THE STRANGENESS FROM ONE'S OWN BACK YARD, RENDERED BY TRANSLATION. "PRINT AND PUBLISH IN ROMANIA – WHY NOT."

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Abstract Starting from a recently published memoir, authored by the British pilot Betrand Whitley, recounting his experiences during World War II, the present paper aims to emphasise the role played by the linguistic transfer of such texts from multiple perspectives. As such, in the case of texts originally written in one language, covering the subject of a different cultural space, the translation that pulls the text back into the language of the depicted space raises several issues. Fidelity is given by the negotiation between the meaning present in both linguistic instances, filtered by the style that encompasses an authorial stance on a foreignness that, through translation, needs to be reflected back into the familiar, as foreign.
Keywords Memoir, translation, de-foreignisation, re-foreignisation, Romanian-ness, humour, vulgarity.

The dynamics of foreignness, in the case of the memories of war and in travel literature, function in two directions. In both cases, the texts thus obtained show worlds depicted as foreign and the writers' views that construct their foreignness. The subject at hand is what exactly happens (and how) when one tries to translate this foreignness into the language and into the cultural sphere from which it had sprouted in the first place. In other words, the memories of a person in a foreign country, in their attempt to recount their experiences, come back to that country in the shape of translation; however, the issues begin the moment translation tries to re-foreignise the de-foreignisation. In an in-depth analysis of the Romanian translation of *The Tale of Genji*, Rodica Frențiu states that "in order to enter a different culture, a «foreign» culture must stop being so… foreign; through the act of

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translation, it must try to acquire a name and a place within the host culture,[1]" which leads to the following issue: one culture is foreignized by the subjective gaze and, if translation is an act of de-foreignisation, in order to maintain the charm of the text, the translation must re-foreignise the perception of the familiar place, in a linguistically familiar version of a foreign approach.

Thus, the two types of foreignness must not only coexist, since they do so in the environments of their original utterances (the original texts), but they must also find the common ground necessary to revert one.

Introduction

The Romanian interest in self-referential literature has gained increasingly more ground and, as such, the foreign self-referential literature that addressed the Romanian space has been approached as a field in its own rights. The Romanian Academy published a series of volumes entitled *Călători străini despre Țările Romîne în secolul al XIX-lea. Serie Nouă* (Foreign travellers about the Romanian Countries in the 19th century), while the Bucharest Digital Library holds an entire collection of such digitised titles[2]. The importance of such recounts of foreigners' experiences in the Romanian space is most often emphasized as instances of "placing Romania on the world map", not only as part of a wider, unintentional PR endeavour depicting Romanian-ness throughout the ages, but also as a means of identifying the Romanian impact on the larger mechanisms of world history.

The volume approached in the present paper, Bertrand Whitley, *Din Benghazi la Bucureşti (Memorii din cel de-al Doilea Război Mondial)* [Benghazi to Bucharest (A World War II Memoir)], represents the manuscript (159 typewritten pages)[3], edited and translated from English into Romanian. Adrian Boda published a study prior to the publication of the volume in Romanian, in which he conducts a comprehensive analysis of the historical text, using the instruments associated with the study of war memoirs, focusing on the parts that are relevant to the Romanian readers – "The article presents a fragment from the manuscript of R.A.F pilot officer Bertrand Whitley, focusing on his experience as a prisoner of war and S.O.E agent in Romania. This part of the memoirs is especially relevant for Romanian readers, as it

[1] Rodica Frențiu, "Literary Translation as a Hermeneutic and Poetic Dialogue in the Cultural Semiosphere", *RIELMA. Revue Internationale D'Études en Langues Modernes Appliquees*, Supplément au numéro 11 / 2018, 50:
https://lett.ubbcluj.ro/rielma/RIELMA_no11_2018_Supplement.pdf (Accessed in April 2020).

[2] Colecţia "*Călători străini în spaţiul românesc*" (The "Foreign travellers in the Romanian space" Collection): http://www.digibuc.ro/colectii/calatori-straini-in-spatiul-romanesc-c1131 (Accessed in April 2021).

[3] Manuscript: Betrand Whitley, *Benghazi to Bucharest. A second World War Memoir*, http://dspace.bcucluj.ro/handle/123456789/129551 (Accessed in February 2021).

presents the conditions of 1944 Romania, perceived by an Englishman.[4]" The text is reassessed and expanded in the introductory study, published in Romanian in the translated volume, in 2019. The value of this publication resides not only in its historical dimension, as Adrian Boda emphasises. Considering the fact that the stories recounted in the book bear a true function of delight, it can be placed among the similar volumes that ultimately became bestsellers – "The development of aviation and the elitism of this weapon turned the memoirs and biographies of some famous pilots of WWII into real bestsellers at the very time of their publication,[5]" such examples being Hans Ulrich Rudell, Adolf Galland, Saburo Sakai, Douglas Bader etc., pilots who published their memoirs and had remarkable success.

