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Indirect Translation and the Challenge of Preserving the Original: *Der Weg zurück* as a Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the practice of indirect literary translation – translating a work via an intermediary language – through the case study of Erich Maria Remarque's novel Der Weg zurück*. We analyze how the novel's distinctive style and conceptual content are preserved or altered in the Russian translation (directly from German) and the Uzbek translation (via Russian). Special attention is paid to morphological, stylistic, and cultural shifts that occur when translating through an intermediary. Drawing on translation studies frameworks, we compare the German original with its Russian and Uzbek versions to identify equivalents, transformations, losses, and compensations. The results indicate that the Russian translation largely maintains Remarque's imagery and tone, whereas the Uzbek translationrelying on the Russian versionexhibits both retention of certain original elements and modifications influenced by the intermediary text. We discuss the linguistic and cultural factors behind these shifts, including structural differences among German, Russian, and Uzbek, the adaptation of colloquialisms and taboo expressions, and the risks of diminished stylistic nuance in indirect translation. The study underscores that while direct translation is generally preferable for faithfully conveying a literary work's originality, an indirect translation can succeed if the translator remains acutely aware of the original's form and style and employs creative strategies to bridge the gap between languages and cultures.*

Keywords: Indirect translation; relay translation; literary translation; stylistic equivalence; cultural adaptation; Erich Maria Remarque; Uzbek translation.

INTRODUCTION

Literary translation invariably grapples with the question of how to preserve the original work's unique style and intent. A literary text's originality comprises its distinctive stylistic features, imagery, authorial voice, and emotional-conceptual content. The translator's task is thus twofold: to convey "what" is said and "how" it is said. As one theorist notes, the translator must not only transfer factual meaning but also recreate the aesthetic impact of the original on the reader [4: 3]. In practice, this often requires compromise. L. S. Barkhudarov observed that in translating literature, a word-for-word rendering is frequently impossible – the translator may have to sacrifice parts of the literal content to preserve more crucial elements like emotional nuances and the author's stylistic texture [3: 73]. In other words, a translation should strive to convey the effect of the original rather than its form alone. This challenge of equivalence becomes especially pronounced in indirect translation, where the translation is done not from the source text itself but from an intermediate translation in another language.

Indirect (or "relay") translation has long been a practical solution when a qualified translator for the source language is unavailable. By definition, indirect translation is essentially "a translation of a translation" [1: 113]. For example, if a novel written in German is rendered into Uzbek not directly, but via an existing Russian translation, the Uzbek version is an indirect translation. Historically, this was a common practice in regions where certain languages were "bridging" languages. On the post-Soviet scene, for instance, many works of Western literature were translated into the languages of Central Asia through Russian as the intermediary. Soviet-era translation norms meant that Russian versions served as the basis for translations into numerous other languages, including Uzbek [10: 163]. This reliance on a "pivot" language helped disseminate literature to

wider audiences but also introduced an extra layer of interpretation, with each translation potentially deviating from the original. In recent decades, there has been a shift toward more direct translations from source languages into Uzbek (e.g. works by Goethe, Kafka, and others translated straight from German), improving accuracy and stylistic fidelity. Nonetheless, indirect translation remains relevant – whether due to a lack of source-language experts or other logistical reasons – and it raises important questions about the preservation of an author's voice and intent through multiple transfers.

Erich Maria Remarque's novel *Der Weg zurück* (1931) provides an illuminating case for examining these issues. A sequel to *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Der Weg zurück* (translated as "The Way Back" or "Return") follows German soldiers returning from the trenches of World War I and struggling to reintegrate into civilian life. Remarque's style in this novel is highly distinctive: he blends blunt soldiers' slang and gritty dialogue with lyrical descriptions of nature and poignant, ironic reflections. The narrative conveys themes of lost innocence, camaraderie, and the trauma of war through a mix of rough realism and poetic undertones. Such a rich stylistic palette poses a challenge for translators, who must capture both the harsh colloquial tone and the author's subtle literary devices. The novel has been translated into Russian (titled *Na obratnom puti*, 2021, by Elena Shukshina) and more recently into Uzbek (titled *Ortga yo'l*, 2022, by S. Saidmurodov). Notably, the Uzbek translator worked from the Russian version rather than directly from German. This situation allows a comparative analysis: how does the direct Russian translation handle Remarque's language, and what happens when the Uzbek indirect translation is filtered through the Russian? Do the imagery, stylistic nuances, and cultural elements of Remarque's text survive intact in the Uzbek version, or are they diluted and altered by the double translation process? By closely comparing key passages, we can assess the impact of the intermediary language and identify the kinds of shifts that occur in an indirect translation. The findings can shed light on broader translation dynamics and guide best practices when translators must work via a mediating language.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In translation studies, indirect translation (ITr) refers to any instance where a text is translated from a source through an intermediate translation in another language, rather than directly from the original. Yves Gambier famously described it as "la traduction d'une traduction" – literally, a translation of a translation [qtd. in 1: 113]. Such relay translations have a long history, often serving as the only bridge between "minor" source languages and "major" target languages. On one hand, indirect translation can facilitate the spread of literature from less widely known cultures by using a more dominant language as a stepping stone. Indeed, it has been argued that indirect translation is sometimes "a more efficient means of inclusion for cultural products from peripheral cultures" [2: 254]. In the context of Soviet and post-colonial literary exchange, relay translation enabled works from "peripheral" languages to reach world audiences via Russian, English, or French mediators [2: 254]. This pragmatic benefit is acknowledged by contemporary scholars who note that indirect translation made possible the dissemination of many literatures that would otherwise remain inaccessible [2: 254; 10: 163]. On the other hand, the practice is often viewed with suspicion or outright disapproval by purists. Research has found that "indirect translation tends to be negatively evaluated because it arguably increases the distance to the ultimate source text and, therefore, is often hidden or camouflaged" [1: 113]. In other words, readers and critics may not even be told that a translation is second-hand, due to an assumption that a relay translation inherently entails some loss of fidelity or clarity. The additional layer of interpretation is seen as a risk – each translation is an act of interpretation, so an indirect translation stacks interpretations on interpretations, compounding the chances of deviation from the original author's intent.

