THREE VERSIONS OF *THE HOBBIT*: STRATEGIES OF AUTHENTICATION AND THEIR TRANSLATION INTO ROMANIAN

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Abstract

A classic such as *The Hobbit* has occasioned three published versions in Romanian, which raises the question of progress in retranslation. Inspired by Kruger’s proposal that narratological translation shifts do occur in translation, we intend to check the validity of Antoine Berman’s famous ‘retranslation hypothesis’. By employing Berman’s ‘analytic of translation,’ the present paper identifies possible deforming tendencies in translation and compares the existing versions by using this criterion. We restrict our scrutiny to authentication strategies in a crucial chapter of *The Hobbit*, that is those narrative devices by means of which the narrator creates a bond with his readership. Another important point checked in our paper is whether there are instances of intertextuality in retranslation, which we prove by looking at those places in the narrative where the auctorial voice is heard in the source text and at similarities in their translation.

Keywords: retranslation; intertextuality; translation shifts; authentication strategies; ambiguity.

INTRODUCTION

The present paper aims at checking whether Antoine Berman’s famous “retranslation hypothesis” applies to the three Romanian versions of *The Hobbit*. 
The hypothesis, stated in a seminal article, “La retraduction comme espace de la traduction” [Retranslation as a translation space 1990], advanced the idea that, with very few exceptions, a first translation can hardly be a “great” translation. Only a retranslation, that is a second or a third target text, can aspire to be great. By ‘greatness’ Berman meant that, unlike in the case of the first version, more often than not characterized by translation loss, retranslation had a chance at recouping losses and at becoming as rich as the source text itself. Textual richness as well as a rich relationship with the original were the features that turned a target text into a great translation.

The hypothesis mentioned above, dubbed in the literature as the “retranslation hypothesis”, has, of course, been the butt of debate ever since the 90’s. One of the problems of Berman’s hypothesis has to do with the evaluation strategies that can be applied to check whether a target text is, indeed, great. While Berman is adamant with respect to what greatness in translation means, he fails to offer a toolkit with which evaluation can be performed on a target text. To this effect, we intend to make use of Berman’s “analytic of translation” (Berman 1984, translated into English in Venuti 2000) that predates his article on retranslation by six years and that contains a whole list of “deforming tendencies” that may take place in the translation of fiction. This should be, we believe, a consistent means of analysis and an excellent basis a translation theorist might use to check whether a translation is indeed “great.” While the label “great” is not employed in the 1984 article, the concept of “richness” might be seen as present in the older text under the form of the phrase “shapeless polylogic” which, Berman explains, characterizes high-quality novels and shouldn’t be destroyed by a translator’s desire to apply “arbitrary homogenization”.

The comparative textual analysis we intend to perform is restricted to the fifth chapter of J. R. R. Tolkien’s book and will focus on instances of linguistic realization of auctorial “authentication strategies”, i.e. linguistic strategies “whereby the author engages the reader in a second-frame dialogue with the textual world and, indirectly, with himself.” (Furkó 266) In choosing to investigate the translation of narrative strategies by means of which the narrator bonds with the reader we were inspired by Kruger (816), who suggests that narratological translation shifts are inherent in translation. A similar observation is made by Zhang (580) who discusses strategies of identifying intertextuality in retranslation and notices that traces of intertextuality can be identified by inspecting the way in which the translator deals with defining narrative or stylistic features of the source text.

It turns out that a close look at instances of text where the presence of the narrator is made visible can be fruitful with respect to translation shifts and intertextuality in translation. On the one hand, Berman’s deforming tendencies
such as explicitation, clarification, qualitative impoverishment, etc. can be looked at as instances of translation shifts. It would be interesting to see whether the three Romanian versions of *The Hobbit* are subject to such deforming tendencies. A possible evaluation will definitely have to take into consideration the density and frequency of such translation shifts in the target texts under analysis. Once evaluation is performed, we might be able to see whether the first target text is “less” than the other two subsequent target texts under scrutiny. This will enable us to confirm the retranslation hypothesis.

