CENSORED VS. UNCENSORED: THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENT(S) IN SOME ENGLISH TO ROMANIAN LITERARY TRANSLATIONS

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Abstract: Exerting power through censorship has always been common practise. Like all forms of arts, literature can contain elements that might make it controversial in certain political or social contexts hence the existence of pre-communist, communist and post-communist Romanian variants of the same literary texts. The present article consists in a brief comparative analysis carried out with the purpose of identifying norms at work when translating words and structures referring to religious elements before, during and after communism. Therefore, we shall establish the extent to which the political context influenced the translation process and determined linguistic choices in the target versions of W.S. Maugham's The Painted Veil and D.H. Lawrence's The Plumed Serpent.

Keywords: censorial measures, literary texts, religion, translation, norms.

It is known that power and censorship work hand in glove inasmuch as the latter is one of the techniques of exerting power and it enables the former, in particular in politics, to remove elements that do not fit the ideology. In history, especially during communism in Romania, this removal was done by using the three forms of interdiction described by Foucault: "affirmer que ca n'est par permis, empecher que ca soit dit, nier que ca existe" (Foucault in Müller, 2008: 7). The first two forms are the most common. The criteria for censoring are the materialisation of the first, whereas the second measure consists in the very banning. Purging, cleansing, seizing, removing, burning etc. – these are just some of the actions mentioned and described by historians and scholars who studied the phenomenon of censorship exercised by the communist regime, especially in the cultural environment – i.e. the removal of published matters (books, newspapers, magazines) or the banning of films, theatrical productions etc. (see Petcu 1999, Caravia 2000, Corobca 2011 and 2014, Dobre 2015 etc.). Since the definitions and classifications of censorship provided in course of time imply eliminating elements that do not conform with the rules or norms valid at a certain

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moment, this might be considered the umbrella term used for referring to the repression exercised on the intellectuals' products in communist Romania by the state and could entail all the aforementioned damaging actions. The censorial measures were enforced by several institutions like: the Ministry of Propaganda (that later became the Ministry of Arts and Information), The General Administration of Press and Publications, Police etc.

Despite it being undertaken constantly in the cultural field, the varying intensity of censorship corresponded to the fluctuation between repression and the so-called liberalism that characterised the very regime. Nevertheless, the dominant line of behaviour was to avoid or even discard (by means of more or less harsh measures) any element that was subversive, controversial or anti-communist and to adapt everything, first to the Soviet-like communist ideology and then to an excessive so-called nationalist regime with Ceausescu as the main figure to be praised and obeyed. Books of all kinds became the main targets for the censors and their actions, i.e. purging the libraries, antique shops and book shops by seizing and banning or destroying publications that might have been 'controversial' because of their content or author.

Between 1945-1949, the massive destruction of books (ranging from scientific to literary texts) started with the 1945 Law (included in Art. 16 of the 1944 Armistice Convention) signed by the king. The purging process was based on the criteria provided in the brochures (that later became tomes) issued in 1945, 1946 and 1948: "Publicațiile scoase din circulație până la 1 august 1945" (The publications removed from circulation until the 1st of August 1945) that contained 910 titles; "Publicațiile scoase din circulație până la 1 iunie 1946" (The publications removed from circulation until the 1st of June 1946) with almost 3000 titles, and "Publicațiile interzise până la 1 mai 1948" (The publications forbidden until the 1st of May 1948) and the related instructions. All these brochures contained criteria for censoring, but also titles of books considered controversial. They were constantly being 'enriched' with titles of censorable books, by adding annexes or booklets. The most significant as regards the criteria and the number of titles – 8779 titles including the titles mentioned in the previous brochures (Țurcanu 2007: 311) – is the 1948 brochure. It remained a 'handbook' for censors until the fall of the regime, even in the years when the phenomenon was, apparently, 'lighter'. Though censorship was actually forbidden, it took place as ***book control*** or ***purging*** and the term coined and employed in this period to refer to books subject to purging was ***epurabilă*** (Corobca 2014: 20). The actions of seizing, removing from libraries and bookshops and burning prevailed. Measures were taken according to the above mentioned article regarding the control of all the publications or cultural products, by obeying the rules of the Soviet Union and a Soviet-like Constitution whose main aims were detachment from the West and the rejection of

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Western elements in all fields. This objective became essential to the Party in particular starting from 1948, when the Congress of the Romanian Workers' Party took place (in February) and all was clearly stated by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. Censorial measures were explained as necessary for promoting the working class' ideology, for "ideological sanitation" (Costea, Kiraly, Radosav 1995: 82) and fight against the *rotting* (Western) culture. The state full control on libraries and monopoly on antique shops and bookshops (that started in 1948) enhanced the realisation of the stated principles.

