MICHAEL SWAN’S POEMS IN TRANSLATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA – AN EXERCISE IN RENDERING POETIC IMAGES AND ENCOURAGING TRANSLATING COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

Translating poetry is an exercise that stimulates both the cognitive and the emotional potentialities of students. Poetic texts are the essence of what poets thought and are therefore more difficult to decipher given the minimal linguistic input. The present study is the result of the work with two groups of students who had classes online during the coronavirus pandemic. Facebook as an accessible social media platform proved to be a great hub for launching the challenge of translating poetry and having students post their versions of translations. Their work was thus exposed to the assessment and appreciation of their fellow students who became part of a translating community. The poems chosen for this exercise in translation were selected from Michael Swan’s volume tiger dreams/ vise cu tigri POEMS/ POEME. The bilingual edition appeared at Niculescu Publishing House Romania and served as a consistent basis for the translation practice with the students from the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iaşi who were specializing in Applied Linguistics - Translation and Interpreting. The resulting versions of the texts prove that language in poetry is pulsating with meaning anchored in the reality of the author’s imagination and in the translators’ efforts to mediate that reality and make it accessible to the contemporary public.

Keywords: poetry, translation, imagery, implicature, translating communities
INTRODUCTION

Poetry is the literary genre that manages to concentrate meaning in a small number of words that have the power to create images and flows of thoughts beyond their limits. Therefore, translating poetry is an exercise that challenges both the emotional and the cognitive potentialities of translators, especially of students preparing in the field of translation. The scarcity of words creating an image invites the translator to an act of guessing, of creating the flow of the poem and of pausing where the poet indirectly invites the reader to such a respite. The present study is the result of the work with two groups of students who had classes online during the coronavirus pandemic. At the beginning of the pandemic, we used Facebook as a platform for creating online groups, uploading materials and interacting during the courses and seminars. The platform proved to be a great hub for launching the challenge of translating poetry and having students post their versions of translations. Their work was thus exposed to the assessment and appreciation of their fellow students who became part of a translating community. The poems chosen for this exercise in translation were selected from Michael Swan’s volume *tiger dreams/ vise cu tigri POEMS/ POEME.*

The bilingual edition, with the translation of the poems into Romanian offered by Andreea Giorgiana Nicolae, appeared at Niculescu Publishing House Romania and served as a consistent basis for the translation practice with the students from the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași who were specializing in Applied Linguistics - Translation and Interpreting.

Translating the poems of a linguist expert in grammar poses a greater challenge to the learner of English who wants to specialize in translations. The poems of Michael Swan display a richness that is only obvious to the eye of the attentive reader. They are like codes inviting to be broken in order to savour the truth, the beauty, the joy or any other feeling that has been woven in the texture of the lines. The poet confesses in the Introduction to his bilingual volume: “The poems are generally straightforward and easy to read, though, as reviewers have pointed out, their simplicity can be deceptive: there is often more in them than appears on the surface.” (6) Therefore they summon readers and translators to an exercise in getting a glimpse of the world and making sense of it. Swan admitted to using poetry “to explore our confusing world and our place in it” (6)
In an interview taken by Daniela Mihaela Călinescu and posted on english.agonia.net, Michael Swan reveals his intention of letting meaning be discovered by the readers:

My poems are very often stories, or fictional in one way or another. So they don't necessarily set out to express a meaning or a message directly; to tell the reader something that I think he/she might not know. On the contrary, like many stories, they may start from something general that everybody knows perfectly well ('Humanity is in a mess', 'We are all going to die', 'Love is important', or whatever), and use that as a basis for something quite particular. (“Poems come along and ask to be written”)

This immersion in the perceptive universe of the poet challenged the students to an act of inferring meaning and rendering what they thought was the message conveyed by words. With regard to the pervading themes, in the same interview the poet highlights the inclination to embrace recurrent themes:

...things that I feel strongly and that I would like the reader to think about. One of them is the difficulty or impossibility of satisfactory communication (don’t ask me why I‘m trying to communicate about how you can't communicate!) Another, more generally, is how everything is in a mess: I have a pretty pessimistic view of the world we live in. (“Poems come along and ask to be written”)