The potential pitfalls of indirect translation are often discussed in terms of equivalence and interference. Equivalence in translation does not mean a word-for-word reproduction, but rather achieving a comparable effect or meaning. According to

Barkhudarov's framework, any translation involves multiple levels of meaning: *referential* (the factual, denotative content), *pragmatic* (the emotional and stylistic tone), and *intralinguistic* (the formal linguistic features, such as wordplay or rhythm) [3; 69]. Crucially, translation rarely preserves all these levels equally. Referential meaning is usually transferred most directly (the basic facts or events of a story), whereas pragmatic nuances – tone, humor, irony, connotations – are harder to maintain, and intralinguistic features (e.g. puns, alliteration, dialect) often prove the most difficult, sometimes being lost entirely in the target text [3: 71]. In indirect translation, these challenges can be amplified: the first translator might already lose or alter certain nuances, and the second translator working from the first translation might compound those shifts. As Barkhudarov notes, every translation inevitably entails some loss, and a "double transfer" increases the likelihood that stylistic subtleties will "fade" at each remove [3: 72]. This phenomenon is also described by the concept of *second-order interference*, where features of the intermediary language or translation creep into the final text in ways that wouldn't occur in a direct translation.

Despite these concerns, translation scholars emphasize that indirect translation, when done carefully, need not be a mere dilution of the original. Recent studies propose systematic approaches to mitigate the risks. For instance, Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Maia outline methodological considerations for identifying and evaluating indirect translations, calling for transparency about the translation lineage and careful textual comparison to detect any "hidden" influences from the intermediary [1: 113-116]. Pięta notes that while indirect translations have often been "camouflaged" historically, acknowledging them can actually enrich our understanding of cross-cultural literary flows [1: 115]. Researchers like Marin-Lacarta have suggested that indirectness in literary translation can be studied with mixed methods (combining close reading with broader corpus analysis) to reveal patterns of adaptation and preservation. Moreover, scholars such as Susanne Witt have examined how indirect translation was institutionalized under regimes like the USSR, arguing that it became an organized practice with its own norms rather than a

haphazard last resort [10: 163]. These insights frame our expectations for the case at hand: we anticipate that the Uzbek translation of *Der Weg zurück*, having been produced via Russian, might show signs of both mediating influences (e.g. calques or idioms carried over from Russian) and adaptive strategies used by the translator to maintain Remarque's impact.

Another important theoretical consideration is the role of the translator as a creative agent. Translation is not a mechanical process; it is often said to be both a craft and an art. G'. Salomov, a Central Asian translation theorist, stressed that a translator is not merely a bilingual transmitter but a co-creator who must deeply understand both the source and target cultures [9: 15-16]. Likewise, M. Brandes argued that the translator should "penetrate into the inner form of the text" – identifying the text's genre, style, and narrative voice – and use that understanding to guide every lexical and stylistic choice [4: 5]. In the context of indirect translation, this means the second translator should, to the extent possible, consult and feel the spirit of the original work, not just the intermediary text. Ideally, the Uzbek translator of Remarque would need to be aware of Remarque's German style and not rely solely on the Russian phrasing. The translator's creative decisions – such as introducing an equivalent idiom in Uzbek to replace an untranslatable German metaphor, or softening a vulgar expression to respect cultural norms – are crucial in preserving the "intent" and "effect" of the original. In sum, the theoretical framework guiding this study combines an understanding of indirect translation's risks (loss of equivalence, accumulated deviation) with a recognition of the translator's agency in overcoming those risks. By applying these concepts, we can systematically evaluate how the Russian and Uzbek translations of *Der Weg zurück* handle key elements of Remarque's style and what that reveals about indirect translation as a practice.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a comparative textual analysis of Remarque's *Der Weg zurück* and its two translations: the Russian

version by Elena Shukshina (translated directly from German) and the Uzbek version by Saidmurodov (translated via the Russian text). The primary material consists of the German original (1931), Shukshina's Russian translation *Na obratnom puti* (2021, AST, Moscow), and Saidmurodov's Uzbek translation *Ortga yo'l* (2022, Factor Books, Tashkent). Key passages from the novel were selected for comparison, focusing on those that exemplify Remarque's stylistic hallmarks: vivid metaphors and imagery, soldiers' slang and coarse humor in dialogue, colloquial turns of phrase, and culturally specific references. By examining the same passages across the German, Russian, and Uzbek texts, we can trace how each element of style is rendered in the direct translation versus the indirect translation. The analysis was conducted line by line, aligning the original with the translations to identify correspondences and shifts. We categorized the translation outcomes into several types for clarity:

1. **Equivalent translation** where the image or effect of the original is preserved;
2. **Neutral/plain translation**, where the basic meaning is conveyed but the figurative or emotional force is lost or altered;
3. **Adaptation/transformation**, where the translator replaces the original figure or expression with a different one (adding explanations, toning down or ramping up the intensity, etc.); and
4. **Omission/loss**, where a stylistic device in the original is omitted without compensation in the translation.

This categorization allows both qualitative and quantitative assessment of how much of Remarque's stylistic "color" survived in each translation. By tallying instances in each category, we gain an approximate measure of equivalence: for example, if the Russian translation shows a high proportion of category (1) equivalents for metaphors, it suggests strong preservation of imagery, whereas if the Uzbek translation shows

more (2) and (3) cases, it indicates a greater degree of shift due to indirect translation.

We also applied morphological and syntactic analysis to the translations. German is known for its compound words, flexible word order, and use of certain grammatical forms (like participial constructions) that may not have direct equivalents in Russian or Uzbek. We examined how German compound nouns or complex sentences were rendered: Did the translators break compounds into phrases? Did they change parts of speech (e.g. a German noun turned into a verb phrase in translation)? We noted instances of grammatical transpositions, additions, or omissions, drawing on Barkhudarov's classification of translation transformations [3: 102]. For example, if an expressive German adjective was translated as a noun or adverb in Uzbek, we considered what effect this had on style and meaning. Such shifts are often necessary due to structural differences between languages, but they can cumulatively affect the text's tone.