Conversely, the following years were said to be more democratic, with a purpose that differed from the initial one. The regime aimed at destalinization, not defascization (1949-1952) and, obviously, the eliminated elements referred to the ideology that did not fit the purposes of the regime, related to both the state's internal organisation and to the relations with other states.

The purging continued in the '50s and, as regards the published matters and the access to books, a very important step was the monitoring and purging of libraries by dividing the libraries into sections like "biblioteca interzisă" (forbidden), "biblioteca documentară" (documentary) and "biblioteca liberă" (free-access sections of the libraries) (Petcu 1999: 173). In 1960 these sections became "fond special", "fond documentar" and "fond uzual". However, many books were destroyed due to their content, but also for ad hominem reasons (Blium in Corobca 2014: 49).
The following years were marked by ups and downs in the cultural, economic and political life, variations that ranged from a policy of detaching Romania from Russia and a wish of contact with the West in the late '60s to another period of rejection of any kinds of foreign influences in the early '70s. What followed was a so-called abolishing of censorship in the late '70s and a false calm while censorship achieved its aims through agents infiltrated in all sectors and institutions (Petcu 1999: 181), and then an even harsher repression in the last years of communism when dissident groups, in particular literary, took stand against the regime.

During all these periods, censorship had a significant effect on literary products, both on the Romanian literary texts and on texts written in other languages. The overall tendency during all the aforementioned periods was avoiding and condemning anything related to democracy, cosmopolitanism and any other cultural or ideological trend that, from the communist point of view, was deviant (see details about the trials against intellectuals that were accused of using or enabling the circulation of materials coming from abroad or of being in contact with the West in Petcu 1999: 175). Nevertheless, there were also other elements disapproved by the communist regime. These were mentioned in the instructions (criteria) for censoring – that in the beginning were formulated as correspondent of those stated in the 1922 decree for the establishment of censorship – and in the

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1923 instructions for the circulation and confiscation of literature used by the Glavit (The General Direction for Literature and Printed Matters in the Soviet Union). Amongst these, religion was one of the most controversial and potentially subversive, described as the "opium of people" (Dobre 2015: 32). Consequently, many repressive actions were directed against the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches and personalities, and books on religion were moved in the forbidden or documentary section (Petcu 1999: 174). In addition, religious hints like the word "God" capitalized had to be non-capitalised or removed from many works, in particular in Romanian poems or prose like Dan Verona's (Vianu, 1998: 177).

Translating Western literature posed a double problem – rendering details related to the potentially threatening Western influences and ideology, but also elements (like religion or mysticism) that, according to the criteria for censoring were supposed to be discarded. Therefore, religion might have been one of the reasons why books written and published between January 1917 and 23rd of August 1944 (or, according to Petcu 1999: 174, between 1920 and 1945), were banned. Furthermore, the quality of translations done before 1947, especially during the interwar period, was often questioned and described as a very productive period as regards the number of translations, but lacking translations of valuable world literature (Ionescu 1981:18). Consequently, the communist translation policy was said to be governed by the need of good translations meant to 'fight' against superficiality, amateurism (Argintescu-Amza 1965: 161) and thus against low-quality translations. Censorship seemed a measure that enabled this by censoring the pre-communist translations. Other variants – "high-quality translations" – were later provided. This substitution of translations poorly done before 1945 was a purpose often stated by theorists in the field at that time (see Ionescu 1981, Popescu 1978, Argintescu-Amza 1965).

