

Mihaela VANCEA
Faculty of Science and Letters, UMFST
Târgu Mureș, Romania
ioanamvnc@gmail.com

**THE UNSEEN FACES OF A TRANSLATION. INSIGHTS INTO THE ENGLISH
AND SPANISH TRANSLATIONS OF NORMAN MANEA'S THE HOOLIGAN'S
RETURN**

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Abstract: This paper aims to determine the strategies of adapting the translated content to a specific context based on a study case of Norman Manea’s *The Hooligan’s Return*. An exclusive interview with the author reveals the lesser debated prospect of the ghost translator. At a closer look, the translation of a text in various languages and spaces reveals certain truths and aspects specific to the community that embraces the translated text. Therefore, besides the role of cultural mediators, translators also need to possess certain anthropological qualities, so as to *transplant* the fragile human experience of a text to the foreign reader. According to Lawrence Venuti, this exchange can happen through a phenomenon explained in terms of *foreignization* and *domestication*, characterized by combating racism or ethnocentrism. Starting from these two approaches, we will examine how the mechanisms of translation are applied in our case study.

Keywords: translation, anthropology, foreignization, domestication, ghost translator, translatability

Humanity lives in translation as an ongoing process of understanding the world. Not only does the reading process depend on an “interpretive community” (Fish 368), but so does any action performed, spoken, or thought of. Every experience is perceived

uniquely by each person, based on their background. The process of extracting social knowledge or data is bound to go through any individual and it is conveyed through specific practices. Despite its recent past as a field of study, the phenomenon of translation goes even farther back in history. For instance, throughout periods of intense colonization, translation represented a path towards enabling intercultural dialogue and cross-cultural interactions. However, it was mainly reduced to an exchange of specific phrases between colonists and indigenous people, covering words that lay under the spectrum of administration, legislation, and commerce rather than literary texts or philosophy.

It is rather difficult to pinpoint the starting point of this discipline. Opinions can vary, but the extensive use of translation proved to deserve its own discipline when the phrase “Translation Studies” was proposed by the American translator James Holmes in 1972, in his essay *The name and Nature of Translation Studies*. His work represents an important milestone for this future discipline that later gained independence and its own structure. In fact, Mary Snell-Hornby dedicates an entire subchapter to the discipline’s pioneer, considering his work a legacy as he “was the scholar who both formulated the ‘raw program’ and presented the ‘manifesto’ of today’s discipline” (Snell-Hornby 40). Besides the attention given to the importance of Holmes’ study, the scholar also presents in her volume *The turns of translation studies* all the meaningful theoretical and methodological aspects of the discipline, stressing out the differences that emerged over the decades. That being said, she manages to highlight the way in which the discipline of *Translation Studies* grew towards different theoretical approaches of high importance such as the works of André Lefevere, Susan Bassnett, or Lawrence Venuti. This itinerary starts with the German Romantic period, which focused on hermeneutics, going further up to the 1990s, and Lawrence Venuti’s *Translator’s invisibility*, ending with a debate over the state of the discipline at the turn of the millennium (Snell-Hornby 149). In its evolution as a discipline, it has seen many theories develop and set the norms for reaching a specific degree of accuracy in translation.

It appears that there has been a constant dispute between linguistic and literary approaches. While the 1980s were dominated by various theories (the dynamics between the reader and the author described by Friedrich Schleiermacher, the three

phases of understanding, interpreting, and transferring outlined by the Czech theoretician Jiří Levý in *The art of translation*, Vermeer's *skopos theory* or the deconstructionist approach of Rosemary Arrojo), the 1990s seem to be dominated by the emergence of new technologies and influenced by globalization. In other words, there was a time when theoretical innovation flourished, followed by a period that integrated the practice of said theories. However, each of these scholars have always considered the other approaches available, as well as the readers of the target texts. It is the translator's responsibility to analyze the needs and cultural context of the target audience.