The striking truth beyond this assertion will come to light in the two poems chosen for exemplification in the present study: THE TWO PHOTOS, addressing a thorny historical issue whose ripples are felt strongly at present and EVERYTHING IS JOINED which throws the readers in the midst of compressed communication about things that extend over time and whose memories can be captured by the force of some words that create powerful images. The poem THE TWO PHOTOS was given to the students in the original version, whereas the other – EVERYTHING IS JOINED – was given in the translated version in order to check whether by back translation the students will come to the original text. This latter method could be deemed as a good test for an accurate translation of a text. Swan himself encourages – in the Introduction of the volume – the more advanced students to “try their own alternative translations, or even write their own variations of the poems.” (6) Some students have reached this pinnacle of creativity precisely in translating the translated version of the poems.
SOME INSIGHTS INTO TRANSLATING POETRY

Translating poetry can be a difficult but rewarding task. The reader–translator sets on a journey of discovery of the poet’s self, the poetic voice and the message delivered in accordance to the intent and options of the poet.

Marta Dahlgren emphasises a clear fact regarding the role of translation when she says: “Translators, when attempting to communicate the same interpretation as the one intended in the original, often speak about ‘the spirit’ or ‘the poetic essence’ of a literary work.” (Poetry translation and pragmatics: 239)

The translator has to infer the authorial intention behind the choice of words. Moreover, he/she can make guesses or assumptions regarding the circumstances of creation. One’s intuition or previous knowledge and experience may serve as guides and counselors. The following questions naturally arise in the process of translating: What does it take to translate a poem in such a way as to create the same effect in the target reader as it does in the reader of the source text? Is the translation an accurate mirror of the original? Does it faithfully convey the explicit as well as the implicit information? How can the translator know what is implicit? As Khaled Hafdhí remarks when referring to the ensuing ‘dialogue’ between the poet and the translator in the light of pragmatics:

It is only through an active cooperative effort, shared between the translator and author, that the interplay of voices can be successfully created and recreated. Translating is a cooperative act; the pragmatics of literary texts spell out the surroundings for this collaborative effort, without which the translated text would not properly exist as a new text. Only through a pragmatic act of reading, interpreting, and translating can the translated text be realized ... (429)

Since poetry is a finely designed construct of lines, rhythm, rhyme – be they regular or irregular, tamed or wild, the task of the translator is to dive into its depth and see what lies behind the surface, what gives the poem coherence of imagery and message. The emotive language that glues the poem is another challenge for the translator. Words carry various emotional values depending on the intensity of rendering a special emotion. Opting for a less strong equivalent would diminish the impact of the poem. The emotional literacy competences of
the translators are obvious in the way they perceive an image as having emotional value and the way they render it in words.

The pragmatic elements of connotation and association which represent “vital aspects in poetry” are “instrumental in creating inference and implicature” (Dahlgren 240). Approaching implicature from the perspective of Paul Grice’s explanation in Studies in the Way of Words, one may conclude that “the conventional meaning of the words used will determine what is implicated, besides helping to determine what is said” (25). The Cooperative Principle of implicature with its four categories: Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner (26) represent sufficient guiding for translators as communicators of a poem’s message even if the context of the writing and the personal history and experience of the poet may hardly be inferred. The imperative behind the second maxim of the category of Quantity: “Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.” (26) should be heeded by all translators who feel the need to fill in gaps that were intended as such by the poet. Coupled with the supermaxim “Be perspicuous” and the various maxims Grice includes in the category of Manner: “Avoid obscurity of expression.”, “Avoid ambiguity.”, “Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).” and “Be orderly.” (27), the imperative related to quantity does not allow the translators to unnecessarily stretch the meaning of the initial text by their own choice of words.

Regarding the semantic and prosodic aspects of poetry, Marta Dahlgren stresses a particularly sensitive aspect:

The translation of poetry, where the choice between the achievement of equivalence in meaning and the achievement of mimesis of form has to be made when approaching each and every poem, is particularly daunting. When emphasis is given to semantic meaning, there will have to be changes in form: rhymes can only be maintained at the cost of changes in ST meaning. (241-242)

Considering the way language functions in poetry, i.e. the manner in which language “is charged or energized in various manners”, Ezra Pound identifies three kinds of poetry:
MELOPEIA, wherein the words are charged, over and above their plain meaning, with some musical property, which directs the bearing or trend of that meaning.

PHANOPEIA, which is a casting of images upon the visual imagination.

