

THE FATE OF SUCCESS: ANNA RADLOVA'S SHAKESPEARE

ALEKSEI SEMENENKO*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6884-6836>

UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

Abstract: Today, the discussion of Shakespeare translation in the early Soviet era typically centers on the giants Mikhail Lozinskii and Boris Pasternak, whose translations are often contrasted with Anna Radlova's, and usually not in her favor. Indeed, Radlova experienced virtual oblivion in the Soviet postwar period and is rarely mentioned today. In the 1930s, however, Anna Radlova's translations of Shakespeare dominated the Soviet cultural scene, and there was no more successful Shakespearean theater director than Sergei Radlov. This paper revisits the reception of Radlova's translations and Radlov's productions against the backdrop of the history of Shakespeare translation in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, the practice of stage translation, and the politics of translation at the height of Stalinism.

Keywords: Anna Radlova; Sergei Radlov; Soviet Union; Soviet theater; Shakespeare; translation

1. Introduction

In early January 1936, the first All-Union Conference of Translators took place, featuring prominent scholars, critics, and translators such as Iogann Al'tman, Pavel Zenkevich, Boris Pasternak, Mikhail Smirnov, and Mikhail Lozinskii (see Witt 2013; Zemskova 2015). The conference focused on the methodological and ideological principles of translation, translation into the languages of the peoples of the USSR, and the role of translators as "communication engineers" (a phrase used by Ezra Levontin at the Translators' Section meeting in October 1935, echoing Stalin's idea of writers as "engineers of human souls," Witt 2013: 141). Beyond routine work, the conference also sought to reinforce the ambiguous norms of socialist realism in translation practice, as did the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934.

Not coincidentally, it was at the same Writers' Congress in 1934 that Shakespeare was canonized as one of the classics of a new proletarian literature; his name was repeated alongside the giants of world literature, and Sergei Dinamov, in his speech, urged the new generation of proletarian artists to learn from Shakespeare.¹ In the same

* aleksei.semenenko@umu.se



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¹ "We need Shakespeare's art as much as lungs need air. [...] Our playwrights must absorb Shakespeare, master him, and breathe the air of creativity of this genius artist, who cuts through the

year, the Shakespeare Cabinet² was opened at the All-Russian Theater Society to mark Shakespeare's 370th birthday, which was celebrated on the scale of a national holiday (Ostrovsky 2006: 58). The wave of Shakespearean enthusiasm continued until the 1940s,³ and *Othello* — somewhat unexpectedly — became Shakespeare's most popular play in the Soviet Union.

The 1936 All-Union Conference of Translators was covered in detail by the newspaper *Literaturnaia gazeta*, but no discussion of issues related to Shakespeare translation was recorded in the reports or articles. The only hint that this topic was relevant — although it was not yet as politicized as it would be in the late 1930s — was a caricature by Aleksei Radakov⁴ titled “To the Discussion of *Othello*” published on 15 January 1936, in the third issue of *Literaturnaya gazeta* dedicated to the event (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. “To the Discussion of *Othello*.” Caricature by Aleksei Radakov.
Literaturnaia gazeta, 15 January 1936.

centuries yet remains alive and close to us” (Dinamov 1934: 449–450). Together with Alexander Smirnov, Dinamov co-edited the first Soviet complete works by Shakespeare in eight volumes between 1936 and 1950.

² The Cabinet was the precursor to the Shakespeare Committee at the Russian Academy of Sciences. It was created to conduct research, organize conferences and symposia, and advise theaters on matters related to Shakespearean scholarship. In 1937, Mikhail Morozov became head of the Cabinet, and in 1938 its scope was broadened; it was renamed the Cabinet of Shakespeare and West European Theater. In 1975, after Aleksandr Anikst's proposal, the Cabinet's was incorporated into the Academy of Sciences.

³ In 1939, Shakespeare's 375th anniversary reconfirmed the Bard's status as a “titan of Renaissance,” and a “realist,” “humanist” writer. See, e.g., Zabludovskii (1939).

⁴ Aleksei Aleksandrovich Radakov (1877–1942) was a well-known caricaturist, poster artist, and illustrator who worked with various Russian and Soviet publications, including ROSTA (Russian Telegraph Agency) and the journals *Satirikon* (1908–1914) and *Krokodil* (1922–2000).