Regarding the rules of translation, I cannot speak about a definite set of directions that must be followed, as it is more important to examine the community to whom that text is addressed and their particular needs. It is doubtful that a text can retain the same full meaning and form in its translated version. Many works of literature come with their imprecisions in translation: the relationship between the source text and the target text is not an exact mapping of text elements (Katharina Reiß et al. 113). Even when discussed in terms of linguistics, translation requires an anthropological angle as well, revealing a specific behavioural science. Noam Chomsky explains in *Language and Mind* that the linguistic system incorporates so much more than what is shown at the surface of linguistic competences. If handled well, it can illustrate its underlying behaviour that functions as a cultural matrix. Language works within us in a pathological way, leaving its subtle marks: "What is involved is not a matter of degree of complexity but rather a quality of complexity" (Chomsky 4). Therefore, translation techniques can be improved or reinvented once the gap between what is known and what can be discovered in a language is narrowed down. Once the behavior matches the language, one can render a community's image. To be noted that his paper appeared in the fifties when both the development of linguistics and psychology were reaching new highs. In his opinion, a new language represents a new expression of thought and new sources of creativity:

Having mastered a language, one is able to understand an indefinite number of expressions that are new to one's experience, that bear no simple physical resemblance and are in no simple way analogous to the expressions that constitute one's linguistic

experience; and one is able, with greater or less facility, to produce such expressions on an appropriate occasion, despite their novelty and independently of detectable stimulus configurations, and to be understood by others who share this still mysterious ability. The normal use of language is, in this sense, a creative activity (Chomsky 88).

Therefore, each language would have its own inherent creative side, which means by extrapolation that each culture can develop a specific creative side based on linguistics. Even if Chomsky's approach focuses on examples that work within the framework of generative grammar, the message is that grammar can indicate aspects of the mind.

Bringing anthropology into discussion might appear incongruous, but human life and its activity, including artistic products, are based on sociocultural ties. In this respect, a translation works as an individual application, as a method that animates a particular cultural form. Hence, translators offer their readers the chance to access different aesthetic judgements. There is unknown potential in each original text that is translatable. Each source text hides a latent potential that is activated through translation. For example, the Japanese writer Yoko Tawada dedicates an entire article to Paul Celan whose translated poems become an inspiration for the Japanese reader. His poetry is characterized as being translatable as it carries an intrinsic value that matches perfectly the target culture's sensibility: "The translation is not the image of the original but rather, in the translation a meaning of the original is given a new body" (Tawada 2013).

The so-called "cultural turn" that cultural studies experienced in the late 1980s and early 1990s caused a growing interest in translations that gradually gained relevance in defining cultural identity, but also cultural differences. Therefore, translation has become "a more complex negotiation between two cultures" (Munday 11). Lawrence Venuti describes the negotiation that takes place in the process of translation in terms of "domestication" and "foreignization" (Venuti 12, 24). Both refer to the translator's manner of relating to the target culture. The latter refers to certain techniques through which the translated text embraces characteristics of the original in terms of personal names, institutions, national holidays, cuisine, and so on. In brief, instead of finding a substitute for them in the target culture, the translator transfers them as they are and, in some cases, offers additional information in footnotes or the

text itself. On the other hand, when a text is domesticated and tamed to fit the new culture, it provides readers with familiar words while maintaining the genuineness of the original text. Such an endeavor will become clearer in the following case study that focuses on the plurality of perspectives that translations point out when it comes to a single source text.