LOGOPEIA, 'the dance of the intellect among words', that is to say, it employs words not only for their direct meaning, but it takes count in a special way of habits of usage, of the context we expect to find with the word, its usual concomitants, of its known acceptances, and of ironical play. It holds the aesthetic content which is peculiarly the domain of verbal manifestation, and cannot possibly be contained in plastic or in music. It is the latest come, and perhaps most tricky and unendurable mode. (170)

Pound goes on to explain that, while the MELOPEIA is impossible to be transferred and translated, the PHANOPEIA can be translated almost “intact” and “it is impossible for the translator to destroy it” (Pound 170) and LOGOPEIA can only be translated through “paraphrase” and as a translator “having determined the original author's state of mind, you may or may not be able to find a derivative or an equivalent.” (171). Not unwittingly probably, the two poems chosen for exemplification in this study reveal the qualities of haikus for which Pound himself is also famous, since Michael Swan heavily relies on very suggestive imagery to deliver the profound meaning behind his poems.

The inherent code of the poem, i.e. the stylistic devices, the order of words, the tone, the prosody and the imagery must be preserved in the translation in a mirror-like manner so that the reader may experience the poem just like the native reader of the original version. Thus, the translator: “bearing in mind the fact that translation is after all rewriting, re-creation of a certain poem, analyses all the structures and patterns that are to be found in the original and tries to transfer them into the product of his work, the translated poem. Nothing is supposed to be added and nothing is supposed to be lost.” (Matiu, 130)

Translation as communication involves the insertion of the translator in this transmitter-receiver continuum as the one who tries to faithfully mediate the message so that the audience—whose language is not that of the poem—may have a similar reaction to it as if they spoke and thought in that language. "In the synonymic relationship between two languages, two things are important: to find the closest synonym (depending on the context) and to avoid mistakes of
lexical or grammatical association" (Levițchi 31). The linguistic and literary competences of the translators must be accompanied by a profound understanding of the intention of the poet behind the veil of words and his train of thought behind the manner of arranging the words in that specific order.

TRANSLATION VARIETIES ON TWO POEMS

The poem TWO PHOTOS has been chosen for exemplification due to its force of eternalizing some deeply felt and almost never reconciled historical truths. The choice of the poet to render facts by means of the short history of a child is imbued with the sarcasm of the one who looks at history and cannot understand how some innocent human beings could have represented a threat and fell in the merciless hands of people who deemed themselves entitled to decide their destiny. Here lies the challenge for the young generation who may have been exposed to such historical facts either at school or by means of any form of art. Translations vary depending on the translators’ perception of the source text and their decision to replicate the message by embracing a freedom coming either from the desire to preserve the poet’s message accurately or a wish to initiate a kind of rhyme where the target language seemed to offer the chance. The first translation next to the original text is the one that appears in the bilingual volume. The translated words that introduce a slight difference in perspective from the original one have been italicized and given their literal translation between brackets:

TWO PHOTOS

The first photo:
1938
Malachi’s house.
Those wonderful Baltic proportions,
good plasterwork on the walls,
the windows just right.
Malachi in front
with his new satchel,
grinning at the camera
out of naughty clever eyes.

DOUĂ FOTOGRAFII

Prima fotografie:
1938,
casa lui Malachi.
Proportiile acestea (these) baltice
minunate,
ornamente frumoase din ghips pe pereți,
ferestrele la locul lor (in their place).
Malachi în prim-plan
cu noul său ghiozdan,
răunjind la aparat
obraznic, dar isteț (naughty, but clever).
And the second:
1945
the street
a heap of rubble.
Malachi and the house long gone.

Iar a doua:
1945,
strada,
un mormân de moloz.
Malachi și casa nu mai sunt.

They used photos and paintings
to reconstruct the whole quarter
stone by stone.
Heroic
that utter refusal
to be robbed of their past.

Din fotografii și picturi
au reconstructit întregul cartier
piatră cu piatră.
Numai un ero (Only a hero)
ar fi refuzat hotărât (would have decidedly
refused)
de a fi jefuit de trecut.

In the end
Malachi’s house stood again
perfect
with all its plaster and windows.
You wouldn’t know the difference.

La final,
cu toate ornamentele și ferestrelle ei,
casa lui Malachi pare iarăși (Malachi’s house
seems again)
un model de perfecțione (a model of
perfection).
Nu ai vedea diferența. (You wouldn’t see the
difference.)