The caricature depicts Othello, the protagonist of Shakespeare's play, standing on stage and addressing critics seated before him, who glare at him unfriendly. The critics wield giant, spear-like quill pens. Othello points to a woman in the front row whose profile bears an unmistakable resemblance to that of poet and translator Anna Radlova. The verse accompanying the image, likely written by Radakov himself (who often wrote short poetic captions for his caricatures), reads:

Нас с Радловой любовь соединила,
Никто из вас те узы не порвет.
Она меня за муки полюбила,
А я ее за бранный перевод.

In English translation:

Love united Radlova and me,
None of you shall break those bonds.
For my *woes* she fell in love with me,
And I loved her for her *militant* (cursing) translation.⁵

The caricature references both Petr Veinberg's and Anna Radlova's translation of two lines from Othello's speech in I.3:⁶

She loved me for the dangers I had passed
And I loved her that she did pity them.

Она меня за муки полюбила,
А я ее – за сострадание к ним. (Veinberg)

Она за бранный труд мой полюбила,
А я за жалость полюбил ее. (Radlova)

For the uninitiated reader, the caricature may be puzzling: Why are the critics hostile to Othello? What ties bind Radlova and Othello? And what is meant by the "militant/cursing translation"? Radakov's verse plays with the word *brannyi*, from *bran'*, which means both war, battle, and cursing, swearing, but it is not obvious why. To answer these questions, we must take a long excursus into the cultural and political contexts of the 1930s.

Anna Radlova (née Darmolatova, 1891–1949) began writing poetry in 1915. In the 1920s, she was associated with Mikhail Kuzmin's "emotionalist" circle,⁷ and at one point, she even hosted a literary salon in Petrograd. After the revolution, she focused primarily on translating works from French and English literature. Her popularity as a

⁵ Here and henceforth all interlinear translations from Russian are my own, — A.S.

⁶ Shakespeare is quoted according to the 1988 Oxford edition, with the traditional (act.scene) indication in the text.

⁷ The declaration of emotionalism was published in the Petrograd almanac *Abraksas* in February 1923. The almanac saw only three volumes in 1922 and 1923 and was edited by Mikhail Kuzmin and Anna Radlova.

poet and socialite is reflected in Kuzmin's poetry, who dedicated to her the first part of his last book, the poem "The Trout Breaks the Ice" (1927):

Никто не видел, как в театр вошла
И оказалась уж сидящей в ложе
Красавица, как полотно Брюллова.
Такие женщины живут в романах,
Встречаются они и на экране...
За них свершают кражи, преступления,
Подкарауливают их кареты
И отравляются на чердаках.

No one had seen her enter the theater,
And suddenly she was seated in the box,
A beauty, like a painting by Briullov.
Such women live in novels,
Sometimes you see them on the screen...
Because of them people steal, commit their crimes,
Carriages lie in wait for them,
And men poison themselves in attic rooms.

Radlova began translating Shakespeare in 1933, and by 1935 she had translated *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *Richard III*. Later, she translated *Hamlet* in 1937 and *Anthony and Cleopatra* in 1940. Her translations were especially popular for their modern vocabulary and stage-oriented approach. Radlova's husband, Sergei Radlov (1892–1958) — who organized his first theater in 1928 as the Molodoi (Young) Theater — was one of the most prolific theater directors of the time and had staged eight Shakespearean tragedies in various Leningrad theaters by 1939, predominantly using his wife's translations (Ostrovsky 2006: 68). What concerns *Othello*, until 1935, it was mostly staged using Petr Veinberg's 1864 translation, so Radlova's version quickly became the most sought-after for theatrical productions.⁸ Aleksandr Ostuzhev, who played Othello in Radlov's production at the Malyi Theater, later said that he readily — though not without difficulty — abandoned Veinberg's translation in favor of Radlova's, praising it for "Shakespeare's earthiness, his clarity and the purposefulness of his language" (Ostuzhev 1966: 164).⁹

This explains the "ties" between Radlova and *Othello*. Now, let's turn to the hostile critics.