The research work behind the Romanian edition is presented in the introductory study, which brings forth all the efforts made to exploit the documentary quality of the manuscript – "The issue of verifying and corroborating the information in the manuscript proved to be quite a difficult task, since the advice written on the second page of the memoir, namely that of checking the information and adding more, from his flying log book was initially impossible.[6]" However, with the collaboration of the pilot's family, his log book did manage to become part of the present volume, reproduced in its entirety in Annex 2 (pages 222-286). The verity of the recounted events is continuously supported by comparative references to other works, such as Patrick Macdonald's monograph, *Through Darkness to Light*, "the log kept by SLt. Whitley's colleague, Jim Auton, form the same Squadron 178, Escadrile 178, *R.A.F. Liberator over the Eastern Front,*[7]" and the memoir of R.A.F. Lieutenant Dudley Egles, *Just One of the Many. A Navigator's Memoirs*, who "lived similar experiences with the author, beginning with the missions in which they flew together, to the shootdown, the capture, the captivity and the escape attempts.[8]"

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[4] Adrian Boda, "A Prisoner and Agent in 1944 Romania. A Fragment of the Memoirs of Pilot Officer Bertrand Whitley," transl. by Emese Czintos, in *Philobiblon: Transylvanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Humanities*. 2014;19(2): 469-490, http://search.ebscohost.com.web.bcucluj.ro:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=99807698 (Accessed in March 2021).

[5] Ibid., 470.

[6] Original text: "Problema verificării și coroborării datelor din cadrul manuscrisului s-a dovedit a fi una destul de dificilă, întrucât îndemnul autorului din pagina 2 a memoriilor, de a verifica și completa datele cu cele din jurnalul său de zbor a fost, într-o primă fază, imposibil de realizat" (Translation mine), in Bertrand Whitley, *Din Benghazi la București (Memorii din cel de-al Doilea Război Mondial)* [Benghazi to Bucharest (A World War II Memoir)], ed. Adrian Boda, transl. Anca Ghețu, Adrian Boda (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2019), 13.

[7] Original text: "jurnalul coechipierului subl. Whitley, Jim Auton, din cadrul aceleiași Escadrile 178, *R.A.F. Liberator over the Eastern Front*" (Translation mine), Ibid., 14.

[8] Original text: "a trăit experiențe similare cu autorul, pornind de la misiunile în care au zburat împreună, până la doborâre, capturare, prizonierat și tentative de evadare" (Translation mine), Ibid.

The comparatist approach that accompanies any such endeavour, between the subjective view of memory and the established historical information, emphasises the idea analysed by Doru Radosav in an extensive article on the dimensions of this historical genre – "In the discourse on the subject of war, a *suprapersonal* level of perception is given by the statements, the agendas, the military commands and military reports, a level that was thus objectivised by plans, numbers, political and military decisions, treaties, armistices, negotiations, as well as a *personal* level of perception – a narrative, epic, emotional and direct level, seen as an experience, as a «subject» within the larger history. At the level of this personal discourse, history becomes memory and, even more so, memories, as the recount of the events or the «factuality» of the memories of war is not merely narrative, but «philosophical» as well, separated from «language theories», because it contains commentaries, explanations, evaluations, contextualisations.[9]" Moreover, what makes the present volume be much more than a mere war story is the course followed by the 159 typewritten pages – the temporal leaps around the story are doubled by the geographic leaps, between the friendly "Dear Nicolae Ratiu", in a 1993 Scarborough, and a 2019 Cluj-Napoca, and they comprise the narration into a point marked by "Fifty Two Years Ago. Sometimes it seems like yesterday.[10]" The issue of the temporal levels of memory brings forth the two levels of reflexivity – "The communication of individual memory creates two levels of discourse: a subjective level of reflexivity that implies the uses of a relived and supratemporal past, and an objective level of reflexivity in which the uses of time are meant to negotiate one's past in order to project oneself into becoming; in this case, time has a retrospective nature. The «ground level» memory of war assumes the two levels of discourse and the two types of temporalities through which the individual positions himself in relation to a collective, historical and normative time and in which the narrative model is emitted by the first-person authorial pole.[11]" The "ground level memory of war", as Doru Radosav calls it, thus has two discoursive levels and two temporalities and, in the case of the present volume, there is a third, extra-textual level that marks the 26 year journey of the typewritten document, from its drafting, to its translation and publication. However, this trajectory raises a rather thorny philological issue, namely that the manuscript is *too clean*. In the absence of clear information, unanswerable questions thus arise: How many times was it re-written? When? Was it ever proofread by anyone else? The information we do have was also

[9] Doru Radosav, "The 'Ground Level' Memory of War. A Cultural Reading," transl. by Anca Chiorean, in *Philobiblon: Transylvanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Humanities*, 23 (1), 6. doi:10.26424/philobib.2018.23.1.01.
http://search.ebscohost.com.web.bcucluj.ro:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=130400671 (Accessed in March 2021).

[10] Whitley, manuscript, 6.

[11] Radosav, 9-10.

obtained by Adrian Boda's research: "In order to obtain the photographs and the additional information that can accompany the manuscript, I sent a letter to Mr. Whitley's family. As a result, on 27 March 2013, I received an email from Mrs. Anne Whitley-Scott, in which she promised to offer the requested documents, which were at that time in the custody of her sister, Jane. Only in the autumn of 2016, through Richard Augood, did I manage to contact Mrs. Jane Garlick, born Whitley, who, one month later, offered us the flying log book in a scanned format, a copy of her father's memoir, «R.A.F. Guest in Romania», which was printed in 6 copies, for the members of the family, and several of the photographs mentioned by the author in the beginning of his manuscript.[12]"