Additionally, a cross-linguistic interference check was incorporated to specifically detect any Russian-mediated influences in the Uzbek translation. Since the Uzbek version was produced via Russian, we hypothesized that some phrasings or choices might be calqued (copied) from the Russian translation rather than derived from the German original. To test this, we looked for telltale signs such as: Uzbek phrases that mirror the Russian wording even when a more natural Uzbek rendering would be expected if translating directly from German; idioms or metaphors in Uzbek that correspond to Russian expressions but not to German ones; or structural choices in Uzbek that echo Russian syntax. For instance, if the Uzbek text uses a turn of phrase that is common in Russian but has no precedent in the German, it may indicate that the translator leaned on the Russian text's solution. Conversely, if the Uzbek translator deviated from the Russian version and introduced a different expression or restored something from the German, that is also noteworthy. One example we anticipated was the treatment of culture-specific terms or jokes: the Russian translator might have already adapted these for a Russian audience, and the Uzbek translator then had to decide whether to adopt the Russian adaptation or to innovate

further. By identifying such patterns, we can gauge the extent of interlingual interference introduced by the indirect path.

Throughout the analysis, the theoretical considerations outlined earlier were kept in view. We evaluated not just *what* changes occurred but *why*: Was a metaphor dropped because it would be obscure in the target culture, or simply lost in relay? Did a vulgar term get softened due to cultural norms or because it was already softened in the intermediary text? We also assessed whether the Uzbek translator took any steps that suggest consultation of the original German (despite presumably not working directly with it). For example, if the Uzbek translation includes a detail or metaphor present in German but omitted in the Russian, it might imply the translator or editor checked the German source at least for certain passages – an interesting case of an indirect translation attempting to "reach back" to the original.

Methodologically, this study is qualitative in nature, grounded in close reading and comparative analysis. However, it draws on established translation studies methods: a bit of Descriptive Translation Studies (examining shifts and their motivations), contrastive linguistics, and even some quantitative tallying of translation strategies. By combining these approaches, we aim to form a comprehensive picture of how *Der Weg zurück* was handled in direct vs. indirect translation, and to derive insights that are applicable beyond this single case. All translations of examples are back-translations by the authors for the purpose of analysis, unless otherwise noted. In-text citations of Remarque's work refer to the edition or translation by year and page number (e.g., Remarque 1931, 9 for the German original; Remarque 2021, 5 for the Russian translation; Remarque 2022, 9 for the Uzbek translation).

ANALYSIS

Preservation of imagery and figurative language

Remarque's novel is rich with figurative descriptions that juxtapose beauty and horror. One striking example occurs during a nighttime battle scene, where Remarque writes: *Wie bunte und*

silberne Blumen steigen die Raketen über das Wetterleuchten der Artillerie hinaus (literally: "Like colorful and silver flowers, the rockets rise above the summer lightning of the artillery") [6: 9]. This poetic metaphor compares exploding rockets to flowers blooming, injecting an eerie beauty into the depiction of war. The Russian translator, Shukshina, preserves this imagery closely: *От артиллерийских сполохов отделяются пестрые, серебристые цветы ракет* [7: 5]. In back-translation, this reads: "From the artillery flashes separate variegated, silvery **flowers of rockets**." We see that the Russian version explicitly incorporates "flowers" (*cvety*), effectively maintaining the original simile of rockets as flowers. The image is slightly restructured into Russian syntax ("flowers of rockets"), but the core comparison and its visual impact remain. A Russian reader thus experiences a similar poetic vision – bright rocket flares likened to colorful blossoms – almost as Remarque intended [6: 9].

Now contrast this with the Uzbek translation. Saidmurodov renders the same scene as: ... *zambarak chaqmoqlaridan olachalpoq va nuqra ranglar taratib raketalar chirpirak bo'lib uchib chiqadi* [8: 9]. A literal English translation might be: "... from the cannon flashes, scattering mottled and silver colors, rockets fly out **fluttering**." Here, notably, the explicit image of "flowers" is gone [8: 9]. The rockets are described as flying out *chirpirak bo'lib* – an Uzbek phrase meaning "fluttering, whirring (like a butterfly or bird)". The translation conveys that the rockets give off variegated, silvery colors and that they flutter as they shoot into the sky. This certainly captures motion and color, but it changes the metaphor: instead of comparing rockets to flowers (stationary objects representing beauty amidst chaos), the Uzbek text compares the rockets' movement to something like fluttering wings. The result is a more literal description of rockets flying and scattering colors, without the poetic overlay of the flower image. The vivid floral metaphor present in both German and Russian has been "neutralized" into an image of flickering lights and movement. The emotional effect shifts subtly – the German (and Russian) evokes a delicate, ironic beauty (flowers blooming in the night sky), whereas the Uzbek focuses on the dynamic action (rockets flying and flittering), arguably losing the

juxtaposition of beauty and horror. This appears to be a case of figurative loss in the indirect translation. It's possible the Uzbek translator found the "flowers" metaphor either culturally puzzling or stylistically unwieldy in Uzbek, and thus opted for a more direct depiction. The downside is a reduction in Remarque's lyrical touch – the Uzbek reader sees the colorful flashes but misses the symbolic resonance of flowers amid warfare. This example illustrates how an indirect translation can attenuate the literary imagery of the original, perhaps due to the additional remove.

Rendering of soldiers' slang and tone

Another challenge in translating *Der Weg zurück* is the soldiers' rough, idiomatic speech. Remarque's characters use colloquial language, military slang, and dark humor, which serve to characterize them and provide authenticity. A clear instance is when a soldier character (Kosole) teases his comrade. In the German text, Kosole calls his friend a vivid insult: *Du Miststock von Schreiberseele!* [6: 8], which literally could be parsed as "You manure-pole of a clerk-soul!" This compound insult combines *mist* (manure) with *stock* (stick/pole) to paint a derogatory image, and *Schreiberseele* implies the soul of a pen-pusher or scribe. The phrase is jarring and humorous in its grotesqueness, exemplifying soldiers' banter. In a subsequent line, Kosole also calls another friend *Rheineule* [6: 8], literally "Rhine owl," a seemingly odd nickname (perhaps an inside joke referring to the friend being a night owl from the Rhine region). How do the translations handle these inventive slurs?