⁸ In April 1936, *Othello* premiered at the Moscow Realistic Theater under direction of Nikolai Okhlopkov. Okhlopkov used the translation initiated by Ivan Aksenov and completed by Iulian Anisimov after Aksenov's death in September 1935. The production faced criticism of formalism, and Okhlopkov had to denounce his own play before its premiere; see Semenenko (2020: 21–42).

⁹ Published in the English-language collection *Shakespeare in the Soviet Union* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966). Among other publications, the volume includes articles by Alexander Blok and Anatolii Lunacharskii, Konstantin Stanislavskii's reminiscences, and Nikolai Okhlopkov's notes on his production of *Hamlet*.

2. Shakespeare's "Earthiness"

As I mentioned, Radlova's translations were considered revolutionary. She was praised for her focus on "stage expressiveness," use of contemporary vocabulary, and emotional depth. Shakespeare scholar Alexander Smirnov wrote in his 1933 article "Renewed Shakespeare": "Shakespeare is reborn in Russian. This is the true Shakespeare we have not known or had until now" (Shchedrina 2013: 702). In the *Literary Encyclopedia*, Nadezhda Presman (1935: col. 502) concluded: "Recently, her [Radlova's] Shakespeare translations have gained great fame. Faithfully recreating the character of the original, they are masterpieces of translation."

Radlova's orientation toward modern spoken language made Shakespeare sound like a contemporary stage text, creating a sharp contrast with the canonical nineteenth-century translations (by Andrei Kroneberg, Aleksandr Druzhinin, Aleksandr Sokolovskii, Pavel Veinberg, and others), which by then felt outdated. This feature drew both praise and criticism for Radlova. Critic Iosif Iuzovskii argued,

Radlova brings Shakespeare down from the stilts on which translators, directors, and actors have placed him. She wants to return Shakespeare to the earth. Not a rhetorical, oratorical, or legal Shakespeare, but all his flesh and blood, his meat and muscles. This is Radlova's significant cultural achievement. But isn't it too much of this flesh and this earth? (Zobnin 1998: 251)

In the same vein, the renowned theater director Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko recollected that the impression of Radlova's translations was eye-opening:

'Lord, this Shakespeare is quite rude!' [...] This led Radlova to such roughness [in translation]; she caught it perfectly. But as always, everything novel becomes slightly exaggerated. (Nemirovich-Danchenko 1967: 238).

Furthermore, Radlova faced strong criticism for "vulgarizing" Shakespeare's language — something that became her unfortunate "trademark," hence Radakov's caricature. While working on the first Soviet edition of Shakespeare's collected works for the *Academia* publishing house, Radlova conflicted with editor Gustav Shpet, who insisted on near-literal accuracy. In one of the letters, Radlova emphasized the practically irreconcilable clash of their translation strategies and ideologies:

[...] I am ready to take into account G. Shpet's philological clarifications (I don't think there will be many if he doesn't show bias toward my work), but I can never submit to the artistic taste and poetic technique of the translator of Byron's *Mysterries*. (Shchedrina 2013: 91)¹⁰

Chief editor Aleksandr Smirnov, who held Radlova's translations in high esteem, often had to step in as mediator.¹¹

¹⁰ Radlova refers to the 1933 *Academia* edition of Shpet's translations of Lord Byron: D. G. Bairon. *Misterii*. Transl. by G. Shpet. *Academia*, 1933.

¹¹ See, for example, Smirnov's letter to Shpet on 8 August 1933 (Shchedrina 2013: 46–47).

In a 1934 article, Radlova set out to defend her method by appealing to the highest canon of Russian literature:

My adversaries say that I am an advocate of a contaminated, unstable (*tekuchii*) street language. That's not true... The only language we should strive for when translating Shakespeare is the language of our father Pushkin. (Gavruk 1968: 127).

In 1935, in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, Radlova (1935: 4) reaffirmed her focus on Pushkin and her conviction that Shakespeare's dramas should be heard, not read:

The spectators must and have a right to understand everything in Shakespeare's text [...] you cannot expect them to bring to the theater several multivolume dictionaries and a German commentary to Shakespeare. [...] I think that the language of Pushkin's dramas should be our ideal, albeit unreachable, standard. I do not mean that the translators should stylize their language to resemble Pushkin's [...], but [they should] feel the life force (*zhiznennyi poryv*) that Pushkin gave to Russian poetry.

