

COMPENSATION AND TRANSLATION: JAMES ELLROY'S *WHITE JAZZ*

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Abstract: The current paper explores the Romanian translation of James Ellroy's text *White Jazz*, with a view to explaining away the translator's choices. The main issues at hand are the solutions provided for the ellipsis present throughout the novel and the slang used by the author, which is typical of L.A.'s '60's. The paper provides theoretical data supporting the translator's choice of rendering certain slang expressions by paraphrase, explanation or even coinage of new words. We also look into how much has been compensated for and what was lost during the process of translation.

Keywords: coinage, compensation, slang, translatability, translation loss.

1. Preliminaries

White Jazz is part of the crime fiction *L.A. Quartet* written by the American novelist James Ellroy. In order to better understand the problem that arise in the attempt of translating Ellroy's texts one should endeavour to explore the techniques employed by the author himself.

One such technique, which seems to be highly favoured by the author, is that of collage and intercutting. This allows Ellroy to explore the relationship between memory and truth as well as that between fiction and history (Walker 2002:190). Thus, memory is often compared to a tape or a photograph and subjective reveries are also intercut with all the texts that make up Ellroy's collage.

James Ellroy refers to all kinds of different media, juxtaposing references to tabloid gossip, police reports with subversive effect. He sees novels and television shows as responsible for constructing a vision of the world, which (although they may repress unpleasant truths) becomes part of a broad, encompassing notion of the real – one that includes images (Walker 2002: 188).

2. Problems encountered in the translation of Ellroy's text

White Jazz is a book on crime fiction, part of the *L.A. Quartet*, set in the 60's. The main technique favoured by the author is that of *intercutting*: instances of violent crimes and police investigation are interspersed with a broad variety of different types of newspaper articles ranging from the *L.A. Times*, *L.A. Mirror*, and *Hush-Hush Magazine*. The language employed in the writing of these articles varies from formal accounts to highly informal slang, with a lot of puns and alliterations that are very difficult to render in translation.

There are two main problems in translating James Ellroy's text: one is ellipsis and the other the use of slang, which after some research proved to be the slang used in 1960's America. The current paper does not deal so much with the problem of ellipsis. Our choice was that of dwelling upon the problem of slang and the way the translator chose to render slang in the target language (i.e. Romanian). However, we cannot ignore it altogether since it is constantly present throughout the text, so we present the most commonly used type of ellipsis by the author: situational ellipsis.

- (1) Exley – tall, easy to spot. (Ellroy 2001: 91)
Exley – înalt, ușor de găsit.

Jesus Chasco – fat, Mex – not my peeper. (Ellroy 2001: 95)
Jesus Chasco – gras, mexican – nu-i omul meu.

The author's choice of using situational ellipsis over textual ellipsis gives rise to register problems. Since *situational ellipsis* is associated with spontaneous/spoken language and *textual ellipsis* with standard / written language, Ellroy's text has the feature of being highly colloquial / spoken, something which obviously allows the extensive use of slang. In what follows, we shall attempt to make an analysis of its use starting from the features of slang and the problems it poses to translators.

3. Theoretical problems on translating ellipsis

According to Quirk et al. (1972) there are two types of ellipsis: textual (structural) vs. situational ellipsis. Below we supply the criteria for ellipsis:

- (i) The deleted words are precisely recoverable: *She can't sing tonight so she won't [sing tonight]*
- (ii) The elliptical construction is grammatically "defective", by which Quirk et al. (1972) mean that some normally obligatory element of a grammatical sentence is lacking. For instance *won't* typically has a complement in the shape of a verb stem possibly accompanied by its own complements, but the complement of *won't* can be omitted in coordinate constructions and, importantly, there are specific constraints on what can or cannot be omitted from what sort of structure.
- (iii) The insertion of the missing words results in a grammatical sentence.
- (iv) The missing words are textually recoverable.
- (v) The missing words are present in the text in exactly the same form.

The so-called recoverability condition is satisfied if it is possible to reconstruct the deleted material from within the structural context that the rule applies

Textual (structural) ellipsis is of two types. Strict ellipsis observes all criteria ("strict identity"): *I can sing better than you can [sing]*. Quasi ellipsis observes all criteria but (v) "sloppy identity": *She sings better than I can [*sings]*.

