Translating ‘shame’: A translational approach (II)

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Abstract

Starting from the semantic and lexical sphere of the concepts of ‘honte’ (in French) and ‘rușine’ (in Romanian), my aim is to examine the way this word was translated into Romanian; for this purpose, my point of departure was a case study. To this end, I tried to elaborate a comparative translational study of Boris Cyrulnik, titled *Mourir de dire. La honte* (Éditions Odile Jacob, Paris, 2010) and of its Romanian translation, titled *Mai bine mor decit să spun. Rușinea* (French translation by Valentin Protopopescu, Editura Trei, “Psihologia pentru toți” collection, Bucharest, 2012). Cyrulnik’s text has a particularity: it oscillates between the specifics of a literary text and those of a specialized text. From this standpoint, his transposition challenges the functionalist theories of translation and mostly the *skopos* theory elaborated by Katharina Reiss and Hans Vermeer: it is interesting to analyse the way the translator “decodes” the “intentionality” of this type of text, ultimately a specialized text, and the way he decides to transpose its semantic and lexical sphere into Romanian.

8. The lexical field of *shame*: a) effects of *shame*

The fact that the translator did not study the dominant of this text (thus he failed to elaborate a hierarchy of his translational effort), that he did not focus enough on reconstructing in his translation the terminological grid around the concept of *shame* are also obvious in the way he chose to transpose the lexical field of this concept. The paraphrase, periphrasis, synonymy ended up extending the lexical field excessively and rendering it less specific than in the original text, implicitly.

For this type of text, the lexical field around the key-term, *shame*, is meant to construct and support the entire argumentative framework. The author of the text—this time clearly in his capacity as a specialist—enumerates the effects of *shame* upon the ones affected by this trauma following events that had perturbed their existence significantly. Hence, he lists the following: *malaise*, *flétrissure*, *fracas*, and, most frequently, *déchirure*. The translator has to reconstitute this constellation of pain indicators, who become as many symptoms of pathology. However, the translator uses yet again synonymy massively, but he also chooses often the marked poetizing term that beatifies the lexical register, which estranges the text from its dominant function and provides it with a different coherence than the one embedded in the intentionality of the source text. In this respect, I will provide only a few examples in the following lines.

*Malaise*—one of the “untranslatable” terms of the French lexicon, according to the well-known *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies* (subtitled *Dictionnaire des intraduisibles*)—denotes a dysfunction between soul and body; hence, its semantic sphere reverberates both towards “the networks of affect and passion” and of the physiological disorders; both at individual and at ontological and even “national”, related to “origin” (*Cassin, 2004*, p. 750). The translator is the one who has to operate—by the context and the type of text to translate—a selection among the various semantic paths of the term. Furthermore, he has to maintain its coherence in similar contexts, where the use of synonyms would actually perturb reception. In the Romanian version, where *malaise* concerns a psychological state (not a physical sickness), a *disturbance*, it is translated by *suferință* in a general sense (where the combination with *contagioasă* becomes

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inadequate) or by disconfort, or even by a frivolous indispoziție that mitigates the severity of the trauma that it expresses. Thus, “Le malaise n’est pas toujours provoqué par un effondrement traumatique” (p. 81) becomes “Indispoziția nu este totdeauna provocată de un colaps traumatic” (p. 76). The serious perturbation determined by shame generates very perceptible physical reactions: “Un adolescent rougit, évite le regard et bafouille de malaise” (p. 85); actually, se bîlbîie de tulburare [he is so troubled, he stammers], not “flecărește, spre a-și masca disconfortul” (p. 80).

**Fletissure**—whose semantic sphere indirectly suggest the sign applied with a red-hot iron to the convicts in the public square during the French Old Regime—is a stigma, a term that the dex is defined as dis-honoring, a “shameful” mark that may be associated with înfiereare. Sparked by an intimate trauma, shameful eruptions under the look of the others: transposed either by alterări (p. 76) or by nefericire (p. 148), how could these flétrissures—the stigmas of “mărunte rușini ale vieții cotidiene” [small shames of daily life] (p. 76)—represent “punctul de plecare al moralei” [the starting point of morals], how could they provide the energy to combat the one that stigmatizes us, in order to liberate ourselves from shame?

