

TRYING TO KEEP FAITHFUL TO THE ORIGINAL IN THE ROMANIAN TRANSLATIONS OF VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *MRS DALLOWAY*, *THE YEARS*

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Introduction

During her lifetime, Virginia Woolf preferred that her novels were translated by not making use of too much creativity, as that would change her original intentions. This was the case of Marguerite Yourcenar's translation of *The Waves*, where she made use of too much creativity, being a writer herself.

A faithful translation as far as Woolf's novels are concerned is a good solution. Woolf herself believed that:

'When you have changed every word in a sentence... have thereby altered the sense a little, the sound, weight and accent of the words in relation to each other completely, nothing remains except a crude and coarsened version of the sense' ('The Russian Point of View', *Common Reader* 1).

However, to what extent is fidelity in translation possible?

Wilhelm von Humboldt's view on what a good translation should be like seems to offer a good solution as well as describe how the Romanian versions of Virginia Woolf's novels *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Years* have been done:

Translation should indeed have a foreign flavour to it, but only to a certain degree; the line beyond which this clearly becomes an error can easily be drawn. As long as one does not feel the foreignness (Fremdheit) yet does feel the foreign (Fremde), a translation has reached its highest goal; but where foreignness appears as such, and more than likely even obscures the foreign, the translator betrays his inadequacy. (Humboldt 1816)

This is because, at times and where the situations allow it, these translations seem to adapt cultural aspects. Cultural equivalents have been chosen, where possible, which mirror Romanian reality in the past, at about the time the action takes place in Woolf's two novels. Yet the readers are still kept aware that the action does not belong to the Romanian space. This combination however does not make the Romanian versions sound inappropriate. This was done to help preserve the spirit and also to help the readers realize the way characters talk as well as better get into the atmosphere of the time. None of these cultural adaptations were meant to get far from the original meaning. Such adaptations were necessary to keep faithful, as much as possible, to the original text of the novels, as in Wilhelm von Humboldt's view.

The Romanian translations of Virginia Woolf's novels *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Years* will be examined in terms of preserving or adapting the language used by characters, and ways in which cultural equivalents are sometimes found for terms of address or other expressions.

The choice of language in each version is according to the time period depicted in each novel. Various equivalents try to introduce the Romanian reader into the cultural environment of the respective period of time. As regards the choice of language in translations, it shows a certain culture's perception of a foreign culture.

The activity of translating and the result of this activity, translation, are very much linked to the concept of culture. The phenomenon of culture has been a subject of debate in Translation Studies since the *cultural turn* in the 1980s.

1. The Cultural Turn in Translation Studies

A cooperation between Translation Studies and Cultural Studies has been proposed. André Lefevere and Susan Bassnett (1990) use the phrase *cultural turn* to signal an increasing interest in investigating translation linked with an in-depth analysis of the cultural contexts which it involves. Translations are, after all, intercultural events. Cultural Studies could benefit from research in Translation Studies in the same way as it has drawn on other disciplines (such as sociology or ethnography, for instance).

André Lefevere associates translations to other forms of rewriting operating in a culture; translations shape images of foreign cultures, texts, authors for a target audience.

One may say that there are two main trends in the discipline of Translation Studies: a linguistic and a cultural/literary orientation. Lefevere, in 1976, saw this discipline as addressing both literary studies and linguistics.

In time, linguistic approaches to translation have widened their area of research, from cultural terms/words, to culture-determined texts, to descriptions of cultural contexts in which translations of literary and non-literary texts occur.

Issues of interest to Cultural Studies could find answers due to research performed by Translation Studies, such as: the way the image of one culture is constructed for another by translations (which is of relevance to the present paper), together with other forms of rewriting; why certain texts are chosen to be translated/rewritten and not others, etc.

However, despite the obvious links between Translation Studies and Cultural Studies, despite the ways in which the two disciplines could draw on each other, there is little evidence of the 'translation turn' in Cultural Studies that Susan Bassnett was looking forward to in 1998. The issue is approached only in terms of the high potential of this little explored research area.

2. Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, *The Years* and their Romanian versions

2.1. Time and Setting

In *Mrs Dalloway*, the action takes place during a single day in post World War I England, and we are presented with an inter-war social structure. The novel *The Years* includes periods of time in the lives of the main characters placed from 1880 to 1918. The city of London is present in both novels. On some occasions, some other settings occur.