Situational ellipsis observes only (i), (ii), and (iii). This is also the type of ellipsis encountered in Ellroy's work. For convenience the example under (1) is repeated below:

- (2) Exley – tall, easy to spot. (Ellroy 2001: 91)
Exley – înalt, ușor de găsit.
 Jesus Chasco – fat, Mex – not my peeper. (Ellroy 2001: 95)
Jesus Chasco – gras, mexican – nu-i omul meu.

Register problems also arise. Thus, *situational ellipsis* is contrasted with *textual ellipsis*: spontaneous spoken language / standard written language (cf. Miller and Weinert 1998)

4. Problems of equivalence

Jakobson (1959) discusses grammatical deficiency in the source language. The translator is faced with difficult decisions of detail due to the different parameters.

- (3) No equivalence :
- *Claudine est une bonne etudiante, et Marie est [VP e]aussi.
'Claudine is a good student, and Mary is too.'
 - *Juan ha salido y Pablo ha [VP e] tambien.
'John has left, and Pablo has too.'
 - *Bach es dificil d'interpretar, i Mozart es [VP e] tambien.
'Bach is hard to play, and Mozart is too.' (Busquets 2005)
- (4) *Ion a plecat și Maria a [VP e], de asemenea / iar Maria a [VP e] și ea.
'Ion has left and Maria has, as well / and Maria has also she.'
- (5) Equivalence (but cf. the structures where the missing material is recovered, i.e. *c* to *d*)
- Max went to the store, but Oscar wondered why.
 - Max s-a dus la magazin și Oscar s-a întrebat de ce.*
 - Max s-a dus la magazin și Oscar s-a întrebat de ce Max s-a dus la magazin.*
 - Max s-a dus la magazin și Oscar s-a întrebat de ce s-a dus Max la magazin.*

An important guiding principle for translators is their (in)visibility. It is particularly difficult to preserve that with a text such as Ellroy's *White Jazz* poses a real challenge especially since the slang employed by the author is typical of America's 1960's. Thus, one has to find the best way of rendering such language especially if, as is the case of Romanian, there is no equivalent slang to transpose the source text into. This is a problem that has to do with what Nida (2000: 126) calls *dynamic equivalence*.

Some translators are successful in avoiding vulgarisms and slang, but fall into the error of making a relatively straightforward message in the source language sound like a complicated legal document in the receptor language by trying too hard to be completely unambiguous; as a result such a translator spins out his definitions in long, technical phrases. In such a translation little is left of the grace and naturalness of the original (Nida 2000: 138).

5. Features of slang

Following Hervey and Higgins (2001: 132) the characteristics of particular social registers are very often built up out of features of tonal register – and of dialect and sociolect, for that matter. This is especially true of social stereotypes characterized by “downward social mobility”. For instance, a middle-class, educated person who is adept at the jargon of criminals and down-and-outs will have an active repertoire of vulgarisms and slang expressions. Thus, “vulgarity” and “slang” are points on the politeness scale of tonal register; but at the same time, they go towards building up the complex of features that define a particular social register.

A particular genre-marking translation problem occurs in the case of STs heavily marked by slang. Sociolect and register are crucial here, but so is the fact that languages differ from one another in respect of the referential domains covered by slang, and even in the kinds of slang available (Hervey and Higgins 2001: 156).

6. Stylistic strategies in Ellroy's text: a translator's perspective.

This section deals with the comparative analysis of the target text (the Romanian translation of *White Jazz*) to the source text (the original English version). The translation tried to avoid the danger signaled by Nida (2000: 138) that of making a relatively simple

message in the source language sound like a complicated piece of text in the target language in the attempt of trying too hard to explain everything. To this extent, let us compare the following excerpts:

- (6) Recently, three wino bums were found strangled and mutilated in abandoned houses in the Hollywood area. **Very Hush-Hush**: we've heard the still-at-large killer snapped their windpipes postmortem, utilizing great strength. The press has paid these **heinously horrific** killings scant attention; only the **sin-sation slanted L.A. Mirror** seems to care that three Los Angeles citizens have met such **nauseatingly nasty nadirs**. The LAPD's Homicide Division has not been called in to investigate; so far only two Hollywood Division detectives are working the case. **Hepcats**, it's the pedigree of the victims that determine **the juice of investigation**. (Ellroy 2001: 7-8)

Romanian version:

De curând s-au găsit trei vagabonzi alcoolici strangulați și mutilați în niște case părăsite din zona Hollywood. În stilul binecunoscut al revistei Hush-Hush: am aflat că ucigașul aflat încă în libertate, le-a smuls traheele post-mortem, folosindu-se de multă putere. Presa a acordat extrem de puțină atenție acestor crime cu adevărat oribile și oripilante; numai ziarului L.A. Mirror ahtiat după scandaluri și știri de senzație pare să îi pese de faptul că trei cetățeni ai orașului Los Angeles și-au găsit un astfel de sfârșit îngrozitor. Departamentul de omucideri al poliției orașului Los Angeles nu a fost sesizat ca să pornească o anchetă; până acum la acest caz lucrează doar doi detectivi din cadrul diviziei Hollywood. Iubitori ai jazzului, pedigree-ul victimelor este cel care provoacă suculența anchetei.

In this particular excerpt, there are instances of translation loss as well as compensation. In the case of *very Hush-Hush* rendered into the target text as *în stilul binecunoscut al revistei Hush-Hush*, the translator was faced with the impossibility of rendering the double meaning of *Hush-Hush* into the target language. *Hush-Hush* is both the name of the tabloid magazine as well as *Hush-Hush* [1930's, 1940's] 'most secret, undercover' (Green 2000: 627). This loss could be recovered by an overtranslation, adding an explanation of the type *în stilul binecunoscut al revistei Hush-Hush, adică sub acoperire*. However, at the time, the translator chose not to overtranslate since this double meaning of *Hush-Hush* would become apparent to the reader of the target text throughout the translation.

Another aspect that is quite difficult to render in the target language is the extensive use of alliterations in these *Hush-Hush* excerpts. For instance, *heinously horrific* killings is rendered as *crime cu adevărat oribile și oripilante*. The same was possible with *sin-sation slanted L.A. Mirror* where the target text resulted in *ziarul L.A. Mirror ahtiat după scandaluri și știri de senzație*. This is a case of compensation but also translation loss, even untranslatability due to the play upon words in *sin-sation*, which is a portmanteau, a blending between *sin* and *sensation*. A counterexample to the instances above is *nauseatingly nasty nadirs* which was rendered as *un astfel de sfârșit îngrozitor*, where the translator chose to explain by means of direct translation rather than preservation of the alliteration. *Hepcats* rendered as *iubitori ai jazzului* is an instance of paraphrase. The translator chose to explain this term instead of finding an equivalent, even possibly creating one in the target language due to the lack of jazz terms in Romanian. The definition supplied by Green (2000) is *hep / hip-cat* 'n. [1930s+] (US Black) a jazz or swing fan; an aware, sophisticated person'. The choice for *iubitori ai jazzului*, is justified given the entire atmosphere of the book and the title. Finally, *the juice of*

investigation is rendered as *suculența anchetei* which is a true-to-the-text rendition of the author's words.

- (7) Hush-Hush hereby names this anonymous killer fiend the “**Wino Will-o-the-Wisp**” and petitions the **LAPD** to find him and set him up with a hot date in **San Quentin's green room**. They cook with gas there, and this killer deserves a four-burner cookout. Watch for future updates on the Wino Will-o-the-Wisp, and remember you heard it first here: off the record, **on the Q.T.** and **very Hush-Hush**. (Ellroy 2001: 8)

Romanian version:

*Prin urmare revista **Hush-Hush** îl numește pe acest ucigaș netrebnic „Wino Will-o-the-Wisp” și îi cere poliției orașului Los Angeles să îl găsească și să îi aranjeze o întâlnire fierbinte în camera de recreație de la închisoarea San Quentin. Acolo se gătește cu gaz, iar acest ucigaș merită să fie gătit la un aragaz cu patru ochiuri. Urmăriți viitoarele aventuri ale ucigașului „Wino Will-o-the-Wisp” și țineți minte că ați auzit prima dată despre asta aici: neoficial, în secret și foarte mult în stilul revistei Hush-Hush.*

In the case of the nickname assigned to the killer sought by the LAPD, *Wino Will-o-the-Wisp*, the translator chose a direct borrowing thus leaving the name in the original due to the impossibility of translating it or transposing it into Romanian and preserving the sound effect at the same time. Instead, this can be explained in a footnote by giving the definition of the words making up the nickname. Thus, *wino* [1910+] ‘(orig. US) an alcoholic, usu. living in poverty’ (Green 2000: 1290) and *will o’ the wisps* ‘[20 c] crisps [rhy. sl]’ (Green 2000: 1288).