Malachi was more of a problem.
(Swan 100)

Malachi a fost mai mult o problemă.
(Swan 101)

As can be noticed, even the slightest variations in the translator’s choice bring a shift in the reception of the apparently intended meaning of the original text. Choosing these instead of the original those brings the text into a continuously valid present, while in their place for just right emphasises the positioning and not so much the quality. Leaving aside the eyes in the translation of the last line in the first stanza moves the focus on the entire character of the person the poem refers to and robs the original picture of the force of the eyes in human interaction. Choosing the noun hero to replace the adjective heroic again makes direct reference to the person and not so much to the force of his character and the quality of the gesture of refusal. The original utter (“utter refusal”) may overlap in meaning with the translator’s rendering by means of decidedly in terms
of completeness of the act of refusal. The slight difference in perception induced by the use of *seems* instead of the original *stood* to the refer to the house and *see* instead of *know* to refer to the observer’s grasp of the reality behind the poem are very telling.

In order to get an ampler grasp of translators’ choices regarding the rendering of the original message, the versions posted by the students are given below. For an easier reference to the students’ translations, their translations are given under the headings Student 1, Student 2 etc. The different choices of words have been highlighted by italicizing the words in the translated versions:

**Student 1**

Două fotografii

Prima fotografie
1938
Locuința lui Malachi.  
*Toate (all)* acele proporții baltice,  
*decorațiuni stilate din ipsos atașate pe pereți (stylish plaster decorations attached on the walls)*  
ferestrele *potrivite în decor (fitted in the decor).*  
Malachi în prim plan  
cu noua lui traistă  
rânjind la aparatul foto  
*cu ochii șoțioși și atenți (with mischievous and attentive eyes).*

Cea de-a doua:
1945  
*aleea (alley)*  
o *movilă de moloz (a heap of rubble).*  
*Malachi și casa demult plecate.(Malachi and the house long gone.)*

Au folosit fotografii și picturi pentru a reconstrui întregul în totalitate (to reconstruct the whole completely)

**Student 2**

Două fotografii

Prima fotografie
1938
Casa lui Malachi  
*Acele minunate proporții baltice*  
Tencuiala bună a pereților  
Ferestrele la locul potrivit.  
Malachi în față  
Cu noul lui ghiozdan,  
rânjind la cameră  
*cu ochii năstrușnici și ștețe (with naughty and clever eyes).*

Și a doua:
1945  
*Strada*  
Un *morman de moloz*  
Malachi și casa demult dispărute.  

Au folosit fotografii și *desene (drawings)*
Despite some slight faulty renderings in the target language, Student 1 manages to keep the finesse of the original in describing the house and Malachi as a child and uttering the harsh truth behind the last line, which obviously carries the weight of the entire thought construct of the poem. Moreover, choosing a diminutive pietrică (pebble) the student seems to highlight the minute attention to replicating the old building in its tiniest detail and a tendency to reduce the dimensions to those of Malachi as a child. The second student offers an accurate rendering of most of the poem, but slightly fails to recognise in the word quarter used in the original the meaning of area in which people live and renders it with the Romanian sfert which indicates the mathematical fraction.

**Student 3**

DOUA FOTOGRAFIILE

Prima fotografie:
1938
Casa lui Malachi.

**Student 4**

“Două poze”

În prima poză:
1938
Casa lui Malachi.
Acele minunate proporţii baltice,  
o bună tencuială pe pereţi,  
ferestrele foarte potrivite. (very suitable windows.)
Malachi stând în faţă  
cu noua sa tolbă, (satchel)  
rânjind spre cameră  
cu ochii săi obraznic de deştepti. (with his naughtily clever eyes.)

Și a doua:  
1945  
strada  
un morman de resturi. (a heap of debris.)
Malachi și casa de mult au dispărut.

Au folosit poze, și tablouri  
pentru a reface întreg cartierul  
piatră cu piatră.  
Eroic  
a fost acel refuz  
de a fi furăți de propriul lor trecut.

În final  
casa lui Malachi se înaltă din nou  
perfectă  
cu toată-i tencuiala și ferestrele.  
Nici nu ai observa vreo diferență. (You wouldn’t notice any difference.)

Malachi fusese mai mult o problemă.  
(Malachi had been more of a problem.)

Acele proporţii baltice ideale, (Those ideal Baltic proportions,)  
Ornamente impresionante pe pereţi,  
(Impressive ornaments on the walls,)  
Ferestrele poziționate perfect.  
Malachi în față  
Cu noul lui ghiozdan,  
Zâmbind larg la cameră (Smiling broadly at the camera)  
Cu inteligența și neastămpărul citindu-i-se în priviri. (Reading his intelligence and naughtiness in his eyes.)