**Flétrissure**
- flétrissures, p. 81
- flétrissure, p. 159

**Fracas**—the shock of a violent fracture—that refers, very concretely, to the noise produced by it, is translated by tulburare, tumult, colaps, dezastru or by agresată, distrus, zdrobit, prăpăd; the occurrences of the equivalent tulburare, tulburat are numerous. However, tulburarea indicates a state of confusion quite far from the commotion expressed by the semantics of the source term and it pushed the lexicon towards a vague, general level (tulburarea may suggest convulsie, tumult, but not the other way around, too). Within the list of synonyms proposed by the dictionary Trésor de la langue française, trouble, the French equivalent of tulburare, is not even mentioned: all the equivalences (bruit, tempête, ouragan, grondement, agitation, déflagration, vacarme, etc) are related to an extreme “resounding” intensity. In its concreteness, the French term involves no ambiguity, no doubt.

**Fracas**
- fracas, p. 8, două ocurențe
- fracas, p. 72
- fracas, p. 76
- fracas, p. 93
- le fracas, p. 111
- fracas, p. 112
- fracassés, p. 76
- personne fracassée, p. 117
- un fracas, p. 157
- blessées, mais non fracassées, p. 158
- fracassé, p. 174
- le fracas de la guerre, p. 256

**Suferința**
- suferința, p. 62
- suferință contagioasă, p. 73
- indispoziție conștientă, p. 75
- indispoziția, p. 76
- flecărește, spre a-și masca disconfortul, p. 80

**Malaise**
- malaise, p. 67
- malaise contagieux, p. 79
- malaise conscient, p. 80
- malaise, p. 81
- bafouille de malaise, p. 85
The most interesting case is that of the term déchirure, also translated using numerous equivalents: fărîmițare, ruptură, sfîșiere, suferință, traumatism, destrămare, as if the translator feverishly sought for the most adequate term but failed to find it. Ruptură [rupture]—a more extended, thus more general term—records the most occurrences (though it is mostly used in the medical lexicon, mostly in contexts related to the rupture of various organs). Fractură [fracture]—which would suggest both concretely and figuratively a serious lesion—has no occurrence; destrămat and sfîșiat suggest rather poetizing clichés than a specialized psychoanalytical lexicon. Șocul traumatic [traumatic shock] is not among the versions considered by the translator, though it seems to be used in the specialized lexicon.

Déchirure
fărîmițare invizibilă, p. 59
ruptură, p. 63
sfîșiere traumatice, p. 67
ruptură afectivă, p. 74
sfîșieri, p. 75
sfîșiat, p. 75
ruptura traumatică, p. 82
ruptura traumatică, p. 87
suferință mea, p. 94
traumatism, p. 122
ruptură traumatică, p. 147
această ruptură, 152
o ruptură, p. 152
să distrugă legătura, p. 151
destrămat, p. 64
destrămat, p. 107
s-a fărîmițat, p. 170

This pressure of finding synonyms gradually becomes more important than the importance of constructing, in the target language, the lexical field of the concept of shame. Instead of grasping the physical component of the trauma of shame, the translator transposes, for instance, les filles honteuses (p. 148) into fete făcute de rîs (p. 138), in a context where the author talks about the physical pain of women who are induced shame, shame of their own sex, in order to make their submission easier. This sentence is part of a relevant subchapter titled in the original Fonction socialisante de la souffrance physique (p. 147), but in Romanian it becomes Funcția socializantă a suferinței psihice...

Fonction socialisante de la souffrance physique // Funcția socializantă a suferinței psihice
La pensée automatique consiste à dire que, puisque les garçons battus et lesfilles honteuses finissent par prendre la place subalterne qu’on veut leur attribuer, il suffit de supprimer toute douleur et toute honte pour qu’ils s’épanouissent et deviennent heureux (p. 148).
Gîndirea automată constă în a spune că, deoarece băieții bătuți și fetele făcute de ris sfîrșesc prin a ocupa locul subaltern care li se atribuie, ar fi suficient să suprimăm orice durere și rușine pentru ca ei să înfloască și să devină fericite (p. 138).