The fact that the story is delivered directly, clearly, cleanly, leaves no room for any hypertextual references that would have been a fruitful field in any discussion on a manuscript. We do not have access to a pre-text that would animate approaches from the viewpoint of genetic criticism. In the case of literary texts, genetic criticism can indeed function on the basis of an unstable mechanism – "Genetic criticism is searching for a phenomenon that is in effect unobservable, unobjectifiable: the origin of a literary work. Its object of inquiry is essentially unstable, or rather its object of study is the very instability of the «pre-text» (*l'avant texte*), where explicit projects, unconscious choices, and the play between what is possible and what is dangerous are intertwined to the point of nonsense.[13]" In the present case, however, a sufficiently chaotically scrawled manuscript would have brought forth the mechanisms of memory itself, not necessarily in relation with the historical events, but with the "ground level" details from within the subjective micro-stories. Some episodes are short enough to create the suspicion of certain cuts which would not have otherwise impaired the narration. The chapter "Face to face with a lion", for instance, through its wording, announces a gladiatorial encounter, when, in fact, the meeting is summarised into several sentences: "I GOT THE SHOCK OF MY LIFE. Was just about to enter the Sergeants Mess, when out trots a young lion, barring my way. Having recovered, got past the lion and into the Mess,

[12] Original text: "În vederea obținerii fotografiilor și a informațiilor suplimentare care să întregească manuscrisul, am trimis o scrisoare familiei d-lui Whitley. În urma acestui demers, la data de 27 martie 2013, am primit un e-mail din partea d-nei Anne Whitley-Scott, prin care ni se promitea punerea la dispoziție a materialelor solicitate, aflate în acel moment în custodia surorii sale, Jane. Abia în toamna anului 2016, prin intermediul lui Richard Augood, am reușit să o contactăm pe doamna Jane Garlick, născută Whitley, care ne-a pus la dispoziție, o lună mai târziu, caietul de zbor într-un format scanat, un exemplar din memoriile tatălui său, «R.A.F. Guest in Romania», imprimate în 6 exemplare pentru membrii familiei și câteva fotografii menționate de autor în paginile de debut ale manuscrisului." (Translation mine) Whitley, *Din Benghazi la Bucureşti*…, 13.

[13] Laurent Jenny, Richard Watts, "Genetic Criticism and its Myths," *Yale French Studies*, 89 (1996), 10: https://www.jstor.org/stable/2930336?seq=1 (Accessed in March 2021).

it was to be told the story. The young lion, it was not that small (about my own size) had been brought up from the cub stage by one of the staff on the station. None the less frightening to me.[14]" Of course, there is also the very real possibility that this is, in fact, the whole story, but it does make one wonder.

De-foreignising humour, vulgarity and style

Considering the fact that the historical dimension of the volume has already been analysed in-depth,[15] we shall focus on its philological issues. A memoir of this type can be approached from multiple viewpoints: "memoirs can be subjected to multiple interpretations. They can be easily approached from an interpretive-historical perspective, since writing the self is an act of civilisation. An analysis from a psychological viewpoint of the memorial narrative is also at hand through the issues of memory, the construction of a personality and the self-assessment it raises. Last but not least, the memorial discourse can naturally impose a poetic and critical approach, if it is considered to be a literary text.[16]" These approaches also benefit, in addition, from a viewpoint emerging from the hermeneutics of translation.

A philological aspect that is important to a Romanian edition was mentioned by the author himself – "How could I correct, or check the text when I do not know the language?[17]" The style used in his typewritten memoir is sufficiently clear and direct, so as not to raise major issues in translation. However, style is usually one of the elements that raise the most issues (both with respect to translation, and to ethics, in an exercise of fidelity to the original text). The theoreticians in this field seem to agree that translation is not necessarily an impossible mission – "the widespread notion that style is untranslatable is just a variant of the folkish nostrum that a translation is no substitute for the original. (...) [*Translating style – my note*] is better done by taking a slight distance from the text and allowing its underlying patterns to emerge by their own force in the process of rewriting in a second tongue.[18]" The footnote system of the text is rich in historical information and technical clarifications, meant to accompany the terminology used

[14] Whitley, manuscript, 55-56.

[15] See Boda, 469-490.

[16] Rodica Frențiu, "Scribing and De-Scribing History: Marie, Queen of Romania, the Story of My Life (1934-1936)", transl. by Anca Chiorean, *in Philobiblon: Transylvanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Humanities,* 2019, 24(1): 5-24.
doi:10.26424/philobib.2019.24.1.01
http://search.ebscohost.com.web.bcucluj.ro:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=137229899 (Accessed in April 2021).

[17] Whitley, manuscript, 2.

[18] David Bellos, *Is that a fish in your ear? The amazing adventure of translation* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 300-301.

by the author, but also includes notes that compile the translation's support system, whenever the source-language and the target-language cannot find the common ground, from the viewpoint of the cultural sphere.