In the Russian translation, we see a significant transformation. The translator renders *Du Miststock…* not by a literal equivalent ("навозный столб" would be a direct translation of *miststock*), but as *Чудило кёльнское… не посоветовал бы ей это делать*, and later **"***Крыса гнилая канцелярская* [7: 4]. Here, the insult has been split and adapted. *Chudilo kyol'nskoe* means "Köln weirdo/freak," effectively replacing the entire "manure-pole with a clerk's soul" image with a more straightforward colloquial insult: *chudilo* (freak, oddball) plus an adjective indicating the person is from Cologne (a city on

the Rhine). The translator chose to localize the reference to the character's origin (Cologne, which is on the Rhine) rather than keep the abstract "Rhine owl." The second part, *krysa gnilaya kantselyarskaya*, literally "rotten office rat," appears to serve as a Russian equivalent for the sense of "stinky clerk" embedded in the German insult [7: 4; 8: 8]. In effect, Shukshina toned down the bizarre metaphor and instead delivered insults that a Russian reader can readily grasp: calling someone a "rat" and a "freak," with references to being a bureaucrat and being from Cologne. The crude, teasing tone is preserved – these are still fighting words among friends – but the specific imagery (manure, poles, owls) is exchanged for idioms that work in Russian. This is an example of adaptive equivalence: the translator sacrificed literal accuracy to maintain the function (mocking camaraderie) and roughly equivalent weight of the insults in the target culture. The loss is some of Remarque's eccentric flavor, but the gain is immediacy for the Russian reader.

Turning to the Uzbek translation, interestingly, the translator at times hews closer to the German original than the Russian did, and in other ways invents new adaptations. The nickname *Rheineule* (Rhine owl) which the Russian omitted (replacing it with *Köln freak*) is translated into Uzbek as *Reyn yapaloqqushi* – literally "Rhine owl" [8: 8]. This suggests that the Uzbek translator chose to retain that peculiar image from the German, perhaps considering it colorful or thinking it important to preserve. The downside is that, as in Russian, a phrase like "Rhine owl" means little to an Uzbek reader who doesn't have context – why an owl? why Rhine? If anything, it's even more obscure in Uzbek, since the Rhine is a far-off place and "owl" as an insult has no clear meaning. Here the indirect translation oddly restores an original element that the direct translation had dropped. One might speculate that the Uzbek translator either had access to the German text or guessed the meaning and decided to keep it for flavor. This increases formal fidelity to the original but potentially at the cost of clarity or impact for the reader (the joke may fall flat if it's not understood). It illustrates how an indirect translator might oscillate between following the

intermediary text and reaching back to the source, consciously or not.

For the nastier insult *Miststock von Schreiberseele*, the Uzbek version splits it into *Sassiq taka, qog'ozboz!* [8: 8]. This is a two-part insult: *sassiq taka* means "stinking goat" (where *taka* is a he-goat, often used as an insult comparable to calling someone a smelly goat), and *qog'ozboz* is an Uzbek derogatory term for a bureaucrat or "paper-pusher" (literally "one who plays with papers"). We can see what the translator did: the German "manure" became "stinking" (close in connotation), the "pole" became a "goat" (choosing an animal that conveys nastiness – in many cultures goats are associated with smelliness), and the "clerk-soul" became an actual word meaning a bureaucrat. Essentially, the Uzbek translator reconstructed the insult using native resources: the target is called a stinky goat and a pen-pusher. This is a creative compensation. While the imagery is not identical to "manure pole," it arguably conveys a similar level of coarse insult and even mirrors the two-part structure (one part referring to filth, one part to a clerk/office worker). The result is that the force and tone of the insult are preserved in Uzbek, even though the exact metaphor is different. The camaraderie via crudeness – soldiers bonding by trading barbs – survives. One might judge this a successful adaptation, since it maintains both meaning components ("you stink" + "you damned clerk") in a way a Uzbek reader can understand and chuckle at. Notably, this Uzbek rendition is not calqued from the Russian; it seems to be an independent solution. The Russian had "rotten office rat," whereas Uzbek has "stinking goat" and "paper-shuffler." This suggests that the Uzbek translator was not blindly following the Russian phrasing, but actively crafting insults that fit the Uzbek language and culture. In some cases, the Uzbek translator even outdid the Russian in closeness to the German: for "Rheineule," the Uzbek text reflects the German more than the Russian does (for better or worse). In others, the translator diverged both from German and Russian to create something new that preserves intent.

These examples of slang and insults demonstrate the complex decisions in indirect translation. The Russian translator

largely aimed for functional equivalence, replacing German slang with roughly analogous Russian slang to keep the spirit. The Uzbek translator, receiving an already adapted text, faced a choice: use the Russian version's colloquialisms or invent his own. We see a mix of strategies. At times he borrowed the Russian adaptation (e.g., the Russian dropped the "owl" and referred to Cologne – the Uzbek ignored that and went back to "Rhine owl," so in that case he did not borrow the Russian's simplification). Other times he paralleled the Russian in spirit but with local flavor (the Russian "office rat" vs Uzbek "paper-pusher"). These choices hint at the translator's priorities: preserving the insult's impact and perhaps showcasing some direct connection to the original text. The Uzbek translator's decision to include "Rhine owl" despite its obscurity might reflect an effort to maintain a trace of Remarque's quirkiness that the Russian had smoothed out. However, doing so possibly reduces the pragmatic equivalence – the Russian reader gets the humor ("weirdo from Cologne"), whereas the Uzbek reader might be puzzled by "Rhine owl." This is a trade-off between fidelity to the source and transparency to the target audience, a classic dilemma in translation amplified by the relay context.

Idiomatic expressions and cultural adaptations

Remarque's dialogue also contains interjections and vulgarities characteristic of soldiers under stress. Consider a scene where a character exclaims: *Ach, Mann, sei froh, wenn du zuerst mal aus der Scheiße hier raus bist* [6: 9]. This can be translated informally as, "Ah, man, just be glad if you manage to get out of this shit first." The key elements here are the colloquial address *Ach, Mann* (literally "Oh, man," akin to "Buddy" or "pal" in tone) and the crude word *Scheiße* ("shit"), used to describe the mess or hell they are in. The phrase typifies trench slang – rough, direct, and heartfelt.