On the other hand, intertextuality in translation can be defined as all that sets the target texts in a relationship, as Zhang (577) suggests. Sometimes, intertextuality in translation may manifest itself as “filiation”, that is as “textual similarities that reflect a filial stance of one translation towards the other.” (Zhang 580) Among other textual features that can be closely investigated so as to identify filiation are “narrative or stylistic features” that characterize the source text. Another form of intertextuality is “dissidence”, which refers to those “textual features that indicate one translation is made to distinguish from or even compete against another.” (Zhang 580) If we manage to demonstrate the fact that there are instances of “filiation” or of “dissidence”, to use Zhang’s terms, between the existing versions of *The Hobbit*, we will be able, once again, to confirm the retranslation hypothesis. This is because, in Berman’s acceptation, retranslations benefit from the first target text as a sort of reference point that constitutes the foundation for progress and improvement. A retranslation is supposed to build upon the first translation, to refine upon it, to take it as the perfect precedent for another go at the source text and at recapturing that inherent loss.

“IT WAS A TURNING POINT IN HIS CAREER, BUT HE DID NOT KNOW IT.”

We have chosen Chapter V of *The Hobbit* as the main source for our corpus for a number of reasons. The first one has to do with the fact that this chapter is the one which constitutes the “turning point” in the narrative: it is the chapter where Bilbo is lost from his friends, he is alone in the mountain tunnels and happens upon a magic ring which he slips into his pocket. Little did the author himself know, back in 1937, when he first published *The Hobbit*, that this ring was to be the bone of contention for the whole *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. After the trilogy was completed in 1949, Tolkien had to operate some changes on the fifth chapter of *The Hobbit* in 1951, to recalibrate the story. This is the second reason for which this chapter is important, as it contains comments on the part of the narrator that were not present in the first version (Anderson 127) and that are mostly to do with old Gollum, a character which turned out to be crucial for the trilogy. A third reason
for our choice is the fact that this chapter abounds in instances of auctorial intrusion and, as it also contains a riddle contest, it constitutes a special mixture of narrative prose and poetry whose main purpose is to intrigue and engage the reader. The presence of the riddles is a surefire indicator that the readers are also meant to be participants in the story and that they are supposed to learn something from this exchange. In fact one of the reviews that were written for the first edition said: “We guarantee that you will enjoy this stirring tale as much as your boy. Make him solve the riddles of Gollum and Bilbo. They alone are worth the price of the book.” (Catholic World, July 1938, quoted in Anderson 22)

So, what kind of narrator does The Hobbit have? The blurb on the jacket of the first edition offers some clues: J. R. R. Tolkien “is Rawlinson and Bosworth professor of AngloSaxon at Oxford, and fellow of Pembroke College. He has four children and The Hobbit was written for them, and read aloud to them. It became a standing family entertainment, especially at Christmas-time…” (quoted in Anderson 25). The book was meant as a story to be told aloud by Tolkien to his children, which defined the persona of the narrator as a fatherly figure, intent on not just delighting the readers and making them experience the joys and terrors of a novel fictional world but also on teaching them about right and wrong and on helping them take a few steps behind and distance themselves when the world of the story became too frightening. (Buzaré 56, Thomas 162)

The narrator might be like a father figure, intrusive enough so as to drop all sorts of comments in the narrative, in which the fifth chapter abounds, but he is not as knowledgeable as he might like. In the introduction to The Fellowship of the Ring, Tolkien himself creates an intricate explanation for the gaps in the knowledge of the narrator as he explains that The Hobbit is in fact a retelling of Bilbo’s narrative:

I have in this tale adhered more closely to the actual words and narrative of my original than in the previous selection from the Red Book, The Hobbit. That was drawn from the early chapters, composed originally by Bilbo himself. If “composed by” is a just word. Bilbo was not assiduous, nor an orderly narrator, and his account is involved and discursive, and sometimes confused, faults that still appear in the Red Book, since the copiers were pious and careful, and altered very little. (introduction to The Fellowship of the Ring)

As one can see, auctorial stance is an important feature in the text, so important in fact, that some of the first reviewers of The Hobbit objected to the narrator’s intrusive presence: the book was considered to have been “marred, in my opinion, by some reflection of the author’s attitude to the world” (Eleanor Graham, Junior Bookshelf, December 1937, quoted in Anderson 18). It therefore
stands to reason that more attention should be paid to those devices that mark the presence of the narrator in the text.

A close perusal of Chapter V (‘‘Riddles in the Dark’’) reveals at least three types of narrative markers that might be argued to be part of the author’s authentication strategies: deictic markers (such as first and second person pronouns and verbs), pragmatic markers (such as evidential adverbials), and instances of deliberately created ambiguity (which are typical of children’s literature and are meant to have more than one function: apart from the aesthetic, comic and didactic functions these instances of ambiguity might fulfil, they are also important for a bonding between the reader and the narrator, as pointed out by Wagner 131).