The role and impact of the footnotes in translation, however, represent another topic of debate. By approaching the English translation of certain phrases used by Derrida, Lawrence Venuti explains the way in which such footnotes *dilute* the text: "Derrida's translator Alan Bass quotes Findlay's translation but must leave in the original French version of the expression and resort to a footnote to create a context in which Derrida's point is meaningful to the English-language reader. In this way, Bass's English version approximates, but simultaneously falls short of and goes beyond, Derrida's text: the translation, of course, communicates the point about iterability which Derrida's critique of Husserl is intended to make but, in its reliance on a foreign-language expression and a footnote, it can also be said to diminish the immediate persuasive power of Derrida's French.[19]" The footnote thus adds another dimension to the text, it adds new meanings that never existed in the initial version. However, Venuti's thesis relies on the fact that no translated text needs to strive to seem original. In other words, the translator's mission is not to present Homer as a highly versed Romanian language speaker, but to offer a Romanian language that is sufficiently foreignized, in order to create a foreign ancient atmosphere in a somewhat linguistically familiar way – "The translation must be seen as a *tertium datum*, which «sounds foreign» to the reader but has an opaque quality that prevents it from seeming a transparent window on the author or original text (...). This sort of translation, quite simply, will read as it has been translated.[20]" This is the solution proposed for the issue according to which translation is rather a form of ethnocentric violence, which actually destroys the cultural characteristics of the source-text.[21] The classical methods, however, relying on approximate equivalences and footnotes, did get the job done in the case of Whitley's memoir.

The wordplays, in the case of Whitley's memoir, as well as in the case of any transfer of meaning between two unrelated environments, represent the first hindrance in an accurate illustration of the humour within the narration. The solution usually comes in the form of an explanatory footnote, which thus offers the historical and social details that contextualise the jovial approach of the most often macabre phenomena. One such example would be "Goolie Chits", which was kept in

[19] Lawrence Venuti, "The Translator's Invisibility," *Criticism*, 1986 (28), 2, 184: https://www.jstor.org/stable/23110425?seq=1 (Accessed in April 2021).
[20] Ibid., 190.
[21] Cf. Silvia Kadiu, „Visibility and Ethics: Lwrence Venuti's foreignizing approach," in *Reflexive Translation Studies. Translation as Critical Reflection* (UCL Press, 2019), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv6q5315.7: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv6q5315.7 (Accessed in April 2021).

its untranslatable form, but which received an explanation (that is worth a complete reproduction here) – "The title of this chapter refers to the notes, written in different languages, carried by the pilots of the British-American forces, with the purpose of asking for help if they parachuted behind the enemy lines or in neutral zones. The notes to which the author refers were called, by the British Air Force, «goolie chits», or «notițele boașelor», a name that comes from the association of the words «goli», originally Hindu, meaning ball, and «chit», which in English means «notă»/«notiță» [note]. Practically, the contents of these notes, written in different dialects from North Africa, encouraged the local population to not harm the captured pilot and to return him, unharmed, to the closest British unit, with the promise of receiving a cash reward. They came in use because of the habit of the Bedouin tribes in the area to decapitate or castrate the captured British pilots.[22]" Thus, here we have the complete context, in the absence of which, in the Romanian edition, a title in the form of "Notițele boașelor", as the closest translation (but one that is somewhat closer to "notes for the bullocks"), would have a completely different impact and it would have deprived the text of the author's jovial tone (and of the jaunty tone of the military jargon) in relation with the horror that was actually behind such a note.

This example, taken together with its historical context, raises another issue, namely that of the relation between the factual reality and its rendition through language. The humoristic filter raised between the note and the castration is the result of a collision. Approaching the memoirs of World War I and the issue of language, in a chapter wonderfully entitled "Oh What a Literary War", Paul Fussell states that "One of the cruxes of the war, of course, is the collision between events and the language available – or thought appropriate – to describe them. (...) Logically, one supposes, there's no reason why a language devised by man should be inadequate to describe any of man's works. The difficulty was in admitting that the war had been made by men and was being continued ad infinitum by them. The problem was less one of «language» than of gentility and optimism; it was less a

[22] Original text: "Titlul acestui subcapitol face referire la notele în diferite limbi pe care piloții din cadrul forțelor anglo-americane le aveau asupra lor cu scopul de a solicita ajutor în cazul în care s-ar fi parașutat în spatele liniilor inamice sau în zonele neutre. Aceste notițe la care autorul face referire erau numite în aviația britanică «goolie chits», sau «notițele boașelor», numele provenind din asocierea cuvintelor «goli», de origine hindu, semnificând bilă și «chit», care în limba engleză înseamnă «notă»/«notiță». Practic, conținutul acestor note, scris în diferite dialecte din zona Africii de Nord, încuraja populația locală să nu rănească aviatorul capturat și să îl returneze nevătămat celei mai apropiate unități britanice, cu promisiunea dobândirii unei sume de bani pentru acest lucru. Utilizarea lor s-a datorat obiceiului triburilor de beduini din zonă de a decapita sau castra piloții britanici capturați." (Translation mine) Whitley, *Din Benghazi la București*…, 114.

problem of «linguistics» than of rhetoric.[23]" Fussell brings forth the speculation made by Luis Simson, according to which the infantry soldiers rarely transpose their experiences into language, in order not to falsify the truly physical experiences lived by those who had died, but he counterbalances this argument through the fact that "no one is very interested in the bad news they have to report. What listener wants to be torn and shaken when he doesn't have to be? We have made *unspeakable* mean indescribable: it really means *nasty*.[24]" Thus, through jargon, this *nasty* given by the cruel reality (that of castration, in this case) was masked by humour, but the unutterable received a more digestible linguistic form.

