EXTRATEXTUALITY IN TRANSLATING EDGAR ALLAN POE'S 'THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH'

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Abstract: *In our paper we first make critical use of Christiane Nord's (2005) checklist of the possible questions to be asked by one in order to pinpoint the extratextual factors of a text, which, in our opinion, are of paramount importance for the translator of a literary text. Next, we analyse Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Masque of the Red Death' in terms of the author or sender of the text (who?), the sender's intention (what for?), the audience the text is directed at (to whom?), the medium or channel the text is communicated by (by which medium?), the place (where?) and time (when?) of text production and text reception, and the motive (why?) for communication.*

Keywords**:** *extratextuality, author/sender, sender's intention, audience, medium/channel, place of communication, time of communication, motive for communication, text function.*

The analysis of the extratextual factors implies gathering of information on: *the author* or *sender of the text* (who?), *the sender's intention* (what for?), *the audience* the text is directed at (to whom?), *the medium or channel* the text is communicated by (by which medium?), *the place* (where?) and *time* (when?) of text production and text reception, and *the motive* (why?) for communication.

The analysis of the extratextual factors is necessary not only for the educated reader who wants to be in the know as to the text's literariness, or for the literary critic who wants 'to fill in the gaps' and read between the lines so as to come to the writer's intention, but it is also useful to the translator-reader providing him/her background information on the author (sender), his/her intention (sender's intention) and the production and reception of the respective text.

In Nord's (2005:43-87) opinion, there is the following comprehensive checklist of extratextual factors:

A. Sender

1. Who is the sender of the text?
2. Is the sender identical with the text producer? If not, who is the text producer and what is his/her position with regard to the sender? Is s/he subject to the sender's instructions? Is s/he an expert in text production or an expert on the subject?
3. What information about the sender (e.g. age, geographical and social origin, education, status, relationship to the subject matter, etc.) can be obtained from the text environment? Is there any other information that is presupposed to be part of the receiver's general background knowledge? Can the sender or any person related to him or her be asked for more details?
4. What clues as to the characteristics of the sender can be inferred from other situational factors (medium, place, time, motive, function)?

In the case of the literary prose translator-reader, these questions may be answered either if the author's name carries sender-relevant information belonging to the translator's background knowledge such as information on their literary classifications, artistic intentions, favourite subject matters, types of addressees, etc., or if the translator-reader possesses no background knowledge on the author and as a result he/she researches for specific author-

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oriented information starting from the text's environment (preface or epilogue, footnotes, etc.) and going through all that represents relevant criticism on the respective author.

In as far as the distinction between sender and text producer is concerned, in the case of most literary prose works the sender is identical with the text producer and is to be found in the form of a name (the author's name) on the front cover of any book.

The translator functions as a special type of text producer, being neither the sender nor the text produce proper, since he/she 'produces' a text bearing the stylistic features of the original and functioning as a carrier of message sent by the original author who is still to be found on the front cover performing the sender role.

B. Sender's intention

1. Are there any extratextual or intratextual statements by the sender as to his or her intention(s) concerning the text?
2. What intention(s) are by convention associated with the genre to which the analyzed text can be assigned?
3. What clues as to the sender's intention can be inferred from other situational factors (sender, receiver, medium, place, time, and motive)?

Concerning the sender's intention as an extratextual factor, we think that the translator-reader may form a general idea on the sender's intention by taking into account such factors as the author's life and background or other events which have influenced his or her writings (such as his/her adherence to a literary movement), thus playing the role of a 'critical receiver' looking for hints in the author's life and career to confirm or contradict his/her deductions as regards the sender's intention(s).

According to Nord (2005:54), however, we may distinguish several types of intentions as follows:

- *referential intention*: when the sender wants to inform the receiver about a certain issue;
- *expressive intention*: when the sender wants to express his/her feelings or attitudes towards things;
- *appellative intention*: when the sender plans to persuade the receiver to adopt a particular opinion or perform a certain activity;
- *phatic intention*: when the sender just wants to establish or maintain contact with the receiver.