In what follows, we intend to illustrate the three categories of authentication strategies mentioned above and perform a comparative textual analysis on the three existing target texts. As previously discussed, at least for the first two target texts (Bîrsanu 12), there are clear differences in the approach that the translators took to Tolkien’s text. While the first target text (signed by Catinca Ralea and published in 1975 by Cartea Românească, then republished in 2002 by Rao Publishers) has the merit of having introduced a new genre (heroic fantasy) to the Romanian readership, the second target text (signed by Junona Tutunea and published in 1995 by Elit Publishers) is more of an archaizing approximation, subject to a lot of criticism as it departs from the tone and the style of the source text (Bîrsanu 12). Interestingly enough, only five years later, in 2007, Rao Publishers decided to commission a new version, probably because the trilogy had already been translated (between 1999-2001 by Irina Horea, Ion Horea and Gabriela Nedelea) and the publishers must have opted for uniformity, employing the same translators to complete the series of Middle Earth books. This meant that, at least for a decade, the first (republished) target text and the third target text were “active” retranslations, if we were to employ the term suggested by Pym (82), i.e. they were simultaneously read by the same readership and may have been competing with each other. The main difference between the tone of these target texts is, as anticipated by Bîrsanu (7) when discussing the first two target texts, the fact that the first target text was meant for young readers, while the third target text addressed a much older, much more knowledgeable segment of the readership: the fans of the movies and of the Middle Earth-verse. In light of all this, the attitude of the translators towards their “implied reader” should be transparent and distinct if there are any narratological translation shifts that can be identified below.
DEICTIC MARKERS

The fragment in the table below is the very beginning of the fifth chapter and sets the tone of the narrative:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE TEXT</th>
<th>TARGET TEXT1 (Catinca Ralea 1975)</th>
<th>TARGET TEXT2 (Junona Tutunea 1995)</th>
<th>TARGET TEXT 3 (Irina Horea 2007)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When Bilbo (1) opened his eyes, he wondered if he had (2); for it was just as dark as with them (3) shut. No one was anywhere near him (4). Just imagine his fright! (5)</td>
<td>Când deschise din nou ochii, Bilbo se întrebă dacă într-adevăr i i deschisedese; căci era atât de întuneric, că nu vedea nimic. Și nicăieri, lingă el, nu era nimeni. Vă închipuiți ce spaimă l-a cuprins!</td>
<td>Când deschise ochii, Bilbo nu știu ce să creadă, pentru că nu deslușea nimic prin bezna din jur. În preajmă nu era nici țipenie de om! Dați-vă seama ce groază a intrat în sufletul lui de hobbit!</td>
<td>Când Bilbo deschise ochii, se întrebă dacă i i deschisedese cu adevărat; și-asta pentru că întunericul era la fel de deplin ca și când i-ar fi ţinut închiși. Nimeni nu se găsea lângă el. Vă puteți închipui ce spaimă l-a cuprins!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Under (1) the subject (Bilbo) is placed in anaphoric relation with the personal pronoun (he) in the main clause. None of the target texts preserves this relation, opting for a null subject in the time adverbial and a cataphoric relation between the null subject of the adverbial and the subject of the main clause. This is an instance of rationalization, as far as Berman is concerned, and is probably forced exactly by the fact that Romanian is a pro-drop language.

Another instance of rationalization is present under (2) and is due to the fact that Romanian does not operate a similar kind ofellipsis with respect to auxiliaries. While English has VP ellipsis under strict identity available (he wondered if he had... {opened them}), Romanian does not possess this type of textual ellipsis. This forces the undesirable repetition of the verb a deschide (‘to open’) in TT1 and in TT3, which can be also viewed as an instance of intertextuality (an instance of filiation due to the similar treatment of ellipsis). TT2 chooses a different approach to VP ellipsis and replaces the ellipsis by a verb of propositional attitude (he wondered if he had is rendered as ‘he didn’t know what to believe’), which is a translation shift that might be identified as clarification in Berman’s terms.

