in Works by Isaak Babel and Ivan Bunin

**Short Title:** Warm Translations of Maupassant in Babel and Bunin

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*Abstract*

In the wake of Lev Tolstoi’s appraisals of his work, Guy de Maupassant was embraced by Russian twentieth-century authors, who admired his mastery of the short story. The Soviet author Isaak Babel and the émigré writer Ivan Bunin reference stories and other texts by Maupassant in their stories ‘Guy de Maupassant’ and ‘Bernard.’ To these authors, Maupassant constitutes a means to express their own outlook on the craft of literature. Mediated by the act of translation from French into Russian, Maupassant’s writing enables the Russian authors to articulate distinct identities regarding their national literature: as Soviet and émigré.

*Keywords:* Warm Translation; French Literature; Russian Literature; Soviet Literature; Émigré Literature.

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«И вот вспоминается мне, что когда-то было написано мною о Бернаре» (“And thus I am reminded of what once had been written by me about Bernard”<sup>1</sup>), writes the narrator in Ivan Bunin’s short story ‘Bernar’ (‘Bernard,’ first published in 1929) (1965-1967 7: 345). Despite this forceful assertion, as the story progresses it becomes clear that neither the fictional narrator nor Bunin had ever written anything about Bernard, a sailor aboard Guy de Maupassant’s yacht: the referent of the “I” of this sentence is, rather, Maupassant. Roman Jakobson classifies personal pronouns as “shifters”— a class of grammatical units “the general meaning” of which “cannot be defined without a reference to the message” (1990: 388). In shifters, “code and message overlap” (389): in the context of a given utterance, “I,” as a part of speech, can only be defined in relation to a speaker who is projected beyond the boundaries of the text. Shifters pose a conundrum when observed from the perspective of translation, insofar as translated speech can be ascribed, not only to one speaker (the original “I”), but also to the translator’s voice. A similar dynamic takes place in ‘Bernard’: neither a conventional translation of Maupassant nor a fictional story written from the point of view of Maupassant, Bunin’s tale undermines the stable identity lurking behind the shifter. As a result, both the authorial and the diegetic “I”<sup>2</sup> of Bunin’s story reside in an ambiguous space between Maupassant’s French-language self and Bunin’s own Russian-language, French-émigré counterpart.

Although ‘Bernard’ might seem an anomaly, it belongs in a series of texts by Russian authors that engage with the legacy and the authorial figure of Guy de Maupassant, the most well-known of which being Lev Tolstoi’s ‘Predislovie k sochineniiam Giui de Mopassana’ (‘Preface to the Works of Guy de Maupassant’), a trial run for the ideas on ethics and aesthetics that he would formulate more systematically in *Chto takoe iskusstvo?* (*What Is Art?*). Isaak Babel’s famous short story ‘Giui de Mopassan’ (‘Guy de Maupassant’) also engages with

Maupassant's works by incorporating into its own plot the act of translation of texts by Maupassant. In this article, I focus on Babel's 'Guy de Maupassant' and Bunin's 'Bernard' in order to argue that, despite the radically distinct aesthetic and ideological outlooks of their authors, both short stories establish a similar intertextual relationship with Maupassant's works articulated by means of translation. Rather than purely *rewritings* (which is how translations are conventionally regarded<sup>3</sup>), 'Guy de Maupassant' and 'Bernard' are *writings*: original literary works that incorporate the act of rewriting through translation (or the figuration thereof). While we can regard *all* translated literature as an extreme case of intertextuality (insofar as the target-language text incorporates in full, and is fully coterminous with, the structure of the source-language text<sup>4</sup>), Babel's and Bunin's texts—neither translations nor quite “original” works—constitute more unpredictable uses of intertextuality.

I employ Sherry Simon's coinage “warm translation” in order to designate the relationship between Maupassant and the Russian-language “authors” of these texts: rather than a substitutive operation (with the author-translator's authorship superimposed on Maupassant's), the stories produce a form of collective or shared authorship. Warm translations “involve interference, rewriting, and creative transposition—and . . . engage more volatile and self-implicated forms of interrelations” (2012: 438). To be sure, neither Babel's nor Bunin's stories are translations in the conventional sense of the word. Yet, while they are not “cold” or purely derivative translations, their modalities of engagement with Maupassant's texts also complicate their status as “original” works. “Warm translation” becomes a means for Babel and Bunin vicariously to formulate their own poetics: they express their respective views of art and authorship by, paradoxically, appropriating and assimilating the foreign words of (and *about*) Maupassant.

By choosing Maupassant as a literary interlocutor, Babel and Bunin conceptualize Russian literature along questions of form, most notably the short story—a genre in which Maupassant, as well as both Russian authors, excelled. Maupassant is not only relevant to the construction of Babel's and Bunin's authorial *selves*; his works also allow both authors to articulate distinct collective identities regarding Russian literature as a whole—as Soviet and émigré respectively. Formulating their conceptions of *Russian* literature through the figure of a *French* author, these Russian authors simultaneously engage with and subvert conventional conceptions of national literature. This is not unique to the cases I discuss here: Andrew Wachtel convincingly demonstrates that, as early as in the Petrine era, “it became a given that Russia's manifest destiny was built not on any inherent quality of Russian culture itself but rather on its ability to absorb and perfect what it had taken from outside” (1999: 54). The means to achieve this manifest destiny was translation: “the basis for this national image lay in a novel interpretation of the imperial project as a project of translation of world culture into and through Russia (1999: 52). Unstably located along a continuum that runs from the concepts of *adaptation* to *appropriation*<sup>5</sup> of Maupassant's texts, the Russian stories bridge the chasm between country- or nation-bound and universal concepts of literature by blurring the boundaries between “original” literary authorship and ostensibly derivative literary translation.

Brian James Baer demonstrates that translation at times was “put forward as an ethical and aesthetic alternative to the Western cult of *original authorship*” (2016: 4; my emphasis): the Soviet era offers a telling example of the constitutive role of translation, with the devaluation—for various reasons, not least of which the rise of socialist realism in the 1930s—of the figure of the author and the emphasis on “text-centered models of literary production . . . which offered a variety of material and creative opportunities to men and women of letters” (2016: 116). What

sets Babel's and Bunin's cases apart from this larger trend is the degree to which 'Guy de Maupassant' and 'Bernard,' despite foregrounding translation as the means through which meaning is produced, continue to rely on traditional notions of authorship. This is akin to Iurii Levin's description of the process of "transformation" (преобразование) of a foreign author through translation, wherein both the "new literature" and the translated author are "enriched" (1985: 6). Even when Babel and Bunin seemingly reproduce Maupassant's poetics, the stories reflect their author-translators' repertoire of tropes, motifs, and devices; they also portray their artistic choices or affiliations; and, finally, they convey information about their author-translators' beliefs regarding the relationship between literature and society.

My analysis is grounded on the concept of metonymy as the means for the achievement of warm translation. Douglas Robinson describes "metonymical translation" as one in which the text is reduced to its "sense, the transcendental 'content' or 'signified' that is posited as standing above or beyond the actual spoken words"; that "sense" is then converted into the target language (1991: 141). Paul de Man argues that translation is a "metonymic, a successive pattern, in which things follow, rather than a metaphorical unifying pattern in which things become one by resemblance. They do not match each other, they follow each other" (de Man 1986: 90). Walter Benjamin writes that "all translation is only a somewhat provisional way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages" (1996: 257), highlighting the distinct historical status of translation vis-à-vis its source. While Benjamin and de Man refer to "cold" translation, metonymy is particularly suitable to express the intertextual relationship contained in warm translation, insofar as that figure of speech focuses on temporal displacement and semantic association.