A cursory study of a sender's intention in the case of a piece of literary prose fragment will reveal that the sender's intention is in most cases both referential and expressive in the sense that prose writers are both informative and expressive either by their subject matter or by their writing techniques. Charles Dickens, for example, wrote 'on reqest' several novels expressing 'his' bitter resentment against "the cruelty of the workhouse and the foundling asylum, the enslavement of human beings in mines and factories, the hideous evil of slums where crime simmered and proliferated, the injustices of the law, and the cynical corruption of the lawmakers" but also against "the great evil permeating every field of human endeavor: the entire structure of exploitation on which the social order was founded" (Johnson, 1952). Ernest Hemingway is another such writer whose intention was to express his concern with such social issues as the economic and political injustice or the loss of liberty which he portrayed with the help of the Spanish Civil War.

Writing techniques, in their turn, support and give life to the author's intention by means of narrative structure, repeated motifs, consistent imagery, juxtaposition of

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symbols, stylization of characters and settings, and command of language (such as in Dickens' case for example), or by means of an economical, simple, almost childlike style, meant to provide the reader with the raw material of an experience, eliminating the authorial viewpoint and having the text reproduce the actual experience as closely as possible such as is the case with Hemingway's style. More than that, Hemingway was also deeply concerned with authenticity in writing. He believed that a writer could treat a subject honestly only if the writer had participated in or observed the subject matter closely. Without such knowledge, the reader would sense the author's lack of expertise. In addition, he also believed that an author writing about a familiar subject is able to eliminate superfluous detail without sacrificing the voice of authority.

C. Audience

1. What information about the addressed audience can be inferred from the text environment?
2. What can be learned about the addressees from the available information about the sender and his/her intention?
3. What clues to the ST addressee's expectations, background knowledge etc. can be inferred from other situational factors (medium, place, time, motive, and function)?
4. Is there any information about the reactions of the ST receiver(s) which may influence translation strategies?

In point of audience-related terminology, we prefer to make use of the common-gender concept of *readership* instead of the more general terms *receivers* or *readers* on account of the fact that it implies the idea of collectivity including all those who perform the act of reading, and excluding thus the idea of a special type of readership literature is addressed to.

To put it differently, literature is addressed to whomever is willing and capable of 'tasting' it, provided that they have the potentiality of understanding a literary message with some of the expertise of a literary critic who is skilled and takes pleasure in distinguishing between literary and non-literary, or of a wine taster who is skilled and takes pleasure in distinguishing between an ordinary wine and a 50 year old Chardonnay.

Theoretically speaking, one could distinguish, however, between an 'advised,' learned reader endowed with background literature-oriented knowledge enabling him/her to decode both the referential and the expressive intention of the sender and also capable of going beyond the surface-levelled decoding, and an ordinary reader focusing on the subject matter and paying no attention whatsoever to the aesthetic dimension of the text and its realization.

D. Medium/Channel

1. Has the text been taken from a spoken or a written communication? By which medium was it transmitted?
2. Which medium is used to present the text to the target audience? Is there any extratextual information on the medium?
3. What clues as to the medium or channel can be inferred from other situational factors (sender, intention, motive, function)?

In the case of a literary translation, which is written communication, the medium is the means of publishing, such as a book, a serial installment, a brochure, a literary supplement, etc. For the literary translator-reader the dimension of medium is relevant in this phase only if it provides some clues as to the size of the addressed audience in the sense that a cheap paperback edition of a novel would be expected to reach a wider public than an expensive volume of the same novel.

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An example in point is Charles Dickens who established (and made profitable) the method of first publishing novels in serial installments in monthly magazines. He thereby reached a larger audience including those who could only afford their reading on such an installment plan. This form of publication soon became popular with other writers in Britain and the United States. This medium-related information is relevant for a translator of Dickens since it brings further information on Dickens's eagerness to find the best means of 'sending' his literary 'intention' to a larger part of the audience, thus extending his readership with those who did not have the money to buy a book, but enjoyed and afforded reading serial installments in monthly magazines. The translator in his/her turn should take this into consideration and find ways to 'transmit' Dickens's intention as easily to the TL readership.

E. Place of communication

1. Where was the text produced or transmitted? Is any information on the dimension of space to be found in the text environment? Is any information on space presupposed to be part of the receiver's general background knowledge?
2. What clues as to the dimension of space can be inferred from other situational factors (sender, receiver, medium, motive)?

The dimension of space refers to the place of text production which is to be found in the text environment in the form of the place of the publication, the name of the publishing company, the first edition details.

