TRANSLATING ETHNIC IMAGES AS AN EDITORIAL POLICY OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

The global context in which we live brings different countries and cultures in closer and closer contact, a fact which, paradoxically for some, has increased the individuals' self-awareness in what concerns aspects such as nation or ethnicity. This evolution has led to something which, for a long time, seemed rather unusual: the translation of travel books dealing with less known countries into the language of those countries, with the purpose of showing the target readers how they had been regarded by the foreign authors. The situation has determined me to expect many more travel books to be translated into the language of those travelled to; moreover, during my doctoral research, I expressed my expectation that such translation projects become editorial policies of different publishing houses. I have also advocated the translation strategy of 'further-foreignization' so as to confront the readers with the foreign author's precise viewpoint and, thus, establish a knowledgeable position within the intercultural dialogue. I believe that this is precisely the case of the recent translations released by the 'Humanitas' Romanian publishing house.

Keywords: *intercultural communication, imagology, translation studies.*

1. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

According to Anholt (2010: 137), judging by the interest that they generate worldwide, countries could be categorized as *downtown areas* (the major Western democracies), *ghettos* (conflict zones and countries which oppose the Western model of development) and *planetary suburbs* (generally ignored by the public but which sometimes generate curiosity). It would be no mistake if we generally placed the Romanian territories into Anholt's third category, also bearing in mind the fact that, at some points, they have made it into the second category. After all, this situation has been acknowledged both by historians and imagologists (e.g. Deletant, 2007: 223: "the Romanian image was bland until the late nineteenth century") and travel writers(e.g. Sitwell, 1938: I, "at the first mention of going to Roumania, a great many persons, as did myself, would take down their atlas and open the map").

Nevertheless, the curiosity that such countries do attract is proven by the fact that the Romanian territories have constituted the object of many travels and travel writings undertaken by Anglophone writers, starting with the sixteenth century. Moreover, these territories have attracted the Westerners' interest due to their geostrategic position at the "crossroads" between East and West. The clichés through which the Romanian territories have commonly been referred to have been linked to the Romanians' Christian faith (a sign of *Europeanness*), the Latin heritage of the Romanian language (another sign of *Europeannes*), the Western/Oriental binary opposition of the Romanian society, idyllic landscapes and hospitable people. More recently, after the collapse of Communism (1989) and the adhesion to the European Union (2007), stereotypes such as chronic poverty and systemic corruption have also entered the travel writing on Romania.

However, up to now, few such travel books on Romania have been translated into Romanian. Thornton's *The Present State of Turkey…together with the Civil, Political and Geographical State of the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia* (1807) has been, for almost two hundred years, the only such work translated into Romanian. The authorship of the Romanian translation of the work (Thornton, 1826) is generally assigned to Dinicu Golescu. The second such translation project resulted in the release, in 1996, of the Romanian version of Olivia Manning's *Balkan*

Trilogy, two of the novels covering Romania: *The Great Fortune* (1960) / *Marea Şansă* (1996a); *The Spoilt City* (1962) / *Oraşul decăzut* (1996b).

Why translate a travel book into the language of the *travelees*[1] anyway? The realities described were supposed to be familiar to them, and they were not the addressees of the books in the first place. The answer resides in the fact that, especially during decisive periods in the history of a country or ethnic group, individuals are increasingly sensitive to the way they are regarded by referential countries or groups, and it goes without saying that travel writing, through its main feature of physical displacement to a distant geographical and cultural space, does provide ethnic images (i.e. moral and typological representations through discourse).

For example, Golescu's translation was carried out shortly after the 1821 Revolution, considered to be a movement of national revival. Golescu himself mentioned, in his preface, that he had made the translation so as to testify his honest belief in the Western values, as opposed to the Wallachian mores, and thus to stir a certain change in the Wallachian clerical and political life. Several other travelogues have been translated in the last two and a half decades, during which Romania broke out of communism and adhered to the European Union. These translations, although few, were different enough in many ways, starting with the kind of image that the *patronage* (person or institution capable of exerting control over the translator's activity, cf. Lefevere, 1992) wanted to provide (and, consequently, the books chosen to be translated) and the strategies used in order to do so.