San Quentin's green room was rendered as *camera de recreație de la închisoarea San Quentin*. The green room is a term used in prisoner's slang as recreation room; therefore, it was explained in the target text thus losing the slang tinge. The phrase also contains an instance of compensation where San Quentin is explained as *închisoarea San Quentin* so that the target readers may understand the reference.

Finally, *on the Q.T.* meaning *pe furiș, pe ascuns, pe neve*, was rendered as *în secret*, while *very Hush-Hush* was rendered as *foarte mult în stilul revistei Hush-Hush*. The latter is an instance of both loss and compensation since *Hush-Hush* is, as explained above, a play-upon-words referring both to “something done secretly” and the title of the tabloid magazine, whose articles are recurrent throughout the novel.

- (8) **Tail men** walked in and sat down. **Mixed bag: suits and ties, loafer types. Twelve men – eyes on me.** (Ellroy 2001: 284)

Romanian version:

Iscoadele au intrat și s-au așezat. O adunătură amestecată: oameni în costume și cravate, tipuri de haimanale. Doisprezece bărbați – toți cu ochii pe mine.

This excerpt offers us again an instance of situational ellipsis. However, what is more to the point of our discussion are the terms used in the police jargon such as *tail men* rendered as *iscoade, suits and ties – oameni în costume și cravate* and *loafer types – tipuri de haimanale*.

- (9) **Little nods – Exley pre-briefed them.**
“Gentlemen, those folders on your desks contain Intelligence Division photos of the four Kafesjians, **along with State Records Bureau mugs of Richard Herrick, and a**

more recent artist's sketch of him. Know those faces. Memorize them. You'll be stringing three-man tails on each family member, both mobile and on foot, and I don't want you losing them."

Folders open, pix out – pros.

"You're all skilled tail men, or Chief Exley wouldn't have chosen you. You've got radio-equipped civilian cars, and Communications Division has got you hooked up on band 7, which is absolutely Fed-listening-proof. You're hooked up car to car, so you can talk among yourselves or contact me here at the base. You all know how **to leapfrog** suspects, and there are boom mikes outside the Kafesjian house. There's **a man in a point car** listening, and once you assume your perimeter posts, he'll tell you when to roll. Questions so far?"

No hands up.

"Gentlemen, if you see Richard Herrick, apprehend him alive. He's **a peeper** at worst, and both Chief Exley and I believe that **a man peeping on him** is in fact the Herrick family killer. (Ellroy 2001: 284-285)

Romanian version:

Încuviințări din cap – Exley îi informase deja.

- Domnilor, dosarele acelea de pe birourile voastre conțin fotografiile ale Departamentului de inteligență cu cei patru membri ai familiei Kafesjian, împreună cu **semnalmentele lui Richard Herrick din arhivele Biroului de Stat precum și o schiță recentă cu acesta realizată de un artist.** Cunoașteți chipurile acelea. Memorați-le. Veți înșira echipe de urmărire de trei oameni asupra fiecărui membru al familiei, atât mobile cât și pe jos, și nu vreau să le pierdeți urma.

Își deschid dosarele, își scot pozele – niște profesioniști.

- Cu toții sunteți urmăritori cu experiență, altfel șeful Exley nu v-ar fi ales. Aveți mașini civile dotate cu radiouri și Departamentul de Comunicații v-a conectat pe frecvența 7, pe care agenții federali nu o pot intercepta sub nici o formă. Sunteți conectați mașină de la mașină astfel încât puteți vorbi între voi sau puteți să mă contactați pe mine, aici la bază. Cu toții știți cum **să evitați** suspjecții și există microfoane sensibile în jurul casei familiei Kafesjian. Există **un om într-o mașină de urmărire** care ascultă și în momentul în care vă ocupați pozițiile vă va spune când să acționați. Aveți întrebări?

Nimeni nu ridică mâna.

- Domnilor, dacă-l vedeți pe Richard Herrick, prindeți-l viu. El e în cel mai rău caz un **benoclist** și atât șeful Exley cât și eu credem că **un om care-l urmărește pe furiș** este de fapt ucigașul familiei Herrick.