The picaresque adventures of Fielding's *Tom Jones* on his way to and from London, for example, are perceived somehow differently by an Englishman who will tend to disregard the space setting, having a certain representation of the distance to and from London, and by a Romanian who gets in touch with the same story through translation and thinks of London as 'that remote place' enhancing thus the effect of the space setting.

F. Time of communication

1. When was the text written/published/transmitted? Does the text environment yield any information on the time dimension? Is any information on the time dimension presupposed to be part of the addressee's general background knowledge?
2. What clues to the dimension of time can be inferred from other situational factors (sender, medium, receiver, motive, and text function)?
3. What fundamental problems arise from a possible time lag between ST and TT situation?

The time of communication which can be inferred from the date of publication of the text is in our opinion one of the most important extratextual factors on account of the fact that it is a hint for the historical state of linguistic development the text represents. Indeed, the translator-reader needs to know the time of the text production so as to read Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and then try to translate it as Dan Duțescu masterly did by giving the Romanian version an archaic touch that contributed wonderfully to the preservation of the satirical and comic effect of the original.

G. Motive for communication

1. Why was the text written or transmitted? Is there any information on the motive of communication to be found in the text environment? Is the ST receiver expected to be familiar with the motive?
2. Was the text written for a special occasion? Is the text intended to be read or heard more than once or regularly?

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3. What clues as to the motive for communication can be inferred from other extratextual dimensions (sender, intention, receiver, medium, place, time, function)?
4. What problems can arise from the difference between the motive for ST production and the motive for translation?

An example in point would be that of Edgar Allan Poe who was so devastated by the death of tuberculosis of the three women in his life (his mother, his foster mother and his wife) that he gave death a symbolic dimension in his short story *The Masque of the Red Death* with the intention of pointing out that no one, not even the powerful and wealthy, can escape death, which eventually claims all mortals.

H. Text function

1. What is the text function intended by the sender? Are there any hints as to the intended function in the text environment, such as text-type designations?
2. What clues as to the function of the text can be inferred from other extratextual dimensions (motive, medium, receiver, intention)?
3. Are there any indications that the receiver may use the text in a function other than that intended by the sender?

Generally speaking, text function is related to the situational aspect of communication and it is analyzed in terms of the text type, thus distinguishing such particular categorizations as 'newspaper reports', 'sermons', 'resolutions', or more general categorizations as informative, expressive or operative texts.

Literary texts as a category of expressive texts making use of the aesthetic dimension of language are characterized by the text function of literariness which lends them such features as *abstract*, *complex*, *figurative*, *meaning deferred*, *implicit*, *plural*, *morally reflective*, as opposed to non-literary texts which are more *concrete*, *simple*, *literal*, *meaning immediate*, *explicit*, *univocal*, and *full of physical action*.

From this point of view, as we mentioned earlier, literary texts are addressed to receivers who have a specific expectation determined by their literary experience, and a certain command of a literary code consisting of those systems of interpretation which make the text significant for them.

In order to point out on the one hand the necessity of such an analysis of the extratextual factors for a correct decoding and the subsequent understanding of a literary text, and, on the other hand, the complexity of such an undertaking on the part of the literary translator-reader, we will analyse Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Masque of the Red Death' in terms of the author or sender of the text (who?), the sender's intention (what for?), the audience the text is directed at (to whom?), the medium or channel the text is communicated by (by which medium?), the place (where?) and time (when?) of text production and text reception, and the motive (why?) for communication.

A. Sender +

B. Sender's intention

As a first observation, as in the case of most literary productions, the sender and the text producer are one and the same person, i.e. Edgar Allan Poe.

Generally speaking, Poe's intention in 'The Masque of the Red Death' is to describe death as one of the worst "terrors of the soul." In his preface to *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840), he described the "terror…of the soul" as his essential "thesis": "If in many of my productions terror has been the thesis, I maintain that terror is not of Germany (see the Gothic's origins, the Faust book, etc. - our note), but of the

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soul, - that I have deduced this terror only from its legitimate sources, and urged it only to its legitimate results." (Hayes, 2004:84) The supernatural accompanied by phantasms of death and destruction, afforded a means of articulating this primal fear.

