

## INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION IN ROMANIAN - ENGLISH FAIRY-TALES

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### Introduction

Irrespective of the many attitudes, points of view, studies and works of reference, the term 'translation' remains in itself, if not a mystery, at least a challenge. The concept, as the definition of the term 'translation' displayed several other terms more or less related: an art, a science, a craft. There is no doubt that these terms are complementary ones.

### 1. On translation

According to Munday (2001: 19) *translation* in its written form (because the oral form is considered to be 'interpretation' or 'interpreting') is both a **process** and a **product**. However, the theoretical interpretation of the term *translation* (both as a **process** and as a **product**) implies certain domains of linguistics, psycholinguistics, semantics, and pragmatics. The cultural context and the competence of communication have their importance in the translation act and the translation-oriented text analysis (TOTA) (Bantaș and Croitoru 1998: 11)

Reference is most often made to three types of translations, namely:

- intralingual translation, where the interpretation of the verbal signs of a language is performed by means of other signs of the same language;
- interlingual translation or the translation proper, where two languages are 'passing' each other the means of interpretation;
- intersemiotic translation, where the interpretation of the verbal signs is done by means of non-verbal signs.

Jakobson (1959) is the voice who launched the idea that a translator cannot obtain a perfect equivalence, as each linguistic unit contains a set of associations and connotations that cannot be always transferable.

According to the level of the linguistic analysis, translations can be of the following types:

- rank-bound translations, where the equivalence is sought in the **word-for-word** pattern;
- unbounded translations, where the sense-for-sense pattern is used.

There are also **total** and **partial** translations where the syntagmatic chain is favoring a possible 'extension' and there are **restrained** translations where the linguistic level targets only the grammar or the lexicon of a certain target language (TL).

### 2. Aims of the paper and corpus analysis

The present paper aims at exploring and evaluating the cultural context as the operational unit in two fairy tales: Petre Ispirescu's *Tinerețe fără bătrânețe și viață fără de moarte* translated by Ana Cartianu as *Youth Everlasting and Life without End* and Mihai

Eminescu's *Borta Vântului* translated by Nicolae Damaschin as *The Wind-Hole*. The first observation is that the two translations belong to two different translators, published by two different Romanian publishing houses (Minerva and Sigma), at two different periods of time: i.e. 1979 and 2006.

What is really interesting is in the first place the impact the translation has on the target system. The folk-tale is seen as a 'special' literary creation, '*a presentation of life at the fabulous level*'. And there are, indeed, elements that can be considered as '*common denominators*' of the two worlds (the real and the fabulous one), people, social conventions and knowledge through experience. These fairy-tales contain the joy, irony and laughter, rage and tears, the drama of non communication of the communities they are addressed to.

The interpretation of a fairy-tale cannot but lead the reader to a metaphor of an epic-fantastic nature. The narrator and then the translator can dream about his/her own condition and that of the people around him/her.

There is, definitely, in every fairy-tale (and the two examples I have chosen, are no exception) a narrative compactness, a certain rhythm of revelation, unpredictable events, violent confrontation between '*good*' and '*evil*', '*fairness*' and '*perversity*'.

The main characters of the two fairy-tales are different: one is young, handsome and rich (Făt-Frumos), the other one is old and poor. Each of them has his own quest, which is the quest of the absolute. The role of the narrator is to make the impossible adventures, possible deeds.

The translators did not change anything in the narrator's status, unless the presence of the pronoun '*me*' in '*the bigger liar he who doesn't trust me at all*' for '*mai mincinos cine nu crede*' (*Youth Everlasting and Life without End*) is seen as Ana Cartianu's desire to make the reader feel the narrator's presence.

In *Youth Everlasting and Life without End*, the mysterious palace is reached but the deed is '*more than man can do*', landed in the impossible. Făt-Frumos is betrayed by his own happy restlessness. He chases a hare and forgets the capital interdiction of not stopping into the Vale of Tears. He remembers his home and his parents; he becomes human again and loses the paradise of eternity.

Făt-Frumos from *Youth Everlasting and Life without End* could be any man and the same anonymous status has the main character from *The Wind-Hole*. The narrator of *The Wind-Hole* stresses upon the social condition of the old man: he was very, very poor and he had also a lot of children. The motive for which he starts his quest was that he had no food to feed his children.

Still the two fairy-tales have different endings. If Făt-Frumos has to regain his human condition and his death, the man from '*The Wind-Hole*' '*enjoyed a good life*' and apparently his children, too.

The semantic relation between the original and the translation is a dynamic one and the translated text is a product that can be understood and can ensure an interlingual and intercultural communication.