Într-a doua:  
1945  
Strada –  
Un morman de moloz  
Malachi și casa nu mai sunt demult. (Malachi and the house no longer existing.)

S-au folosit de poze și tablouri  
Pentru a reconstrui întregul cartier  
Cărămidă cu cărămidă. (Brickstone by brickstone.)  
Un act eroic (A heroic act)  
Refuzul absolut  
De a fi jefuiți de propriul trecut.

Într-un final  
Casa lui Malachi era din nou în picioare  
Perfectă  
Cu tot cu ornamente și ferestre.  
Nu ai putea sesiza vreo diferență. (You couldn’t notice any difference.)

Cu Malachi, însă, era o problemă mai mare.  
(With Malachi, however, there was a much bigger problem.)
Students 3 and 4 opt for a kind of communicative translation. Student 3 uses the adverb *naughtily* instead of the adjective and opts for the Romanian equivalent *tolbă*, which is mainly used in fairy tales. Interestingly enough, there is a bit of variety regarding the preservation of the spaces between the stanzas, although these are probably the most important in creating the tension in the poem, in letting the reader take that kind of *Selah* used especially in the Biblical psalms (with the meaning of either pausing, thinking about what has been said before or just ‘lifting up’ your thoughts and voice), indulging in a moment of meditation on the things said and creating a space of expectation of what is to come. Student 4 opts for a freer, more down-to-earth rendering of some lines. His interpretive last line sheds light on the crude reality that the original poem brings to light.

**Student 5**

Două fotografii

Prima fotografie:
1938
Casa lui Malachi.
Acele proporții baltice minunate,
Tencuială bună pe pereți,
Ferestrele perfect potrivite.
Malachi în față
Cu rucsacul său nou, 
Zâmbind la aparatul foto (*Smiling at the camera*)
Cu ochii săi obraznici și isteți. (*With his mischievous and clever eyes.*)

Iar a doua:
1945
Strada
Un mormân de moloz.
*Casa și Malachi dispărutî de mult. (The house and Malachi long missing/disappeared.)*

**Student 6**

Două fotografii

Prima fotografie:
1938
Acasă la Malachi.
Acele minunate proporții baltice,
Tencuiala bună de pe pereți,
*Geamurile cum trebuie. (Windows as they should be.)*
Malachi în față,
Cu noul său ghiozdan, 
Zâmbind la cameră, (*Smiling at the camera,*)
*Din ochii inteligenți și obraznici. (Out of intelligent and mischievous eyes.)*

Și a doua :
1945
Strada
O grămadă de moloz.
*Malachi și casa de mult dispărutî. (Malachi and the house long missing/disappeared.)*
S-au folosit de fotografii și picturi
Pentru a reconstrui întregul cartier
Piatră cu piatră.
Eroic
Acel refuz absolut
Să știe fure trecutul.

În cele din urmă
Casa lui Malachi se înălța din nou
Desăvârșită
Cu tencuială, cu ferestre, cu tot.

Nu-ți dădeai seama de diferență. (You wouldn’t realise the difference.)

Malachi era o problemă mai mare. (Malachi was a much bigger problem.)

Au folosit fotografii și picturi
Pentru a reconstrui cartierul
Piatră cu piatră.
Eroic
Acel refuz total
De a fi tâlghăriți de propriul trecut. (Of being robbed/ mugged of one’s own past.)
Într-un sfarsit
Casa lui Malachie era din nou ridicată
Perfectă
Cu tencuială și ferestre.

Nu ai face diferența. (You wouldn’t tell the difference.)

Malachi era o problema mai mare. (Malachi was a much bigger problem.)

As can be observed there is a tendency to render the original grinning with smiling and replacing gone with missing which allows for a mystery that needs to be solved. Moreover, the equivalent tâlghăriți used by Student 6 points to the enormity of the crime. Both students grasp the issue at the end of the poem and render it with similar equivalents.Worthy of mention is the end of another translation not rendered here, but whose translator opted for a free translation of the final line which seems to be an accurate interpretation of the meaning behind the poet’s choice of words: “Pe Malachi, însă, nu-l mai pot întoarce.” (Malachi, however, they cannot bring back.).

