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FOREIGNISMS IN D. BOLINTINEANU'S NOVELS⁴

Bolintineanu, as a writer and a political figure

Dimitrie Bolintineanu is part of the late 1840s generation of authors who would be actively involved in politics and literature. His 1843 successful literary debut with the elegy *O fată tânără pe patul morții* (*A Young Girl on Her Death Bed*) brings him a scholarship for Paris where he lives between 1845 and 1848. His years in France were good; he met important people, attended conferences (as some of those held by Lamartine or by Hugo), made a few connections in literary circles, became quite popular and he even promoted his poems[1].

Deeply involved in the preparation of the 1848 historic movement, Bolintineanu returned to Romania to participate at the event. Sadly for all those who had concocted the movement in Paris, their project failed and they were forced to face the consequences of their own decisions. As far as Bolintineanu was concerned, he had to bear the heavy burden of a 9-year-long exile. When allowed, he came back to Romania where he became (once again) deeply involved in politics and governmental activities and his political career reached its climax when he became a minister, in the mid-1860s.

Even if much of Bolintineanu's time was dedicated to politics, his literary heritage is fairly rich including, among others, volumes of poems [2], travel writings [3], ballads and historic legends. During his stay in Paris, he improved his knowledge of French language and literature and he translated Hugo's *Les Misérables* into Romanian, together with A. Zane and M. Costiescu.

Although the 20th century literary criticism hardly praises Bolintineanu's gift as a poet or prose writer, he does deserve recognition for the services he did to the Romanian culture. His fundamental contribution to the making of the Romanian novel is unquestionable, as the first to have written such pieces of literature. Irrespective of their structure, plot, artistic or stylistic value, it is these novels that opened and paved the pathway for this new species of epic genre which was born quite late in Romania, if compared to western European countries.

Attempts at implementing this species did exist and they were chronologically presented (Vârgolici 1971: 170), but they are either translations or

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unfinished literary works. Bolintineanu's *Manoil* does hold the front position, being published as a volume, in 1855. His second novel, *Elena*, was published in 1862.

Preliminaries to Bolintineanu's foreignisms

Educated for a short interval of time against the French background and, also forced to live in exile for nine years, Bolintineanu must have experienced, in turn, feelings of both an exponent of the majority and of the minority, thus gaining a first-hand experience within a culturally diverse world.

To interpret his linguistic manifestations as direct experience of cultural diversity would be a failure, if Vianu's (1991: 22) opinion according to which "the act of language is 'reflexive' and 'transitive' at the same time were ignored. It is this very reflexivity which Bolintineanu exposed between the lines of his novels that allows for the textual interpretation from a culturally diverse perspective.

The concepts of inter/cultural diversity have recently attracted researchers who proposed definitions and theoretical interpretations. Cultural diversity has become a major issue beginning with the UNESCO General Conference held in 2001, when the Declaration on Cultural Diversity was adopted [4]. Based on the foregoing, it could seem inadequate to discuss cultural diversity based on mid-19th century novels; yet, such proof of human relationships did exist, irrespective of the UNESCO declaration.

Materials and method

This textual exploration is based on Bolintineanu's novels, *Manoil* and *Elena*, in their 1988 edition published by Minerva. The idea of visiting the novels to survey the foreignisms was inspired by literary historians (Rosetti *et al.* 1971: 31), who state that interpreting linguistic means (at text level, *my emphasis*) is a way to decode the emotional content of literary creations, the text reflexive interpretation leading to the perceiving of the author's subjectivity. Thus, as the language used in the selected texts proves it, the author himself as well as his characters reveals openness to and support for cultural diversity.

Neologisms and borrowings are accepted to be synonyms having one and the same definition, i.e.

"the transposition of one word, with a new content (or rather meaning, *my emphasis*) and with a different form from one language into another. The borrowing language neither possessed the notion it assumes from a foreign language nor the form corresponding to the respective notion" [5] (Rosetti *et al.* 1971: 259).

Nevertheless, in the following years, a distinction has been made between *neologisms* and *borrowings*. The term *neologism* (< the Greek word *neos*, 'new', and *logos*, 'word') is 'a newly coined word or expression.' [6]. In the same line, Newmark (1988b: 140) defined neologisms as 'newly coined lexical units or

existing lexical units that acquire a new sense'. In a broader perspective, Crystal (1992: 264) views neologism to be

“the creation of a new lexical item as a response to changed circumstances in the external world, which achieves some currency within a speech community”.

All in all, a neologism is literally a new word. *Borrowings* are also “new words” but they are “words or phrases from one language that are used in another language,” [7] which points to an act of borrowing, accepted as *foreignism* in the specialist literature after the year 2000. Thus, while *neologisms* result from different combinations of stems, prefixes or suffixes already existing in a language, *borrowings*, *loans*, or *foreignisms* are words which were calqued from another language, bringing along with them all their spelling and sometimes their phonetic features.

The current lexical survey focuses on the identification of those instances of linguistic diversity as manifested by members of the majority, when introducing foreignisms in their daily conversations.

With this main purpose, the texts were read and all of the words which did not look Romanian and which are written in italics were manually selected. Their language of origin identified, the foreignisms were grouped and interpreted on their contextual basis.

Findings and discussion

Our collection includes 23 words or groups of words coming from French, Latin, Italian, Greek and English.

While 16 examples originate in French (see the table below), 2 are Latin quotations and 2 are allusions to the English language (*milady* and *Lovelas*).