This essay is divided into three parts: the first part provides an overview of the reception of Guy de Maupassant in Russian letters, emphasizing Tolstoj's evaluation and subsequent interpretations in the Soviet period by readers who either drew attention to the formal attributes of his work or attempted to read him as a "critical realist" author. Following that, I analyze Babel's and Bunin's intertextual engagements with the *oeuvre* of Maupassant. Babel and Bunin engender their concepts of *Russian* literature by embracing its very foreignness as it incorporates a *French* literary tradition by means of (warm) translation. In the conclusion, I analyze the similarities between Babel's and Bunin's appropriations of Maupassant and the usefulness of the concept of "warm translation" to understanding the question of authorship. The focus on the persona of the author, I argue, is recast as a universal question of artistic creation vis-à-vis collective identities.

## I. Maupassant in Russia

The introduction of Maupassant to a Russian readership resulted from the efforts of his friend Ivan Turgenev, who recommended him to Mikhail Stasiulevich, the editor of *Vestnik Evropy*, and advised him on translators (see Denis 1969: 166 and Olshanskaya 2013: 94-95). The Russian writers who embraced Maupassant were attracted to the *poetic* qualities of his work—those elements most closely tied to his deployment of the short story form. The Russian "discovery" of Maupassant coincided with the return of the short story as a dominant genre in Russian literature. Tolstoj's exposure to Maupassant, for instance, complements his predilection for short genres,<sup>6</sup> and follows the exhaustion of the all-encompassing Realist novel as the foremost highbrow literary genre in Russia after the deaths of Dostoevskii and Turgenev, and after Tolstoj himself moved away from the novel after *Anna Karenina*.<sup>7</sup> Not only bound by form, Tolstoj also identifies a moral dimension in Maupassant's *oeuvre*. The Frenchman repeatedly returns to the

problem of human alienation: «мучительное состояние одиночества, духовного одиночества человека, той преграды, которая стоит между человеком и другими» (“the painful condition of loneliness, of spiritual loneliness, of that barrier that stands between a human being and others”) (Tolstoi 1952: 21-22). The emphasis on Maupassant’s humanity and compassion resurfaces in Soviet appraisals of the writer.

In the twentieth century, due in no small part to Maupassant’s own short stories as well as to Chekhov’s, the short story establishes itself as a “high” genre. Explaining that the short story form “foregrounds the moments of revelation that intrigued [Tolstoi],” John M. Kopper points out how “Revelation, not development, distinguishes the short story tradition” (2008: 350). Yet there is a qualitative difference between the Maupassant-Chekhovian trend of short story writing and texts by their Russian predecessors and contemporaries. Whereas, in France and the West, Maupassant was still regarded as too polished and too mechanistic to be truly great,<sup>8</sup> Soviet writers and critics saw him in a more positive light. In the context of Formalism and modernism, Maupassant’s perceived lack of “intellect”<sup>9</sup> proved beneficial, insofar as it allowed the “literariness” of his *oeuvre* to be fully displayed. Thus, in *O teorii prozy* (1929), Viktor Shklovskii refers to Maupassant’s novellas as archetypes of the genre by virtue of their formal traits.<sup>10</sup> And Mikhail Petrovskii, a Moscow philologist and participant in Formalist polemics of the time, analyzes the narrative devices and plot structure of Maupassant’s ‘En Voyage’ in a 1921 article entitled ‘Kompozitsiia novelly u Mopassana.’<sup>11</sup>

Another camp in the Soviet Union regarded the Frenchman as an heir to the Realist tradition, somewhat akin to Chekhov in his focus on “slices of life” in the countryside and the provinces.<sup>12</sup> Building in part on Tolstoi’s own reading of Maupassant as someone capable of depicting the hypocrisy of society—but conveniently overlooking Maupassant’s predilection for erotic themes and love of the beautiful that had displeased Tolstoi—Soviet critics saw the French author as a “critical realist” unafraid to attack the structures of capitalism—in the words of Anatolii Lunacharskii, a kind of «[собрат] по борьбе с пошлостью высших и низших» (“comrade in the fight against the vulgarity of the most privileged as well as the most dispossessed”) (1965: 525).<sup>13</sup> Lunacharskii portrays the French author as someone imbued with «тоскующее стремление к настоящей человечности» (“longing attraction to genuine humanness”) among the petit-bourgeois pettiness of life (1965: 522). Even Babel, whose ‘Guy de Maupassant’ focuses primarily on the formal merits of Maupassant’s prose, appeals to Maupassant’s “realism” when he explains the Frenchman’s relevance in 1932: «Этот писатель непопулярен на своей родине, ведь он с такой убийственной точностью показал быт Франции» (“This writer is unpopular in his homeland, and for good reason, for he depicted the customs [быт] of France with such lethal precision”) (qtd. in Olnik 1932: 25).<sup>14</sup>

Maupassant’s reception in twentieth-century Russian letters was modulated by a dual stance that emphasized at once the “humanistic” qualities of his work and his attention to aesthetic beauty. The former position emerged in the label of “critical realist” that was applied to Maupassant and the likes of Flaubert, Chekhov, and other “bourgeois” authors, while the latter was eventually “translated” into Maupassant’s mastery of the modern short story.<sup>15</sup> Maupassant’s inclination toward aestheticism hindered the development of any dogmatic or doctrinaire philosophical stance in his *oeuvre* (as opposed to his friend Emile Zola). This aestheticism allows for the association of such seemingly disparate qualities with Maupassant: that of master of a literary form, and that of a “humane” and “compassionate” author who depicts “reality.”

Babel was an ideologically uncommitted author who remained in the Soviet Union despite personal and cultural ties with France and Belgium. Bunin was a staunch critic of communism and the Bolsheviks who regarded the October Revolution as a political and cultural usurpation of Russia's true essence. Despite their incompatibility (also manifested in Bunin's trenchant mockery of Babel's writing and other Soviet authors<sup>16</sup>), both authors evoke the same foreign model in 'Bernard' and 'Guy de Maupassant.' To be sure, they enlist Maupassant from myriad other authors who might have served as models and subjects of their warm translations.<sup>17</sup> Maupassant's emphasis on revelation, as both aesthetic and ethical experience, hints at the reasons for Babel's and Bunin's choices, for revelation constituted a key element of their own aesthetics and philosophies.

## II. What's In a Name? Writing Like Maupassant in Babel's 'Guy de Maupassant'

Babel's 1916 essay 'Odessa' has often been read as a kind of programmatic manifesto for the type of literature that, so Babel argues,<sup>18</sup> will contain «настояще[e] радостне[e], ясно[e] описани[e] солнца» (2006 1: 46) (the "truly joyful and vibrant description of the sun" [2018: 6]).<sup>19</sup> The "Literary Messiah" that will redeem Russian literature from its Dostoevskyan gloominess will come from Odessa, «из солнечных степей, обтекаемых морем» (2006 1: 48) ("from the sunny steppe, washed by the sea" [2018: 8]). Maksim Gorkii is evoked as a «предтеча» ("precursor") who describes the sun because he is «глашатай истины: если о чем-нибудь стоит петь, то знайте: это о солнце» (2006 1: 47) ("a herald of the truth: that if there is one thing worthy of song, you can be sure it is the sun" [2018: 7]). The narrator's turn of phrase offers a glimpse into Babel's hierarchy of values:

*А вот Мопассан, может быть, ничего не знает, а может быть—все знает . . . . С Полита и с девки льет пот, а дилижанс громыкает по сожженной светлым зноем дороге. Вот и все.* (2006 1: 47; my emphasis)

*As for Maupassant, maybe he doesn't know anything, and maybe he knows everything; . . . Polyte and the lass are dripping with sweat, while the wagon clatters on the bright scorched road. And that's all.* (2018: 7; my emphasis)

Why the introduction of Maupassant with «А вот», as if he had been lurking throughout the essay as an invisible *tertium comparationis*? The narrator clearly feels that there is a connection between Maupassant and the topic of his essay—the need of a “joyful” description of the sun. Yet not only is this connection left unexplained, but the Maupassant story that Babel references ('L'Aveu,' or 'The Confession') seems to contain no direct reference to the sun, except in the implication that it was a bright day when Polyte and the peasant girl met on the carriage. If this constitutes an example of a “joyful description of the sun,” it is so only by inference. Furthermore, against Babel's implication, this is not “all” that there is to Maupassant's story. Tellingly, another of Babel's alter egos, the narrator of the story 'Guy de Maupassant,' also omits the context in which this episode is brought up: the young peasant Céleste reveals to her mother that she is pregnant from Polyte, and explains to her how this happened. At the end of the story, the mother forces Céleste to hide the pregnancy from Polyte in order to continue riding to town in his carriage for free.