In describing the situation of translations under dictatorial regimes in our countries, we have, as a matter of fact, identified preliminary norms, as described by Gideon Toury, in the context of a communist regime that imposed its ideology and forbade everything that did not conform to it. Nevertheless, for the purpose of proving how censorship worked in order to eliminate controversial elements related to religion from the very text, it is necessary to examine novels of which pre-communist, communist and post-communist variants are available. Therefore, stress shall be laid on textual-linguistic norms that will become obvious when analysing the linguistic choices made to replace elements (in pre-communist translations) that 'compromised' the imposition of the communist ideology. Matricial norms will also be highlighted since **omission** and **substitution** were often mentioned by professionals in the field who were forced to operate changes in texts published at the time or witnessed the purging done directly by censors (Vianu 1998: 219). To the

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purpose of analysing potentially controversial religious elements that caused the banning of translations from Anglo-American literature, we shall provide some illustrative samples from both the original texts and the Romanian versions of two novels written by British writers – *The Painted Veil* by W.S. Maugham (removed from libraries according to the Annexe VII of the 1949 brochure provided in Costea, Kiraly, Radosav 1995: 224) and D.H. Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* (see Caravia's list of censored works in *Scrieri cenzurate*, 2000: 320, 335). Both novels were on the lists of totally censored (banned) books i.e. the lists of books in Fondul S (stock of special/secret books). The first Romanian version of Maugham's novel is Jul Giurgea's translation – *Fumul amăgirilor* –, Remus Cioflec Publishing House (1943), banned during communism. The version provided during communism is Radu Lupan's translation of the original text (that first appeared in 1925 and then in 1935 in Britain), published by Eminescu publishing house in 1972. Besides the banning of the pre-communist translation, there are many instances of censorship in the communist variant. The publishing of the latter depended on eliminating elements that did not conform to the ideology and the Party's criteria. Consequently, a novel on a woman who, after being forgiven by her husband for adultery, deals with and gets to fathom the mysticism of the locals but also the sound faith of Catholic nuns who were taking care of people sick with cholera in a British colony in China was, evidently, supposed to be carefully checked and 'cosmetised' before it being accessed by the public.

In addition, the text is sprinkled with elements related to religion.

For instance, in the following excerpt censorship becomes obvious due to the substitution of a term that refers to Christian churches practice (the Communion) – "I communicated" – achieving adequacy both at the semantic and pragmatic level in the communist variant. The term was kept in the 1943 (banned) translation, whereas in the 1972 translation the meaning was entirely distorted. The translator's mastery might justify the use of a verb that has in common with a faithful translation (Jul Giurgea's variant) of the structure (at least) the reflexive feature "m-am hotărât". It is worthy of note how the choice of this verb that means "to decide" fits the context of decision communication. Avoiding to render the structure referring to religion does not, in this case, create ambiguity, despite going slightly beyond the logical form of the source text. This type of substitution, that might also be seen an instance of **ethnocentric reduction** (domestication), is not employed again for translating the structure referring to the same concept in "After I had received the Holy Communion I asked Our Lord to give me peace of mind" probably because of the existence of a second element referring to the divinity. Instead, the whole sentence was omitted. Similarly, the following sentence – that has the form of the divinity's utterance or an answer to the prayer expressed in the omitted sentence – was deleted, despite the interpolated VP "the answer

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seemed to come to me" providing the explanation – i.e. something apparent, an illusion in the mind of a religious person (future nun) who thinks to speak to God. A sample of this type, with such a high concentration of religious terms, might reveal the difficulties that communist translators had to deal with when having to eliminate them. This is because the content and the form of works might have been seriously threatened if strategies like substitution and omission were misused. Therefore, as regards the coherence in this particular case, a rather balanced use of these translation strategies can be noticed. In fact, what is important in this kind of situations, is, that if censorship has to be done, it must be done properly, with the least detrimental effect on the ST.

Since no strict rules regarding free access to information functioned after the fall of the dictatorial regime, the post-communist variant (2011) is faithful to the original, achieving both ***adequacy*** (that implies the preservation of the features of the original) and ***acceptability*** (conforming with the literary or translation norms of the period). The meaning of "am luat Sfânta Cuminecătură" is identical to the one in the 1943 variant ("m'am împărtășit"), but the linguistic elements are different parts of speech. The verb was translated by using a verb+noun structure (with the adjective "Sfânta" as modifier), a pattern kept later in the text for translating "Holy Communion", with a slight change that consisted in the use of the synonym "Împărtășanie". The use of another term referring to "Communion" might reveal the freedom of choice as well the tendency to vary the terminology in a literary text. Also, the aforementioned (omitted) sentences referring to the same religious practice, to God and the utterance attributed to the Divinity ("Our Lord") were translated accordingly in the last variant. In the Giurgea's translation, though, the sentence "After I had received the Holy Communion" is omitted, probably because of it being considered redundant as the context was already created by translating the previous verb referring to the same practice.