I do not suggest here that I support unconditionally a view of translation based on the supremacy of the signifier, but the decision to crumble the specialized lexicon in translation should have a justification, which I failed to find in this case. Concerning this lexicon, an excessive and unjustified dispersion only undermines the specific of the text: “synonymization” is not and cannot be a universal translational principle. On the other hand—and this is the essential point—, by disseminating a lexicon that aims to become
a terminology, the very topic of the book (shame as trauma, as physical and mental wound) tends to become a metaphor that accentuates the essayistic and narrative side, to the detriment of a psychoanalytical journey destabilized by the lack of a stable conceptual support. However, this is the main topic of the book!

Therefore, some researchers posit that the specificity of translation techniques in case of humanities discourse is the practice of various techniques for the “general language” and terminological lexicon. While for transposing the first, the translator can use the technique of equivalences, for the latter he must use correspondences systematically. Whenever possible, he must use corpuses of related terms by derivation or etymology (similarly to Saussure, a long time ago, when he named the sides of the linguistic signs). Thus, the translator should differentiate the terminology, the array of key-concepts within the text to translate, which he would subsequently have to transpose into the target language using strictly the term he decided—either the literal translation or a neologizing term, if he had enough courage to use it (Cassin, 2004, p. 298). In other words, whereas the “general” lexicon must be rendered using “idiomatic” procedures, the transposition of terminology would be done literally, “imitatively”. In this case, it may be concluded that the use of literal translation and of loan technique—in other words, the dependence on the terms used in the source text—may represent a particularity of translating humanities-specific discourses. If the use of such procedures turned out to be recurrent, then it can be stated that in that type of text, the desideratum of textual cohesion tends to be treated differentially. Thus, the specialized lexicon is transposed by fully observing the density in the source text, while general lexicon admits and even requires translation by equivalence.

9. The lexical field of shame: b) predication of shame

At a syntagmatic level, shame develops in our text a combination focused on a relatively small number of verbs, which—through their recurrence—create a semantic network meant to specify, delimit and explicitate not only the “topic”, but also the trauma of shame. Whereas it may not be very poor, the lexicon of shame is actually not very rich in Cyrulnik’s book, because this is not his intention. In many cases, however, the translator dilutes the lexicon in the Romanian version, though the main verbal axes that determine shame can be transposed into Romanian by correspondence. In fact, this terminological fluctuation indicates that the translator failed to perceive the existence of a lexicon aiming to become a terminology and that he treated it like a “current” lexicon, where variation would be justified, à la limite, only by the rejection of “literalism”. We may thus decipher his “project”, his view of the translation for this type of text, but his view no longer coincides with the intentionality of the source text, insofar as
the translator extends the technique of “idiomatizing” to the whole text, as if he had failed to grasp the hierarchy of textual levels, specialized text and essay, (specialized text being the primary level).

The text follows mainly three verbal axes, all based on the principle of lexical economy. The syntagmatic axis (of combinations in præsentia) makes up the framework around the core concept of shame. The first verbal axis circumscribes shame as a feeling, then as a provoked trauma that can end up destroying the one affected by it: the verbs related the individual perception of shame are the following, some of which (ressentir, éprouver, sentir) are almost synonyms:

- avoir honte
- ressentir la honte
- éprouver de la honte
- se sentir honteux
- rendre honteux
- faire honte
- provoquer la honte
- mourir de honte

The dramatic consequences of the trauma of shame are organized around the silence to which it constraints the subject, who cannot speak it for fear of the isolation to which telling it would condemn him.