2.2. Translation and its cultural aspects

Terms which are culturally related are sometimes preserved or sometimes adapted, that is, replaced by terms belonging to the Romanian culture. In the case of units of measurement there is conversion. A similar process is noticed with respect to terms of address. However, far from seeming inappropriate, such adaptations help the reader get into the atmosphere of the novel. These adaptations have the role of decoding the message from one culture into another one. They are in fact necessary in an attempt to preserve the spirit of the texts.

2.2.1. Titles and terms of address

The characters' titles are preserved where it is the case. For instance, the following can be noticed in *Mrs Dalloway*:

(1)	
<i>lady</i>	<i>lady</i>
<i>gentleman</i>	<i>gentleman</i>
<i>lady Bruton</i>	<i>lady Bruton</i>
<i>said "milady" very respectfully</i>	<i>spunea foarte respectuos 'milady'</i>
<i>Sir William</i>	<i>Sir William</i>

In the same novel, terms of address may be either preserved:

(2)	
<i>asking Miss Brush, Lady Bruton's secretary</i>	<i>s-o întrebe pe Miss Brush, secretara lui lady Bruton</i>

or sometimes translated:

(3)	
<i>she used to say to Miss Brush</i>	<i>obişnuia să-i spună domnişoarei Brush</i>
<i>that charming little lady, Mrs. Smith</i>	<i>această fermecătoare micuţă lady, doamna Smith</i>

Similar terms of address are found in *The Years* and they are treated in a similar way by the translator, e.g. "*The Mistress, sir, taken worse, I think, sir,*" / *Stăpâna, sir, mi se pare că e mai rau, sir*, etc. In this novel, we also find some specifically Romanian terms of address together with the English proper names, for instance:

(4)	
<i>come and let Uncle Boggy look at you</i>	<i>Hai să te vadă nenea Boghy</i>
<i>old Foxy</i>	<i>moş Foxy</i>

3.2.2. Cultural referents

Cultural referents designate holidays, institutions, etc. Units of measurement or money may either be preserved or converted: *miles of conservatories/ kilometri de sere* (Mrs Dalloway).

(5) (Mrs Dalloway)	
<i>how many miles on how many gallons</i>	<i>câte mile cu câţi litri de benzină?</i>
<i>She might own a thousand acres and have people</i>	<i>Ar putea să aibă o mie de acri de pământ, să aibă oameni</i>
<i>under her.</i>	<i>care să depindă de ea</i>
<i>circles traced round shillings and sixpences</i>	<i>cercuri trase în jurul unei monede de un şiling, de şase pence</i>
<i>Another penny</i>	<i>încă un penny</i>
<i>She had once thrown a shilling into the</i>	<i>Aruncase cândva un şiling în</i>
<i>Serpentine</i>	<i>Serpentina</i>

(6) (The Years)	
<i>he tried to single out one sixpence from all the</i>	<i>se străduia să aleagă o monedă de şase peni dintre toţi</i>
<i>florins</i>	<i>florinii</i>
<i>half-crowns</i>	<i>jumătăţi de coroană</i>
<i>sovereigns</i>	<i>lire</i>

(7) (The Light of Day)	
<i>a shilling</i>	<i>un şiling</i>

Names of foods are treated in a similar way. They can be preserved if specific to the English culture: *pudding basins/ castroane de pudding* (Mrs Dalloway), *She put down the pudding./Puse pe masă puding-ul.* (The Years), or translated: *porridge/ budincă* (Mrs Dalloway).

Names of institutions are mostly preserved: *Union Jack, Buckingham Palace*, etc. Same happens in the case of newspaper titles or publications: *Morning Post, Times* (Mrs Dalloway), *He sent Crosby for The Times./ O trimise pe Crosby după The Times* (The Years).

2.2.3. Familiar language

Familiar language used in these novels may be translated by means of equivalents:

(8) (*Mrs Dalloway*)

*Lucy had her work cut out for her.
eating her heart out
trivial chattering
Where are you off to?*

*Pentru că Lucy avea de lucru până peste cap.
î se mistuia inima de durere
flecăreli banale
Încotro?*

(9) (*The Years*)

*"Now, my boy, take yourself off and get on with
your prep.," he said to Martin.
"Of course not,"
"Now, shall we get on with our dinner?"*

*Acu', băiatul meu, șterge-o și fă-ți lecțiile! îi spuse lui
Martin.
Da' de unde?
Ei, acu' ne terminăm cina?*

by making a more general translation in Romanian while in English a more colourful term is used:

(10) (*Mrs. Dalloway*)

*her own daughter, her Elizabeth, cared not a
straw for either of them*

*propriei sale fiice, Elizabeth, ei nu-i pasă nici un pic nici
de una, nici de alta.*