The second poem chosen for this study EVERYTHING IS LINKED meant to challenge students to adopt a different route. This time the students were given the translation of the poem to see whether they can replicate the original or at least come as closely as possible to the original version and the intended original message. The slight differences in rendering the original message have been italicized and given the literal translation between brackets.

EVERYTHING IS JOINED

Everything is joined.
Pick a blackberry,

TOTUL SE ÎNLANȚUIE

Totul se înlanțuie.
Culegi o mură
and you are walking up steps
into a square
where your childhood
paused for a second.

Buy a newspaper,
and you are in a café
facing the door,
your cup half-empty, forgotten,
as your head spins with love.

Pick up the cup,
and you are playing the violin
very badly
in a dusty cellar.

How can you think of any one person,
or glance at your shoes,
or take a breath, even? (Swan 22)

Despite the fairly accurate rendition of the original message, the initial translator in the bilingual volume opted for the use of the present tense where the poet may have intended an Imperative with the subtle force of summoning a person to perform an act in order to be swept by memory and taken to places where one has been before or to spaces that may have resembled one’s experience and felt as personal. The versions offered by the students unfold the potentialities of the words to render different shades of the same experience. Only one student (Student 1) has sensed the possible use of the Imperative with the accompanying consequential act.

**Student 1**

**EVERYTHING ENTWINES**

Everything *entwines.*

**Student 2**

**EVERYTHING IS LINKED**

Everything *is linked.*
Pick up a blackberry
and begin to climb steps
within a market
where your childhood
was interrupted for a second.
Buy a newspaper
and breath new life into a coffeehouse,
outside the door,
holding a half empty forgotten mug,
while love gets you.
Lift the mug
and begin playing the violin
really lousy
in a grubby basement.
How is it possible to think about a
particular person only,
to get a glimpse of your shoes,
or to even take a breath?
You pick a blackberry
And start mounting stairs
In a market place
Where your childhood
Stopped for a second.
You buy a newspaper
And find yourself in a café,
Facing the door,
With the forgotten half empty cup,
While love messes with your head.
You raise the cup
And start poorly playing
The violin
In a dusty cellar.
How can you even think about one man
only,
Glance at your shoes,
Or even breathe air in your lungs?

The use of the verb *entwine* to render the way things are linked or joined carries the force of the meaning offered by the Cambridge dictionary: “to twist together or around something” and its accompanying examples of either two lovers with their arms entwined or of a porch entwined with creeping plants. Thus, the linking of images is part of a process that gives strength and permanence especially if rooted in the deep emotion of lasting love. The use of the synonymous *begin* and *start* may be not as surprising as the use of *steps* (which are part of a stair) and *stairs* which creates a sense of a continuous line of steps that need to be climbed. The first student’s option for *within* (within a market) similarly contributes to a slight change in the perception of space, creating the sense of a certain enclosure. Choosing *was interrupted* instead of *stopped* reveals the way the student perceived the experience as being a fluid memory interrupted by something or a reflection on childhood from a future point in time and seeing it as a frozen picture of what was. The successions of different translation choices that follow – although a bit unexpected taken into account the original translated version offered to them – testify to the students’ freedom to translate the perceived images in a personal way. Regarding the love's impact
on one’s head Student 2 opts for an interpretation of the way love can affect somebody and uses the phrasal verb *mess with*, whose meaning from the Cambridge dictionary is very revealing: “to make small changes to something, or to move it to a different place, especially not carefully”. Projected on the poet’s original phrase “your head spins with love” which implies a kind of fast movement of a probable pleasurable sensation, the slight negative connotations of *mess* can be understood as being the effect of some strong force love can exert on the person. An attempt to literally render the Romanian expression is made by Student 3 with the phrase *Love going straight to your head* and partially by Student 6 *While love gets inside your head*. An interesting version is offered by Student 5 who acknowledges the strong power of love *While love overwhelms you*, pointing to the surge of this strong emotion inside a person’s heart.

*Lousy* as a word describing the violin performance might have been a good variant for *badly*, had it been used in the adverbial form: *lously*. Choosing *grubby* instead of *dusty* indicates a preference for a stronger word that reveals the condition of the cellar. Startling is also the second student’s insertion of the word *lungs* adjoining the verb *breathe*.