Another problem for the translator is the anaphor them, which resumes the definite noun phrase his eyes. Only TT3 manages to capture the anaphor in the
original, which means that the cohesion devices employed in the original are reformulated in TT1 and TT2. While all three preserve the adverbial (reason) meaning of the connecting conjunction, TT1 compensates for the lack of anaphor by means of clarification (a complex sentence containing a main clause and an adverbial of result) and expansion (the pronoun them is replaced with the verb to see). Also, the polarity of the sentence is changed (for it was as dark as with them shut becomes ‘for it was so dark that he couldn’t see a thing’.) TT2 chooses to render the same sentence as ‘for he could not distinguish anything in the darkness around’, which is another instance of clarification and rationalization, with polarity change on top. TT3 in its turn makes use of expansion and clarification: ‘and this because the darkness was as thick as when he kept them open’. Of the three variants available, TT3 seems to have preserved both the anaphoric relation and the polarity of the original.

The sentence under (4) is an instance of negative incorporation and while the polarity of the source text is kept intact, both TT1 and TT2 opt for a more expressive rendering: TT1 does so by means of rationalization (reordering the phrases in the sentence and opting for an adverbial of place in sentence initial position), while TT2 opts for an idiomatic negative polarity item (nu era nici țipenie de om, ’there wasn’t a living soul around’) that is much more expressive than the simple negation in the source text.

Finally, under (5) there is an illustration of the narrator’s presence, an instance of authentication on the part of the narrator. The third person narrative is interrupted by a directive (underlined in bold letters in the table), containing a second person verb in the imperative. Both TT1 and TT2 opt for a similar mood (indicative present) and a similar verb phrase (vă închipuiți, vă puteți închipui ‘you (can) imagine’). In fact, we believe that, in this case, TT3 is in a relationship of filiation with TT1, as, apart from the added modal in TT3 (a putea ‘to be able to’), the whole sentence is identical, which is unlikely to be a coincidence. TT2 on the other hand opts for an imperative and does away with the ellipsis present in the source text, adding a diminutive on top: dați-vă seama ce groază a intrat în sufletul lui de hobbit ‘you should realize what fright entered his little hobbit’s heart.’ This is a combination of more than one translation shifts: rationalization, expansion, clarification, and ennoblement.

Below we offer our own version of the fragment we have just analysed. We endeavoured to observe all the points made by Berman in his analytic of translation and avoided creating translation shifts as much as the parametric differences between English and Romanian allowed:
When Bilbo (1) opened his eyes, he wondered if he had (2); for it was just as dark as with them (3) shut. No one was anywhere near him (4). Just imagine his fright! (5)

Când Bilbo deschise ochii, se întrebă dacă făcuse iare asta; pentru că era la fel de întuneric ca atunci când ii ținea închiși. Nu era nimeni prin preajmă. Imagineți-vă groaza lui!

When Bilbo opened his eyes, (he) wondered if he had (interrogative particle) done so; for it was as dark as when (he) kept them open. There was no one around. Imagine his fright!

As one can see, TT4 preserves the simple vocabulary of the source text and does away with explicitation, expansion and clarification. The fact that Romanian does not have VP ellipsis under strict identity available is compensated for by means of an interrogative particle that manages to recreate the simplicity and expressivity of the original. The sentence under (5) containing the voice of the narrator is preserved as faithfully as possible, without resorting to ennoblement and expansion as was the case with the published target texts.

Consider also the table below, containing another intrusion of the narrator, who inserts a comment about the main character that alludes to the ending of the story and even to future events that are yet to come and be described in the trilogy Lord of the Rings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE TEXT</th>
<th>TARGET TEXT 1</th>
<th>TARGET TEXT 2</th>
<th>TARGET TEXT 3</th>
<th>TARGET TEXT 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was a turning point in his career, but he did not know it.</td>
<td>Asta avea să însemne o cotitură în cariera lui, dar atunci n-o știa.</td>
<td>Habar nu avea el că descoperirea aceea întâmplătoare era un moment de răscruce în viața lui.</td>
<td>Era un moment de cotitură în cursul vieții lui, dar nu avea de unde să știe acest lucru.</td>
<td>Era un moment de cotitură în cariera sa, dar el nu știa asta.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sentence above is made up of two main clauses coordinated adversatively. The tense used is the Simple Past. Apart from the compound turning point, the vocabulary is quite simple. While explicitation seems to characterize all three published versions, it appears that TT1 is the least burdened by extra-material. The only addition made is the futurate use of the verb a însemna ‘to mean’, which does not appear in the original. TT3 seems to go along similar lines, but opts for expansion when rendering the noun phrase his career by în
cursul vieții lui ‘in the course of his life’. Expansion is also present in the rendition of he did not know it by dar nu avea de unde să știe acest lucru ‘but he had no way of knowing this thing’. TT2 however opts for a more dramatic rendition: ‘Little did he know that that accidental discovery was a turning point in his life.’ Apart from the emphatic construction at the beginning of the sentence, the translator has rationalized and explicitated the compound sentence and turned it into a complex sentence. The voice of the narrator is in this case reinforced by the voice of the translator herself, who turns out to be as intrusive, if not more so, as the narrator of the source text. To our mind, the dry simplicity of the original is completely lost in TT2.