- la honte fait taire
- dire la honte
- la honte fait fuir

Finally, the third axis concerns the effort of liberation, of escaping trauma, made by the individual who wants to save himself: this axis, too, features a limited number of almost synonymous verbs:

- s’affranchir de la honte
- se libérer de la honte
- sortir de la honte
- se sauver de la honte

Besides the times when these verbal structures were translated by correspondence, it is worth underscoring an over-diluting tendency of the translator: he uses an inventory of synonymies that exceeds the reduced inventory within the source text. Its function is actually to consolidate a certain lexicon by concentrating it, not to disperse it by disorganizing it. Sometimes, the translator’s effort to find synonyms leads to rhetorizing, inadequate or downright mistranslated constructions: îmi este rușine că mi-a fost rușine, with all its redundancy present also in the source text, is not the same as a-ți fi rușine de propria rușine; that it is possible să-ți fie rușine că locuiesti in a very luxurious apartment does not mean that you have concluded that faptul ar fi un lucru de rușine; to say that ți-e rușine is not the same as a-ți mărturisi rușinea; a-ți fi rușine also does not mean a descoperi ce înseamnă să trăiești cu rușinea în suflet, which may be adequate for a literary text, nor does it mean a ți se face rușine, nor a o resimți, nor a o trăi, and much less a o experimenta. In several occurrences, I also find disputable the assimilation between a-i fi rușine and a se rușina. The avoidance of repetitions—a procedure specific to this type of text—leads to the transformation of “on peut avoir honte sans raison d’avoir honte” (p. 80) into a construction lacking both elegance and clarity: “ne poate fi rușine fără să avem motiv pentru asta” (p. 75).

9.1. **Avoir honte**

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**Un souvenir d’enfance // O amintire din copilărie**
- qu’on pouvait avoir honte d’habiter
- j’ai honte d’avoir eu honte
- că ar fi un lucru de rușine să locuiesc
- mi-e rușine de rușinea mea de-atunci

**La honte et son contraire // Rușinea și opusul ei**
- fier d’avoir honte
- en disant qu’il avait honte
- se mindrea cu faptul de a fi resimțit rușine
- mărturisindu-și rușinea

**Honte sexuelle // Rușinea sexuală**
- elle avait honte
- descoperise ce înseamnă să trăiești cu rușinea în suflet

**Honte ou culpabilité? // Rușine sau vinovăție?**
- alors elle a honte
- și-atunci i se face rușine
Lilliput, star de la honte // Liliputanul, vedeta rușinii

nous n’avons pas honte pe loc nu resimțim rușine

La honte peut durer deux heures ou vingt ans // Rușinea poate dura două ore sau două decenii

on peut avoir honte sans raison d’avoir honte ne poate fi rușine fără să avem motiv pentru asta

n’ont pas honte nu se rușinează că

avaient presque honte aproape că au trăit sentimentul rușinii

le déni, une légitime défense morbide // Negarea, o legitimă apărare morbidă

on a honte de ne pas en avoir souffert iși va fi rușine din pricina că această suferință nu s-a produs

Les animaux ont-ils honte? // Animalelor le este rușine?

avait honte se rușinase

La manière d’aimer est un mode de socialisation // Felul în care iubim este o modalitate de socializare

l’enfant eut honte de ce qu’il était sous le regard de cette dame

Bonheur et pulsions. Honte et morale // Fericire și pulsiuni. Rușine și morală

aucune raison d’avoir honte nici un motiv să experimenteze rușinea

Affectivité et performances scolaires // Afectivitate și performanțe școlare

on n’a pas honte de travailler dans une médina de pauvres nu e motiv de rușine să lucrez într-o medina de sărăci

Nègres, zoos et hôpitaux psychiatriques // Negri, grădini zoologice și spitale psihiatriche

da culture a à son tour honte sistemul cultural ajunge să resimtă rușine

Les sans-honte // Cei fără rușine

n’ont jamais honte nu trăiesc niciodată rușinea

comment voulez-vous avoir honte cum vă închipuiți atunci că acesta va simți rușine

Morale, perversions et pervertis // Morală, perversiuni și pervertiți

n’ont jamais honte nu li se face niciodată rușine

9.2. Faire honte

Inexplicably, faire honte seems to have determined the greatest fluctuation in the list of equivalences: a trezi, a produce, a stîrni, a face să, a inculca. Again, the only justification is the well-known resistance of translators to repetitions, which would allegedly question their own skills of mastering the target language.