Radlova discussed her translation method in the press, but she did not describe it as thoroughly or in as much detail as, for example, Mikhail Lozinskii did. In her 1934 article titled "How I Work on Translating Shakespeare," she criticized the nineteenth-century translations and claimed a qualitatively different approach to translating Shakespeare's tragedies. She directed her focus toward modern Soviet audiences and opposed the overly liberal translations of the nineteenth century, as well as the bookish archaization of Lozinskii's translations. She also stated that it is inevitable to sacrifice the least important details in translation in order to avoid literalism (Radlova 1934). In a foreword to the book dedicated to the *Hamlet* premiere on 15 May 1938, Radlova declared that, although she was in principle positive toward equirhythmia and equilinearity, she "did not make a fetish of them" and that she considered the tropes that require scientific commentary to be the least significant (cited in Chekalov 1960: 185).

3. Stage before Text

Although the in-depth analysis of Radlova's translations is not the focus of this article, certain distinctive features of her translations warrant mention. Translating Shakespeare, Radlova combines an elevated, archaicized style with modern, everyday speech and often replaces Shakespearean and English idioms with more familiar Russian ones. For example, she translates "отрок" for "noble youth," "парень" for "fellow," "шиты-крыты" for "hugger-mugger," "малюете" for "you make yourselves another," "горло драть" for "mouth ... rant," "гони деньги" for "make money," "поиграем в прятки" for "hide fox, and all after," and "губка вы такая" for "sponge." Radlova also uses such modern words as "вербовка" (for *levies*), "съезд" (for *convocation*), "инвентарно" (for *inventorially*), etc. In most cases, Radlova ignores wordplay and puns and translates literally; on the other hand, it is notable that Radlova usually retains all forms of address, such as "milady," "my Lord," "sir," etc.,

but “gentlemen” is still replaced with *господа*, alongside such Russicisms as *бердыш* or *по-царски*.

Radlova’s “earthiness” often stems from literalist translation and/or misunderstandings, which were not unusual in the translation practices of that time and were also characteristic of other translators. That is why there are such examples as “настоящий карп” (carp of truth); “все лучше и все хуже” (Still better, and worse); “в дохлой собаке, приятной для поцелуев падали” (sun ... being a good kissing carrion); “дорожка дружбы” (beaten way of friendship), etc. Similarly, with unwavering consistency, Radlova translates interjections *Fie* (on ‘t)! and *Pooh!* as “Фу” или “Тьфу”; as an example, Horatio says, “Тьфу, тьфу, не явится” (Tush, tush, ‘twill not appear).

At times, Radlova resorts to borrowings from Lozinskii’s translation, particularly when the passages are ambiguous, and interpretation may vary, for example, “шум земной” (Lozinskii’s “бранный шум”; mortal coil); “глум” (Lozinskii’s “глумление”; scorns); “ползущее молэчо” (Lozinskii’s “крадущееся малечо”; miching malhecho).

In sum, Radlova’s translation is best characterized as *eclectic*. On the one hand, it is filled with literal translations — apparently the result of the translator’s attempt to remain as close as possible to the original. On the other hand, it contains errors, liberties, and additions, and is stylistically heterogeneous. It was precisely this stylistic inconsistency that elicited a negative reaction from many critics. However, what may appear to be a translator’s inconsistency and stylistic dissonance can be viewed differently if we consider Radlova’s *skopos*, that is, her deliberate *orientation toward the stage*, and not in an abstract way, but as concrete goals for translating individual scenes. Below, we will see an example of how the logic of performance dominated the written word.