Maupassant and his tale of seduction and greed link 'Odessa' to 'Guy de Maupassant.' Babel's texts both entail the practice of translation; they accomplish that by evoking a French author (and using French expressions in the Russian text) and, in the case of 'Guy de Maupassant,' by incorporating translation into the fabric of the plot.<sup>20</sup> Both texts fit into a continuum that includes Babel's statements on the short story form—for instance in his

conversation at the Soviet Writers' Union in 1937 referenced in fn. 10, at which Babel spoke at length on the distinctions between short stories and novels. There and in 'Odessa,' Gorkii is presented as a "precursor," an author who both "knows" he needs to describe "the sun" and who attempts to write short stories which are novels in disguise. Much as, in Babel's hierarchy, Maupassant is an author who achieves somewhat more than Gorkii when it comes to the sun, the implication is that the former is also the author who manages to write *real* short stories. Babel develops this argument in 'Guy de Maupassant,' in which the question of form is deeply entwined with the art of translation.

Translation is present throughout 'Guy de Maupassant,' starting at the level of the plot: the narrator is hired to help Raisa Benderskaia, the wife of a Jewish magnate, revise her translations of Maupassant; he then uses the plots of Maupassant's stories (including 'L'Aveu') to seduce Benderskaia, reenacting the events from those stories on paper—into Russian—as well as in "real life." Nils Åke Nilsson argues that a core theme of 'Guy de Maupassant' is "the contrast between dream and reality" (1982: 219), for instance in the fact that the narrator at once opens Benderskaia's eyes "to the secrets of literary style and the art of translation" while simultaneously living "himself in a world of dreams and illusions" (1982: 220).<sup>21</sup> Translation performs an unstable role in this binary: from the beginning of the story, the narrator indirectly contrasts translation with everyday life. He portrays himself as an idealist who refuses a clerkship because «лучше голодовка, тюрьма, скитания, чем сидение за конторкой часов по десяти в день» (2006 1:225) (he would prefer to "starve, go to jail, or roam the earth than sit ten hours a day behind a desk" [2018: 44]). By contrast, he welcomes the opportunity to help Benderskaia in her translation work: «На рождестве к нам привалило счастье» (2006 1: 226) ("At Christmastime we had a stroke of luck" [2018: 44]), and, when describing his process of "correcting" Benderskaia's translation, he points out that «Работа не так дурна, как кажется» (2006 1: 227) ("The work wasn't as bad as it sounds" [2018: 45]). Through a series of images, the narrator connects this very "work"—which he pragmatically claims not to be "as bad" as the reader might think—to the "idealistic" or "illusory" side of his existence. The narrator's work literally takes place while the other inhabitants of Kazantsev's apartment are sleeping (thereby foretelling the narrator's epiphany at the end of the narrative, which takes place as Kazantsev falls asleep on a copy of *Don Quixote*): «Я унес рукопись к себе и дома в мансарде Казанцева—среди спящих—всю ночь прорубил просеки в чужом переводе» (2006 1: 227) ("I took the manuscript home with me, and, in Kazantsev's attic, while the others slumbered, I spent all night hacking a path through someone else's translation" [2018: 45]). The word чужой highlights the narrator's alienation from Maupassant's original by drawing attention to the fact that the narrator is further altering *someone else's* translation (already in itself a derivative product of *Maupassant's* work). Чужой also resonates with his arrival in Benderskaia's mansion earlier that morning, «облачившись в чужой пиджак» (2006 1: 226) ("dressed in someone else's jacket" [2002: 680]).<sup>22</sup> The verb облачиться (often used to refer to religious vestments, and here deployed instead of the more standard одеться) reinforces the dreamlike aspect of the narrator's translation activity: it contains the same root as облако, "cloud," which is also an old Russian word for "dress" (Shaposhnikov 2010: 39). Облачившись thus belongs in a semantic chain associated with the host Kazantsev, a translator from Spanish, who knows «все замки, сады и реки» (2006 1: 225) ("all its castles, gardens, and rivers" [2018: 44]) in Spain, despite having never been there. Mikhail Iampolskii notes that Kazantsev's knowledge of "all castles" in Spain evokes the French expression "*châteaux en Espagne*," the equivalent of the English "castles in the sky" and the Russian «воздушные замки» (Iampolskii, in Zholkovskii and

Iampolskii 1994: 190). The narrator's "donning" of *someone else's* jacket thus constitutes a metaphor of translation itself, as the appropriation of another author's words; by association with Kazantsev's "illusory" knowledge of Spain, it also locates translation squarely within the realm of dreams and illusions.

The emphasis on translation as an experience of alterity points to an underlying condition—whether actual or metaphoric—of many characters in the story, namely homelessness. The narrator had turned up in Petersburg «с фальшивым паспортом и без гроша денег» (2006 1: 225) ("with a forged passport and not a penny to my name" [2018: 44]): in other words, while he officially resides elsewhere in Russia, a fake residence permit allows him to stay in Petersburg. His host Kazantsev is the happiest in the narrator's circle because «У него была родина—Испания» (2006 1: 225) ("He had a motherland—Spain" [2018: 44]). The narrator's seduction-*cum*-artistic education of Benderskaia becomes a way for her also to find a home, even if this home is elsewhere from where she actually originates. The atmosphere of self-delusion suggested by her translations extends to her husband, Benderskii, an assimilated Jew whose house the narrator describes as one of «множество пошлых, фальшиво величавых этих замков» built by «Банкиры без роду и племени, выкресты, разжившиеся на поставках» (2006 1:226) ("many such vulgar, pretentious castles" built by bankers "without family or tribe, converts who made money selling supplies to the army" [2018: 45]). What distinguishes the "homeless" Benderskii with his "pretentious" "castle" from the "homeless" translators (such as Kazantsev with his "castles in Spain") is the fact that, through the artistic craft, the latter are able to find a "home," elusive as it may be, in the foreign places they access through translation.

Translation and its constitutive activities—reading and writing—all play a role in the narrator's ultimate insight into the human condition. Lida Oukaderova notes that Babel's narrator "implies that language—and therefore meaning—is heterogeneous, and it is the task of the translator to reveal this heterogeneity" (2002-2003: 163). In the case of Babel's narrator—and arguably of Babel himself, as a translator of Maupassant—this difference or heterogeneity consists of the "foreignization" of the national literature: both the narrator's seduction of Benderskaia and Babel's own advocacy of the introduction of the "sun" to Russian literature rely on modes of explication of Maupassant's prose, in terms of content or style, in order to address—and emulate—what they regard as its essential, defining trait. The transcendental "sense" of Maupassant's text, Babel argues, is contained in the poetic material of the source-language stories—hence his attempt to "foreignize" Russian literature, rather than to *translate* the French originals.

This appropriation of Maupassant's poetics resembles a metonymical transfer. Metonymy, as Douglas Robinson notes, "is literally a change of names" (1991: 141); at its most basic level, metonymical translation in Babel's story takes place as the narrator replays the plot of 'L'Aveu' "in real life" with Benderskaia. Readers of Babel have observed that the narrator commits a number of misrepresentations or inaccuracies regarding 'L'Aveu,'<sup>23</sup> and earlier I mentioned the narrator's selective summary of the plot of that story in 'Guy de Maupassant.' At the diegetic level, these inaccuracies represent the translator's interference into Maupassant's text. Yet this episode itself is embedded in a literary text: the "real life" events are only a "literary" plot borrowed from another story. The inaccuracies point to the multifarious transformation of Maupassant's text. As the narrator strives to *relive* Maupassant's 'L'Aveu' in the course of translating it, he also becomes the "author" of his own fiction in the process of retelling these events.