This excerpt offers a number of instances of situational ellipsis: *Mixed bag: suits and ties, loafer types. Twelve men – eyes on me. = O adunătură amestecată: costume și cravate, tipuri de haimanale. Doisprezece bărbați – toți cu ochii pe mine. / Little nods – Exley pre-briefed them. = Încuviințări din cap – Exley îi informase deja. / Folders open, pix out – pros. = Își deschid dosarele, își scot pozele – niște profesioniști. / No hands up. = Nimeni nu ridică mâna. / Whistles, smiles. = Fluierături, zâmbete.*

The target language lacks a series of synonyms for the word *peeper*, rendered in Romanian usually as *voyeur*, a French borrowing. So since the language employed by Ellroy is highly slangish, and Romanian does have the verb *a se benocla* which is marked as a slang word, the translator resorted to the coinage of a new word by means of deriving a noun from this verb, namely *benoclist*.

- (10) Bugs in my walls, bugs on my phone. Bugs snooping on Glenda, snooping on Meg. Fred Turentine – the “Bug King” – guarding Chick.
 Bugs in my buildings – three hundred units plus. Tenants overheard: fix the roof, kill the rats. Bugs blasting bop – niggers tearing up my slum pads.
 “Sir? Lieutenant Klein?”
 I woke up aiming – trigger happy.
 A bluesuit – scared. (Ellroy 2001: 285)

Romanian version:

Microfoane în pereți, microfoane și în telefon. Microfoane ce o spionau pe Glenda, și pe Meg. Fred Turentine – „Regele microfoanelor” – îl păzea pe Chick.

Microfoane în clădirile mele – mai mult de 300 de echipaje. Chiriașii au auzit: reparați acoperișul, omorâți șobolanii. Microfoane bubuind când sunt lovite – negrotei distrugându-mi apartamentele din mahala.

- Domnule? Domnul locotenent Klein?

M-am trezit ochind – gata să trag.

Un om în uniformă – speriat.

Besides offering more examples of situational ellipsis in the source text that cannot always be rendered as successfully in the target language, this fragment also triggers problems of equivalence due to the difference in structure between the two languages. Romanian prefers paraphrase in order to explain things and therefore preserving the ellipsis is not possible in all cases because it would render the target text opaque for interpretation by the target readers.

7. Instances of translation loss

Translation loss is illustrated by the examples below discussed below.

- (11) More **sin-tillating scoop** on the Mickster
Alte detalii picante despre Mickster

Sin-tillating is obviously a play-upon-words, a blending / portmanteau resulting from sin (*păcat*) + to scintillate (*a arunca scânteii, a radia, a sclipi*). *Scoop* is slang term (*a publica o știre înaintea altor ziare*).

- (12) Rumors are climbing **the underworld grapevine**: two surviving Cohen gunmen (Chick Vecchio and his brother Salvatore "Touch" Vecchio, a failed actor rumored to be **très lavender**) are planning nefarious activities outside of Mickey's aegis. Get in on the ground floor, Mickster – we've heard that your sole source of income is Southside **vending and slot machines**: cigarettes, rubbers, French ticklers and one-armed bandits stuffed into smoky back rooms in **Darktown** jazz clubs. For shame again, Mickey! Shvartze exploitation! Penny ante and beneath you, you the man who once ruled the L.A. rackets with a **paralyzingly pugnacious panache!**

Romanian version:

Zvonurile se înmulțesc la radio șanț în lumea interlopă: doi dintre malacii lui Cohen care au supraviețuit (Chick Vecchio și fratele lui Salvatore „Touch” Vecchio, un

*actor ratat despre care se zvonea că este **cât se poate de pe invers**) plănuiesc activități absolut ilegale care nu se vor desfășura sub egida lui Mickey. Coboară cu picioarele pe pământ, Mickster – am auzit că singura ta sursă de venit este de pe urma **automatelor cu jetoane și a tonomatelor** din zona de sud: țigări, prezervative, prezervative cu rugozități și bandiți cu o singură mână înfundați în camere afumate din cluburile de jazz din **cartierul negrilor**. Încă o dată, să-ți fie rușine, Mickey! Exploatarea negrilor! Țsta este un mărunțiș chiar și pentru tine și este sub demnitatea ta, omule, tu cel care pe vremuri conduceai afacerile ilegale din L.A. cu o **eleganță paralizantă și agresivă!***