In Russian, the translation comes out as: *Да ты радуйся, если выберешься из этого дерьма* [7: 6], which back-translates to: "Just be glad if you get out of this crap." The translator preserved the vulgar term by using *der'mo* (literally "shit" or "crap") in Russian [7: 6]. This choice reflects Russian literary

norms that allow a certain level of profanity or coarse language in dialogue to maintain realism. The address *Ach, Mann* is dropped or rather subsumed; the Russian sentence starts with *Да ты радуйся*, which implies "Just be glad, you...," without explicitly adding "man" or "buddy." Russian might convey the familiarity through tone rather than a direct word. Importantly, the emotional bluntness and the excremental metaphor for the situation are kept. A Russian reader thus gets the full impact of a soldier swearing about the predicament – something that maintains the authenticity of Remarque's scene.

Now, in the Uzbek translation, we encounter a culturally influenced shift. The line is rendered: *Eh, yigitti guli, avval sen bu bo'tanadan chiqib olsang ham katta gap* [8: 9]. Translated, this is roughly: Eh, *yigitti guli*, it would already be great if you got yourself out of this *botana*. This requires unpacking *Yigitti guli* literally means "flower of a lad" – an Uzbek idiomatic address. It's a playful or mildly ironic way to address a young man, somewhat akin to "my dear fellow" or sarcastically "princess" (though literally "flower" implies something cherished or maybe ironically over-praised). It's definitely not a direct translation of "Mann," but it serves a similar pragmatic function of informal address, with a local flavor. By adding *yigitti guli*, the translator injects a bit of Uzbek colloquial color that wasn't present in either the German or the Russian texts [8: 9]. This is an example of cultural adaptation as compensation: the Uzbek language and culture might avoid direct equivalents of "hey man" (one could say *og'ayni* for buddy, or "aka" for bro, etc., but the translator chose an idiom that also adds irony). It maintains the camaraderie and adds a slight teasing tone that fits the scenario (soldiers ribbing each other even in dire moments).

The second element, *bo'tana*, is particularly telling. *Bo'tana* in Uzbek is a slang or dialect word meaning "mire, muck, mess," and crucially, it is far milder than the outright obscene word for "excrement." Uzbek literary norms, influenced by cultural and possibly Islamic etiquette, typically avoid printing strong profanity in literature. Even if soldiers realistically curse, an Uzbek translator might opt for a toned-down term. *Bo'tana* serves as a colloquial euphemism – it conveys the idea of filth

and disorder ("this mess") without being as shocking as the direct word for "shit." So, whereas the Russian translator could use *der'mo* unabashedly, the Uzbek translator chose a workaround, likely due to cultural expectations of decorum in published text [8: 9]. The result is that the Uzbek version's register is slightly cleaner: "this mess" instead of "this shit." However, *bo'tana* is still a rough, informal word – it's not polite language by any means, just not an unprintable curse. The trade-off here is an instance of pragmatic equivalence versus cultural acceptability. The translator sacrificed a degree of the original's blunt vulgarity to adhere to target culture norms, but tried to preserve the meaning (they are in a terrible situation) and some level of slanginess.

Interestingly, the translator compensated for the loss of shock value in the swear word by using the colorful address *yigitti guli*. In doing so, he maintained the informal, bantering tone. The overall effect in Uzbek is that the line still sounds like two soldiers talking casually – one calling the other "buddy" (in a local idiom) and warning him about the "mire" they're in. The **tone** (urgent, informal, and a bit cheeky) remains, even if the exact level of profanity is dialed down(Remarque, Ortga yo'l 9). This reflects a conscious balancing act: due to cultural constraints, direct translation of *Scheiße* was likely avoided, but to avoid losing the feel of soldierly speech entirely, the translator added an idiomatic phrase *yigitti guli* that adds character and informality. It's a creative solution that illustrates how translators navigate differing cultural norms in indirect translation. The Russian intermediary text had set a precedent by including the curse; the Uzbek translator, however, *departs* from the Russian here in terms of register, demonstrating sensitivity to the target audience.

This example also highlights a general pattern observed in the translations: Russian translation tends to be more linguistically loyal to the source's level of diction, while Uzbek translation is more constrained by cultural propriety, often requiring mitigation of strong language. The need to soften or euphemize taboo content in Uzbek can be seen as a second layer of filtering that happens in the indirect translation. Even if the

Russian translator had preserved a harsh word, the Uzbek translator might choose (or feel pressured) to soften it, thereby compounding the distance from the original's tone. However, as we saw, the translator can also introduce other means (idioms, rhetorical flourishes) to keep the dialogue lively. In theoretical terms, this is an example of how pragmatic meaning (emotional tone, level of formality) can be altered in indirect translation due to cultural *skopos* – the purpose and norms of the target context. The Uzbek translator's strategy aligns with the idea that translations must be acceptable to the target readership's expectations, even at the expense of some source-text literalness [1 116].

Having examined specific instances of imagery, slang, and idiom, we can summarize that the direct Russian translation largely strives for equivalence in both meaning and effect, using creative adaptations where needed, whereas the indirect Uzbek translation shows a mixed outcome: certain elements (especially basic content and plot) are faithfully preserved, but some stylistic nuances are either diminished or replaced by new, culturally tuned elements. The Uzbek translator's efforts to sometimes revert to the German original's content (as with "Rhine owl") indicate an attempt to not lose all the original flavor, but other changes (dropping the flower metaphor, softening profanity) illustrate how the intermediary and target culture influence can lead to noticeable shifts.