The culmination of this process of “authorship,” ironically, is the self-effacement of the figure of the author—a process which is enacted by warm translation. The following oft-quoted passage from ‘Guy de Maupassant,’ which resembles a *profession de foi* of literary authorship, offers a case in point:

Фраза рождается на свет хорошей и дурной в одно и то же время. Тайна заключается в повороте, едва ощутимом. Рычаг должен лежать в руке и обогреться. Повернуть его надо один раз, а не два. (2006 1: 227)

A phrase is born into the world both good and bad at the same time. The secret lies in a barely discernible twist. The lever should rest in your hand, getting warm. You must turn it once, but not twice. (2018: 45)<sup>24</sup>

The narrator references phrases which “are born” simultaneously good and bad, with no indication of what they are born *from* or *who* gives birth to them. While this mini-lesson in sentence composition might appear to refer to “original” literary creation, it is actually elicited by the narrator’s work of correcting Benderskaia’s translation, from which «не осталось и следа от фразы Мопассана, свободной, текущей, с длинным дыханием страсти. Бендерская писала утомительно правильно, безжизненно и развязно—так, как писали раньше еврей на русском языке» (2006 1: 227; my emphasis) (“there was no trace of Maupassant’s free-flowing phrases with their drawn-out breath of passion. Mrs. Bendersky’s *writing* was tediously correct, lifeless and loud, the way Jews used to write Russian back in the day” [2018: 45; my emphasis]). As he criticizes the lifeless “correctness” of Benderskaia’s translation, the narrator focuses, not on “faithfulness” *per se* to the original, but on Benderskaia’s own act of *writing in Russian*. Translation in ‘Guy de Maupassant’ holds the key to the aesthetic and ethical experiences of the narrator, insofar as it constitutes a way, not of homogenizing foreign discourse (Maupassant’s texts), but instead of foreignizing one’s own (learning to write *like* Maupassant). Benderskaia’s “laborious and inert correctness” is harmful precisely because it glosses over the foreignness of her own texts as translations from the French.

Warm translation enables Babel to pass aesthetic judgment on Maupassant’s prose while questioning the concept of “original” writing: the narrator regards translation as a fully creative activity guided by the same aesthetic principles as the creation of “original” literary texts. Iampolskii notes that Babel «явно стремится превратить чужой текст в свой, стать его автором» (in Zholkovskii and Iampolskii 1994: 195), and the narrator’s confusion between “original” literary creation and translation seems to reinforce this notion. At the same time, the narrator’s emphasis on phrases which “are born” and on Benderskaia’s (not the narrator’s own) writing also complicates a seemingly straightforward metonymical transfer (a literal change of *names*, from Maupassant to Babel). Rather than emphasizing the Romantic conception of literary creation as the product of “inspiration,”<sup>25</sup> the narrator privileges instead a final product which is relatively independent from individual authorship and strives to convey its own foreignness—i.e. its dependence on a preliminary piece of writing. Babel hints at a process akin to the “gestures of depersonalization performed in literary and artistic theory” of the Soviet era that Petre M. Petrov describes in *Automatic for the Masses* (2015: 26). Petrov’s narrative culminates in the complete self-effacement of the author in socialist realism, yet the principles of this self-effacement had already appeared in Formalism: “The symbolic achievement of Formalism . . . is to imagine literature as a work driven by necessity, as a kind of practice that satisfies an objective demand. . . the impersonal need of the craft itself, the imperative issued from its own inner logic” (2015: 41). In similar fashion, Babel’s narrator seems to envision an author-translator who is, in Petrov’s words, an “employee of form” (2015: 41): even the narrator’s alienated work on

Benderskaia's translation, marked with the adjective *чужой*, is described via a metaphor (прорубить просеки, "to cut swaths or clearings in the forest") that emphasizes the physicality of the operation. Thus "authorship" relies on a conception of labor as a kind of impersonal and physical work: phrases which are "born" alone are not enough to make a true literary text; the narrator must "cut swaths" in Benderskaia's translation and "turn the lever" in order to make the phrases "good."

While there is no easy solution to the conundrum of translation as an alternatively autonomous and derivative activity, 'Guy de Maupassant' follows the Maupassant model by providing a glimpse into the experience of alterity that lies at the center of the narrator's activity. 'Guy de Maupassant' culminates with a revelation which falls under the theme of the insight (art- and love-related) that Babel's heroes often experience. After another night spent with Benderskaia, the narrator returns home and reads Maunial's biography of Maupassant. His epiphany derives from the discovery of the tragic facet of Maupassant's life that had been left out of the "sunny" tales of the French countryside that he had been translating with Benderskaia.<sup>26</sup> He recollects details of Maupassant's degrading condition, including the rumors that he ate his own excrement and walked on all fours (2006 1: 234-235; 2018: 49-50).<sup>27</sup> His earlier appreciation of the seemingly idyllic aspects of life in a faraway France («в стране роз, на родине роз, там, где плантации цветов спускаются к берегу моря...» [2006 1: 228]; "in the land of roses, the birthplace of roses where flowering slopes reach down to sea..." [2018: 46]) had overlooked the implicit criticism of morals contained in these tales or, alternatively, the tragic circumstances of Maupassant's own life in contrast with the "sunny" artistic fruits of his labor. It is unclear whether the "truth" the narrator experiences really entails a rejection of his previous debauchery, i.e. of the illusions and pretensions that had guided him through most of the narrative, or if it sensitizes him to the variety of experiences and emotions that are part of human life, whether in idyllic France or in foggy Petersburg.<sup>28</sup> It is fair to assume, however, that this insight has to do with the narrative's emphasis on the craft of literature and the equation of writing with translation. Janneke van de Stadt writes that "truth is imparted in 'Guy de Maupassant' not despite fiction, but by way of it. . . . The vehicle of translation is a supremely effective way through which Babel can communicate his thoughts on the power of art" (2006: 651). The metapoetic character of 'Guy de Maupassant' implies that the narrator's "insight" («предвестие истины» [2006 1: 235], "premonition of the truth" [2018: 50]) entails a commitment to art, no matter how illusory or deceitful it may be. This commitment supersedes the "reality" of Maupassant's tragic death and the narrator's drab living condition, even though art would not exist without this underlying "reality." Just as Gorkii was the *предтеча* in 'Odessa,' reading Maunial grants the narrator a *предвестие истины*. The path to the *immediate* experience, whether of the "sun" or of "truth," runs through Maupassant's *words*, specifically through the twenty-nine volumes of his collected works which, earlier in the story, are called «прекрасн[ая] могил[а] человеческого сердца» (2006 1: 228) ("a magnificent grave of the human heart" [2018: 46]) as the Petersburg sun sheds its rays on them. It is the narrator's act of translating Maupassant—his fidelity to the aesthetic "spirit" of the original (if not to the plot)—that grants him access to this truth.

Warm translation plays such a central role in Babel's aesthetics because it affords him an insight that arises from the contrast of Maupassant's *writing* (the twenty-nine volumes that fall from the shelf onto the lovers) to his *life* (Maunial's biography). The paradox lies in the fact that, while translation benefits from the narrator's heightened understanding of the *author's* biography (and therefore relies on a conventional concept of the author's biography as a source of insight

into his works), it eventually requires him to *efface* that authorial figure, which is replaced by the hybrid figure of the author-translator and by the self-effacing modernist writer-as-laborer. ‘Guy de Maupassant,’ with its emphasis on the intangible qualities of a literary text and iconoclastic approach to Maupassant’s life, became the target of criticism in the Soviet Union, *e.g.* by readers who questioned the story’s focus on the eroticism of Maupassant’s writings. This critique hints at a deeper source of trouble for Babel, namely the perceived “decadence” or “hedonism” of his writing and its ostensible alienation from Soviet reality. At the same time, with ‘Guy de Maupassant,’ Babel also finds himself, as it were, at the vanguard of an opening up to Western literature and culture over the course of the 1930s—part of what Katerina Clark calls “a general shift . . . to a broader, less parochial purview” (2011: 137) of arts and politics that took place after the foundation of the Soviet Writers’ Union. Read in this context, Babel’s advocacy of Maupassant and equation of writing and translating activities point the way toward a model of literature marked by a cosmopolitan mindset that would become, if not dominant, at least noticeably present in Soviet society for the remainder of that decade. Babel’s “illusion” of Spanish castles and *le soleil de France* became, for a fleeting moment, a part of Soviet reality.