4. (Hostile) Critics

The reputation of “vulgarizing” or at least “bringing down” Shakespeare’s language was hard to shake off, even though Radlova’s poetic talent was also acknowledged. For example, Dmitrii Mirskii ([n.d.]: l. 83) in his internal review of Radlova’s *Othello* for the Academia publishers criticized her for “equirhythmic troubles” but commended the quality of her blank verse.¹² Mikhail Morozov’s afterword to the 1937 edition of *Hamlet* in Radlova’s translation is typical of this time for its combination of admiration for the refreshed language of translation and the affirmation of the socialist realist norms supposedly expressed in the translation:

¹² Concluding his review, Mirskii ([n.d.]: l. 87) made a special point about equirhythmia: “We must keep repeating and insisting that equirhythmia is for Shakespeare, not Shakespeare for equirhythmia; that we are translating Shakespeare, not engaging in squaring the circle; that we must not force Shakespeare to speak in a kind of Russian language invented especially for the ‘equirhythmic’ reworking of Shakespeare. I believe that if the editors do not adopt such a ‘scholarly and pharisaic’ attitude on this issue, Anna Radlova will be able to convey Shakespeare in Russian, and not in an equirhythmic manner.” Mirskii’s review in the RGALI archive is undated, but the upper temporal limit of this archival unit is set as 8 August 1936.

Studying Radlova's translation, one involuntarily recalls the "cleaning" of a painting in a restorer's workshop. The "gloom" is removed from an old painting, and once again the bright and vivid colors come to life. And if someone feels sorry for this "thoughtful gloom," let him remember that this "gloom" is nothing but darkened, dirty varnish [accumulated] with time. In her translation of *Hamlet*, Anna Radlova managed to restore in Russian the most essential features of a remarkable work belonging to a full-blooded (*polnokrovnyi*) and passionate writer, a great realist, true Shakespeare. (Morozov 1937: 254)

In 1940, however, Morozov (1940: 121-124), apparently under the impression of Pasternak's newly published translation of *Hamlet*,¹³ changed his opinion of Radlova's translations, declaring them "extremely one-sided," in which "solely the Marlow line is adequately expressed."

Radlova's harshest critic was Kornei Chukovskii, who situated her translations within the debate over equanimity and equirhythmia in translation. In 1939, after the new edition of Radlova's *Othello* had been published, Chukovskii (1939: 4), in an article titled "The Maimed Shakespeare," argued that Radlova "mutilates" not only the English original but also the Russian language:

The main problem with her translations [...] is the total annihilation of Shakespeare's intonations. Almost all the characters in these great tragedies speak in abrupt, jerky, and truncated phrases. [...] All these stumps of human speech have nothing to do with Shakespeare's poetry. If every actor [...] is forced to speak as if they are suffering from asthma, what lively intonation can there be in their gasping, convulsive, interrupted shouts? [...] For some reason, the reviewers only noticed the roughness (*grubost'*) of her vocabulary. But honestly, that roughness is nothing compared to the roughness of her intonations.¹⁴

Radlova was fully aware of Chukovskii's opinion of her work but never cared to respond in public. In this particular case, it was the renowned actor Aleksandr Ostuzhev who took it upon himself to defend Radlova's method on the pages of *Pravda*. He stated that Shakespeare's text must always be viewed as an element of performance and that the laconic nature of Radlova's translation allows him to maintain the right tempo for a particular scene (as we will see later, it was not just a formal excuse but a demonstration of the method adopted by the Radlovs). He also stated that he had never received any complaints from fellow actors or the audience that the text was difficult to understand (Ostuzhev 1930: 4). It was an important opinion voiced by a very popular actor with the title of the People's Artist of the

¹³ Pasternak published his first version of *Hamlet* translation in the spring issues of the journal *Molodaia gvardiia* (5-6). Already in 1939, Nemirovich-Danchenko, after hearing Pasternak read excerpts from his new translation of *Hamlet*, cancelled his contract with Anna Radlova, whose translation he had previously agreed to use, and commissioned Pasternak for the (never-to-be-fulfilled) production at the Moscow Art Theater (more on that in Semenenko 2012).

¹⁴ Later, Chukovskii republished his critique in the book *High Art*, tempering its tone to some degree; see Chukovskii (1964: 175-195). Interestingly, in 1934 Chukovskii harshly criticized Mikhail Kuzmin's translation of *King Lear*. When Radlova later served as editor, she significantly improved the text, prompting a surprised reaction from Chukovskii, who remarked that it had become "ten times better"; see Kuranda (2015).

USSR, but Chukovskii did not leave the matter there. The next month, he published an extended criticism of Radlova's *Othello* titled "Desdemona's Asthma" in the journal *Theater* (Chukovskii 1940).