(11) (*The Years*)

*"D'you remember,"
"How d'you find her?" said the Colonel.*

*Mai ții minte
Cum o găsiți? întrebă colonelul.*

or by introducing a more colourful term in Romanian for a more general use in English:

(12) (*Mrs. Dalloway*)

*Rumpelmayer's men were coming.
I love walking in London.
Really it's better than walking in the country.
"Let us go on, Septimus," said his wife.
the room where her sisters sat
still sitting alone on the seat
as she came across the room
It was over.
there was a man writing quite openly
he never hurried his patients*

*oamenii lui Rumpelmayer erau pe cale să sosească.
Îmi place să umblu prin Londra.
Zău că-i mai plăcut decât la țară.
Hai să mergem, Septimus, spuse nevastă-sa.
camera unde ședeau surorile ei
șezând, tot singur, pe bancă
în timp ce străbătea odaia
Se isprăvise.
se găsea cine să scrie pe șleau
nu-și zorea pacienții*

(13) (*The Years*)

*She adored her sister.
She looked at her father.
"Who is this Jew?"
He sat staring ahead of him
Here was a pattern.
His wife was dying
"I'll go..."
"Here, in your own room."
she could not put a name to her.
until it's over.
behind the coffin
her mother was punctilious about such things.*

*O adora pe soră-sa.
Privi spre taică-său.
Cine e ovreiul ăsta?
Ședea privind țință înainte
Colo apărea un desen.
Nevastă-sa trăgea să moară
las' că mă duc eu
Aici, în odaia dumatăle.
nu-i putea dibui numele
până se isprăvește slujba.
îndărătul coșciugului
maică-sa era meticuloasă în de-alde astea.*

Sometimes, expressions that have a dialectal flavour in Romanian are used:

(14) (*Mrs Dalloway*)

There's a fine young feller aboard of it, Mrs. Are la bord un flăcău de nădeje, parie doamna Dempster

<i>Dempster wagered</i>	
<i>talking to little Jim Hutton</i>	<i>stând de vorbă cu junele Jim Hutton</i>
<i>"And if some one should see, what matter they?"</i>	<i>Și de ne vede cineva, ne pasă oare?</i>
(15) <i>(The Years)</i>	
<i>And you haven't changed either</i>	<i>Nici mata nu te-ai schimbat</i>

2.2.4. Language related to epoch

In the case of *Mrs Dalloway*, we find terms that are translated in such a way so as to convey their meaning during the respective time in Romanian:

(16)	
<i>to give her party</i>	<i>să dea o serată</i>
<i>motor cars</i>	<i>automobile</i>
<i>housemaids</i>	<i>servante</i>
<i>ma'am</i>	<i>coniță</i>
<i>thought how the gentry love</i>	<i>se gândi cum iubesc boierii</i>
<i>nursemaid</i>	<i>guvernanta</i>
<i>At some party</i>	<i>într-o societate</i>
<i>squire</i>	<i>moșier</i>
<i>The perfect hostess</i>	<i>Ce amfitrioană perfectă</i>
<i>middle class</i>	<i>burghezi</i>

The term of address to a father is as in French in both English and Romanian (this happens in *The Years* as well): *Papa*. However, in *The Years*, *Papa* is sometimes translated into Romanian: "*How's Papa?*" / *Ce face tata?* On other occasions, the use of some now poetically flavoured words can be noticed: *baby/prunc*, *trees/arbori*.

The Years relies on other French or French-like words:

(17)	
<i>his mistress, Mira</i>	<i>metresa lui, Mira</i>
<i>Was it Grandpapa on the cob</i>	<i>Era grand-papa pe căluț</i>
<i>Commissionaire</i>	<i>'Consierjul'</i>

Similar vocabulary with the one used in *Mrs Dalloway* can be seen:

(18)	
<i>A woman of the lower classes</i>	<i>O femeie nevoiașă</i>
<i>they turned to make room for their hostess</i>	<i>se întoarseră să-i facă loc amfitrioanei</i>
<i>In she came again</i>	<i>Veni iar în odaie</i>
<i>Antonio, the man servant</i>	<i>Antonio, feciorul</i>
<i>"And you're going to the City, Papa?"</i>	<i>Și dumneata te duci în City, papa?</i>
<i>Her parties were never brilliant.</i>	<i>Recepțiile ei nu erau niciodată strălucite.</i>
<i>Jewels flashed on her neck</i>	<i>Giuvaieri îi scânteiau la gât</i>
<i>tell me about the party</i>	<i>povestește-mi despre serată</i>
<i>The nineteenth century going to bed</i>	<i>Veacul al nouăsprezecelea care merge la culcare</i>

2.2.5. Other uses of language

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, for the rendition of an intentionally humorous accent, adaptation is used: "*The Proime Minister's kyar.*" / *Otomobilul primului-ministru*.