Transparence du honteux // Transparența celui care suferă de rușine

fait honte au nécessiteux trezește rușinea celor nevoiași

Le "je" n’existe qu’auprès d’un autre // „Eul” nu există decit în raport cu un altul

pouvoir de me faire honte puterea de a-mi produce rușine
9.3. **Mourir de honte**

The height of this axis—which leads to *mourir de honte*—did not practically entail any paraphrase, except for the inappropriate phrase *rușine letală*—which I have analysed before and which destroys the connections between the title and the text itself—and for two occurrences, “îmi vine să mor de rușine” (p. 75) and “le vine să moară de rușine” (p. 177) which inexplicably attenuate the fulfilled action in “je meurs de honte” (p. 80) and “ils meurent de honte”, respectively (p. 190).

*Un souvenir d’enfance* // *O amintire din copilărie*

*Le détracteur intime* // *Detractorul intim*

*La réussite, un masque de la honte* // *Reușita, o mască a rușinii*

*Les maîtres du rêve et le miroir crotté* // *Maeștrii visului și oglinda minjată*
La honte peut durer deux heures ou vingt ans // Rușinea poate dura două ore sau două decenii
elle mourrait de honte // ar muri de rușine
pour un rien, je meurs de honte // pentru un nimic îmi vine să moară de rușine

Le cinéma intérieur de notre abjecteur de conscience // Cinematograful lăuntric al denigratorului de conștiință
ils mourraient de honte // ar muri de rușine
il serait mort de honte // ar fi murit de rușine

Affectivité et performances scolaires // Afectivitate și performanțe școlare
était mort de honte parce qu’il avait échoué // murea de rușine deoarece picase examenul
da concours d’entrée dans une grande école // de admitere într-o universitate
quand ils échouent, ils meurent de honte // cînd se confruntă cu eșecul, le vine să moară de rușine

Nègres, zoos et hôpitaux psychiatriques // Negri, grădini zoologice și spitale psihiatriche
mortes de honte et de désespoir // moarte de rușine și disperare
meurt de honte et de désespoir // moare de rușine și disperare

L’hymen est un discours social // Himenul este un discurs social
feraient mourir de honte // ar face să moară de rușine

Quand la violence était morale // Cind violența era morală
un homme meurt de honte // un bărbat moare de rușine
plutôt que mourir de honte // decît să moră de rușine

Quand la servitude renforce // Cind supunerea întărește
mourait de honte // murea de rușine

La violence au théâtre de l’honneur // Violența în teatrul onoarei
que de mourir de honte // decît să moră de rușine

Morale, perversions et pervertis // Morală, perversiuni și pervertiți
morts de honte // ar fi murit de rușine

9.4. Ressentir – éprouver – provoquer la honte; dire la honte – s’affranchir – se sauver – se libérer de la bonte
This axis may suggest some variation to the translator because it is also features in the source text. However, it exceeds the one of the source text again and it includes a certain number of inadequate phrases, such as a nutri rușine or a vădi rușine. Hence, provoquer in provoquer la honte is translated by: a stîrni, a declanșa, a genera; éprouver in éprouver la honte is transposed by: a încerca, a vădi, a fi, a se simți invoadat, a prezenta, a experimenta, a resimți, a avea, a arăta, a suferi, a simți, a da dovadă, a fi încercat; dire in dire la honte by: a afirmă, a mărturisi; ressentir din ressentir la honte: a nutri, a i se face; s’affranchir in s’affranchir de la honte by: a se elibera, a obține; se sauver in se sauver de la honte by a se salva; éponger in éponger la honte by a se scutura; s’en sortir by a scăpa; sortir in sortir de la honte by: a depăși, a ieși; se libérer by a se elibera.
Un souvenir d'enfance // O amintire din copilărie

ne provoquait pas de honte
Alain... s'est tué... sans jamais avoir éprouvé
le moindre sentiment de honte

La honte et son contraire // Rușinea și opusul ei

en disant qu'il était honteux, il exprimait sa fierté
en disant qu'il avait honte
sentiment de honte que je ressens
en éprouvant un peu de honte
on peut donc éprouver une honte à montrer
de soi une image

