

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TRANSLATIONS IN THE EVOLUTION OF THE ROMANIAN LITERARY LANGUAGE

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*Our communication presents some particular aspects of the evolution of the literary Romanian language towards modernity, by emphasizing the phenomena that characterized the first half of the century. We retained for analysis the first Romanian translation from Victor Hugo's prose - the novel *Le Dernier jour d'un condamné* in Stefan Stoica's version, which we put in parallel with three other later versions. The significant number of translation and republications, which covers three centuries, their motivations, as well as the possibility for the researcher to obtain samples of language from various periods, justifies our interpretative initiative of these versions. The studied aspects represent an incontestable proof of the determining role played by translators and translated texts in the creation of a modern literary Romanian language and in the enrichment of its expressiveness.*

Key words: Romanian literary language, neological loan, translations, Victor Hugo

In the process of constitution of the modern literary Romanian, the XIXth century occupies a particular place, owing to the intensity of debates around questions linked to the Romanian language, of multidisciplinary action of men of letters animated by patriotic breath, that is to say so much efforts made concrete by the huge step towards modernization made by the Romanian language and literature. This process of quick transfiguration assumed the concurrence of several directions of development: education and press in Romanian, original literature, cultural societies, but also translations of major writings of foreign literatures, who played an important role in refinement and unification of the literary Romanian language.

Being in charge of the Romanian culture in the three Romanian Principalities, Gh. Asachi, I.Heliade Rădulescu and G.Barițiu were the originators of “a true policy of translations”, according to “instructive criteria”, which aimed “the acceleration of the process of incorporation of the Romanian nation in the sphere of ideas, aspirations and interests of modern civilization”[2,157]. I.H.Rădulescu had already underlined the necessity of translations, in the *Preface* of his *Grammar* of 1828: these “prettify and ennoble the language; it is by their intermediary that enter the language all sentences and all manners of speaking the nicest of the renowned authors and, by including them, the language makes them

its own” [3,69]. Later, in an article published in 1848 in *Curierul românesc* (The Romanian Mail), I.Heliade-Rădulescu insisted on positive purpose for the literary language of versions in Romanian of foreign writings: by the opening towards all the picture of human knowledge, our language “will legitimate words, sentences and expressions, will widen and stretch towards all skylines of knowledge” and, becoming “able to express any thought”, it will be “the language of the future of Romania” [4,VIII]. While giving up-to-date models to follow to the young creative authors, the Romanian scholars had the remarkable intuition of the contribution of translations in enrichment and in refinement of the Romanian language. When they were obliged to make loans from the source language of translations, because of the absence of terms in Romanian, the translators submitted new words to a process of adaptation, that generated a transformation of the material of the Romanian language [5, 180]. The intense activity of translation in Romanian of writings of foreign literatures was supported by I.Heliade-Rădulescu in its plan of an universal Library. The public could so have access to the texts of the great French authors, what had as consequence to make Hugo and Lamartine both the foreign authors most translated in XIXth century. The interest for hugolians texts is explained by the fact that the Romanian men of letters found elements considered as necessities for the evolution of the autochthonous culture there.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