Generally, the Romanian public was provided with what they were expecting to hear. Profoundly negative images have been provided, similar to those quite frequent especially in the western tabloid media. It is the case, for instance, of Mike Ormsby's *Never mind the Balkans, here's Romania* (2008a) / *Grand Bazar România* (2008b), translated into Romanian (by Vlad Arghir) through a paraphrase which acts as an extreme explanatory modulation which, it may be said, distorts the initial image of original Balkanism (with all its cognitive implications). Through the meta-text (book covers, foreword), the author is presented by the patronage as natively-lie

acquainted with the Romanian realities, and therefore his findings are trustworthy (in accordance, for instance, with Heitmann, 2014, who observes that there is a tendency in exposing the foreigners as *revealers* of one's qualities). However, the already negative images have often been exaggerated through translation, as can be seen in the following example[2]:

ST: The service was in a *small church* squeezed between two *large blocks*, as if inserted as an afterthought. Which it was. First, they built all the blocks and moved the *workers* in. Then, the workers *decided* they had some other needs, when they were not working. (2008a: 42, italics mine).

TT: Slujba se ţinuse într-o *biserică micuţă,* flancată de două *blocuri uriaşe*, de parcă ar fi strecurat-o cineva acolo în ultimul moment, uitând că şi ea era prevăzută în schemă. Ceea ce probabil se şi întâmplase. Întâi construiseră toate blocurile **şi** mutaseră *oamenii muncii* în ele. Apoi, *oamenii muncii se treziseră* că mai aveau şi alte nevoi, atunci când nu munceau. (2008b: 67, emphasis mine).

The antithesis between the *small church* and the *large blocks* is exaggerated in the TT through the use of the words *micuţă* (tiny) and *uriaşe* (gigantic, colossal, enormous) and leads, once again, to negative hyperbolization. The ironic situation is further exaggerated through the translation of the (neutral) word *workers* as *oamenii muncii* – working people, the specific phrase used to refer to the working class during the communist regime. The meaning is also distorted by the translation of the verb *decided* by the more emphatic *se treziseră* (had realized, to their surprise). In this way, the ironic effect is even higher, since the working people realize,to their surprise, that they have needs which are unrelated to work.

In more recent cases, the cliché of unaltered natural habitats has been brought back into the Romanians' attention. This is in accordance with the 'rediscovery' of the Romanian 'exotic locale' with idyllic sceneries, a common cliché in travel writing on Romania which has also found its way in the western media (possibly due to the extensive lobby that has been made by the Romanian public institutions and foreign authorities such as Prince Charles). For instance, Peter Hurley's *The Way of the Crosses* (2013a) and

the Romanian version, *Drumul Crucilor* (2013b), simultaneously published by the government-based Martor publishing house. The translation was produced by a group of master students from the University of Bucharest, under the guidance of Lidia Vianu, a proof that the images of Romania as reflected in travel writing have become a concern both of the public authorities and of the academics. The main strategy that has been used is *further-foreignization* (Dimitriu, 2012), a strategy applicable only in the situation in which the culture visited by the foreign traveller is also that to which the translation is addressed[1]. This strategy seeks, for instance, the distancing of the Romanian readers from their own culture, with the purpose of enabling them to realize that they are regarded as "foreigners":

ST: The *Şopron*, pronounced 'shop-ron', which is a kind of square barn without walls, used for storing about five times the quantity of hay found in a regular hay stack, was almost empty, a good sign (2013a: 12)

TT: şopronul, care era un fel de hambar pătrat fără pereţi, folosit pentru a depozita cam de cinci ori cantitatea de fân dintr-o căpiţă obişnuită, era aproape gol, ceea ce era un semn bun. (2013b: 12)

In this example, the initial explicitations (about something which is otherwise familiar to Romanians and which aimed at domestication[3]), were rendered literally into Romanian, thus generating 'further-foreignizatoin'.

2. TRANSLATING ETHNIC IMAGES AS AN EDITORIAL POLICY

Given the complex historical context which determines individuals to be more and more interested in the way they are regarded by *the Other(s)*, as well as the global framework which makes the proliferation of ethnic images accessible, I have expressed, in my doctoral research and some subsequent articles, the expectation that more travel books on Romania be translated into Romanian in the immediate future. I have also expected that such translation projects become editorial policies openly assumed by publishing houses. Not only have I found it presumable, but I have also found it necessary for ethical reasons. When it comes to

translating images as reflected in travel writing, a multilevel intercultural dialogue is established; it includes the author, the source readers, the editor, the translator, and, sometimes the preface author and, of course, the target readers. All the decisions made by those involved in text production may be considered in ethical terms. Mossop (cited in Koskinen, 2011: 55) argues that "translation takes place in some kind of institutional framework and that translational decisions are to a great extent pre-determined by the goals of the institution within which the translator works". The ethical dimension of the necessity of assuming the editorial policy of translating ethnic images resides in one of the purposes for which such texts should be translated, namely to mediate in a way so that the readers critically distance themselves from what is commonplace and adopt a knowledgeable position within this multilevel intercultural dialogue. This ethical reason is also relevant when it comes to image translation strategies, as we shall see further on.