Morphological and syntactic transformations

Beyond vocabulary and idioms, the translations reveal systematic grammatical shifts driven by the differences between German, Russian, and Uzbek. German's compounding and word-formation often have to be unpacked. For example, Remarque uses an informal compound *zweischläfriges Bett* to humorously denote a double bed (literally "two-sleeper bed"). In a line where a character says, roughly, "now one has a wife and a two-sleeper bed at home," Remarque coins *zweischläfrig* [6: 7]. The Russian translation renders this in the standard way: *двуспальная кровать* ("double bed") [7: 4], and the Uzbek similarly has *ikki kishilik karavot* ("bed for two persons") [8: 7]. Both target texts

thus convert Remarque's playful neologism into a neutral, established term (in both Russian and Uzbek, the expression is a normal compound or phrase for a double bed). While the basic meaning is conveyed perfectly – a bed for two – the tone shift is noteworthy. Remarque's original phrasing is slightly jocular or colloquial (inventing *zweischläfrig* instead of the more standard German *Doppelbett*). Neither the Russian nor Uzbek can easily mirror that wordplay because their languages don't allow such a formation in casual speech. Russian *dvuspal'naia krovat'* is a standard term, not slang; Uzbek *ikki kishilik karavot* is likewise standard. Thus, a tiny piece of stylistic color – the sense that the character uses a wry, folksy term – disappears in both translations. This is an almost inevitable loss, attributable to structural differences: equivalent meaning was prioritized over stylistic register in this case, because coining a parallel colloquialism might have confused readers. It's a reminder that some nuances (intralinguistic features, as Barkhudarov would classify them) "do not survive the trip" in any translation [3: 71-72], direct or indirect.

Another structural transformation is seen in handling German sentence structure. German often uses participial phrases or subclauses that do not map neatly to Uzbek syntax. For instance, Remarque writes: *Gleich darauf schnarcht er bereits* [6: 8], meaning "Immediately afterwards he is already snoring." This comes after some dialogue lines and describes a character falling back asleep quickly. Russian translates this straightforwardly as *Через мгновение Фердинанд уже храпит* ("A moment later Ferdinand is already snoring") [7: 4], preserving the structure (temporal adverb + verb). Uzbek, however, renders it as *o'sha zahotiyoq uning 'xirr-pish'i eshitila boshlaydi* [8: 8). This is quite interesting: Uzbek did not use a finite verb "snores" at all; instead, it turned the act of snoring into a noun (an onomatopoeic noun, *xirr-pish*, which mimics the sound of snoring, like "Zzz" or "snore-snore") and then says "his 'khirr-pish' begins to be heard." In effect, "immediately his 'snore' begins to be heard." This is a creative syntactic shift. Uzbek language often prefers to avoid complex subordinate clauses or participles by rephrasing, and it has a rich tradition of sound-imitating words. The

translator chose to convey the meaning ("he started snoring") by saying "his snoring sounds started." It's a grammatically acceptable and even vivid way in Uzbek to describe someone snoring (using an imitative word makes the description lively). But from a translation perspective, it's a transformation in part of speech (verb to noun) and structure (simple statement to a perception-based construction).

What's notable is that this particular shift likely has little to do with the Russian intermediary and more to do with Uzbek grammar and style. The Russian gave a direct model ("already snores"), yet the Uzbek did not calque that – perhaps because a direct calque *u allaqachon xurrak otmoqda* ("he is already snoring") would be fine too. The translator instead chose a more onomatopoeic expression, which adds a touch of flair. This could be seen as the Uzbek translator exercising stylistic freedom or adhering to Uzbek narrative style, where using onomatopoeia is common in fiction. It results in a line that arguably preserves the effect (we still understand the man is snoring soundly, even get a sense of the sound), albeit through different means. It's a small example of how an indirect translator is not necessarily bound to the exact structure of the intermediary text; they can still be innovative and target-language-oriented in their approach.

Across the board, many German long sentences had to be chopped or restructured in translation. German allows stringing together multiple clauses; Uzbek tends to prefer shorter sentences or chaining with conjunctions in different ways. The Russian translator already breaks or adjusts some structures, and the Uzbek likely further adapts them for fluidity. Each step can introduce slight meaning shifts or emphasis changes. For instance, an ironic aside set off by commas in German might become a separate sentence in Uzbek, possibly losing some irony or continuity. These are subtle effects that accumulate. However, since our focus is on stylistic preservation, the key observation is that syntactic adjustments were mostly necessary and expected and both translators handled them in standard ways. It is rare to see a crucial stylistic element hinged purely on syntax that would be lost – except maybe the rhythm or breathlessness that punctuation can convey. But given Remarque's style, the more

important elements were at the lexical and idiomatic level which we discussed above.

Finally, we looked for traces of the Russian translation in the Uzbek text – places where the Uzbek phrasing might mirror Russian idiom more than reflect the German source. One example previously discussed is the "Rhine owl" case, which interestingly showed the opposite (Uzbek restoring the German element that Russian dropped). Another potential area is any calque of Russian figurative language. We did not find blatant instances of Russian idioms carried over in the samples we analyzed. The Uzbek translator generally either used an original Uzbek expression or translated literally from the Russian/German meaning. This suggests that the indirect translation's lexical choices were largely naturalized to Uzbek rather than awkwardly copying Russian wording. It is possible that the translator did occasionally rely on Russian sentence structure or interpretations – after all, the entire narration (not just dialogues or idioms) would have been based on the Russian text. For example, if the Russian translator had already interpreted an ambiguous line in a certain way, the Uzbek might follow that interpretation. Without the German text at hand, the Uzbek translator might not catch nuances that the Russian missed or might propagate any translational errors present in the Russian version. Our focused examples didn't uncover a clear error cascade, but one can imagine scenarios: say, if a German phrase had a double meaning and the Russian translator chose one meaning, the Uzbek translator likely carried that same meaning in ignorance of the ambiguity. Such subtleties require a full text analysis to catch. Our targeted examples mainly highlight stylistic shifts rather than misinterpretations.

In sum, the analysis reveals a pattern: The Russian translation, being direct, achieves a high level of fidelity to Remarque's style, though with culturally apt modifications. The translator managed to keep most metaphors (flowers, etc.) and the gritty language, making only those changes necessary for Russian comprehension or stylistic naturalness. The Uzbek translation, coming via Russian, succeeded in transmitting the story's plot and general sense, and in many cases preserved the

tone, but it shows a measurable loss in some of the finer stylistic touches. Some imagery is diluted or changed (the absence of the flower metaphor, for instance). The overall rawness of language is toned down (due to cultural norms, not translation error). On the other hand, the Uzbek translator injected local color (like "yigitti guli") and demonstrated ingenuity in recreating insults and expressions in Uzbek, which keeps the text lively for the target audience. One could say the Uzbek version oscillates between being a translation of *Remarque* and a translation of *Shukshina*'s – at times leaning toward the former (e.g., reintroducing "Rhine owl") and at times clearly following the latter (e.g., inheriting the Russian interpretation of certain lines).