We were interested in the first hugolian novel translated into Romanian: *Le Dernier jour d'un condamné* (1829) (Source text), the Romanian version of which, signed by the captain Stefan Stoica, has the title *Ziua dupe urmă a unui osândit*, (on 1839, Bucharest, I.Eliad's printing house) (Target Text 4). Having the dimensions of a short story, this text appears as the expression of the will of V.Hugo "to move to convince" (J.-P.Berret), because the author transforms his text in a plea for the abolition of the death penalty. Written at the first person, the novel tells the last hours of a person sentenced to death, a hero without identity because having all the identities and nobody's, guilty of a murder that we ignore, but young, educated, husband and father. The technique of the newspaper allows the recording of the growing fear of the character, its thoughts and the contradictory feelings, which involve analysis and dream, pity and cruelty, and the more detailed retort of which will be given by Dostoievski, in *Memories of the house of the deaths* [1, 58]. We identified four later versions, in volume: *Cea din urmă zi a unui condamnat*, trad. de Horațiu et Virgiliu Z., Colecția Biblioteca pentru toți, București, Librăria universală Alcalay&C^o, 1908; *Ultima zi a unui condamnat*, trad. de J.Leonard, București, Editura Librăriei „Colos”, 1938 (Target Text3); *Ultima zi a unui condamnat la moarte*, trad. de Mihai Rădulescu, Iași, Junimea, 1971 (réed. Editura Nemira, 2007) (Target Text 1); *Cea din urmă zi a unui condamnat*, trad. de Sorin B.Rareș, București, Editura Doris, 1991. We add to it the version of I.S.Spartali, appeared in *România liberă* (Free Romania), IX (1885), no. 2357-2369, with the title *Ziua din urmă a unui osândit* (Target Text 2), as well as several fragments appeared in the other newspapers or the magazines. The significant number of translations and republications, during three centuries, the motivations of these versions, as well as the possibility of finding samples of Romanian language of several stages of its evolution, all these aspects justify our evaluative approach.

We appeal, mainly, to the model proposed by Christiane North in her book *Text Analysis in Translation* (1991). This model of analysis of the translations includes the extratextual or external factors (the factors of the situation of communication in which the text achieves its function): the author, the intention of the author, the receiver of the text, the environment or the communication channel of the text, the place, the time of the production and that of the reception, the motivation of the communication, the function of the text; and intratextual or internal factors (concerning the text): the subject, the contents, the composition of the text, the lexicon, the syntax, the suprasegmental features (having stylistic implications). While taking into account constraints of editorial staff, we propose an analysis that retains the most significant elements for the evolution of the literary Romanian language, which we examine in successive stages, but by registering them in an evaluative integrative approach. We can so formulate conclusions on the obstacles met by the translators with various stages of the language, on the quality of the proposed equivalences, on the level of aesthetic realization of the Romanian versions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Șt. Stoica's version is accompanied by a letter sent to "Mister I.Eliad", in which the translator, having demonstrated that the Romanian customs deserve more respect than the Westerns ones, asks Heliade Rădulescu to receive the translation of Victor Hugo's text, to correct it, to make it publish and to defend it against the critics. In its *Answer*, Heliade-Rădulescu thanks the translator for having helped him to give to the Romanians in its Collection of the classic authors "this Mr. Victor Hugo's beautiful work", he asserts having had nothing to correct, neither in the spelling, nor in the ideas, because the nature of the text imposes a simple, natural style. As regards the contents of the book, the editor recognizes that the text incites to meditate, and he makes afterward a parallel between what takes place in the civilized said countries and the examples of tolerance of the history of the Romanians.

The title of the novel knows three variants, with an ancient written form and a structure forced at Șt.Stoica, the old-looking term "osândit" being afterward replaced by the neologism "condamnat", to which M.Rădulescu adds an absent circumstance in the original title: "la moarte", maybe to amplify the impact on the reader. Certain editions (on 1908, 1938, 1991) specify the literary membership of the text: "novel", what already directs the reader in his expectations. At the lexical level, we retain three forms of demonstration of the specialized language: the slang, the terms of the judicial domain and those connected to the prison universe, each three being represented well in the novel. The text can be reported to *Les Misérables* by the importance lent to the passages in slang. The term *patois* raises problem to the translators, when it appears in the same sentence as the word *argot*:

ST: Le patois de la caverne et du bagne, cette langue ensanglantée et grotesque, ce hideux argot...(p.452)

TT1: Argoul cavernei și al ocnei, această limbă însângărată și grotescă, acest grai hidos...(p.69)

TT2: Graiul speluncilor și al ocnei, această limbă însângărată și ciudată, acest argo scârbos...(p.97)

TT3: Limba peșteri și a ocnii, limbă însângerață și grotescă, acest argo hidos

TT4: Baragoina peșterii tâlhărești și a bagnetului, această limbă cruntă și grotiască, acest scârbos argot...(p.53)

The more ancient versions hesitate in the phonetic adaptation of the neologism *argot*, whereas *patois* knows four equivalents (the TC1 operates a permutation); the TT3 eliminates it, by having appeal to the term above ordered, the TT4 introduces a neologism which was not preserved in Romanian (from the fr. *baragouin* = incomprehensible language). It is necessary to notice the suggestive solution proposed by the first translator of the text for the noun "caverne" = *peștera tâlhărească*, superior to the later realizations: the TT1 contents with borrowing, whereas the TT2 makes confusion with the fr. "taverne".