The translation of humour that is somewhat less macabre is problematic in situations in which the wordplay is closely linked to proper names. In the original version, the author recounts life in the desert and describes a day-to-day situation: "Cigarettes were supplied free. They came to us from South Africa, labelled 'Cape to Cairo', we called them 'cough to consumption'. Just occasionally we would get a chance to barter with wandering Bedouins and get some eggs against a packet of 'C to C's.[25]" A translation that would follow the wordplay would obtain "un pachet de T la T", in which the Ts stand for "de la tuse la tuberculoză", but the geographical references from which the humour initially sprouted would be lost. David Bellos, in his approach to humour translation, brings forth the stance taken by W.D. Hart, according to which "Translation between languages cannot preserve *reference* (what a sentence is about), *self-reference* (what a sentence says about itself) and *truth-value* (whether the sentence is right or wrong) at the same time.[26]" Bellos, of course, disagrees, relying on the fact that the term "translation", in this case, was not defined clearly enough. Humour can be transposed, transported, teleported even, but it does depend on the creativity of the final form: "Arduously headscratching, intellectually agile wordsmiths may simultaneously preserve reference, self-reference and truth-value of an utterance when fate smiles on them and allows them to come up with a multi-dimensional matching expression in their own language.[27]" Nevertheless, in some situations, a footnote can still replace the long wait for fate's smile.

Another instance of wordplay would be not untranslatable, but adaptable – during a short leave in Alexandria (the Egyptian one, not the one from southern Romania), the author enjoyed "the 4 S – a shit, a shave, a shower and shampoo"; in

[23] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 169-170.
[24] Ibid.
[25] http://dspace.bcucluj.ro/bitstream/123456789/129551/1/whitley_manuscris.pdf page 54.
[26] W.D.Hart, "On Self-Reference," *Philosophical Review* 79 (1970), 523-8, in David Bellos, *Is that a fish in your ear? The amazing adventure of translation* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 288.
[27] Bellos, 289.

translation, the 4 *S* transformed into the 4 *re*: "defecare, bărbierire, dușare, șamponare,[28]" which does represent a good result of the negotiation of meaning between the source-text and the target-text. However, perhaps judging form a subjective stance, I would have opted for a version that does not *sanitize* the author's language through translation – *a shit* is "o căcare", and not "o defecare" (a defecation), yet the nuance to which I would thus fiercely cling does not necessarily influence the meaning, but rather the style. The vulgarity (a highly reasonable vulgarity, tempered to its very limits, in the present case) is part of the specific jargon and humour. This aspect compels us to return to Fussell who, when speaking of the "indescribable" put into words, in situations which were, for the people who took part in World War I, unprecedented and outright incommunicable, mentions the fact that, in order to confer the experience a linguistic form, "what was needed was exactly the clinical – or even obscene – language the literary Aitken regards as «weak»[29]. It could take still another war, and an even worse one, before such language would force itself up from below and propose itself for use. It was a matter of leaving, finally, the nineteenth century behind.[30]" In this sense, by analysing the "vulgar language" in general, in his volume *The Vulgar Tongue*, Jonathon Green also approaches the field of the military jargon and, in the chapter "War: One Thing It's Good For," he approaches an interesting aspect with respect to the impact or the results of war (other than the clearly documented social-geo-political ones) – wars end, but the jargon created within is brought home by the survivors: "they bring at least a sample of their language with them. It too survives, in their conversations, their memoirs and, later, in the history books, or certainly those that call on oral testimony.[31]" One such example would be the term "jankers", or "to be on jankers", used in passing in Whitley's memoir. However, it is part of the military jargon, meaning "restrictions of privileges,[32]" and it later entered the common language.

The most famous term borrowed from the military vocabulary must be that of "fraternization". It was used initially during World War II, as part of the set of rules of conduct among the occupant troops and the locals, but, considering the fact that

[28] Whitley, *Din Benghazi la București*…, 123.

[29] "The road here and the ground to either side were strewn with bodies. Some motionless, some not. Cries and groans, prayers, imprecations, reached me. I leave it to the sensitive imagination; I once wrote it all down, only to discover that horror, truthfully described, weakens to the merely clinical" – Alexander Aitken, in Fussell, 174.

[30] Fussell, 174.

[31] Jonathon Green, *The Vulgar Tongue. Green's History of Slang* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 364.

[32] In the original text: "Of course, the Corporal had his own little private room at the end of the hut, so to keep his eye on us and dish out 'jankers' as though they were going out of fashion", in http://dspace.bcucluj.ro/bitstream/123456789/129551/1/whitley_manuscris.pdf, page 15.

the "non-fraternization" rule inclined so heavily towards forbidding any sexual relations between the soldiers and the local women, almost eclipsing any other norms (such as no drinking with Germans, no friendly visits with Germans, basically, no making friends with the enemy), the connotation it received in time, in the civilian language, was almost exclusively sexual – "Language, policies and practices had changed in the meantime. The slang «fratters» and «frats» had fallen out of use, while the sexual connotations of «fraternization» had expanded to take over the world entirely.[33]" Thus, in the civilian language, "fraternization" is accompanied either by a *wink-wink*, or by "with the enemy", in the form of a reproach.