According to Kennedy (Bloom, 1987:112), "Poe's 'terror of the soul' bears traces of the historical and intellectual crisis that produced the Gothic novel. The Gothic paradigm dramatized for the first time the quintessential modern predicament - the plight of an alienated being whose rational skepticism had vitiated his capacity for belief, while paralyzing dread had betrayed the insufficiency of science and logic.

Unlike his contemporaries, Poe refused to soften or idealize mortality, going even beyond the Gothic formula to explore divergent conceptions of death.

The best representation of the wide variety of 'guesses' concerning Poe's intention is given by Roppolo (1963:59-69) who warns the reader that "Those who seek guidance in interpreting Edgar Allan Poe's "The Masque of the Red Death" are doomed to enter a strange world, as confused and confusing as a Gothic Wonderland and in some respects as eerie as the blighted house of Roderick Usher. Their guides will be old critics, New Critics, scholars, biographers, enthusiasts, dilettantes, journalists, hobbyists, anthologists, medical men, psychologists, and psychoanalysts. From these the seekers will learn that Prince Prospero is Poe himself and that "The Masque" is therefore autobiography; that Poe never presents a moral; that "The Masque" is an allegory and must therefore teach a lesson; that there is indeed a moral; that there are unnumbered morals; that there is no message or meaning; that there is a message; that the message is quite obvious and understandable; and that the meaning of the message transcends human understanding."

Campbell (1933), among others, contented himself with seeking sources and with attempting to ground the fantasy of "The Masque of the Red Death" in fact. In *The Mind of Poe and Other Studies*, Campbell points out that Poe was "pretty clearly indebted to William Harrison Ainsworth's *Old Saint Paul's*" and then cites an account by N. P. Willis in the *New York Mirror* of June 2, 1832, in which Willis describes a Parisian ball featuring "The Cholera Waltz," "The Cholera Galopade," and, most pertinently, a masked figure representing the cholera itself.

To Blair (1946), as to many others, there is an "allegorical signification" in the seven rooms, which, "progressing from east to west - from blue to black - connote the seven ages of man from the blue of the dawn of life to the black of its night." The clock is, of course, Time; the masked figure is the Red Death; and the revelers are the living, "who seek to bar out and forget death by being gay and carefree," only to discover that death must inevitably conquer all humanity. So far, the critic is in the mainstream of interpretation. But Blair, more perceptive than most, refuses to confine "The Masque of the Red Death" to this moral. The closing note of the last paragraph is "inconsistent with such a meaning"; and Poe, a lover of ambiguity, would probably argue, Blair says, that "The Masque" is "suggestive of implications which cannot be made explicit this side of eternity."

Vanderbilt (May, 1991:140-150) in his study of *The Masque of the Red Death* offers an insight into Poe's intention by interpreting it in light of the writer's aesthetic ideas in 1842. Thus, according to him, Poe defined the poet or creator of Beauty as a man of "taste" rather than of "pure intellect' or 'moral sense." The true artist strives to create rather than imitate, and his vision therefore transcends mere nature. His "burning thirst" for supernal beauty, a passion approaching even to madness, is related to "the

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immortal essence of man's nature." In making this "wild effort to reach the beauty above," the artist rearranges and transforms material reality. Prince Prospero matches exactly this description of the artist-hero. When he isolates himself and one thousand knights and ladies of his court during the pestilence, the Prince is not following the dictates of a judicious "intellect" or a dutiful "moral sense." The Prince, as Poe notes, is a man of "taste." Though his courtiers conceive the adventure to be a well planned escape from the Red Death itself, the Prince has motives of another order. Objective nature outside having been ravaged by the plague, Poe's hero will employ his taste and imagination to create a symbolic equivalent of nature's elements - a combination which can transform earthly reality into the artist's liberating vision of immortal beauty."

In light of the above quite divergent viewpoints concerning Poe's intention, we think that the only 'intentions' to be considered by a translator of Poe's are those suggested by Poe himself on the one hand in his preface to *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840), in which he described the "terror…of the soul" as his essential "thesis" with death representing one of the most dwelt upon terrors of the soul, and on the other hand in his "The Poetic Principle" where he prefigured the Prospero-like artist hero who is a man of taste capable of changing the ravaging images brought about by Death through its agent, the Red Death, by his creating a completely new suite-shaped world full of colour and good taste, but at the same time incapable of keeping the Red Death out of his subjective tasteful world.