We identified in the novel 35 terms of the domain of the justice; for the biggest part, these words do not raise problems to the translators, who appeal to the neologisms, even during the first translations. Here is the list of the terms and the constituents of the source text : *procès, salle d'audience, juges, témoins, avocats, procureur du roi, jurés, salle des assises, gendarmes, robes noires, président, assesseur, rabat, déclaration, préméditation, travaux forcés à perpétuité, greffier, verdict, application de la peine, déclaration du jury, procureur-général, défenseur, arrêt, pourvu de cassation, parquet, cour d'assises, substitut du greffier, condamné aux frais, plaideurs, avoir sa grâce, huissier, le rejet du pourvoi, procès-verbal, magistrat, substitut du procureur-général*.

Certain neologisms used by Șt.Stoica are not completely adapted to the Romanian, having a characteristic shape for the stage of the language in this time: *proșes, prezedent, grafier* (probably, by analogy with *grafie*), but we meet also terms with their current shape there: *asesor, avocat, parchet, substitutul procurorului general, proces-verbal, magistrat*. The marks of the stage of the language are: a) at the lexical level: *pârâciunea asupra faptei precugetate* for « *préméditation* », *trimitere la munca obștiască pe toată viața* for « *travaux forcés à perpétuité* », *înainte hotărârea* for « *arrêt* »; b) the word order, in *general procurorul*. When he does not use a neologism, the translator appeals to a word of the common language: *părerea* for « *le verdict* », *veșmintele cele negre* for « *les robes noires* ». The equivalents proposed by the TT3 mark an upper degree of specialization and adequacy: *premeditare, recurs la casație, apărător, curtea juraților, muncă silnică, supleant* etc. We identified two cases of literal translation: *rochiile negre* (fr. « *les robes noires* ») and *a avea grația* (fr. « *avoir la grâce* »). J.Leonard translates incorrectly « *condamné aux frais* » ("condemned for expenses") by: "sunt nevoit să fac cheltuieli"; « *les plaideurs* » are rendered by *vorbitorii*, and the sentence « *Le défenseur se leva* » ("The defender got up" does not appear any more.

The richness of the terms associated to the prison universe (*cachot, cellule, prison, geôle, bagné, galériens, prisonnier, détenus, chiourme, ferrer les forçats, forçats en punition, forçats en titre/aspirants; geôlier, guichetier, factionnaire de garde, argousins, garde-chiourme* etc.) is simplified a lot in the TT4: the pair of Slavic origin, today old-looking, *temniță-temnicer* is completed by *strejar*, the

neologisms *gardian*, *galerian*, and two loans from French less adapted to the Romanian language: *forsazi* and *bagnul*. The following versions will amplify the number of equivalents, sometimes with distances or faults: the TT2 juxtaposes two synonyms, of different date, to translate « guichetiers et garde-chiourmes »: *păzitori și gardieni*. It is the version of M. Rădulescu that manages to get back the lexical variety of the original, due to more or less new elements: *carceră, celulă, închisoare, gherlă; galerieni, deținuți, escorta galerienilor, a bate lanțurile ocașilor, ocașii de la „negre”, galerieni de fapt/in spe; temnicer, caraliu, caraulă de pază* [pleonasm], *escorta galerienilor*.