### III. Remembering and Imagining Foreignness in Bunin’s ‘Bernard’

Foreignness and cultural alienation play a central role in Ivan Bunin’s poetics in (and of) exile in his post-emigration prose. One of his most remarkable treatments of the theme occurs in ‘Bernard,’ first published in 1929, included in the book collection *Bozh'e drevo* in 1931, and revised again in 1952. A text that formally resembles a sketch or work of poetic prose,<sup>29</sup> ‘Bernard’ constitutes Bunin’s literary *profession de foi* and testament.<sup>30</sup> Like Babel’s ‘Guy de Maupassant,’ Bunin’s short story demonstrates the concept of warm translation as it incorporates Guy de Maupassant’s writing while mixing categories of authorship (Bunin’s, Maupassant’s, and others’) and national origin (French, Russian, émigré).

The title of the story, which refers to the captain of Maupassant’s yacht *Bel-Ami* (whose family name remains unknown<sup>31</sup>), indicates the trope guiding Bunin’s operation of translation and poetics more broadly, namely metonymy. As in ‘Guy de Maupassant,’ metonymy blurs the boundaries of authorship in ‘Bernard,’ but this result is achieved differently. The first-person narrator of the story opens the narrative by referencing texts by Maupassant, only to then switch to a discussion of Bernard, a character whose presence is at first solely accountable for by his service to Maupassant. After quoting and translating Maupassant’s *Sur l’eau*, Bunin proceeds to quote in translation *another author’s* text that, rather than referencing Maupassant, is in fact a report on *Bernard* as a guardian of the memory of Maupassant. While ‘Bernard’ plays extensively with names and authorship, it can also be read as a metonymical translation, not of the French texts *per se*, but of what Bunin regards as their intrinsic “meaning.” Emulating neither the content nor the style of Maupassant’s writings, Bunin instead metonymically *succeeds* or follows Maupassant’s text with his own lines, creatively repurposing fragments from Maupassant—and other authors—while at the same time addressing a Russian-language readership with his writing.

The Maupassant intertext performs a number of related functions in ‘Bernard’: it offers a formal and thematic link to a number of other “minimalist” stories (to use Adrian Wanner’s coinage) that Bunin wrote during his time in exile; it provides the setting for a series of operations whereby Bunin multiplies the writing selves manifested in the text—a frequent trope in Bunin’s prose, but particularly prominent in ‘Bernard’; and, finally, it enables Bunin, by means of thematic and personal parallels, to outline a model of Russian émigré literature

centered around his own literary legacy. In this section, I will address each of these discrete functions.

Wanner writes that Bunin's "prose miniatures" emulate the generic model of Turgenev's prose poems, intended to fulfill his "original project of the prose poem as a posthumous text" (2003: 34). Bunin's texts approach "the death theme metonymically": in them, "we encounter the ordinary accoutrements of the burial industry" (Wanner 2003: 40). 'Bernard' partakes in this "prosaic" elaboration of the theme of death<sup>32</sup>: the story opens *in medias res*, first with a mention of approaching death, and then by quoting a text ostensibly written by the narrator:

Дней моих на земле осталось уже мало.

И вот вспоминается мне то, что когда-то было записано мною о Бернаре в Приморских Альпах, в близком соседстве с Антибами.

—Я крепко спал, когда Бернар швырнул горсть песка в мое окно...

Так начинается «На воде» Мопассана, так будил его Бернар перед выходом «Бель Ами» из Антибского порта 6 апреля 1888 года. (1965-1967 7: 345)

I have only a few days left on Earth.

And now I am reminded of what had once been written by me about Bernard in the Alpes-Maritimes, not far from Antibes.

—I was sleeping soundly when Bernard threw a handful of sand at my window...

Thus begins *Sur l'eau* by Maupassant, thus Bernard woke him up before the departure of the *Bel-Ami* from the port of Antibes on April 6, 1888.

There is no indication, in the opening paragraphs, that this is Maupassant "speaking": the artifice resides in the fact that the "I," while being explicitly associated with the narrator, turns out to be *also* Guy de Maupassant by the time the reader reaches the fourth paragraph. The 82-year-old Bunin, writing in 1952, was nearing death himself (and aware of that<sup>33</sup>). For a few lines, the narrative also allows for the possibility that the "I" might be Bunin himself. The narrator resembles Bunin in his awareness of impending death, but claims authorship of lines written by Maupassant. This ambiguous narratorial self-representation is typical of the late Bunin. As Iurii Maltsev writes in his analysis of *Temnye allej* (*Dark Alleys*, Bunin's last volume, dating from approximately the same time period as the final redaction of 'Bernard'), «Бунин выражает представление о многослойности нашего «я», а главное, о его некой посторонности и неподвластности нам» (1994: 327) ("Bunin expresses a conception of our "I" as multileveled, and furthermore as somewhat outside of us and outside our control."). While the narrator of 'Bernard' resonates with a general "contiguity principle" that contaminates other selves projected in Bunin's *oeuvre*, what distinguishes him is precisely the fact that, like Bunin (and, of course, like Maupassant), this "self" is a *writer*.

After the opening quote, Bunin weaves more passages from *Sur l'eau*<sup>34</sup> that resonate with his worldview (see Bunin 1965-1967 7: 346).<sup>35</sup> He then introduces a third "self" into the story—the title character. The narrator follows Maupassant's mentions of Bernard with a direct quote from Bernard himself:

Так говорил о Бернаре Мопассан. А сам Бернар сказал про себя следующее:

—Думаю, что я был хороший моряк. Je crois bien que j'étais un bon marin.

Он сказал это, умирая,—это были его последние слова. (1965-1967 7: 346)

Thus spoke Maupassant about Bernard. Yet Bernard said the following about himself:

—I think I was a good sailor. Je crois bien que j'étais un bon marin.

He said that as he was dying—those were his last words.

At the conclusion of the story, the narrator returns to Bernard's statement in order to apply it to himself this time: «Мне кажется, что я, как художник, заслужил право сказать о себе, в свои последние дни, нечто подобное тому, что сказал, умирая, Бернар» (1965-1967 7: 347) (“I believe that I, as an artist, earned the right to speak of myself, in my final days, something similar to what Bernard, dying, said of himself”).<sup>36</sup> Thus Bernard, in the story that bears his title, fulfills more than a purely “realistic” or intradiegetic function: he becomes yet another iteration of the narrative self. Bunin affirms an identity between multiple narrators—Maupassant, Bernard, and the unnamed, implied author—and the extra-diegetic figure of the writer, but simultaneously claims that this identity is an artifice: the “I” in that final sentence *is* Bunin, the Russian émigré writer and Nobel Prize winner, affirming his “right” to state that he was as good a writer as Bernard was a sailor. Paradoxically, then, the individuality of this rhetorical “I” hinges on a parallel—and on an identity—with other “I”s; similarly, Bunin’s attempt to subsume these different lives under the umbrella of an anonymous, grammatical “I” highlights, not the linguistic and literary achievements of Maupassant and Bunin, but the lived experiences that underscore them. Bunin’s elision of individual authorship is founded on the privileging of conventional markers of authorship such as the author-*qua*-historical figure and the Horatian (and Pushkinian) notion of *exegi monumentum*.