**Student 3**

*EVERYTHING IS LINKED*

*Everything is linked*
You pick up a *berry*
And you begin climbing the stairs
Of a town square
Where your childhood stopped
For a second.
You buy a newspaper
And you end up in a coffee shop
In front of the door,
With a half-finished coffee cup
*Love going straight to your head.*
You pick up the coffee cup
And you begin playing the violin
 Really badly

**Student 4**

*EVERYTHING HAS A MEANING*

Everything *has a meaning.*
You pick a *blackberry*
and you start to climb the steps
in a square
in which your childhood
has stopped for a second.
You buy a newspaper
and you get in a cafe
in front of the door
with the half empty cup
while love fills your mind.
You pick up the cup
and you start playing the violin
a very stupid thing
In a dusty basement.
How can you only think about one person,
Take a look at your shoes,
Or even take a breath?

in the depths of a dusty cellar.
How can you think of one soul only
take a look at your shoes
or even take a deep breath?

The option of Student 4 for a freer rendering of the title, i.e. EVERYTHING HAS A MEANING, gains in force if perceived from the psychological theory of Viktor Frankl, the Viennese psychiatrist who advocated for the existence of meaning in everything man does and for the necessity of finding meaning so that life can follow its course and man can summon up the courage to go on living in spite of even the most disheartening circumstances. The variants above also reveal the possibility of interchangeably using the adverb where or the relative pronoun in which in English. The choice of verbs is also telling in terms of the perception of actions; thus, you end up in sounds like a final destination. Student 4 opts for a judging of the decision to play the violin: a very stupid thing, a translation that sounds like the echoes of the thoughts that may cross one’s mind while reading the poem. The cellar’s remoteness from the world is strongly pinpointed by Student’s 4 in the depths of although no such distance is implied by the initial text. Thought provoking is also the use of only which displays such flexibility when it comes to its positioning in the sentence. At the end of the poem Student 4 chooses again to add to the meaning by inserting the word deep (for breath) when the initial translation does not include it.

**Student 5**

EVERYTHING IS CHAINED

Everything is chained,
You pick up a brambleberry
And start to climb stairs
In a market
Where your childhood
Stopped for a second.
You buy a newspaper
And wake up in a café,

**Student 6**

EVERYTHING ENTWINES

Everything entwines
You pick up a blueberry
And you begin to climb stairs
Into a market
In which your childhood
Has stopped for a second.
You buy a newspaper
And you are waking up into a coffee shop
Facing the door,  
With a forgotten half empty cup  
While love overwhels you.  
You raise the cup  
And start to sick at a violin  
Very awful  
In a dusty cellar.  
How can you think about a single human only,  
To take a glimpse at your shoes,  
Or maybe even breath in some air?

In the front of the door  
With the forgotten cup halfway empty,  
While love gets inside your head  
You lift the cup  
And you begin to play the violin  
Very bad  
Into a dusted cellar  
How can you think about only one human  
To take a look of your shoes,  
Or even take a breath in your chest?

The versions offered by Students 5 and 6 are surprising by the choice of rendering the Romanian **mură** with **brambleberry**, which points to the same fruit, whereas **blueberries** are a rather different fruit from the family of berries. Using the adjective **dusted** to describe the cellar points to the opposite of **dusty**. The use of adjectives **Very awful** and **Very bad** indicates a necessity of raising the learners’ awareness regarding the use of adverbs in context, whereas the use of **take a look of your shoes** is a plea for a closer consideration of the way words collocate in English. Moreover, the use of **breath** instead of **breathe** speaks for the need of consolidating the spelling of verbs and nouns belonging to the same family of words.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Translating the poems proposed for this study challenged the learners to an active exercise in making sense of all the features involved in creating such texts. The attempts to faithfully preserve the prosodic and pragmatic elements naturally resulted in slightly different renderings of the original message. The students were given the chance to interact with the work of a great linguist and go beyond the surface of words into the working of texts whose precise choice of words and grammatical constructions sustained the powerful imagery intended. The novelty of the practice of posting their own translations online and reacting to those of their fellow students led to students’ reactions to the translations of their peers either in the form of emoticons or as replies in which they praised the
manner in which their fellow students managed to deliver the message of the poems. This brings to light another aspect that should be trained by educators during translation classes, i.e. the ability to assess the work of others and express valid observations and appreciations. Furthermore, social media can prove to be a generous space for translators to work on the same text and offer variants especially with regard to those texts pertaining to a genre that may pose dilemmas.

Works Cited


BIOTECH

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