ST1: *But the morning when I **communicated** I made the vow that I would before nightfall anounce my wish to my dear mother. **After I had received the Holy Communion I asked**	TT1a: *În dimineața acelei zile însă, după ce **m'am împărtășit**, am făcut legământ că înainte de de a se face seară mă voiu duce la mama și o voi anunța de hotărârea pe care o luasem. **M'am rugat***	TT1b: *Dar în dimineața aceea, **când m-am hotărât**, am făcut legământ ca înainte de căderea nopții să anunț vestea dragei mele mame. Maica stareță păru să se piardă în amintiri*	TT1c: *Însă în dimineața aceea, când **am luat Sfânta Cuminecătură**, am făcut legământ că până la căderea nopții o s-o anunț pe mama mea scumpă de dorința mea. **După ce am primit Sfânta***

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Our Lord *to give me peace of mind: Thou shalt have it only,* ***the answer seemed to come to me****, when thou hast ceased to desire it.* (Maugham 1947: 307	***lui Dumnezeu*** *să-mi dea liniștea sufletului: Această liniște nu o vei avea, decât în clipa când vei înceta să te mai gândești la ea, mi se părea că aud răspunsul.* (Giurgea 1943: 245)	*din trecut.* (Lupan 1972: 140)	***Împărtășanie, m-am rugat la Dumnezeu*** *să-mi dea tihnă sufletească. „O vei avea”,* ***mi s-a părut că a sunat răspunsul****, „numai când vei înceta să mai tânjești după ea”. Și starețа păru că se pierde în amintiri de demult.* (Bantaș 2011: 164)

Instances of omission can be noticed in the communist versions in the case of most of the excerpt referring to God, Virgin Mary or the power of the Church (whose representative was Mother Superior) like in “You could not fail to see she was deeply conscious of the authority of the church which upheld her” (Maugham 2007: 206). Both the pre-communist and post-communist variant preserve the meaning and the grammatical features of the original: “Era imposibil să nu-ti dai seama, cât de profund conștientă era de autoritatea bisericii care o susținea” (Giurgea 1943:168-169); “Nu puteai să nu vezi că era extrem de conștientă de autoritatea bisericii pe care o susținea.” (Bantaș 2011: 109). Conversely, in the 1972 variant the translator omitted the whole sentence (see Lupan’s translation 1972:96)

The structure “authority of the church” bares a clearly controversial feature that consists in the use of two lexical items referring to power, i.e. “authority” and “church”. The latter refers to the institution itself, *the institution of the Christian religion, and all the priests and other ministers who are part of it* (as defined in the LDCE), a noun whose meaning entails ecclesiastical power, with a pragmatic effect doubled by the term “authority”.

The Plumed Serpent, D.H. Lawrence’s novel (that appeared in 1926), was first translated by Iulian Vesper (1943). It was banned during communism and the translation was commissioned to Antoaneta Ralian (1989). The same translation was re-published in 2003 with slight changes. What is interesting here is that, if details on religion are negative, the elements are kept in the communist version. Thus, “desecrate the altars! Bring in strange idols. Burn the images of Our Lord and Our Lady” is neither substituted, nore deleted, but translated faithfully. In this case, the acceptability achieved in the communist variant is triggered by the technique of making the religious element

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devoid of its meaning and importance. The verbs in the mentioned structures have negative meanings and they might be considered verbs belonging to the semantic field of destruction, especially in the context of desecration.

ST2	TT2a	TT2b
*Once more **desecrate the altars**! Bring in strange idols. Burn the **images** of **Our Lord** and **Our Lady** and ask for peace?* (Lawrence 1981: 278)	*Din nou **profanați altarele**! Introduceți idoli bizari... Ardeți **icoana Domnului nostru Isus Cristos** și a **Sfintei Fecioare** și cereți pacea?* (Vesper 1943: 338).	*Profanezi **altarele**, instalezi idoli păgîni, arzi **icoanele Mîntuitorului** și ale **Fecioarei** și pretinzi că vrei pace?* (Ralian 1989: 339).