It seems simplistic to affirm that the point of ‘Bernard’ is to express a parallel between the common man and the lofty writer, especially if we bear in mind that, over the course of this comparison, Bunin goes to the extent of quoting *another* writer—and a French-language author at that—in order to carry this point across. This question becomes more compelling in view of the possible sources for the direct quote from Bernard. Bunin references an unnamed person «который видел Бернара незадолго до его смерти» (1965-1967 7: 346) (“who saw Bernard not long before his death”), who constitutes a likely source for Bernard’s last words. This person is Pierre Borel, a local historian, whose article ‘Guy de Maupassant sur la Côte d’Azur’ was published in the literary supplement to *Le Figaro* in 1923, and possibly republished in subsequent years. Borel’s article opens with mention of the fact that Guy de Maupassant often talks about Bernard in *Sur l’Eau*, supplying, as it were, the cues for the opening passages of Bunin’s own ‘Bernard.’ Borel’s article also supplies the French original for three of four paragraphs quoted by Bunin, as the comparison below demonstrates. Bunin translates, or broadly paraphrases, the beginning of Borel’s article, with the notable exception being the sentence (underlined below in both texts) in which Bunin informs the reader that Bernard is already dead—in his 1923 article, Borel had still been able to meet him personally.<sup>37</sup>

First, Bunin’s text:

—В продолжение многих лет Бернар делил бродячую морскую жизнь великого поэта, не расставался с ним до самого рокового отъезда его к доктору Бланш, в Париж.

—Бернар умер в своих Антибах. Но еще недавно видел я его на солнечной набережной маленького Антибского порта, где так часто стояла «Бель Ами».

—Высокий, сухой, с энергичным и продубленным морской солью лицом, Бернар не легко пускался в разговоры. Но стоило только коснуться Мопассана, как голубые глаза его мгновенно оживали, и нужно было слышать, как говорил он о нем! (1965-1967 7: 346)

—Over the course of many years Bernard shared the roaming seafaring life of the great poet; he did not leave his side until his fateful departure to see Dr. Blanche in Paris.

—Bernard died in his Antibes. But still not long ago I saw him on the sunny boardwalk of the small port of Antibes, where the *Bel-Ami* so often lied at anchor.

—Tall, his skin dry, with an energetic face hardened by sea salt, Bernard did not easily engage in conversation. But it was enough to touch on the subject of Maupassant for his blue eyes momentarily to liven up; one should hear how he spoke of him!

Below is text from Borel's article:

Ce brave marin partagea, durant plusieurs années, la vie tourmentée et vagabonde du grand romancier qu'il servit avec fidélité jusqu'à son internement chez le docteur Blanche. Aujourd'hui, le "patron" termine sa carrière de navigateur à Antibes. Vous le recontrerez aux abords de ce joli petit port, tout doré de lumière, et où longtemps le *Bel-Ami* vint mouiller. Grand, sec, le visage tanné par les embruns, Bernard est plutôt réservé. Mais citez le nom de Maupassant, soudain son regard s'avive, son torse se redresse. Il faut l'entendre parler de "monsieur de Maupassant". (Borel 1923: 2)<sup>38</sup>

This brave sailor shared, for many years, the tormented and roaming life of the great novelist, whom he faithfully served up until he was committed to the care of Dr. Blanche.

Nowadays, the "boss" is ending his career as a navigator in Antibes. You will find him around that quaint small port, all gilded by the sunlight, and where often the *Bel-Ami* used to lie at anchor.

Tall, dry, his face beaten by the seaspray, Bernard is rather reserved. But if you mention the name of Maupassant, suddenly his eyes will brighten up, his chest will stand up straight. One has to hear him speak of "Monsieur de Maupassant."

Following immediately after the last quote from Borel, Bunin returns to Bernard's last words, introducing the paragraph with the same em-dash that he used for the Borel quotes: «—Теперь он умолк навеки. Последние его слова были: «Думаю, что я был хороший моряк». (1965-1967 7: 346) ("—Now he has forever gone silent. His last words were: 'I think that I was a good sailor'"). No source for this quote has been traced yet—it is absent from Borel's 1923 article. It is evidently possible that Bunin, despite passing off this quote as written by someone else, is in fact its "original" author. Regardless of the primordial authorship of those lines, Bunin suggests that authorship itself is of lesser importance than the *effect* of the text on a readership. In other words, it does not matter *who* witnessed Bernard's last words, or even *whether* he truly said those words; what matters is the positive existence of those words.

Bunin reflects on Bernard's death with a characteristic turn of phrase that draws attention to the power of imagination as simultaneously an instrument of literary creation and of reconstitution of reality: «Я живо представляю себе, как именно сказал он эти слова. Он сказал их твердо, с гордостью, перекрестившись черной, иссохшей от старости рукой» (1965-1967 7: 346) ("I can vividly imagine how precisely he said these words. He spoke them resolutely, proudly, crossing himself with his black hand, dried up from old age").<sup>39</sup> While Bunin's story metonymically reproduces the "meaning" of the French texts, it also, in a seemingly paradoxical stance, emphasizes the speculative or imaginative ("metaphorical") character of literary creation. The narrator's "imagination" reinforces an identity between the literary self and the sailor founded on the former's capacity to visualize the *way* the latter speaks. Yet this identification is by no means as straightforward as the narrator suggests; instead, it takes place across various layers of meaning, with the sailor Bernard refracted through multiple written iterations which Bunin, in turn, has translated and incorporated into his text.<sup>40</sup>

Thus the message of 'Bernard' hinges on the power of language to *create* experiences of reality. Bunin's choice of texts written in French and translated—presumably by himself—into Russian is hardly accidental, and indicates a conceptual framework that emphasizes the linguistic manifestation of reality over reality itself. For translation, seemingly a "derivative" aesthetic

manifestation, reliant as it is on an “original” that precedes it, turns out to acquire a life of its own: in Benjamin’s formulation, “Just as the manifestations of life are intimately connected with the phenomenon of life without being of importance to it, a translation issues from the original—not so much from its life *as from its afterlife*” (1996: 254; my emphasis). In like fashion, Bunin’s story, relying as it does on the texts that preceded it (including, most notably, Maupassant’s), creatively transforms them in order to conjure the image of Bernard (in his *afterlife*) and thereby to make a statement about Bunin’s own poetics.

By incorporating material written not only by Bunin but also by Maupassant and Borel, ‘Bernard’ subverts conventional associations between national languages, cultures, and literatures. Translation enables Bunin to make a statement regarding the very significance of his literary output in the context of emigration and the watershed moment of the October Revolution. Wanner argues that “the impetus for Bunin’s writing was to preserve a cultural tradition that he believed had been lost in his homeland”—but that his minimalism also “appears as an eminently modern feature” (2003: 44). Somewhat akin to the Babelian notion of translation as a way of rejuvenating *Russian* (or *Soviet*) literature, Bunin’s approach to translation treats it as a tool for *preserving* a heritage irrevocably lost to the vagaries of history. Yet it aims to accomplish that precisely by embracing the dislocated character of exilic literature. While Babel’s rejuvenation, despite relying on a French nineteenth-century author, is primarily forward-looking, setting forth a *model* of what Soviet literature could become, Bunin instead regards himself as the endpoint of a long process whereby Russian literature came into being—until the fact of the October Revolution.

Bunin’s criticism of the Soviet Union and the literature that was coming out of it are well known and documented; the Revolution appears to Bunin as an event inimical to his (idealized) way of life. Hence Russian literature in exile, to Bunin, lays claim to being the legitimate Russian literature post-1917: the Russianness of an exilic text such as ‘Bernard’ hinges on a formal category—the language in which it is written—as well as on a contingent one—the fact that its author is Bunin himself. Rather than contradicting the Russianness of ‘Bernard,’ the cosmopolitan references to Maupassant’s wandering life and works instead support it. They address a theme dear to the culturally and spatially delocalized audience of émigrés and exiles such as Bunin—namely, how to reconcile their “Russianness” with the fact that the Russia that they had known was being irretrievably confined to the past and to memory.<sup>41</sup> Bunin’s solution resembles Babel’s, insofar as it relies on a similar embrace of cosmopolitanism. Bunin’s incorporation of French texts is at once an acknowledgment of the foreignness of Russia(n)—a foreignness made more salient by the fact of the Revolution and the creation of an émigré culture spatially cut off from the motherland—and an attempt to preserve, through translation, the Russian language from what he regarded as the unnatural Soviet onslaught. It is an attempt, in other words, to “come to terms” with the foreignness of any language—including his own.