At the level of the morphology, we retain a characteristic feature for XIXth century - the use of the gerund with adjectival value: *figuri murinde* (fr. « figures mornes »), *inscripție caracterisindă* întru o închisoare (« inscription caractéristique dans une prison »); *suvenirele junii mele răzânde* (« les souvenirs rians de ma jeunesse »); *inimi flăcărânde* (« cœurs enflammés »).

In the syntax, it is necessary to note the direct object expressed by an infinitive, as in French: „să-mi dea voe a scrie” = « qu’on me laissât écrire »; in the following example, it is about an influence of the ancient language: „În trecutele zile mi s-a întâmplat a vedea ...” = « J’ai vu ces jours passés... » - the use of the conjunction *ci*: „Ci scoală odată!”; - the ante position of the adjective: *general procurorul* (p. 10), but also, on the page 22: *procurorul general*.

It is also necessary to note the use of the forms maintained in the literary language, supported in the time by Heliade: *pe* for *pă, ușă* et non *ușe, ei au luat, mâinile* (although Heliade recommended the form *mânile*). It is surprising to find in the first translation, appeared in the printing office of Heliade, which asserts having had nothing to correct in the language of the translation, a rather important number of elements that were the object of the criticism of the great Romanian man of letters.

A parallel reading of two fragments in Șt. Stoica's version and in that of I. S. Spărtali allows us to identify important changes:

TT4 : Aceste puține vorbe m-aruncară cu sâlnicie în cunoștința adevărului. Pe loc iar mi se înfățișară ca și d-un fulger lunate: melanholicul salon al judecății, masa cea învălătată cu postav roșu sângerieu, la care șădea judecătorii, cele trei rânduri de marturi cu fețele lor cele stupide, cei doi geandarmi de amândoa părțile bănții mele. Vedeam veșmintele cele negre fășiind încoaci și încolo; capetele mulțimei ce, în partea despre ușă, se-ambulzea ca furnicile; vedeam cum se îndrepta asupra-mi ațintatele ochieri ale celor doisprezece jurați, carii privighea când eu dormeam. (p.5-6)

TT3 : Vorbele acestea puține, ca și firul care rupe zborul insectei, mă zvârli d-odată în realitate. Văzui iar fără veste, ca în lumina unui fulger, posomorâta sală a juraților, pe judecătorii așezați în formă de potcoavă și încărcăți cu sdrențe în fața sângelui [wrong meaning], cele trei rânduri de martori cu fețele stupide, pe cei doi jandarmi la capetele băncii mele, și rochiile negre agitându-se, și capetele mulțimei furnicând în fundul umbrei, și oprindu-se pe mine privirea pironită a celor doisprezece jurați, care privegheaseră pe când eu dormeam.

The written form of certain words is the current one: *geandarmi* – *jandarmi* ; *bănții* – *băncii* ; *marturi-martori*. At the lexical level, one replaced words / structures aged, sometimes by appropriate neologisms: *cu sâlnicie* - *d-odată* ; *în cunoștința adevărului* – *în realitate*; *ca și d-un fulger luminate* - *ca în lumina unui fulger* ; *ațintatele ochieri* - *privirea pironită*. At the morph syntactical level, we register: the abolition of the adjectival demonstrative article between the adjective and the definite name: *fețele lor cele stupide* - *fețele stupide* ; *veșmintele cele negre* - *rochiile negre* ; the replacement of the relative pronoun *carii* by the invariable shape *care*. The second quoted version still contains oldest elements: the genitive *mulțimei*; popular forms: *mă zvârli*; calques: *rochiile negre*.

CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation by parallelism of the successive versions of the same text - in our case, the translations in Romanian of the novel *Le Dernier jour d'un condamné* of Victor Hugo - allowed us to operate step by step, from the extratextual level towards the intratextual one, to identify the elements which raise problems to the translators. The analyses by sequence found losses and gains, at the level of the contents, due to multiple causes, but with important consequences for the coherence of the text. Due to the versions dating from different periods of the evolution of the Romanian literary language, we were able to identify and to interpret concrete aspects of the evolution of the language, which owes a lot to the contact through the translations with the languages and the foreign literatures.

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