Transparence du honteux // Transparența celui care suferă de rușine

s'affranchir de la honte
s'affranchir de la honte
se sauwant ainsi de la honte

La réussite, un masque de la honte // Reușita, o mască a rușinii

s'afffranchir de la honte
s'afffranchir de la honte
a obține eliberarea de rușine

Honte ou culpabilité? // Rușine sau vinovăție?

le petit garçon avait ressenti la honte
s'affranchir de la honte
éprouvent la honte

Lilliput, star de la honte // Liliputanul, vedeta rușinii

provoque la honte
provoque la honte

La honte peut durer deux heures ou vingt ans // Rușinea poate dura două ore sau două decenii

se libèrent de la honte, ils ont honte d'avoir eu honte
nous éprouvons notre passé avec honte ou fierté

Le déni, une légitime défense morbide // Negarea, o legitimă apărare morbida

sort de la honte pour entrer dans la fierté

On se libère de la honte en modifiant l'âme des autres // Ne eliberăm de rușine în măsura în care le schimbăm cedrălăți sufletul
se libérer de la honte elibera de rușine

On se libère de la honte en agissant sur n'importe quel point du système // Ne eliberăm de rușine acționînd în oricare punct al sistemului
l'éprouvé qui prépare à la honte situația care pregătește sentimentul rușinii
éprouver une autre source de honte experimenta o altă sursă a rușinii

Anomie et mégapoles // Anomie și megalopolisuri
sans éprouver de honte fără a resimți un sentiment de rușine

L'immigration, chance ou malchance sociale? // Imigrația, șansă sau neșansă socială?
éprouvent la honte încearcă un sentiment de rușine
provoque la honte declanșează rușinea

Affectivité et performances scolaires // Afectivitate și performanțe școlare
provoque la honte declanșează rușinea

Les Noirs et l'étoile jaune // Negrii și steaua galbenă
éprouvent un sentiment de honte planté au au un sentiment de rușine sădit în adâncul sufletului
fond d'eux-mêmes

Quand la servitude renforce // Când supunerea întărește
honte d'éprouver rușinea de a simți

Quand le réel est différent du récit de ce réel // Când realitatea este diferită de discursul acestei realități
sortir de la honte pentru a ne elibera de rușine
peut-on dire „sortir de la honte” putem oare să spunem „să ieișim din rușine”
difficile de sortir de la honte foarte greu să depășim rușinea
sortir de la honte depășirea rușinii

Les sans-honte // Cei fără rușine

des individus qui n’éprouvent ni honte ni fierté indivizi care nu arată nici rușine, nici mindrie
de ne jamais se sentir honteux să nu se simtă nici olandă rușinații
la honte „éprouvée...” rușinea „resimțită...”
„...ceux qui éprouvent trop de honte...” „cei care vădesc prea multă rușine...”
on n’éprouve la honte que nu suferim de rușine decit
ces hommes n’éprouvent pas de honte acești oameni nu resimt rușine

Morale, perversions et pervertis // Morală, perversiuni și pervertiți
éprouver de honte ou de culpabilité fără a da dovadă de rușine sau vinovăție

Le pouvoir des chaussettes // Puterea ciorapilor
nous n’éprouvons ni honte ni fierté nu ne încercă nici rușine nici mindrie

Thus, in the target text, the concept of *shame* is positioned at the crossroads between a paradigmatic axis, which no longer functions by the principles of selection, of a *sau... sau*, but of a *și... și*, and a syntagmatic
axis, where the goal of combinations is lexical richness. However, the specialized text determined by its dominant — namely by a certain hierarchy of functions, as defined before Katharina Reiss by Roman Jakobson (1960, p. 353; 1963) in the ‘60s as the determining factor of the message profile itself—is not defined by the projection of the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection to the axis of combination, as it occurs in poetry. On the contrary, in this case it is defined by the “sequential [combination] of equivalent units” (Jakobson, 1960, p. 358): once the concept is delimited, the selection is far more rigid, and the combination follows more or less the rules of mathematical equations. Thus, substitution—specific to the paradigmatic axis—does not function as such in a specialized text; it does not replace the “central” term of a terminological grid, but it completes it.