EVIDENTIAL MARKERS

Let us consider a first example under this category. Apart from the deictic markers that are present in the second part of this excerpt, the fragment below contains an instance of an evidential pragmatic marker (the adverb certainly), which is frequently used by Tolkien as a strategy of authentication (Fraser 173). Evidentials come in handy when the narrator is in a dialogue with his readers as they are meant to hint at the credibility of the narrator and at his own self-confidence as a reliable story-teller. Thus, it appears that such pragmatic markers in combination with deictic markers are effective in creating complicity between narrator and his readers. In the table below, all three target texts translate the evidential marker in initial position and choose to render the deictic personal pronoun you by means of a polite form (TT1 dumneavoastră ‘you, polite plural’) or an archaic form of polite address (domniile voastre ‘your lordships’), which is present in both TT2 and TT3 and can be considered as a form of filiation, since it is quite rare in contemporary Romanian.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE TEXT</th>
<th>TARGET TEXT 1</th>
<th>TARGET TEXT 2</th>
<th>TARGET TEXT 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Now certainly</td>
<td>E clar că Bilbo se afla, cum s-ar zice, la strâmtioare. Dar gândiți-vă că pentru el strâmtioarea nu era chiar atât de mare cât ar fi fost pentru mine sau pentru dumneavoastră.</td>
<td>Fără doar și poate, Bilbo cam intrase la strâmtioare, cum se spune. Însă nu trebuie să uitați nici o clipă că pentru el „strâmtioare” nu însemna același lucru ca pentru mine sau Domniile Voastre.</td>
<td>Fără îndoială că Bilbo se găsea acum la strâmtioare, cum s-ar zice. Dar trebuie să țineți minte că, pentru el, strâmtioarea nu era chiar așa de strâmtă, cum ar fi fost pentru mine sau pentru Domniile Voastre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilbo was in what</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is called a tight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>place. But you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>must remember it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was not quite so</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tight for him as</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it would have been</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for me or for you.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Compare these versions to TT4, which choose to preserve the connecting adverbial *now* as an important cohesive device, alongside the evidential marker. Moreover, TT4 chooses to resort to a personal pronoun in the plural for the deictic marker (*you*), more in accordance to the alleged relationship existing between narrator and readers in *The Hobbit* (father-children) and less in accordance to conventional rules of politeness assumed to exist between author and readership in general.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE TEXT</th>
<th>TARGET TEXT 4</th>
<th>BACK TRANSLATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Now certainly Bilbo was in what is called a tight place. But <em>you must remember it was not quite so tight for him as it would have been for me or for you.</em></td>
<td>Acuma, bineînțeles că Bilbo se gâsea, cum s-ar zice, la strâmtoire. Dar să nu uitați că pentru el locul nu era chiar așa de strâmt pe cât ar fi fost pentru mine sau pentru voi.</td>
<td>Now, certainly that Bilbo found himself, so to say, in a tight place. But do not forget that for him the place was not as tight as it would have been for me or for you.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With respect to the use of the pragmatic marker *certainly*, Furkó remarks:

Tolkien frequently uses EMs as presupposition manipulators: in [the example above], EMs introduce information that is by no means known to or shared by the interlocutor (i.e. Bilbo) or the reader, respectively. Unlike in mediatised political interviews, however, presupposition manipulations in *The Hobbit* serve to indicate that there is a larger (fantasy) world, of which *The Hobbit*’s narrative tells but a small fragment. (277)