It is quite obvious, by now, that my expectations are being confirmed by the Humanitas publishing house. The first translation of a travel book on Romania released by this publishing house is that of R.G. Waldeck's *Athene Palace* (1942), which came out fifty-eight years after the release of the original work – *Athenee Palace* (2000) - within the *History* collection, *The Performance of History* series. The generally literal translation strategy applied (by Ileana Sturdza) managed to render Romania exotic enough even to the Romanian readers. No less than eleven years later, Humanitas released the Romanian version of Sitwell's *Roumanian Journey* (1938) – Sitwell, *Călătorie în România* (2011), within the *Vintage* collection. Thus, there is no apparent link between the two above mentioned translation projects. However, the Vintage memoirs/journals collection has gradually (and vigorously) expanded, through releasing the translations of Parkinson – *Twenty years in Roumania* (1921) – *Douăzeci de ani în România* (2014); Pantazzi – *Roumania in Light and Shadow* (1921) / *România în lumini ş umbre* (2016), Ozanne – *Three Years in Roumania* (1878) / *Trei ani în România* (2015); Noyes – *Roumania: the Border Land of the Christian and the Turk* (1858) / *România, ţară de hotar între*

creştini şi turci (2016), O'Brien – *Journal of a Residence in the Danubian Principalities* (1854) / *Jurnalul unei călătorii în Principatele Dunărene* (2016), Fermor – *Between the Woods and the Water* (1986) / *Între păduri şi ape* (2016a) and Fermor – *The Broken Road* (posthumous, 2013) / *Drum intrerupt* (2016b).

3. STRATEGIES OF IMAGE TRANSLATION

In a larger editorial project such as that of the Humanitas publishing house, it is recommendable that a coherent translation strategy be (explicitly) assumed for all of the books involved. As mentioned above, I find it ethically convenient that the 'travelees' be able to adopt a knowledgeable position within the intercultural dialogue, and, in order to do so, they need to be provided with the whole picture of how they have been 'otherized'[4] by the foreign traveller. This alienating effect can be achieved through the constant use of the strategy of 'further-foreignization'.

It was not quite the case with the first of the Humanitas *Vintage* translations, that of Sitwell's *Roumanian Journey*. The choice of translating, in 2011 (a period in which the Romanian readers were being confronted with extensive negative western media coverage) a book from 1938 (i.e. the period between the two World Wars, before the communist takeover, generally regarded by Romanians as the most prosperous era of their national history) is not surprising, despite the 73 year time gap: in 2011, given the western stereotypes with which the Romanians had already gotten accustomed, they would have most likely expected to encounter positive images in a foreign book describing their realities from the inter-war period. This is precisely what the Romanian version, *Călătorie în România,* shows them. I have actually noticed a slight manipulation when comparing the covers of the two books: while the original shows a wind rose (thus suggesting the motif of travel), the Romanian version shows and old, sepia picture, which appeals to the nostalgia of a prosperous past. The positive images that had been provided in the

source text were often exaggerated in the target text. For instance:

Greater Roumania has a *steadily* growing patriotic sense (…) *Many*towers and gateways… (1938:2) / România Mare cunoaşte o *puternică*dezvoltare a simţului patriotic (…) *Nenumărate* turnuri şi porţi de intrare(2011: 24) [italics mine]

Beside these slight alterations of meaning, *domestication* is also quite frequent. For example:

ST: Women cowled and coiffed, all starting for the fields. Their houses were wooden, and with wooden porches, or lych-gates, standing on the road. (1938: 1)

TT: ţărănci cu basmale pe cap, îndreptându-se spre câmp. Casele erau din lemn, la fel şi pridvoarele, cu faţa spre uliţă. (2011: 23).

While the neutral 'women' was replaced by ţărănci (peasant women), the two adjectives 'cowled and coiffed' were transposed into the construction *cu basmale pe cap* (with kerchiefs on their heads), whereas *basmale* designs the traditional kerchiefs that women from the Romanian countryside usually wear. Furthermore, two nouns, porches or lych-gates were modulated into *pridvor*, a word which specifically describes the extra-space common to the Romanian countryside house architecture. Even the use of *uliţă* (a narrow passage through a village, rarely a town, with houses on each of its sides) for road, instead of more neutral Romanian words, such as şosea, describes the Romanian countryside in the way a Romanian would do.