*The underworld grapevine is translated with **la radio șanț în lumea interlopă**. For lavender ‘adj [1920s+] (orig US) a euphemism for homosexual and anything referring to homosexuals’ the suggestion is **pe invers** or, possibly, **pidosnic**. *Vending and slot machines* is translated as **automate cu jetoane și tonomate**. Further, *Darktown* is translated as **cartierul negrilor**, whereas *Darktown* is left untranslated in the Romanian version of *L.A. Confidential*, with no explanatory footnote). Finally, *paralyzingly pugnacious panache* is rendered as **eleganță paralizantă și agresivă**, with partial loss of the alliteration.*

(13) Dear LAPD:

Recently, three wino bums were found strangled and mutilated in abandoned houses in the Hollywood area. Very Hush-Hush: we’ve heard the still-at-large killer snapped their windpipes postmortem, utilizing great strength. The press has paid these **heinously horrific** killings scant attention; only the **sin-sation slanted L.A. Mirror** seems to care that three Los Angeles citizens have met such **nauseatingly nasty nadirs**. The LAPD’s Homicide Division has not been called in to investigate; so far only two Hollywood Division detectives are working the case. **Hepcats**, it’s the pedigree of the victims that determine the juice of investigation--and if three squarejohn citizens got choked by a neck-snapping psychopath, then LAPD Chief of Detectives Edmund J. Exley would waste no time mounting a full scale investigation. Often it takes a catchy tag name to bring dirty criminal business into the public’s consciousness and thus create a clamor for justice.

Romanian version:

Dragă LAPD,

*De curând s-au găsit cadavrele a trei vagabonzi alcoolici strangulați și mutilați în niște case părăsite din zona Hollywood. În stilul binecunoscut al revistei Hush-Hush: am aflat că ucigașul aflat încă în libertate, le-a smuls traheele post-mortem, folosindu-se de multă putere. Presa a acordat extrem de puțină atenție acestor crime cu adevărat **oribile și oripilante**; numai ziarului **L.A. Mirror ahtiat după scandaluri și știri de senzație** pare să îi pese de faptul că trei cetățeni ai orașului Los Angeles și-au găsit **un astfel de sfârșit îngrozitor**. Departamentul de omucideri al poliției orașului Los Angeles nu a fost sesizat ca să pornească o anchetă; până acum la acest caz lucrează doar doi detectivi din cadrul diviziei Hollywood. **Iubitori ai jazzului**, pedigree-ul victimelor este cel care provoacă suculența anchetei – iar dacă trei cetățeni de vază conservatori ar fi fost sufocați de un strangulator psihopat, atunci cu siguranță că șeful detectivilor din cadrul LAPD, Edmund J. Exley, nu ar pierde vremea în a porni o anchetă în toată regula. Adesea este nevoie de un nume cu priză care să aducă afacerile criminale murdare în fața opiniei publice și să creeze astfel o paradă de justiție.*

As can be seen, the alliteration was maintained in the following two cases. Thus, *heinously horrific* is translated as *oribile și oripilante*. Further, *sin-sation slanted L.A. Mirror*, another blending which also involves alliteration (*sin* + *sensation* = *sin-sation*), is translated with *L.A. Mirror ahtiat după scandaluri și știri de senzație*. However, alliteration was lost in *nauseatingly nasty nadirs* rendered as *un astfel de sfârșit îngrozitor*.

There are also instances of translation loss by means of paraphrase so as to explain the meaning. For *hep / hip-cat* ‘n. [1930s+] (US Black) a jazz or swing fan; an aware, sophisticated person’ our suggestion is *iubitori ai jazzului*. Consider next the following excerpt:

- (14) University Station, arrest/MO – **buppkis**. FI cards, three recent: a “youngish”, “average build” white man was reported peeping whore motels. My **eyeball man?** – maybe – but:

Romanian version:

*Secția University, arestări/modalități de operare – o laie. Fișe de investigație, trei erau recente: se raportase faptul că un „tinerel” alb, „de constituție medie” obișnuia să tragă cu ochiul prin motelurile prostituatelor. **Benoclistul** meu? – poate – dar:*

For *buppkis* ‘n. [1940s] nothing (whatsoever). [Yidish *bupkes* ‘beans’]’ our suggestion is *o laie*. As for *eyeball man* [cf. to eyeball: ‘to stare, to ogle’], in other contexts *peeper*, we suggest a coinage: *benoclist*.

8. Conclusions

The present paper explored certain aspects in the translation of James Ellroy’s *White Jazz*. The comparison between fragments in the source text and their equivalent in the target text (Romanian) revealed the difficulties the translator was faced with in choosing the most adequate terms for rendering the slang used by the American author.

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