We have counted a total number of 5 occurrences of such evidential markers expressed either by adverbs or adverbial phrases (*certainly x 2, the truth was, actually, really*) in sentence-initial position. Since they are syntactically integrated in the larger class of parentheticals, we were also interested in investigating whether the syntactic positions allotted to these linguistic items had relevance in translation. As demonstrated in Vișan (36), medi ally placed parentheticals may be shifted (or even omitted) in translation when they are placed in so-called ‘weak spots’ that are not easily available to Romanian. Thus, while initial evidential markers (EMs) were provided accurate translations in similar positions in Romanian, the three EMs in medial position were shifted in initial position by some of the target texts (which, in Berman’s terms, can be seen as an instance of rationalization):
If one considers the table above, it becomes apparent that while TT1 sticks to the syntactic order proposed by the source text (probably sensing that parentheticals have a slightly different pragmatic force when shifted, as pointed out by Kaltenböck 299), both TT2 and TT3 rationalize the evidential markers in medial position.

**INSTANCES OF AMBIGUITY**

One important stylistic feature that is typical of children’s literature is the use of idioms with both the main reading (i.e. the figurative, non-compositional reading) and a secondary reading (i.e. the literal, compositional reading), as pointed out by Wagner (23). As repeatedly remarked in the literature (Moon 74 *inter alia*), almost any idiom is potentially ambiguous: the context may make available both the default reading (the non-literal reading) and the secondary reading (the literal reading). Wagner (23) remarks upon the fact that children’s literature abounds in such instances where both readings of an idiomatic phrase are made available because authors like to entertain young readers and teach them about language.
A good illustration of this stylistic device is an example discussed above. Consider again the sentence *Now certainly Bilbo was in what is called a tight place*, which contains the phrase *to be in a tight place* that can be both read non-literally (‘to be in a difficult situation’) and literally (‘to find yourself in a narrow place where you do not physically fit’). The second reading (the literal, unexpected reading) is reinforced by the author by the repetition of the adjective *tight* in the next sentence and by further explanations related to the small dimensions of hobbits. Thus, the idiom is re-analysed by the readers due to the context that points to the fact that the most salient reading is in fact the literal reading. It is clear that ambiguity has been created on purpose by the author as a narrative device meant to strengthen the bond between readers and narrator. In Wagner’s terms (51), ambiguity has been “strategically produced” on an outer level (i.e. on the author-reader level) and probably also “strategically received” by all translators, as all target texts choose to translate the phrase as *a fi la strâmoare* ‘to be in a tight spot’, a good equivalent that preserves both the non-compositional and the compositional readings in Romanian. In fact, all the instances of ambiguity in Chapter V are produced strategically on the outer level, between narrator and readers, while on an inner level (among characters) the ambiguity is not perceived at all. It is obvious that these instances of ludic language are meant for the readers mainly.