The more recent translations, however, bring a visible change of paradigm. As I have also observed in a previous article, the translation strategy^^ [5]shifts towards further-foreignization. We can take the example of the translation (by C. Ardeleanu and O.C. Gheorghiu, 2014) of Parkinson's *Twenty Years in Roumania* (1921):

ST: Over his ordinary clothes a priest wears a long coat, with wide hanging sleeves, reaching almost to his feet, and on his head a sort of brimless hat made of red, purple or black velvet, according to the wearer's status in the Church. (1921: 44)

TT: Peste hainele de zi, preotul poartă o haină lungă, cu mâneci largi, care atârnă aproape până la călcâie, iar pe cap are un potcap din catifea neagră, violet sau roşie, potrivit statutului pe care îl are purtătorul în ierarhia bisericească. (2014: 34)

In Romania, a country in which 86% of the population claims to be Orthodox, everybody knows how the "uniform" of an Orthodox priest looks like. However, the translators decided to keep the explicitations that the author had made for her English speaking public in her attempt to *culturally translate* Romania, although, they could have used the culturally explicit word *reverendă* or even the colloquial *sutană,* both referring to the Orthodox priests' outfit (cf. Sâsâiac, 2016).

I was happy to notice that the *further-foreignizing / exoticizing*strategy was kept in the more recent translation projects. An illustrative example can be found in the case of Pantazzi (1921 / 2016):

ST: Later, as the train went along, we could see the "hora", a slow, swaying round dance, in progress on all the willage greens to the music of the violin and flute. (1921: 15)

TT: Mai târziu, în cursul călătoriei cu trenul, am văzut şi *hora*(1), un dans lent, în cerc, care se juca pe pajiştile tuturor satelor în acompaniamentul viorilor şi al fluierelor

(1)Cuvintele româneşti în italice au fost scrise de autoare în limba română, cu o grafie aproximativă.(2016: 21)

Not only was the explicitation of *hora* kept in the TT despite the fact that Romanians are very well acquainted with their traditional dance, but there is also a translator's note in which he explains the original use of a Romanian word, thus exposing himself (or losing his *invisibility,* cf. Lefevere, 1992) and making it clear to the readers that they are reading a foreigner's viewpoint. The same translator exposure/loss of *invisibility* is noticeable in the case of Ozanne (1878/2015). Here, the Romanian translator (Iulia Vladimirov) often amended, with her own notes, the historical inaccuracies which had made their way into the source text (a fact which has been mentioned in the preface of the book). Of course, when it comes to facts,the translator's footnotes

are not, in my opinion, ethically questionable. They simply make sure that the information the target readers receive is pertinent, without affecting the source text too much, although such amendments may, ultimately, raise questions about the author's credibility.

A fine mixture of translator exposure and further-foreignization can be found in the case of Noyes (1858/2016). The translator (Eurgen Popa) clarifies, through his notes, some potentially ambiguous pieces of information (e.g. *conversation was carried out in French, German, Hungarian, Illyrian, Turkish and Wallachian* – p.67; the translator mentions, through a note, that Illyrian was actually *probably Albanian* – p.66). The usage of broken Romanian words has also been kept and highlighted through italics: "The Daco-Romans call their land *Zara Roumaneasca*" (p.160) / Daco-romanii îşi numesc patria *Zara Roumaneasca* (p.132) [instead of Ţara Românească, the actual Romanian words]. Moreover, the author's original *domestication* attempt, that of explaining *m*ămăliga, a Romanian corn-based dish which has fascinated many English travellers, and of comparing it to something more familiar to his initial Anglophone readership – the Italian *polenta* (p.166), has transformed, through literal translation, into *further-foreignization* (p.136). Perhaps the most estranging instance for the Romanian readership, an instance which illustrates that they are in fact those who are regarded as being foreign, is a narrative version of the *Mioriţa* folk ballad that the author had provided. This is because the narrative version of this folk ballad, which came to be considered an ethnographic representation of the Romanian people, was also translated literally.

A case which I find particularly interesting if that of Fermor's *Between the Woods and the Water* (1986). During my doctoral research, I found the *woods and waters* illustrative for one of the two mega-images of Romania in English travel writing – that of enchanting traditional life and unaltered (mainly rural) landscapes (as opposed to the other mega-image, summarized through the *grand bazaar*, referring to poverty and corruption). Since Fermor's book was not translated into Romanian back then, I suggested two potential scenarios for renderring images

into Romanian, in which the strategies varied from domestication to 'further-foreignization'. For example:

> ST: I hadn't even heard of Cluj or Klausenburg or Kolozsvár then (1986: 164).