C. Audience

In point of the audience or type of readership *The Masque of the Red Death* may have been addressed to, we re-quote Arthur Hobson Quinn's opinion that "Poe gives no hint of the great moral the tale tells to those who can think. For the others, he had no message," this time not to support the idea of the existence of a sender's intention on the part of Poe, but to point out once again that a literary text is not addressed to the ordinary reader proficient in decoding referential type of texts, but to the learned experienced reader who, as Quinn says, needs no 'hint' to decode the literariness of the text, or to use Iser's terminology, to fill in the omnipresent gaps.

D. Medium/Channel +

E. Place of Communication

F. Time of communication

This tale was originally printed in *Graham's Magazine* for May 1842 in Philadelphia. A revised version appeared in the *Literary Souvenir* of June 4, 1842, with the title changed from *Mask* (1842) to *Masque* (1845). Yet another version of the tale was reprinted in the *Broadway Journal* of July 19, 1845.

G. Motive of communication

The motive of communication may be related to Poe's personal overexposure to the effects of tuberculosis through the deaths of his mother, his adoptive mother and his wife.

In the "Masque of the Red Death," Poe shows how this dreaded disease has taken hold of all aspects of his life and how there is no way to escape it. At the time this story was written, he had already lost both of his mother figures to tuberculosis, and his wife, Virginia, had just contracted it. The "Red Death" that is described in this tale is a

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relatively accurate representation of tuberculosis and its effects. In keeping with the traits of tuberculosis, Poe's Red Death is characterized by "sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores."

On the other hand, the motive of communication may be related to Poe's aesthetic theory within the framework of the precepts of the 18th century Gothicism and of the Romanticism preceding Poe's generation. To put it differently, the motive of communication may be related to the time of communication during the 1830s and 1840s.

H. Text function

As we already stated when commenting on the text function as an extratextual factor, the literary text, hence *The Masque of the Red Death*, is an expressive type of text, since the author uses the aesthetic dimension of language and the form of the message is foregrounded.

Poe himself, in a review of a volume of tales by Nathaniel Hawthorne, dwells on the advantages of the 'prose tale' form as a literary species by comparing it first with a novel in terms of the hour(s) time allocated by the reader for 'its perusal,' which gives the prose tale the feature of totality and assures total control of the reader's soul on the part of the writer, and secondly, with a poem from which it differs, on the one hand, in that its modes of thought and expression may be anchored in Truth and not in the Beautiful as is the case of the poem, and, on the other hand, in that, unlike the poet, the prose writer may bring to his theme a vast variety of modes or inflections of thought and expression: "We allude to the short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal. The ordinary novel is objectionable, from its length, for reasons already stated in substance. As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself, of course, of the immense force derivable from *totality*. (…) In the brief tale, however, the author is enabled to carry out the fullness of his intention, be it what it may. During the hour of perusal the soul of the reader is at the writer's control. There are no external or extrinsic influences - resulting from weariness or interruption. (…) We have said that the tale has a point of superiority even over the poem. (…) The writer of the prose tale, in short, may bring to his theme a vast variety of modes or inflections of thought and expression – (the ratiocinative, for example, the sarcastic and the humorous) which are not only antagonistical to the nature of the poem, but absolutely forbidden by one of its most peculiar and indispensable adjuncts; we allude, of course, to rhythm." (May, 1991: 125-126)

Regrouping all these features in light of the type of text, i.e. expressive, and of the main function of a literary text, i.e. literariness, we could say that, while the first four features (totality, unity of effect, Truth-grounding, variety of modes of expression) stand for "the artistically organized content" (Reiss's terminology) of an expressive type of text, the last two ('suggestiveness' and 'indefinitiveness' of meaning) represent the *literary* side of the text in that by making the text 'suggestive', the writer encourages the reader to bring his or her creativity into play, and by textual means indicates a direction in which the reader or audience may proceed to explore the unstated possibilities of meaning (Hawthorn's terminology), while by the indefinitiveness of meaning he, Poe, transmits to the reader that in his case the intended meaning is neither expressed (i.e. implicit), nor clearly defined (i.e. vague, misleading, confusing).

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