Translators also make use of adaptation in cases of referring to unknown names:

(19)	
<i>Betty What'shername</i>	<i>Betty Cutare</i>
<i>Amelia What'shername</i>	<i>Amelia Cutare</i>
<i>visiting a patient, Sir Somebody Something in Bedford Square</i>	<i>vizitând un pacient, sir Cutare în Bedford Square</i>
<i>mention his name to So-and-so</i>	<i>să menționezi numele lui Peter domnului Cutare sau Cutare</i>
<i>Here was So-and-so in South Kensington</i>	<i>Iată-l pe Cutare din South Kensington</i>

The rendition of the sounds Peter Walsh hears is preserved, although those sounds may suggest nothing to the Romanian readers who are not familiar with the English language:

(20)

*ee um fah um so
foo swee too eem oo –*

With play-upon-words in *The Years*, the meaning is kept thanks to a similarity between proper names in the two languages (21. a), translators make use of adaptation (21. b) by creating a new play upon words, meaning is explained by footnotes (21. c) or readers who know English can better understand the meaning of the proper name 'North' (21. d):

(21)

- | | |
|---|---|
| a. "Red hair; red Rose," | <i>Păr roșu; Roza roșie!</i> |
| b. "Hacket? Hacket?" he repeated. He looked puzzled. Then understanding dawned. "Oh, the Hackets!" he said. | <i>Barba? Barba? repetă el. Arăta năuc. Apoi miji înțelegera. A! Familia Barda! făcu.</i> |
| c. "The old Mock Turtle," he said. They had to fall back on childish slang, on childish memories, to cover their distance, their hostility. | <i>Bătrâna Falsă Broască-țestoasă, făcu North. Trebuiau să se întoarcă la idiomul lor copilăresc, la amintirile din copilărie, ca să acopere distanța dintre ei, ostilitatea lor. (footnote: aluzie la un personaj din 'Alice in Tara Minunilor')</i> |
| d. "Who is North?" Nicholas asked. He pronounced the word "North" as if it were a point on the compass. | <i>Cine e North? întrebă Nicholas. Pronunță cuvântul 'North' de parcă ar fi fost un punct geografic.</i> |

Conclusions

Language does not develop in an empty space. Language is part of the culture of a people, aside from being the chief way by which members of a society communicate. A language may also be regarded as a medium through which the other parts of culture are expressed. We express our culture continuously in our dress, food, work, language and other activities, according to Eshleman.

Translation implies intercultural communication, by means of which one culture can be transmitted into another. The cultural characteristics unavoidably influence translation. The equivalence limits of the translation between the original language and the target language are caused by the differences between the two cultures. How to convey the cultural meaning is part of the difficulty of a translation.

There is a distinction between 'cultural equivalence' and 'cultural correspondence'. The first means the translation of a cultural term in the SL into another similar one in the TL, which performs the same function of that of the SL. Cultural correspondence is the absolute identification of an SL cultural term with another in the TL, both in function and description.

The Romanian translations of Woolf's novels *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Years* make use of both, as is appropriate in various situations.

Not only equivalence or close correspondence is possible, but also absolute correspondence. Although the translation of culture is still a problem for the translator, strong ties among global cultures, no matter how different they may be, are a fact.

The Romanian translations make use of a way of talking belonging to an equivalent time period in the novels. Characters use at times French words or French-related words and specifically Romanian terms of address used in the past. This, however, is not a rewriting, but a translation which tries to keep faithful to the original as much as it can. The reader is, as Wilhelm von Humboldt says, feeling as if in an apparently familiar environment while at the

same time he/she is aware that the action takes place in a different culture and in a different time.

The language used in both the original English novel and in the Romanian versions helps build the atmosphere during certain times in the past. Cultural aspects are important, their decoding (which seems to be done both by preserving the original terms – by doing, where possible, a word-for-word translation, and by adaptation) helps the reader to understand the novels within their cultural context. A sense of a certain culture is constructed by means of practices, representations, conceptions, as well as by language. Translation makes the novels accessible to the Romanian readers, in terms of decoding the original message, while also keeping a certain ‘foreign flavour to it’ (as Wilhelm von Humboldt claims that a good translation should).

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