In the context of the Civil War, Jonathon Green also notes the identification of the first use (or, at least, the first documented use) of one of the most common scurrilous structures in the English language: "The war also offered what remains the earliest use of *fucked up* in its sense of objects, intentions or plans that are broken, wrecked or ruined. An anonymous soldier asked «What the bloody Hell is wanted now? This is a *fucked up* company anyhow, and always has been since the guard came on shore (…)» A fastidious Confederate private noted that phrase as well as much more in the way of rough language, writing to his wife in 1864 to deplore military life as «one unceasing tide of blasphemy and wickedness, coarseness and obscenity.»[34]" It would appear that war plays an important role in the formation of new language, or in the enrichment of the existing one, either though jargon, or through vulgarity. After each peace is declared, the "new" vocabulary, if it had not already entered the common language through the reports and articles sent directly from the front, does not remain isolated in the trenches. In Yuri Lotman's heterogenous semiosphere, "Many systems encounter others and in the midst of flight change their appearance and their orbits. Semiological space is filled with the freely moving fragments of a variety of structures which, however, store stably within themselves a memory of the whole which, falling into a strange environment, can suddenly and vigorously restore themselves. Semiotic systems, encountered in the semioshpere, display the ability to survive and to be transformed.[35]"

The only instance in which the authentic curse, the one that fulfils its truly primal function, can be found in Betrand Whitley's memoir is during the episode in which he was captured, after his plane crashed: "I stood up and raised my arms, in surrender. I was searched, then prodded in the back to shouts of «Mama Lui», which I was told months later, was an abbreviated Romanian curse,[36]" although it is a bit difficult to believe that, at that moment, he only heard the "abbreviated" form, since

[33] *Languages at War. Policies and Practices of Language Contacts in Conflict*, Hilary Footitt, Michael Kelly (eds.) (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 140.
[34] Green, 367.
[35] Juti Lotman, *Culture and Explosion*, ed. Marina Grishakova, transl. Wilma Clark (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2010), 114.
[36] Whitley, manuscript, 93.

the Romanian language is truly creative in offering linguistic combinations involving mothers. The aforementioned "sanitation" could have, in this case, become self-sanitation, from the desire to maintain the innocent tone of the narration.

Re-foreignising the rendition of a familiar place

The "foreign gaze" of the western Europeans upon the eastern Europeans, be it condescending or drenched in fascination, is not new and it applies to more cultures than the seemingly marginal Romanian one – "One of the more remarkable phenomena of the early modern period is the explosion of travel accounts by middle- and upper-class Europeans. From the sixteenth century on, the European reading public exhibited a voracious curiosity for accounts of the far corners of the world (…). Surprisingly, included in the exotic East were not only Turkey, the Middle East, or China, but even Poland, Ukraine, and Russia. Even though these lands had many similarities with Europe, (…) Europeans saw these lands as alien.[37]" The approaches that can be read in journals depicting the eastern lands can sometimes be unfair, infuriating even, but that does not necessarily have to be the case. After all, they are subjective perceptions.

The charm of Whitley's memoir, for the Romanian reader, resides in the author's recounts that begin with the chapter "Captured", which opens the period in which he was located in Romania. A reading of the familiar place through the lens of alterity has a very specific amenity – we are truly fascinated by others' fascination of us. The image of the Romanian sphere in which the narration crash-lands begins in "Quite a picturesque village, not dissimilar to a small village in the UK, yet emanating a sense of poverty,[38]" a sense that accompanied the text throughout the events of the imprisonment. The British pilot's memoir describes the prison gastronomy in a way that is more than similar to all the memoirs of this type – "water and a small bowl of thin, watery cornmeal porridge, called MAMALIGA. It seems that, at the same time each evening, Sergeant was missing (had he gone for his pint of beer?) and the daughter brought the usual bowl of mamaliga and a hunk of black bread. If that is what the peasant population lived on, then they must be very poor people indeed.[39]" The impression left by the guards inflamed the image of general poverty even further – "The guards, middle aged farmer's boys, or peasants, were not very clean and would, if chance permitted, occasionally rest their weary legs by sitting on a bed which was unoccupied, near a doorway. In no time at all, the bed occupant

[37] Nancy Shields Kollmann, "The Deceitful Gaze: Ukraine through the Eyes of Foreign Travelers," *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*. Summer-Winter 2008, 293, http://search.ebscohost.com.web.bcucluj.ro:2048/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=60574683 (Accessed in April 2021).

[38] Whitley, manuscript, 94.

[39] Ibid., 96.

would find that he was lousy. Yes, everybody was lousy by the time we had been there a few weeks.[40]" However, gradually, after the escape from prison, the images change, in accordance with the flow of history, depicted in the memoir through short chapters that aim to synthesise the events clearly, in between events that place the narration within very personal experiences – *The War Situation in Romania, Approach of the Russians, Martin and Coca Horovitz, The Romanian Coup D'Etat, Hitler's Wrath Hits Bucharest, The Romanian Monarchy, Russia Occupies Romania, Volunteering to Stay in Romania, Being Presented to King Michael of Romania*, to *Living in Russian Occupied Romania*, in which the image of the Romanian environment is very far removed from the one in the prison camp. Even on a gastronomical level, the situation is absolutely different – "He took me to some posh club where we sat and chatted, in French, until the dish he had ordered arrived. We had fresh caviar, from the Black Sea, heaped on buttered biscuits and taken with sips of tsuica, a liqueur plum brandy (a national drink), which I found very powerful.[41]" However, the author does not lose sight of the discrepancy that was fairly obvious to the elementary logic of a person placed in the midst of historical events – "The food at parties, wherever held, was both sumptuous and plentiful. Caviar was usually the hors d'oeuvre. In war torn Romania can you imagine sitting down to a main course of SUCKING PIG, with all the trimmings? I can, and did! I knew, however, that the educated rich in Bucharest lived life as different as chalk and cheese, from the frugal existence of the ignorant peasants in the hinterland.[42]"

The memoirs of the foreign travellers in Romania seem to have many common points, regardless of the time periods in which they came into contact with the Romanian country and its people. For instance, in 1856, James O. Noyes, M.D., a surgeon in the Ottoman Army, published the volume *Roumania: The Border Land of the Christian and the Turk. Comprising adventures of travel in Eastern Europe and Western Asia*[43], translated into Romanian in 2016.[44] According to the editor's note in the Romanian edition, "James Oscar Noyes was the first American to publish a book about the Romanian space (…). The volume *Roumania: The Border Land of the Christian and the Turk, Comprising Adventures of Travel in Eastern Europe and*

[40] Ibid., 105.