The different '*degrees*' of equivalence can be recognized starting from the titles (six terms in English vs. eight terms in Romanian for *Youth Everlasting and Life without End* and three terms in English vs. two terms in Romanian for *The Wind-Hole*). *The Wind-Hole* is, in fact, the image of the homology between the Romanian genitive construction and the English hyphenated syntagm.

The translators of the two Romanian fairy-tales (having a different style and still respecting the content of the message from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL), achieved a good objectivity. Both Ana Cartianu in *Youth Everlasting and Life without End* and Nicolae Damaschin in *The Wind-Hole* retained a complete set of paraphrases, there where the equivalence was not possible (see the examples on the next page):

'S-au sculat deci împăratul și împărăteasa..'	'... so then the emperor and the empress <b>made ready</b> . (Youth Everlasting and Life without End)
'Nu mă las eu așa, cu una, cu două...'	'I won't <b>leave it</b> at that...' (The Wind-Hole)

In Ana Cartianu's translation, the presence of the teller/narrator is felt more than in Nicolae Damaschin's one. It is not only at the beginning and the end but within the story itself.

Both fairy-tales have developed gradually more characters and different situations. The context-related background emphasizes the role of the context and the appropriate verbal communication.

'-Taci, dragul tatii - zicea împăratul - că ți-oi da împărăția cutare și cutare....'	'- Quiet, my son', the emperor would say, for I shall give you such and such lands' (Youth Everlasting and Life without End)
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If the analysis goes farther, the reader can discover that the English version 'be still' (continuing the first 'quiet my son') covers more than the Romanian '-Taci, dragul meu,...' because it is not only a set of homological set phrase but because it incorporates body language and a network of social acts.

There are in both fairy-tales sets of expectations, beliefs and moral values. Language is used to interact and reconstruct the world:

'-Dac-o zis, atâtea vite ce-or ieșit, oi, cai, hei' Știi mata, putere dumnezeiască! '	'- Then, at once, lots of cattle, sheep, horses, an entire fortune went out of it. A real God's miracle!' (The Wind-Hole)
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Considered sometimes an 'adventure' of the spirit, the act of translating and the verb itself appeared much later. The translator and the reader have to meet each other's style, if not half-way, at least at some moment of their endeavour. There is, no doubt, some effort on both sides: the reader has to understand and sometimes to complete what the translator could not achieve, while the translator has to enter the author's ideas and feelings, and become a part of the author's universe.

What is, in certain authors' opinion, a perfect identity between the text A (SL) and the text B (TL), so that A=A (B), proves to be in the end, a utopian text.

The translator's mission is to decode the text in SL, to become aware of the denotations and connotations (and in the two texts I analyzed, the translators started either from the pattern 'once upon a time' as in *Youth Everlasting and Life without End* or abruptly 'there was a poor-poor man who had a lot of children' as in *The Wind-Hole*).

Very many researchers admitted the fact that the act of translating is complete when the translator renders the equilibrium between the text in the SL and the translated text. The cultural transfer ensures the universal character of the versions. That is why good translations have no age. Irrespective of the moment they were performed, they can be valued if the translator is aware of his/her responsibility towards the LS text.

I can admit that both Ana Cartianu in *Youth Everlasting and Life without End* and Nicolae Damaschin in *The Wind-Hole* reached that exquisite comparison Gogol used to make between a translator and a window-pan: both of them should be so transparent that the reader has no idea about the translator's presence. However, there is a small difference between the attitudes the two translators adopted. Ana Cartianu wanted to make the narrator/translator as visible as she could introduce the word 'babble', at the end of the story:

'Iar eu încălecai p-o șa și vă spusei dumneavoastră așa'	'And I mounted into the saddle, and told you all this <b>babble</b> ' (Youth Everlasting and Life without End)
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Nicolae Damaschin managed to hide himself behind the narrator, who seems to find his way and faith in the last sentence of the story:

'S -o dus împăratul și-o rămas în pace, și-o trăit bine. Să dea Dumnezeu să trăiască și copiii mei așa'	'The emperor went away and the man was left in peace and enjoyed a good life. May God give such life to my children, too' (The Wind-Hole)
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## Conclusions

In the two texts, '*Youth Everlasting and Life without End*' and '*The Wind-Hole*', the translators:

- took into account the linguistic context, the semantic and the pragmatic dimensions of the discourse;
- observed the SL structures and rendered them correctly in the TL;
- selected the appropriate term for ensuring the correct atmosphere and the social background (Făt-Frumos, boyar).

The passage from the original text T1, to the translated text T2 was performed smoothly, in both cases, without any particular or dramatic change in the speaker or the interlocutor's intentions.

The two translations I selected for a brief analysis and interpretation, preserved the authors' intentions, the structures imposed by the fairy-tales framework, as well as the translators' personalities.

## References

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## Corpus

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