A slightly different strategy is applied by the author in the example below, where Bilbo escapes Gollum by jumping over his head while wearing the invisible ring:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE TEXT</th>
<th>TARGET TEXT 1</th>
<th>TARGET TEXT 2</th>
<th>TARGET TEXT 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No great leap for a man, but <em>a leap in the dark</em>. Straight over Gollum’s head he jumped...</td>
<td>Pentru un om, n-ar fi fost o săritură prea mare, dar, în orice caz, era o săritură pe întuneric. Sări drept peste capul lui Gollum...</td>
<td>N-ar fi fost mare lucru pentru un om, dar nu uitați că hobbitul sărise pe nevăzute! Zbură chiar peste capul lui Gollum.</td>
<td>Pentru un om, săritura n-ar fi fost cine știe ce, doar că a fost făcută în întuneric. Drept peste capul lui Gollum...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The phrase *a leap in the dark* can be interpreted as an idiom, that is it can be interpreted non-literally, as meaning ‘a step into the unknown’ although in this context the salient reading is literal, as reinforced by the second sentence. However, the author has been playing with this strategy throughout this chapter and since this example is right at the end of this unit, he probably expects at least that the possible adult readers might point out the less salient reading to the younger audience while reading the story aloud. While we might interpret this
instance of ambiguity as strategically produced, since it is in conformity with other
such instances scattered throughout the text, the translators do not seem to have
identified it (in this case in translation it appears that ambiguity that has been
strategically produced on an outer level was not received by the first reader of this
text, that is by the translator). None of the target texts attempts to preserve
potential ambiguity. Both TT1 and TT3 translate leap as sâritură ‘jump’, while
TT1 actually repeats it in the same sentence. TT2 substitutes the word by lucru
‘thing’ and forces a more generalized reading. Only the literal reading is made
available to the Romanian reader. Below we offer our own version, where
ambiguity is at least hinted at:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE TEXT</th>
<th>TARGET TEXT 4</th>
<th>BACK TRANSLATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No great leap for a man, but a leap in the dark. Straight over Gollum’s head he jumped . . .</td>
<td>Nu cine știe ce salt pentru un om, însă un salt în necunoscut. Drept peste capul lui Gollum a sărit . . .</td>
<td>Not a big leap for a man, but a leap into the unknown. Right over Gollum’s head (he) jumped . . .</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A careful counting of the instances of strategically produced ambiguity in
Chapter V has revealed that there are as many as 5 such instances where the
narrator chooses to play with language and to draw attention to the fact that
parallel (non-literal vs. literal) readings can be fun and intriguing. It is a strategy
that Tolkien reserves for The Hobbit and does not revisit in the much more serious-
toned trilogy. Of these five instances of strategically produced ambiguity, the
three translators seem to have strategically received only three, which is a minus
for all the published target texts. Moreover, TT1 does not identify the potential
ambiguity of put on one’s thinking cap, as demonstrated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE TEXT</th>
<th>TARGET TEXT 1</th>
<th>TARGET TEXT 2</th>
<th>TARGET TEXT 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Dark!” he said without even scratching his head or putting on his thinking cap.</td>
<td>-Întunericul! spuse, fără măcar să se scarpine-n cap sau să-şi pună căciuliţa gânditoare.</td>
<td>-Întunericul ! rostie pe nerăsuflate</td>
<td>-Întunericul! răspunse fără măcar să se scarpine în cap sau să stea prea mult pe gânduri.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While TT1 translates the phrase literally, TT2 omits the phrase and
undertranslates it by ‘said he without further ado’ (which is paradoxical since TT2
mostly overtranslates, resorting to what Berman calls expansion and
explicitation). TT3 on the other hand opts for the non-literal, non-compositional
meaning, providing an equivalent for the idiom that works fluidly in Romanian,
but doing away with potential ambiguity which was present in the source text: ‘he answered without even scratching his head or sitting too long in order to think about it.’ By coordinating a literal phrase (scratch one’s head) with a non-literal phrase (put on one’s thinking cap) in the source text, the narrator managed to hint at the fact that both phrases might have more than one reading. Failure to recapture potential ambiguity results in translation loss and in a destruction of the networks of meanings latent in the source text, as Berman cautions against.

CONCLUSIONS

The comparative textual analysis performed on three Romanian versions of The Hobbit was meant to check the validity of Berman’s hypothesis regarding retranslation as the only viable solution to repair loss in translation. To this effect, we employed Berman’s analytic of translation and identified possible deforming tendencies in each of the target text under analysis. It turned out that the second target text, signed by Junona Tutunea, was heavily ridden with expansion, explicitation, rationalization and ennoblement. From this point of view, TT2 could hardly be viewed as an instance of progress in retranslation.

While both Ralea’s (TT1) and Horea’s (TT3) versions sometimes resort to rationalization and expansion, theirs is a more balanced approach to the source text. Ralea’s in particular seems to be in tune with both the spirit and the tone of the original and avoids explicitation (overtranslation) much more than the subsequent versions. Horea’s version, on the other hand, must have benefited from both previous target texts as points of reference, as proved by the few instances of filiation that we identified (two in the case of TT1 and one in the case of TT2). It would therefore be a gross exaggeration to say that TT1 was proved to be ‘less’ than its subsequent versions. While all target texts resort to ‘deforming tendencies’, the frequency of such instances does not exceed that in TT2, for example. On the contrary it is our belief that TT1 remains the most faithful version to the source text, if we rely on the criteria in Berman’s analytic of translation. This means that the first part of the retranslation hypothesis, stating that only retranslations can attain perfection, could not in fact be proved.

With respect to the second part of the retranslation hypothesis, that is the presence of intertextuality in retranslation, in the sense that the first target text might have been a reference point for both subsequent versions, our analysis hints at a relationship of ‘dissidence’ between TT1 and TT2, while ‘filiation’ seems to be at least partly present with respect to TT1 and TT3 and TT2 and TT3, respectively. However, the similarities traced between TT1 and TT3 suggest that a closer relationship exists between these variants. This can be also explained by the fact that at the time of the publication of TT3, TT1 was still actively read, as
it had been previously republished in 2002, which means that Irina Horea might have had access to Ralea’s text.

Works Cited


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