[41] Ibid., 133-134.

[42] Ibid., 136-137.

[43] James O. Noyes, *Roumania: The Border Land of the Christian and the Turk. Comprising adventures of travel in Eastern Europe and Western Asia* (New York: Rudd & Carleton, m.dccc.lviii): https://wellcomecollection.org/works/egapu7pc (Accessed in March 2021).

[44] James O. Noyes, *România, ţară de hotar între creştini şi turci. Cu aventuri din călătoria prin Europa răsăriteană și Asia apuseană*, traducere din engleză și note de Eugen Popa (București: Humanitas, 2016):
https://humanitas.ro/assets/pdf/James-O-Noyes_Romania-tara-de-hotar.pdf (Accessed in March 2021).

Western Asia – «by James O. Noyes, M.D., surgeon in the Ottoman army» –, containing 520 pages and 26 images, was published by the Rudd & Carleton Publishing House in New York, in 1858. An overview shows that there are 182 pages strictly about the Romanian space, even more than the ones about Constantinople – only a third of the volume.[45]"

Although Noyes's general approach is not exceptionally friendly, the elements he noticed often coincide with Whitley's (a bit more friendly) observations. The image of the *căruța* (the horse-drawn wagon), for instance, is described by Whitley as "very much like a toy cart I had when a youngster, that is, with a flat base, then bars sloping out and up to a strong rail round the top – I called it a hay cart," while, for Noyes, "The Daco-Romans have a capital substitute for a fast American railway. Nothing can be more primitive than their *carutzas*, or post-wagons, the origin of which must date back to the time when the Scythians wandered over the Wallachian plains,[46]" followed by a detailed (and quite condescending) description of the wagon, of its user and of the travel conditions in such a form of transportation.

The fact that the two authors, Whitley and Noyes, although they were surely seeing the same object, the Romanian horse-drawn wagon, use two distinctive means of "translating" the image (the hay cart and the post-wagon[47]), raises, for translation, an issue located in the vicinity of Ilarie Voronca's stance on the transfer of meaning: "the same terms in different languages constantly change. For many *drum, chemin, weg, cammino* mean the same thing. Which is inexact. *Chemin* e completely different from *drum* or *cammino*, since the road here is completely different than the road in Italy, which in its turn is completely different from the road in France. Above the style and the meaning of each expression lies the style and the meaning of the times and the regions. Each word itself means, above its meaning, the sensibility and the sonority if the epoch. This is why I stated that words are untranslatable and a poem in which the first verse is *fumatul e interzis* (smoking is forbidden) and the second is *rauchen verboten* is not a repetition, but

[45] Original text: "James Oscar Noyes este primul american care publică un volum despre spaţiul românesc (…). Volumul *Roumania: The Border Land of the Christian and the Turk, Comprising Adventures of Travel in Eastern Europe and Western Asia* – «by James O. Noyes, M.D., surgeon in the Ottoman army» –, conţinând 520 de pagini de text şi 26 de planşe, apare la editura Rudd & Carleton din New York, cu anul 1858. Din ansamblu, strict despre spaţiul românesc sunt 182 de pagini, cu anticipări şi reluări şi în restul volumului. Este spaţiul căruia i se dedică cele mai multe pagini, mai multe chiar decât Constantinopolului – însă este vorba doar de o treime din volum" (Translation mine): Ibid., 11-12.

[46] James O. Noyes, *Roumania: The Border Land of the Christian and the Turk...,* 199.

[47] Noyes mentions, in the description of the wagon, the fact that the one he saw also contained hay – "The traveller imbeds himself in the fermented hay, which is to be his only cushion, and is sufficiently supplied with thorns to keep up a cutaneous as well as mental irritation.": Noyes, *Roumania: The Border Land of the Christian and the Turk...,* 200.

two completely different verses.[48]" Walter Benjamin emphasises the distinction that must be made between *what is meant* and *the way of meaning it* – "In the words *Brot* and *pain*, what is meant is the same, but the way of meaning it is not. This difference in the way of meaning permits the word *Brot* to mean something other to a German than what the word *pain* means to a Frenchman, so that these words are not interchangeable for them; in fact, they strive to exclude each other, as to what is meant, however, the two words signify the very same thing.[49]" In the case of the two references to (most likely) the same image of the horse-drawn wagon, the subjective perceptions of the same object should, perhaps, be translated differently, when placed in comparison – Whitley sees a "car cu fân", while Noyes sees a "cocie".