Despite these attacks, the Radlovs seemed resilient in the face of various forms of criticism and effectively navigated the pitfalls of the ideological landscape of the 1930s. In 1935, like many other theater directors, Radlov (1935: 4) had to ritualistically criticize his earlier productions, acknowledging his "formalist" and "idealist" mistakes. The most serious accusation appeared in 1938 in a newspaper article titled "On the Wrong Path," which resembled an informant's report. The author, M. Bolotin, accused Sergei Radlov of nepotism (his wife and son worked in the theater), neglecting young artists, and preferring old classics to new Soviet dramas, thereby creating an "undemocratic, ideologically poor" climate in the theater. When published in print, such accusations could easily end one's career, but Radlov's theater survived, albeit through (formal) reorganization. In 1939, it was renamed the Theater of the Leningrad Soviet, or simply the Lensovet Theater, a name that, in 1953, was assigned to the former Novyi Theater (which, to this day, causes confusion).

To put the atmosphere of the late 1930s in perspective, let us return to where we began, the 1936 translators' conference. Some of the prominent scholars and writers who appeared at the conference went on to experience dramatic turns of fate: Pasternak, hailed as one of the best Soviet poets and translators, soon fell out of favor; Pavel Zenkevich, one of the organizers, was arrested in 1936; Sergei Dinamov was arrested and executed in 1939.

5. *Hamlet*

In 1940, a 119-page book by the Leningrad section of the All-Russian Theater Society was published, devoted exclusively to Radlov's production of *Hamlet*, in which a couple of pages addressed Radlova's translation in a generally positive light. Admitting some "unevenness" of translation and stating that the translation "had not fully absorbed Shakespeare's philosophical thought," the author concluded by saying that Radlova's translation is a "serious contribution to the work of our translators on Shakespeare" (Berezark 1940: 43-45).

In general, reviews of the *Hamlet* production at Radlov's theater generated much less controversy than those of *Othello* and, at first, were largely favorable, acclaiming Sergei Prokof'ev's score and Vladimir Dmitriev's scenography. Iogann Al'tman's (1938: 4) review is characteristic in this regard; he celebrated Dudnikov's performance as Hamlet, commended Radlov for "the correct concept of *Hamlet*," and at the same time branded his production of *Othello* as a product of a "vulgar sociological school," a common political epithet of the late 1930s. Aleksandr Smirnov (1938) was even less critical than Al'tman and proclaimed this production a "great victory not only of the theater but also of the entire Soviet art," praising Radlova's "very Shakespearean," "truly realistic" translation that "reflects the flexibility of Shakespeare's speech."

A rare glimpse into the practice of stage production at Radlov's theater is offered by a personal copy of *Hamlet* that belonged to the actress Tatiana Pevtsova (1908–2000), daughter of actors Illarion Pevtsov (1879-1934) and Elizaveta Zhikhareva (1875-1967)

(Fig. 2). Pevtsova played Ophelia in the 1938 production and left performance-specific notes on several pages of her 1937 *Iskusstvo* edition of *Hamlet* (Radlova 1937). The author of this article serendipitously obtained that copy from a bookstore in Tallinn, Estonia, where Pevtsova attended school in the 1920s and where she spent her last years, from 1967 onward.

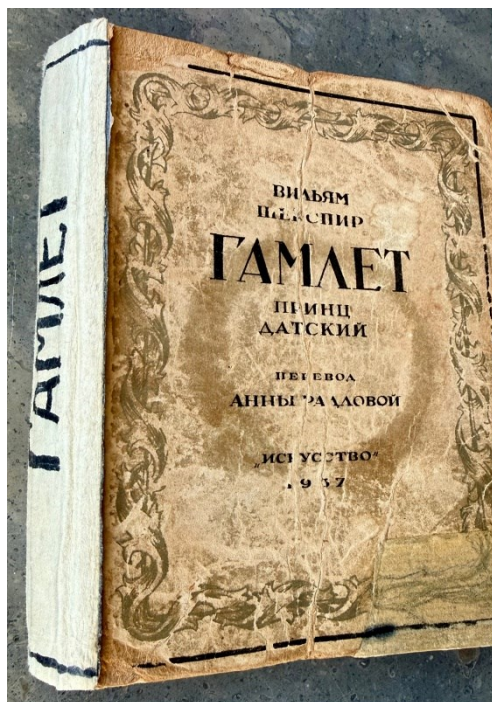


Figure 2. Tatiana Pevtsova's personal copy of the 1937 translation of *Hamlet*.
Photo by the author.