#### IV. Conclusion

Whereas Babel and Bunin deploy the act of translation—whether as metaphor or as an aesthetic activity in its own right—in order to reinforce their own conceptions of literary authorship, Maupassant’s texts do not serve solely as a foil for poetic statements in the Russian-language stories. Translation, as Lawrence Venuti suggests, also entails equivalence—and dissimilarities—between *cultures*, including at the national level.<sup>42</sup> Insofar as they accomplish a form of French-Russian hybridity in terms of content as well as language, the two stories engage with the concept of a national Russian literature, an underlying notion of “Russianness” which is equated with “Soviet culture” (Babel) or with “émigré culture” (Bunin). Translation and

intertextuality remind us that these texts, beyond their status as works of *Russian* literature, are also culturally dislocated from dominant contemporaneous conceptions of what “Russian culture” means.

Through ‘Guy de Maupassant’ and ‘Bernard,’ Babel and Bunin respectively observe their own poetics, and the very act of writing, from an outside perspective. By speaking through Maupassant, by assuming Maupassant’s literary identity, and by reenacting his plots, Babel and Bunin probe the conventional character of literature as the product of the individual figure of the Author—of someone named “Guy de Maupassant,” for example.<sup>43</sup> Ironically, this effacement of the primordial authorial figure—replaced, through warm translation, with a non-exclusive conception of authorship—takes place in texts which rely on a traditional concept of the author-*qua*-historical figure: both Babel’s and Bunin’s narrators assume and investigate a Maupassant renowned for his literary works and endowed with a history of his own. Their process of exploration of his life coincides with the appropriation of his words. In his groundbreaking essay on shifters, Roman Jakobson conveys an anecdote on none other than the French writer: “Thus Guy de Maupassant confessed that his name sounded quite strange to him when pronounced by himself” (1990: 389). Somewhat akin to Maupassant’s reaction, in these stories that bear the names of other people in their titles,<sup>44</sup> Babel and Bunin reject *proper names* as the foundation of their authorship—even if, in the course of doing so, they become ever more involved in the historical fact of Maupassant’s *life*. What takes the place of proper names is shifters: instead of “a story written by *Guy de Maupassant*,” warm translation allows the Russian authors to assert that “this is a story written by *me*.”

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<sup>1</sup> All translations are mine except where noted.

<sup>2</sup> Or rather "me" and "by me"; Bunin eschews the nominative "I" in that sentence, using instead oblique cases (dative and instrumental). He thus at once hints at an active narrator and suppresses the latter's agency.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., André Lefevere's description of translation as "the most obviously recognizable type of rewriting" as well as "the most influential because it is able to project the image of an author and/or a (series of) work(s) in another culture" (1992: 9).

<sup>4</sup> See Laurent Jenny, who speaks "of intertextuality only when there can be found in a text elements exhibiting a structure created previous to the text, above the level of the lexeme, of course, but independently of the level of that structure" (1982: 40). For a useful overview of the history and status of intertextuality in Structuralist, Post-Structuralist, and Dialogic (Bakhtinian) discourses, see Allen 2011.

<sup>5</sup> The former is understood as the "[re]interpretation] of [an] established [text] in new generic contexts or perhaps with relocations of an 'original' or source texts's cultural and/or temporal setting, which may or may not involve a generic shift" (Sanders 2006: 19), while *appropriation* constitutes an activity that "frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain" (2006: 26).

<sup>6</sup> On Tolstoi and the short story form, see Kopper 2008 and Foster 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Tolstoi's novel *Voskresenie* (*Resurrection*, 1899) is, of course, the exception to that rule. The novella *Khadzhi-Murat* (pub. 1912) is at times classified as a "short novel," and its style of composition is similar to that of *Anna Karenina*; like the earlier work, its chapters are organized as "a series of short, sharply focused scenes" (Foster 2013: 169).

<sup>8</sup> See the answers to a questionnaire circulated in 1938 among prominent Western European and North American writers by the French scholar Artine Artinian (1969: 129-192).

<sup>9</sup> The French writer Abel Hermant argues that Maupassant is "not sufficiently intellectual and philosophical" (qtd. in Artinian 1969: 120-121).

<sup>10</sup> Babel, usually unwilling to expound on the nature of literature, echoes Shklovskii in a conversation at the Soviet Writers' Union in 1937, published in 1964 under the title 'O tvorcheskom puti pisatel'ia' ('On the Writer's Creative Path'). Babel affirms that French writers are superior to the Russians in the genre of the short story, *except for* Chekhov. Tolstoi and Gorkii, Babel argues, did not really write short stories but rather abridged novels (2006 3: 400). See also Zholkovsky 1994b: 673-674.

<sup>11</sup> Curiously, this story focuses on a Russian man and woman who meet on a train from Russia to France. On Petrovskij, see Erlich 1980: 87 (fn. 6), and Hansen-Löve 1978: 270-272. On 'En Voyage,' see Johnston 2012: 437 and 1211 fn. 115; on Maupassant's ties with Russia and friendship with Turgenev, see Part III of Johnston's meticulous study, especially Ch. 10.

<sup>12</sup> The comparison with Chekhov is a leitmotif in Artinian's survey of writers. For in-depth analyses of the parallels between Maupassant and Chekhov, see Denis 1969: 169-170 and Sicher 2012: 161-164.

<sup>13</sup> The "critical realist" reading of Maupassant certainly helped his standing in the Soviet canon: Artinian quotes a *New York Times* cable published in 1940 in which Maupassant, with three million copies sold since 1917, "heads the list of foreign authors" published in the Soviet Union (1969: 117, fn. 5).

<sup>14</sup> Babel's response may be read as an attempt to clear his reputation in view of attacks on 'Guy de Maupassant' for focusing on such ostensibly "irrelevant" aspects of Maupassant's life as his eroticism and mental illness.

<sup>15</sup> Maupassant was far from being *the only* foreign-language author, whether living or dead, to be the object of such close engagement in the early Soviet era. On Soviet engagement with foreign literature during the 1930s, see Clark 2011: *passim*, esp. Ch. 5, and Baer 2016: 51-54.

<sup>16</sup> For attacks on Soviet writers including Babel, see the articles 'Inoniia i Kitez' and 'Rossiiskaia chelovechina' in Bunin 1998: 158-177. Despite that, the influence of Bunin on early Soviet writers—most notably Babel himself—should not be understated; see Chudakova 2009: 120.

<sup>17</sup> Both Babel and Bunin, for that matter, did translate other authors, and, while translation plays a lesser role in Bunin's oeuvre (see Friedberg 1997: 133), Babel's engagement with translation was a lot more intense. On his translations and adaptations of Sholom Aleichem's Yiddish works, see Sicher 2012: 88. On his early cycle *Na pole chesti* (*On the Field of Honor*), partially based on Gaston Vidal's French-language sketches, see Sicher 2012: 39 and Luck 1995.

<sup>18</sup> There are grounds to assume that the "narrator" of 'Odessa' is distinct from Babel himself—an author of rhetorically inflated, more eloquent versions of Babel's diffident remarks on literature. For the sake of simplicity, however, I will refer to this narrator as "Babel" in my discussion of the essay.

<sup>19</sup> References to texts by Babel in Russian come from Babel 2006, while the translations, when indicated in parentheses, are drawn from Babel 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Translation, specifically in 'Guy de Maupassant,' functions as an intradiegetic theme associated with ideas of "exchange, transformation, and circulation—of movement within and between bodies, currencies, and languages" (Oukaderova 2002-2003: 161). Besides Oukaderova, the most thorough treatment of translation in 'Guy de Maupassant' occurs in van de Stadt 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Likewise, Efraim Sicher writes that “Babel’s narrator must learn the dangers of Maupassant’s vision and confront the problematic relationship of life and art, in particular the tensions between passion and mortality” (2012: 157). Patricia Carden’s reference to the fact that “the narrator cannot see the truth of his life until it is *mediated* to him by the emblematic life of Maupassant” (1972: 210, my emphasis) is particularly significant in the context of the oft-noted mediating role of translation.