Differently, the connection between people and religion expressed by means of the possessive adjective “Our” is not rendered in the variant provided during communism “icoanele Mîntuitorului și ale Fecioarei”, as opposed to the pre-communist, faithful translation “icoana Domnului nostru Isus Cristos și a Sfinei Fecioare” in which the possessive is translated. The 2003 variant of the Romanian translation (the 1989 variant re-edited) was not provided here due to it being identical to the 1989 one. Similarly, the word ”Fecioarei”, that, when referring to Virgin Mary is usually used in a collocation where sanctity or holiness is suggested by means of a modifier like ”Sfântă”, is alone and deprived of its religious nuances to a large extent.

The following excerpts are further examples of omitted structures in the communist translation. Despite it being the product of the same translator, the post-communist version is different. The sentence refers to *communion*, the same element censored in the communist translation of Maugham’s novel.

ST3	TT3a	TT3b	TT3c
*Men and Women...must bow and submit in reverence, to the gulf. Even though I **eat the body and drink the blood of Christ**, **Christ is Christ** and I am I, and the gulf is impassable* (Lawrence 1981: 265).	*Trebuie să te închini în fața acestui abis și să te supui cu smerenie. **Chiar dacă mănânc carne și beau sângele lui Hristos, Hristos e Hristos, iar eu sunt netrecut**.* (Vesper 1943: 319).	*Oamenii ar trebui să se încline, să se supună cu reverență în fața acestei prăpastii.* (Ralian 1989: 326).	*Oamenii ar trebui să se încline, să se supună cu reverență în fața acestei prăpastii. **Chiar când mă înfrupt din trupul si beau din sângele lui Hristos, Hristos e Hristos si eu sunt eu, iar prăpastia e de netrecut.*** (Ralian 2003: 326).

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Strangely enough, the pre-communist translation is a partially faithful rendering of the original due to translation errors regarding the religious practice that refers to the body and blood of Jesus Christ (simbolically given in the form of bread and wine). The problem occurs in the structure "Chiar dacă mănânc carne și beau sângele lui Hristos". Since we cannot analyse this as an effect of restrictions, repressions or as a missunderstanding at the semantic level, we might ascribe this lack of the definite article "a" in the word „carnea" to a typing error. The application of the censoring criteria during communism becomes *visible* when the missing elements are introduced in the post-communist translation ("Chiar când mă înfrupt din trupul si beau din sângele lui Hristos, Hristos e Hristos si eu sunt eu") that, as already mentioned, is a re-edited edition of the 1989 one. The communist variant is again marked by the omission of the religion-related elements or, more precisely, of the sentence replete with terms referring to the Communion act and the name "Christ". This was possible because the context allowed it. The excerpt is a part of a character's speech about the men-women relationship, compared to the divinity-people relationship described as an almost insurmountable abyss (in the text – "gulf"). Consequently, preserving only one of the terms of comparison, for a public that accesses only the communist target text and not the original text, did not result in a substantial loss in the communist translation.

All in all, the present brief analysis reveals that translating during communism presupposed certain types of interventions on the target texts. Nevertheless, this type of 'text-rewriting' could not ignore the features of the original works even though the task of translating is often a hurdle if texts, in particular literary texts, are difficult to interpret and/or contain features that make them controversial. In dealing with these elements during communism, omission and substitution were the dominant matricial norms. In the analysed excerpts, the elements that replaced the controversial terms were inserted in the context without affecting the coherence of the target text. Nonetheless, the result was a different semantic meaning inasmuch as the linguistic choice – a verb that does not even belong to the same semantic field – was used in order to discard the religious meaning totally (see TT1b). Since according to many theorists in the field *invariability of content* should be a characteristic of translations, substitutions of this type might be considered detrimental to the quality of the translation. Similarly, omissions, despite the fact that they were (in these cases) practiced without affecting the text in a visible manner (see TT1b, TT3b), features of the originals were lost (especially the meanings and nuances intended by the author). Therefore,

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the interventions meant to ensure the success of translations as products both acceptable and adequate during communism might be considered measures resulting in re-writings rather than translations, with slight exceptions like faithful translations of negative aspects referring to religion (TT2b).

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