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| ... <i>bas-bleu</i> ... (p.9) | ... <i>coup d'oeil</i> ... (p. 62) | ... <i>imbécile</i> ... (p.91) | <i>Le Lys de la vallée</i> (p. 142) |
| <i>Sang-dieu!</i> (p.15) | ... <i>rendez-vous</i> ... (p. 67) | <i>Plus il y a des fous, plus on rit</i> ... (p. 73) | <i>Le Lys dans [la] vallée</i> (p. 143) |
| ... <i>c'est le sublime du laid!</i> (p. 51) | ... <i>randevu</i> ... (p.101) | <i>Va banque!</i> ... (p. 89) | ... <i>tête-a-tête</i> ... (p. 168) |
| ... <i>préférence illustrée</i> ... (p. 63) | ... <i>des grands maîtres</i> ... (p. 71) | ... <i>un bon enfant</i> ... (p. 120) | ... <i>trousseau</i> ... (p. 293) |

Table 1.Foreignisms from French

There is only Greek element, an exclamation, *matia-mu*, involving surprise, which is uttered by Duda, a heroine in *Manoil*, who “knew this language” (p. 10). Bolintineanu’s heroes travel abroad and they are familiar with other cultures, like Italy:

“Alexandru was gifted with many talents. He had a tender and sweet voice of tenor; he had studied music in Italy”.

Together with Elena he sang an aria from *Don Juan* and a bit later, Elena sang by herself *Romanza del Sol*. These two Italianisms complement the list of foreignisms both readers and literary heroes are conversant with or can understand.

There are a few mistakes related to the correctness of foreignisms, such as the title of Balzac’s novel *Le Lys dans la vallée*, in whose first mention the preposition *dans* is replaced by the preposition *de*. The same observation applies to the first Latin quotation, where *In vinum veritas* appears instead of *In vino veritas* (a minor matter of declension, anyway...). However they may be used, these foreignisms create the image of a tolerant atmosphere, where, at lexical level, the new and the old meet in calm harmony.

Conclusions

Although not imbued with foreignisms, the first two novels in the Romanian literature open a perspective on the manner in which people would use words from different languages either to express themselves the way they felt it proper or to draw their interlocutors’ attention on some detail they would have liked to emphasize.

Rarely are these foreignisms uttered by the novel characters. In the majority of the cases they seem to belong to the narrator, who is, in both novels, the author himself. It is this auctorial use of foreign words as resorted to in everyday situations that leads to a few remarks:

- foreignisms occur in such variegated contexts that they must have been part of the daily usage;
- foreignisms are used to ensure a certain colour to descriptions: “What a beautiful *coup d’oeil!* A couple of candles on each table;” (p. 62);
- foreignisms are used in order to suggest a strong relationship between personae and worlds they had lived in (see the excerpt referring to Alexandru, at the preceding page) or whose literature they prefer (see the example of Balzac’s novel).

All in all the use of foreignisms is interesting to study in depth, both from a linguistic, a sociologic and an anthropologic perspective for it may reveal not only unexpected but remarkable outcomes as well.

NOTES

- [1]. Bolintineanu is among the poets included in the first anthology dedicated to the Romanian literature which was published in 1856 in the U.K. The volume entitled *Rouman Anthology or a Selection of Rouman Poetry, Ancient and Modern, Being a Collection of the National Ballads of Moldavia and Wallachia* and published under the aegis of Henry Edward J. Stanley, by Stephen Austin, at Hertford, has been included in the Google books repository and it may be accessed via <https://books.google.ro/books?id=LWUAAAAAcAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=ro#v=onepage&q&f=false> (accessed on July 12, 2015).
- [2]. Out of his volumes of poems, we mention *Colecție din poeziile domnului D. Bolintineanu* (1847), *Cântece și plângeri* (*Songs and Laments*, 1852), *Poezii veche și nouă* (*Old and New Poems*, 1855) and *Brises d'Orient* (Romanian poems translated in French by the poet himself, 1866, Paris: Dentu).
- [3]. Out of his travel writing volumes, we illustrate the following titles: *Călătorii în Palestina și Egipt* (*Travels to Palestine and Egypt*, 1856), *Călătorii pe Dunăre și în Bulgaria* (*Travels on the Danube and in Bulgaria*, 1858).
- [4]. *The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, UNESCO, in <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/cultural-diversity/> (accessed on June 9, 2015).
- [5]. this English version is my translation of the original text
- [6]. the definition is an excerpt from Oxford English Dictionary, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/neologism> (accessed on June 9, 2015).
- [7]. the definition is extracted from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/borrowing> (accessed on June 12, 2015).

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DES EMPRUNTS DANS LES ROMANS DE DIMITRIE BOLINTINEANU

Résumé : *Le premier romancier de la littérature roumaine, Dimitrie Bolintineanu est l'auteur des romans Manoil (1855) et Elena (1862) qui ont remporté un succès remarquable dès leur parution. Les héros des romans de Bolintineanu vivent et parlent tout comme les gens de la société roumaine de la deuxième moitié du XIX-ème siècle. C'est pour cela qu'une analyse de leur langage pourrait indiquer la manière dans laquelle ils s'exprimaient dans les situations de la vie quotidienne. Notre recherche va approcher des aspects qui réfléchissent la diversité linguistique des héros de Bolintineanu dans un essai de mettre en relief la présence des mots calqués d'autres langues, leur origine, leur fréquence et leur assortiment avec le style de chaque personnage qui fait appel à ce type de vocabulaire. Les résultats de l'investigation indiquent une majorité de mots d'origine française (16 instances d'utilisation des mots ou groupes de mots d'un total de 23 instances enregistrées). Il y a aussi des mots d'origine latine, italienne, grecque et anglaise, mais la représentation de chacune de ces langues est tout à fait insignifiante par rapport au français. On croit que la fréquence des éléments français est due aux relations de l'auteur avec la culture, la littérature et la civilisation françaises.*

Mots clefs: *diversité linguistique, emprunt, élément français.*