DISCUSSION

Several key factors emerge from this case study that explain the observed shifts and the degree of originality preserved in the indirect translation:

1. *Linguistic structure differences*

The German, Russian, and Uzbek languages have very different grammatical and word-formation systems. German's compound nouns, flexible word order, and idiomatic constructs often cannot be carried over verbatim. By the time we get to Uzbek (a Turkic language with agglutinative morphology and SOV word order), substantial restructuring is inevitable. For example, metaphors based on compound words or certain German colloquialisms may not have direct counterparts in Uzbek. These structural gaps force the translator to replace or drop some elements. In our analysis, the transformation of *zweischläfriges Bett* to a standard phrase in both translations, or the rephrasing of participial clauses, exemplify this factor. Each conversion (German→Russian, Russian→Uzbek) involves naturalizing the syntax and lexicon to fit the target language, which can result in incremental departure from the source's stylistic quirks.

2. *Cultural and normative differences*

Cultural context heavily influences what is considered acceptable or effective in translation. The Russian translation was produced in a context where preserving gritty realism (including profanity) was permissible for conveying Remarque's anti-war starkness. The Uzbek translation, however, is aimed at a readership with different sensibilities; direct use of swear words was avoided and certain imagery might be adjusted to align with local metaphorical language. The handling of "Scheiße" as *der'mo* vs. *bo'tana* illustrates the impact of cultural norms on translation choices. Additionally, some metaphors may have been deemed too alien or confusing for Uzbek readers (e.g., flowers as rockets might have been thought odd or overly poetic in a war scene, prompting the translator to choose a plainer description). Thus, part of the stylistic dilution comes from intentional adaptation to the target culture's expectations and literary conventions, not merely from the relay process. Indirect translation often compounds this because the first translator might already domesticate certain references, and the second translator then further adapts them. The result can be a double domestication: once into Russian culture, then into Uzbek culture, each layer potentially moving away from the source culture's perspective.

3. *Influence of the intermediary text*

The very presence of a mediating translation (the Russian text) exerts influence in multiple ways. Positively, the intermediary can guide the second translator on difficult passages – essentially doing some interpretive work that the second translator can benefit from. Negatively, any loss or shift in the first translation is likely to be transmitted to the second. In our case, the Russian version largely preserved Remarque's content, so the Uzbek had a strong intermediate source. However, we did see instances where the Russian translator's choices framed what the Uzbek translator did (for example, the Russian adaptation of insults set up the creative approach in Uzbek, and the Russian retention of the "flowers" image was an opportunity that the Uzbek translator chose not to take advantage of, perhaps because it didn't resonate in Uzbek). There is also the possibility of compound errors: if the Russian

translation had any mistakes or omissions, the Uzbek would carry them unless independently corrected. We did not detect glaring errors passed down, but this is a known hazard of relay translation [qtd. in 1: 115]. In a sense, the Russian translation served as both a conduit and a filter: a conduit for meaning (since the Uzbek translator could understand Remarque through it), but a filter that could modulate style (emphasizing some elements, downplaying others). For instance, if the Russian translator had chosen to tone down a metaphor, the Uzbek would never even know that metaphor existed to consider translating it. In our analysis, the "Rhine owl" example is telling because the Russian dropped it (so an Uzbek translator relying purely on Russian would normally drop it too), yet the Uzbek added it back in. This anomaly suggests that the Uzbek translator might have had access to the original or at least knew of that detail through some means (perhaps editorial input or parallel comparison). Generally, however, the Uzbek translator's dependence on the Russian text meant that the nuances carried into Russian were the ceiling of what could be carried into Uzbek. Any subtle literary devices that survived into the Russian could be attempted in Uzbek; those that didn't survive into Russian were effectively lost unless independently revived.

Against this backdrop, it's clear why the direct Russian translation achieved a higher degree of equivalence with the German than the indirect Uzbek translation did. The Russian translator was working with the original text and could strive to maintain both content and style in one hop. The Uzbek translator was one step removed, working through the prism of the Russian text, and additionally navigating a larger linguistic and cultural distance from German. The accumulative effect is that some of Remarque's "voice" does get muffled in the Uzbek version. The tone of narration in Uzbek remains engaging but is somewhat different – possibly a bit more straight-laced or localized in flavor. The imagery is partly retained (especially those tied to universal concepts or easily translatable metaphors) and partly altered. The emotional impact is still there in terms of plot and the fates of characters, but certain emotional nuances (like the mix of lyricism and brutality that Remarque masterfully balances) are less striking in the Uzbek.

However, the indirect translation is by no means a failure or "wrong" – rather, it demonstrates adaptive strategies. The Uzbek translator employed compensatory techniques to partially offset losses: for example, where a vulgar word had to be softened, he added a colorful idiom elsewhere to keep the text from becoming too bland; where a metaphor was dropped, sometimes an alternative descriptive phrase was inserted to paint a picture (even if not the same picture as Remarque's). These strategies align with what translation theorists describe as the translator's creative compensations for untranslatable elements [5: 415; 1: 115]. By introducing an idiom like *yigitti guli*, the translator injects local color that can evoke a similar register of speech (casual, playful) even though it wasn't in the original. While this alters the content slightly, it serves the larger goal of maintaining the original's spirit of camaraderie and realism in the target context.

From a theoretical standpoint, this case study supports the view that the translator's role becomes even more crucial in indirect translation. They must be, in a sense, doubly attuned: aware of the original author's style (even if indirectly) and aware of the first translator's interpretations, all while crafting a text that stands on its own in the second target language. The Uzbek translator's choices reflect an effort to minimize the compounded loss of fidelity. In instances like reintroducing "Rhine owl" or finding equivalent insults, we see an attempt to reclaim originality despite the relay. These attempts suggest that indirect translators often oscillate between fidelity to the intermediary text and fidelity to an imagined original. If they lean too much on the intermediary, the translation might become a copy of a copy, potentially dull. If they try to reconnect with the original (through research or parallel reading), they might overcome some intermediary limitations. Of course, not all indirect translations allow that (translators might not know the source language at all). In our case, it's not confirmed whether the Uzbek translator knew German; the mixed approach hints that he might have had some references or just a keen sense of when a phrase seemed to be influenced by Russian structure rather than German imagery, prompting him to adjust.