The local gastronomy appears, in Noyes's memoir, in similar terms used for the one from the 20th century: "We halted an hour at the village of Kalougareni for dinner. The khan was crowned with Wallachs in Phrygian caps of sheepskin, and ragged gypsies. We called for the best that the place could afford, but my dinner consisted of a tough omelette and a crust of black bread, washed down by a vile fluid that would pass for vinegar in any other part of the world, but was paid for as Wallachian wine.[50]" The description of the *mamaliga* continues to fascinate, this time placed within a less friendly context: "The Wallachs do not attend much to the cultivation of grain, but devote themselves especially to the breeding and tending of cattle, wintering their herds in Moldavia and Wallachia at a trifling expense, and conducting them home again in the spring. *Kukurutz*, or maize, from which is prepared a thick porridge, called *Mamaglia*, resembling the *polenta* of the Italians, is chiefly cultivated by them.[51]" In the original text, the *mamaliga* appears in the form cited above, as "*mama**gli**a*", while the Romanian translation corrected its form – "Cucuruzul, sau porumbul, din care se prepară o fiertură groasă, numită mămăligă,

[48] Original text: "Aceleași noțiuni în diferite limbi se schimbă mereu. Pentru mulți: drum, chemin, weg, cammino înseamnă același lucru. Inexact. Chemin e cu totul altceva decât drum sau cammino, pentru că drumul de la noi e cu totul altfel decât drumul din Italia, și acesta altfel decât cel din Franța. Mai presus de stilul și noțiunea fiecărei expresii, este stilul și noțiunea unei epoci sau a unui ținut. Fiecare cuvânt în sine înseamnă, mai prețios decât înțelesul lui, sensibilitatea și sonoritatea epocei. De aceea spunem că sunt intraductibile cuvintele și de aceea o poezie în care versul întâi ar fi: fumatul e interzis și al doilea rauchen verboten, nu înseamnă o repetiție, ci două versuri perfect distincte" (Translation mine): Ilarie Voronca, "Gramatică", in Ion Pop, *Avangarda românească* [The Romanian Avant-Garde] (Bucharest: Editura Fundaţia Naţională pentru Ştiinţă şi Artă, 2015), 37.

[49] Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in *Selected Writings, Vol. 1, 1913-1926*, ed. by Marcus Bullock, Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 257.

[50] Noyes, *Roumania: The Border Land of the Christian and the Turk...,* 98.

[51] Ibid., 164-165.

amintind de polenta italienilor, e cultivat cu precădere la valahi.[52]" The translator's note mentions this choice in a very honest fashion – referring to the entire text, it states that "Writing in capitalised letters was kept in the instances in which it seemed to indicate a choice made by the author. The words and expressions in the Romanian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Turkish languages printed in cursive appear as such in the original, often using approximate spellings; the translation used the correct forms, as close to the original as possible.[53]" For the Romanian reader, however, this translation choice does not necessarily improve the text. The "approximate spellings" should be explained, not corrected, considering the fact that, as they are, they are part of the author's experiences at that time. The charm of foreignness thus reflected back also resides in the pronunciation errors that are then transcribed into the text.

The act of translation, in the case of literary texts, is seen by G. Rabassa as a form of betrayal – a betrayal of the language, of the words, of the author himself: "personal betrayals, those against the people involved in the act of translation. The first victim is, of course, the author we are translating. Can we ever make a different-coloured clone of what he (…) has done?[54]" In the case of the linguistic juggle with foreignness, however, the issue spreads across several successive levels. The language that describes a foreign sphere is transformed into the language of the foreign sphere, through de-foreignisation (of the language), and it is then re-foreignised (through style), all while holding a firm grip onto the lifeline that holds the author in place. It is, in this instance, quite difficult to pinpoint the betrayal (or whether or not there are betrayals on all levels of this process).

Bertrand Whitley's memoir ends with his return to Scarborough, with his "retirement plans", followed, in the translated edition (that, as we can see, in the end, was *printed and published in Romania, why not*[55]), by Annex 1, containing the letter addressed to Nicolae Rațiu, in which Bertrand Whitley, using the jovial tone that is, in fact, present throughout the narration, mentions that "In spite of being most uncomfortably imprisoned in Bucharest – I have very fond memories of the country and particularly of the very many wonderful people I met when staying in

[52] James O. Noyes, *România, ţară de hotar între creştini şi turci…*, 136.

[53] Original text: *"*În general s-a păstrat scrierea cu majuscule acolo unde pare a indica o opţiune a autorului. Cuvintele și expresiile în limbile română, sârbă, bulgară, turcă etc. tipărite cu cursive apar ca atare în original, de cele mai multe ori în grafii aproximative; în traducere s-a adoptat forma corectă cea mai apropiată de original." Ibid., 16.

[54] G. Rabassa, *If This Be Treason. Translation and Its Dyscontents. A memoir* (New York: New Directions Books, 2005), 4.

[55] "Print and publish in Romania. Why not" opens Whitley's letter to Nicolae Rațiu, as a response to a proposal that does not appear in the volume.

Romania for four months after that.[56]" Adrian Boda is right to emphasise the volume's relevance for the Romanian historical research, considering the fact that a large part of the book is dedicated to Bertrand Whitley's experiences on the Romanian territory, but one must not overlook its international potential, given by a possible edited publication of the original manuscript. The field of memoirs about foreign lands raises not only issues regarding representation, in the meeting with alterity, and it does not merely contribute to the image constructed on "how others see us". The issues are raised on the level of the *shipment* of this image – the translation that returns the text to the cultural space from which the story initially sprung, story that was then passed through the filter of a different cultural sphere. Thus, this return takes place in the form of a tightrope act, above a pool of translation theory, practice and hermeneutics.

[56] Whitley, manuscript, 2.