Apart from the usual cuts of the play, for example, the dialogue between Polonius and Reynaldo in II.2, or Hamlet's instructions to the actors in III.2, some notes made by Pevtsova reflect the Radlovs' orientation toward a dynamic, rapid stage action. In several lines, the order of words is altered, for example, in the last scene of Act I, the phrase "Я вам / С любовью доверяю господа" is changed to "Вам доверяю, господа, с любовью," — apparently in order to preserve the specific rhythm of the scene. Furthermore, Pevtsova marks the first scene of the third act as follows: "The rhythm of the scene: Big scene. People are very busy with 'a lot of fuss' (*суетятся «в заботе обильной»*)." Other cuts in the text seem to follow the same logic; even Ophelia's short monologue "Какой высокий ум здесь брошен за борт!" (O what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!), which is usually preserved in theater productions, was cut from III.1, along with the dialogue between Claudius and Polonius, probably because it slows the action after the intense exchange between Ophelia and Hamlet (the "Go thee to a nunnery" scene).

Understandably, the majority of scene directions were left undocumented, but even these scarce remarks still tell us a great deal about the Radlovs' preference for the live word on stage over the logic of syntax on paper.

6. Conclusion

World War II became a reality for the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. On 8 September 1941, the siege of Leningrad began, but Sergei Radlov's theater remained in the city and even toured to Moscow, Piatigorsk, and other cities.¹⁵ In March 1942, Radlov's theater was evacuated from the besieged Leningrad to the Caucasus, specifically Piatigorsk, although it had initially been planned to move to Uzbekistan. In August 1942, the Germans took the city without any struggle, but left it already in January 1943, taking Radlov's theater with them, first to the occupied Ukraine, then to Germany, and then to the occupied France. After the war, the Soviet government invited all relocated persons to come back home, and when the Radlovs returned to the USSR, they were arrested and sentenced to ten years in labor camps near Rybinsk. Even in a gulag, Sergei Radlov continued to teach drama as the director of the Volgostroi Theater of the Cultural and Educational Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, staging performances and concerts with amateur performers. Radlova died in the camp in 1949, and Radlov was released in 1953. He appeared in Daugavpils, Latvia, and then in Riga; his first production in 1954 was *Hamlet* in Daugavpils Drama Theater, in Radlova's translation. The Radlovs (Anna Radlova posthumously) were rehabilitated only in 1957; Sergei Radlov died a year later in Riga, thereby bringing to an end the story of the most successful Soviet Shakespearean theater of the 1930s and 40s.¹⁶

Despite the rehabilitation, Anna Radlova's name was practically erased from the Soviet literary history. In the post-war period, apart from Radlov's productions, I am aware of only four productions based on Radlova's translations: *Richard III* (1972 and 1980), *Othello* (1984), and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1985). One of her translations reappeared in print only 25 years after her death: the Shakespeare scholar Aleksandr Anikst, in his 1974 book on Shakespeare (Anikst 1974), used Radlova's translation of *Richard III*, probably as a commemorative gesture (together with a dedication to Viktor Shklovskii).

The tragic story of Anna Radlova—from the peak of her popularity in the 1930s to her fall into total obscurity after the war — reflects the grim reality of Stalinism at its height. We can only guess what could have happened to the Radlov theater if Sergei Radlov hadn't insisted on going to Piatigorsk. Given the theater's favorable position on the Soviet theatrical scene, Anna Radlova's translations could well have competed with Pasternak's after the war, potentially altering the course of Soviet theater history.

¹⁵ See, e.g., a report about the Radlovs' visit to Moscow in April 1942 ("Iskusstvo Leningrada..." 1942: 4).

¹⁶ On Sergei Radlov's life in Latvia see Ravdin (2012: 180–202).

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Conflict of Interests

The author(s) declare no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in relation to this research.

Ethics Statement

The author(s) confirm that this study was conducted in accordance with the Journal's Research Ethics and Integrity Statement and that all ethical requirements applicable to the study have been fulfilled.