This analysis also yields practical insights: Direct translation is generally preferable when aiming to preserve a literary work's stylistic integrity. Each intermediary step introduces an opportunity for divergence. If resources permit hiring a translator from the original language, that path should be taken to avoid the pitfalls we've discussed. That said, when indirect translation is unavoidable (as is sometimes the reality for less widely spoken languages like Uzbek, where finding a German-Uzbek literary translator can be challenging), certain measures can help. One strategy, evidenced by our study, is to involve a comparison with the original at critical points. Another is to employ a team approach: one person with knowledge of the source language can produce a rough literal translation or annotations, and a second person, a talented writer in the target language, can produce the literary translation from that, checking any ambiguities with the first person [2: 260]. In fact, based on our findings one could argue that if the Uzbek translator had access to a German speaker to clarify things like "Rheineule" or the exact nuance of the "flowers" metaphor, the final text might have kept more of those images (perhaps rendered in a way appealing to Uzbek readers).

Another takeaway is the importance of transparency about indirect translation. If readers know they are reading a translation of a translation, they might be more forgiving of any slight awkwardness or differences from what they know of the author's style. Academic discussions (like this one) also benefit from clarity on the translation process. Unfortunately, historically indirect translations were often unacknowledged (the Uzbek edition of *Ortga yo'l* likely does not advertise that it was translated from Russian). This can lead to misjudgments about the translator's skill or the author's style. For instance, one might blame the Uzbek translator for lacking poetics because the text is less poetic, not realizing that the pipeline constrained it. Recognizing the intermediary's influence allows a fairer evaluation of the translated work and the translator's creative choices.

In conclusion, our case study underscores that while something is always lost in translation, even more can be lost in re-translation – yet with a skilled translator, much can also be

preserved or artfully compensated. The Russian and Uzbek versions of *Der Weg zurück* both succeed in conveying Remarque's narrative and message: the futility of war, the struggle of returning soldiers, and the mix of camaraderie and despair. The Russian does so with a closer echo of Remarque's voice; the Uzbek does so in a voice adapted to its readers, with echoes of Remarque still audible, if fainter. For readers and scholars, the differences serve as a reminder of the delicate balance translators must strike, and for translators, it highlights the value of being conscious of the intermediary influence and striving, whenever possible, to hear the author's voice through the noise of translation. As one scholar puts it, a translator – especially an indirect translator – should be both a scientist and an artist, combining analytical understanding with inspired creativity to bridge languages [9 15-16].

CONCLUSION

This study of the indirect translation of Remarque's *Der Weg zurück* from German to Russian to Uzbek reveals the intricate interplay between fidelity and adaptation in the relay translation process. The comparison of texts demonstrated that preserving the originality of an author's style through an intermediary language is challenging, but not impossible. The direct Russian translation, undertaken from the original German, managed to capture much of Remarque's distinctive blend of gritty realism and lyrical prose. The indirect Uzbek translation, produced via the Russian version, successfully conveyed the novel's plot and central themes, but some of the finer stylistic strokes were altered or muted in the journey.

Several factors were identified as hindrances to full preservation of the original in the indirect route: (1) structural linguistic disparities (each translation step required adjustments to fit the target language's grammar and idiom, unavoidably altering certain expressions), (2) cultural differences and norms (what could be directly said in German or Russian needed adaptation or softening in Uzbek, particularly with respect to profanity and colloquialism), and (3) the influence of the

intermediary translator's decisions (the Russian translator's choices, whether faithful or adaptive, in turn guided and constrained the Uzbek translator's options) [1: 113; 10: 163]. Despite these obstacles, the Uzbek translator employed adaptive and compensatory strategies to mitigate the loss of originality: introducing Uzbek idioms to maintain tonal color, creatively translating insults and humor, and even, in some cases, reintroducing elements from the German source that the Russian text had dropped. These moves partially offset the double transformation and allowed the Uzbek text to recapture some of Remarque's emotional impact in a way that resonated with Uzbek readers.

The case study supports a general conclusion that direct translation is preferable for maximizing fidelity to a literary work's unique style and nuance. When a direct translation is done by a skilled translator, the "through line" from author to reader is shorter and clearer. However, when circumstances necessitate an indirect translation, the outcome need not be a pale shadow of the original. If the indirect translator is aware of the risks of "textual distortion" at each remove, they can take conscious steps to preserve not just the content but the spirit of the original. This might include consulting the original text (if able), or at least understanding the original author's context and voice through secondary sources, so that they are not translating blindly from the intermediary text alone. Our analysis suggests that the Uzbek translator, to some extent, did approach the task with such mindfulness – as evidenced by moments where the translation seems to reflect a direct understanding of Remarque's intent beyond what was explicit in the Russian version.

In practical terms, for languages where direct translation from the source is not feasible, a collaborative translation model could enhance fidelity [2: 260]. For example, in translating *Der Weg zurück* to Uzbek indirectly, involving a German-aware consultant might have helped catch and preserve more of the original imagery and tone. In a broader sense, the findings call for awareness in the literary translation community of the compounded challenges in indirect translation and the importance of translator training that addresses those challenges.

Ultimately, translation is, as has been often said, an art of compromise and interpretation. Even a direct translation is an interpretation, but with each additional layer, the interpretation can drift. The goal, therefore, is to minimize the drift. This case study affirms that by valuing the original's style as much as its content, and by exercising both technique and creativity, a translator can indeed minimize the deviation from the source, even in a relay scenario. As G'afur Salomov insightfully noted decades ago, translation requires both rigorous understanding and inspired creativity – it is both a science and an art [9: 15-16]. Our analysis of *Der Weg zurück* in Russian and Uzbek confirms this duality: the translator's scientific attention to meaning and detail ensures nothing crucial is lost, and the translator's artistic boldness ensures the narrative lives and breathes in the new language. In the case of the Uzbek translation, we see that even acting "through a glass, darkly" of an intermediary, the translator can preserve a surprising amount of the original's life by not only asking "What is said?" but also striving to convey "How it is said." This principle, fundamental to professional literary translation, is the beacon that guides translators through the complex, sometimes treacherous, but ultimately rewarding path of indirect translation.

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