> TT1: Nici măcar nu auzisem de Cluj sau Klausenburg sau Kolozsvár pe atunci.

> TT2: Nici măcar nu auzisem de Cluj sau de denumirile sale în maghiară şi germană pe atunci.

The first target text uses literal translation and is, therefore, much more neutral marking the foreign author's voice clearly. The second proposalis a form of domestication, because not all Romanians are familiar with the Hungarian and German names of the Transylvanian cities.

The Romanian version of the book (translated by Mariana Piroteală) provides a translation which is a lot more similar to the my 'further-foreignizing' suggestion:

> TT: La vremea aceea, nici nu auzisem de Cluj, de Klausenburg sau de Kolozsvár (2016: 181).

> The Romanian traditional clothing poses the same kind of problem in translation:

> ST: He was still jerkined in a fleece *cojoc* and hatted in a conical fleece *caciula* (1986: 208).

> TT1: Avea pe el un *cojoc* din lână, iar pe cap o *căciulă* conică din lână (în română în original).

> TT2: Avea un cojoc şi o căciulă din lână.

In this sentence, the author loan-transferred Romanian cultural terms and left them unexplained, so I suggested, in the first target text, a literal translation in which the italics are kept and the fact that those terms were originally written in Romania is mentioned. This strategy preserves the *otherized* representation of a Romanian peasant. The second target text is, through several omissions, the extreme opposite of the first and would almost make the Romanian readers forget that the author is not a Romanian himself. The "official" version goes, this time, somewhere in the middle:

> TT: Purta incă *cojoc,* iar pe cap avea o *căciulă* conică (2016: 226).

It is worth mentioning, however, that the original use of Romanian words has been somehow highlighted through the use of italics. Nevertheless, the Romanian book abounds in translator's notes which expose the translator and, thus, the foreign author.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

I can only say that I was happy to notice that, as I had expected, the translation of English travel books into Romanian became a legitimate editorial policy. The editorial project that the Humanitas publishing house has started is, in my opinion, praiseworthy, as such projects address the need of the readers to learn how they have been regarded by cultures which they consider referential, and establish an intercultural dialogue which is suitable for the globalized world in which we live. Ethically speaking, the readers' right to be given the possibility of critically distancing themselves from simplifying clichés and stereotypes has been addressed, lately (to my joy), through the translation strategy of *further foreignization*, which enables them to see clearly, although through an alienating experience, that they have been *otherized* and as such presented by a foreign author to his/her initial readership. Perhaps it would also be useful to clearly state this ethical and, ultimately, didactic purpose of the translation through metatext, and also expose the translator and the translation strategy. It is the case, to a certain extent, of the Romanian version of Ozanne's book (2015): in the preface, it is mentioned that the book was *translated faithfully, with the exception of chapters XIV, XV and XVI, which both the publishing house and the translator believed that they are not very interesting for the contemporary reader and contain historical inaccuracies*. However, neither the purpose, nor the translation strategy (and its presumed results) are made clear.

Since it has become customary for those belonging to what Anholt (2010**)** calls world *ghettos* and *suburbs* to be interested in their own ethnic image as reflected by writers which come from the *downtown areas*, I expect such editorial policies to develop in other countries as well. For those too, due to the same ethical reasons, I advocate the use of *further-foreignization*as a translation strategy.

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Endnotes

1. Term coined by M.L.Pratt (1992:242), meaning "person travelled to by a traveller", a receptor of travel. Polezzi (2006) also makes extensive use of this term.
2. Of course, from all of the travelogues quoted in this paper, many more examples could have been provided. Due to obvious space constraints, I have provided those which I had found the most representative.
3. i.e. annihilation of the cultural difference through certain lexical and semantic devices, with adaptation as an extreme procedure (cf. Venuti, 1995)

4. Holliday, Hyde and Kullman (2004: 159) define otherization as a process undertaken in order to ascribe identity to the 'self' through the often negative attribution of characteristics to the 'other'.

5. Although *strategy* may refer to the solutions that translators apply in particular situations, in our case, the term covers the general approach to the translation process, a "a planned, explicit, goal oriented programme which is adopted in order to achieve a certain objective and which involves priorities and anticipation", as Gambier (2010: 412) puts it.