This may explain why the translation of *shame* in expressive texts follows another logic, where equivalence can become the rule or, in any case, also according to Roman Jakobson, “the constitutive principle of the sequence” (Jakobson, 1960, p. 358). Three examples taken almost randomly (actually, randomly from the things I have read recently) may prove this.

10. By way of conclusion: on the false freedom of the translator

I have mentioned—at the beginning of my analysis—that the translator hesitated to construct a grid of specialized terms symmetrical to the one in the source text. I have underscored his reticence to the neologizing of the adjective *rușinos* [shameful]; the price to pay was the dispersion of the terminological grid into a multitude of para- and periphrastic structures, a fluctuation that contravenes flagrantly the intentionality of the source text. However, maybe his reticence has another explanation, too: cultural, literary and historical. An entire lexicon borrowed from the French (that Pompiil Eliade also mentioned), which I invoked at the beginning of this study would rapidly be eliminated, in late nineteenth century, from the Romanian language lexicon. Actually, the vocabulary of the characters within the plays of Alessandri and Caragiale, which reflected the state of the Romanian society of their time, stands to prove the passage from the euphorizing Frenchisms of Chirița to their decadence in the lexicon of Caragiale’s characters. The vocabulary—today almost indecipherable—of *Franțuzitele* by Constantin Faca, and then of the idiolect of Chirița by Vasile Alecsandri (that almost became an idiom) also increasingly hard to comprehend (insofar as the comic character is based on a French-speaking trend today in a state of accelerated desegregation) soon lost the “mark of prestige”. The new jargon, practiced daily by Caragiale’s characters, now comprising loan words turned into Romanian, would degrade into all sorts of deformations once it was integrated into the world of Bucharest slums. The conscience of their symbolic value in Chirița’s world would fully dissipate; the language was not able to assimilate, but only to distort them.

Maybe the same thing happened with the couple *rușinoasă – a rușina*, which in Romanian acquired a comic and pejorative connotative load, which led to all the hesitations in their transposition. I remind here that Veta is *rușinoasă* and that neither she nor her sister must be *rușinate*: actually, the translators of Caragiale’s plays into French (by the way, they are far from novice; see Caragiale, 1994) avoided *la honte*.

They constantly transposed *rușinea* by *pudeur* or *gêne*: the adjective–verb couple of the same family is not mentioned; the translators oscillated between *gêner*, a mitigating tem, and *ne pas la faire rougir*.

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Ca să nu le *rușinez*, știi cum e Veta mea...  
*rușinoasă*  
Ca sa nu le *rușinezi*...  
Știi cum e Veta mea... – *Rușinoasă*, mie-mi spui?  
să n-o *rușinez*  
*Rușinoasă*, mie-mi spui?  
*Rușinoase*... mie-mi spui?  

... histoire de pas les *gêner*. Vous savez comment qu’elle est, ma Vêta, elle *de la pudeur*.  
Pour pas les *gêner*...  
Vous savez comment qu’elle est, ma Vêta...  
– *Pudique*! À qui le dites-vous!  
pour ne pas la *faire rougir*  
Pudique! À qui le dites-vous!  
Pudiques, à qui le dites-vous?
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Far more recently, the successful novel of the Iași-based writer Dan Lungu, *Sînt o babă comunistă!*, was translated into French by Laure Hinckel. I believe to have selected all the occurrences (not many) of the term *rușine* and I was curious to see the extent to which this term was featured literally in the French translation. I was not surprised to note the translator’s freedom: faced with a literary text, the hierarchy of dominants had changed. I was able to find—among the translation techniques, this time around justified, though sometimes disputable—her translational intention of transforming equivalence into a “constitutive principle” (*Jakobson*, 1960, p. 358) a of the translation. Where the Romanian text reads *neobrăzat* (a term featured inadequately in Cyrulnik’s Romanian version), the translator chooses a phrasing that is actually very far from the concreteness and register of the original:

Ba chiar eu am fost mai *neobrăzată*, dacă mă gîndesc bine. (p. 7)

“Lipsa de obraz”, expressed in the source text in a very familiar register and very concrete from a metaphorical perspective, is however translated into French using a lexicon which would better suit a different environment and context:

Auzi, știi ce, ești *nesimțit*. N-ai cherestea, zâu! (p. 145)

*Nerușinarea* is transposed by *insolence*, again a more abstract term, which belongs to a more formal register:

Uneori gobăile sînt așa de *nerușinate*, că se bagă în cotețul porcului să-i fure mîncarea. (p. 71)

The wish to avoid the direct translation of *face pe rușinata* determines—probably due to the translator’s sloppiness—an unpleasant but obviously unintentional repetition:

Învățătoarea dă ochii peste cap, *face pe rușinata*, spune că își face doar datoria, că nu e nevoie, dar, dacă ei totuși insistă, fiindcă tot se pregătește să mergă la o nunță, o brățară *modestă* ar fi un cadou potrivit. (p. 125)

The rest of occurrences of *rușine* are transposed directly, by correspondence:

Cu ce obraz călcam eu din nou în ogradă? Ce *rușine!* (p. 118)

În momentele de slăbiciune sînt gata să-mi pun hainele înapoi în dulap, dar știu foarte bine că, de *rușine*, peste cîteva zile o iau de la capăt. (p. 141)

*Tzucu a spus că din delicatețe. Fiindcă e prea *rușinoasă* să aducă vorba de alimente [...] (p. 157)

Tzucu disait que c’était par délicatesse. Parce qu’elle avait trop *honte* d’amener la conversation sur la nourriture [...] (p. 152)

Faut penser à te marier, il n’y a pas de *honte*... Je sens que je rougis... (p. 205)

On aurait dit que ce chien avait *honte*, il se cachait... (p. 217)
Finally, a Romanian version of Le Petit Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1943, 1971, 1998) associates rușinea, la bonte—by particularizing broader and less concrete semantic spheres—with umilința, with timiditatea, jena, sfâla and ridicolul, almost as for pudoare in this text. Furthermore, the four occurrences for bonte in the original text have turned into eight in the translated version.

In exchange, the physical manifestation of shame—roșeața, înroșirea—is transposed using poetizing terms: you can turn red of shame (not necessarily of shyness) or of pleasure, but a te îmbujora de rușine is rather inadequate. Actually, Saint-Exupéry’s text plays with rather contrasting colours, handkerchiefs with red dots, the king’s crimson, a man that was supposed to red (he is actually sometimes roșu, other times roșcovăn in the Romanian version). Moreover, the Little Prince turns red many times (he also gets pale when he gets mad); this redness should have been preserved in the Romanian text, without alternating it with the poetic îmbujorare, with the risk of committing mistranslations such as:

Il rougit, puis reprit: [...] (p. 30) 

Le petit prince rougit de nouveau. Il ne répondait jamais aux questions, mais, quand on rougit, ça signifie « oui », n’est-ce pas? (p. 94)

Se îmbujoră-n obraj, pe urmă spuse mai de-parte: [...] (p. 10) 

Micul prinț din nou se-mbujoră. El niciodată nu răspunde la întrebări, dar dacă te îmbujorezi înseamnă „da”, nu-i așa? (p. 29)

All of these examples—randomly mentioned within the mixture of recent reads, not following a coherent program of elaborating a corpus—justify the grid elaborated by the skopos theory. At the same time, however, they show what I called the “false” freedom of the translator who has a double task to fulfil in his translational process. The first is to transpose a text into a target language, while the second is to determine to category to which the text pertains (thus to construct a typology for it in the meanwhile). Hence, a translator’s freedom is limited not only by history, by the horizon of expectation of his period, by the translational traditions (also historically determined), but also by the imperative of reconstructing the same type of text in the target language. The translator is thus never completely isolated or alone: his endeavour will or will not be successful also depending on his capacity of deciphering correctly the intention of the text to translate.

[Translated by Alina Piftor]
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