<sup>22</sup> On the parallels between Nikolai Gogol’s ‘Shinel’ (‘The Overcoat’) and the jacket (пиджак) being worn by the narrator, see van de Stadt 2006: 638-639, who argues that both Akakii Akakievich and Babel’s narrator are “copyists” who carry out a similar process of “Coming into another’s name and identity” (2006: 639).

<sup>23</sup> Charles Rougle speaks of “a subjectivity in approach that goes beyond poetic license to become a rather eclectic interpretation of Maupassant himself” (1989: 179). Van de Stadt (2006: 646-647) argues that the inaccuracies indicate the narrator’s desire to transcend translation and reality by means of art.

<sup>24</sup> See van de Stadt 2006: 646 for a fascinating discussion of Babel’s choice of the term рычаг and its implied synonym переводчик.

<sup>25</sup> On Babel’s critique of the Romantic notion of “inspiration” and attention to the labor that goes into artistic creation (including intertextual references to Pushkin’s play *Motsart i Saleri*), see van de Stadt 2009.

<sup>26</sup> In addition to the aforementioned misreading of ‘L’Aveu,’ he likewise appears to overlook the subtle irony in the title ‘Idyll’ of the tale of a starving young man and a wet-nurse traveling by coach to Marseille, as she both relieves herself of the milk and he quenches his hunger. But see also van de Stadt 2006, who draws attention to the dark undertones of Maupassant’s ‘Miss Harriet’ (the third work mentioned in Babel’s story), as well as the fact that it is the only one of the three that addresses directly the relationship between art and reality that plays such an important role in Babel’s poetics.

<sup>27</sup> Babel’s narrator misquotes the note from Edmond de Goncourt’s diary from January 30, 1893. See Maynial 282 and Zholkovsky 1994a: 94-97. Rebecca Jane Stanton reads this episode as a deliberate lie by a narrator intent on “getting the upper hand” in his emulation of Maupassant (2012: 96-97).

<sup>28</sup> Gregory Freidin (1981: 113-114) discusses this insight in parallel with a similar phrasing on «предвестие тайны» in ‘Pan Apolek,’ one of the stories in *Red Cavalry (Konarmiiia)*.

<sup>29</sup> Adrian Wanner notes that Bunin himself “never used the generic label” стихотворение в прозе (2003: 37), which had been adopted by Turgenev.

<sup>30</sup> This is made particularly explicit in the 1952 version, which, for the purposes of my analysis, constitutes the “standard” text of the story.

<sup>31</sup> Maurice Muterse, who helped Maupassant buy the yacht that he named *Bel-Ami*, also advised him to hire the “old sailor” (Johnston 2012: 662) Bernard as well as Raymond, Bernard’s brother-in-law. Marlo Johnston writes that “Ces deux marins, et bien sûr François [Tassart], qui venait souvent sur le *Bel-Ami*, devinrent comme une seconde famille pour Maupassant, et ils partaient régulièrement pour un après-midi, quelques jours ou une semaine” (2012: 663). After Maupassant’s death, Tassart maintained sporadic contact with Bernard and Raymond, who settled in Antibes: see for instance Tassart’s ‘Vingt ans plus tard,’ undated typescript, and ‘Suite des Marins de Monsieur Maupassant,’ undated typescript but with a reference to the year 1933; both documents are housed in the Artine Artinian Collection at the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin, Series II, Box 18, Folder 6, Document 6. My thanks to Marlo Johnston for conveying this reference. Johnston, in a private correspondence, suggests that the first typescript should date circa 1912 (twenty years after 1892, the year of Maupassant’s death).

<sup>32</sup> This is particularly evident in the 1952 version. Incidentally, Bunin reveals—like Babel—a morbid curiosity regarding the lurid rumors concerning Maupassant’s madness and death. In ‘The End of Maupassant,’ his 1928 essay, Bunin discusses a recent book publication, Georges Normandy’s *La Fin de Maupassant* (Paris, 1927), an anecdotal account of Maupassant’s last years of life. See Bunin 1965-1967 9: 459-467.

<sup>33</sup> See Vera Muromtseva-Bunina’s frequent diary notations on Bunin’s references to death, e.g. in 1950: “I did not think that dying would be so difficult” (Marullo 2002: 355); his “Literary Testament” (Marullo 2002: 360) and letters written after World War II, primarily to Mark Aldanov, contain similar references to death (Marullo 2002: 359; 362; 363; 369).

The first two paragraphs of the story—precisely those which reinforce the identification between the I-narrator and the I-Maupassant, and which set the context of the story as one in which the writer is nearing death—were only included in the later, 1952 version, first published in the collection *Vesnoi, v Iudee.—Roza Ierikhona* (New York, 1953) (for comparison, see Bunin 1931: 171).

<sup>34</sup> *Sur l’eau* had also been referenced in a travelogue by Bunin entitled ‘Vody mnogie’ (1965-1967 5: 313-337), published in 1925-1926 but with diary notes dated 1911. On echoes of Maupassant’s poetics in Bunin’s *oeuvre*, see Kapinos 2005. On the poetics of ‘Vody mnogie,’ see Malyshevskii 2014. Notwithstanding his references to *Sur*

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*l'eau*, Bunin had an ambiguous relationship with Maupassant's *oeuvre*. See Egorova 2002: 70, and his diary entries in Bunin 1990: 28 and 32.

<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, in the 1931 version, the narrator meditates on the fact that both Maupassant and Bernard were dead (Bunin 1931: 172). Some of the information from this omitted section is reproduced at a later point in the 1952 edition.

<sup>36</sup> In the 1931 version, the narrator eschews the more particular references to impending death that characterize the 1952 version (Bunin 1931: 174). The reasons for the change in 1952 are evident: not anymore a text about or motivated by Bernard's recent death, the 1952 'Bernard' is about Bunin himself.

<sup>37</sup> This discrepancy suggests that Borel may have reprinted his article later in the decade upon Bernard's death, possibly in a local newspaper, or, alternatively, that Bunin collated information from another source, such as an obituary of Bernard, when writing his story.

<sup>38</sup> I would like to express my gratitude to Marlo Johnston who, in a private correspondence, directed me to Borel's article.

<sup>39</sup> See, similar passages at the end of 'Sukhodol' and 'Legkoe dykhanie' (1965-1967 3: 187 and 4: 360).

<sup>40</sup> Notably, 'Bernard' also contains biblical references in addition to the quotes from Maupassant and Borel: in the 1952 version, Bunin quotes from the beginning of the *Nunc dimittis* (Luke 2: 29-32) in Church Slavonic, concluding it with Bernard's line in Russian. In the 1929 version, Bunin also quotes from Gen. 1: 17-18, a passage that refers to the role of the sun in bringing light to Earth—a motif that echoes Bunin's own descriptions of Bernard as a suntanned sailor and of Antibes as a sun-drenched Mediterranean port (as well as Babel's association of Maupassant with a "sunny" literature).

<sup>41</sup> It is worth remembering that Bunin, having renounced his Russian citizenship upon leaving the Soviet Union, never acquired French citizenship, and remained a stateless citizen until his death. See Kryzyski 1971: 272.

<sup>42</sup> In his classic *The Translator's Invisibility*, Venuti elaborates on the role of translation by describing it as "a process that involves looking for similarities between languages and cultures—particularly similar messages and formal techniques—but it does this only because it is constantly confronting dissimilarities" (1995: 306).

<sup>43</sup> On the figure of the author, see the classical essays by Roland Barthes (1977) and Michel Foucault (1980), as well as the aforementioned book by Petrov (2015).

<sup>44</sup> On the title of Babel's story, see van de Stadt 637.