Case Study: comparative translations in Norman Manea’s *The Hooligan’s Return*

When translated, many works of literature focus almost exclusively on the English language while other high functioning languages seem to be placed on a secondary position. In such contexts, the English language seems to be the “lingua franca” of worldwide interaction both in formal and informal interactions. When it comes to literary translations, if the source text is not already written in English, the tendency is to have it translated into this language as it would be preferred by the market. Taking this aspect into consideration, I decided to analyze the case of Norman Manea’s *The Hooligan’s Return*, the work of a Romanian author that lives in the United States yet writes in Romanian. His texts are usually translated afterwards in English and then in other languages. Norman Manea is an exiled Romanian writer who moved to the USA in his fifties due to the political context of his home country. Thus, he became a writer placed abroad, with a transnational direction from the very first years of his life at the time of his deportation to Transnistria in 1941. Years later, after settling in the United States, he became a controversial writer, taking a firm position against the strong anti-Semitism manifested in post-revolutionary Romania. His cultural openness is strongly emphasized in *The Hooligan’s Return*, which brought him international legitimacy through its numerous translations. The book was first published in New York where it was positively reviewed, as the author had already gained notoriety in the American literary world.

To broaden the usage of Venuti’s concepts, this case study will approach both the English (translated by Angela Jianu) and the Spanish (translated by Joaquín Garrigós) versions of the aforementioned volume. While analyzing the strategies used in these target texts, examples will be given in order to point out how the fundamental concern of a translator is to find a balance between the form (style, syntax) and the function (the

meaning, sense) of a text. Each of this book's translations reveals the transformations and the potential of a literary text. Furthermore, an important aspect must be taken into account: this case study also emphasizes the relation between author and translator as well as the process that lies behind the final version of a translation. During an interview with Sean Cotter, enclosed in *The Nomad Text* (Manea 183), Norman Manea explains how the experiences differ from one translation to another. In this context, he describes the process behind *The Hooligan's Return* as an interesting one; the translator was chosen by the publishing house through a competition. The first English version proved to be very close to the original text, but it had no stylistic force and was rather "shy" from this point of view. Hence, it represented a work in progress in which the author himself worked with a person he refers to as "a text «doctor»" (Manea 183). This aspect will be discussed further. For now, it is essential to understand that the translation was followed by a long editing stage which led to a collaborative process between the author and the translator so as to emphasize its intrinsic value. A comparative analysis of the three versions resulted in differences in terms of function and style. The translators' approaches ended up being highly different. While one ensured the transfer of the cultural background (the *foreignization* option) the other abandoned or transformed a few cultural aspects in the process of domestication. All in all, in terms of strategies, the target texts involved changes in meaning, rephrasing, and various contextual adjustments. In addition, both versions had interventions that left out some particularities of the source text. A first striking difference in interpretation comes from the title itself; while the Romanian version keeps the name simple *Întoarcerea huliganului* (Manea 2006), the English text has added an important detail: "a memoir" (Manea 2003), and the Spanish one categorizes it as "novela" (Manea 2005). In translation, a source text can, therefore, become a *hybrid*, leading its readers to different paths of interpretation. The plot revolves around the author's experience on a visit to Romania, which awakens memories of his double exile when he felt like an outcast. The plot leads to some subtle cultural signs as we see it happening with the word "Patria" (as in "the state") which appears to be written with a capitalized letter all over the volume. This happens because the word is used with a double meaning; that of country and the one of language as a country, as home, a place of survival and escape (Manea 2003):

I had delayed leaving the motherland I had regained in 1945 out of some hypnotic illusion that I could substitute language for homeland. Now all that was left for me to do was to take language, my home, with me. I would be carrying the snail's shell on my back. Wherever the shipwreck would toss me, the snail's shell, the juvenile refuge, was still to be my true home¹ (184).

While the original text capitalizes the word, the two translations do not highlight the double meaning of it, leaving the term as it is. In English, it refers to it as *the motherland* while in Spanish it is simply named *patria*. Such intimacies of the source text are also related to a socio-cultural background and do not have equivalents in the target cultures. Therefore, it is better to be omitted rather than being maintained and creating confusion. Moreover, regarding the plot, when it comes to the meeting with Gelu Naum, to whom Norman Manea had brought an American padlock (*broască* in Romanian), this episode gives rise to a discussion about how expensive the price of the lock (frog) is, which they jokingly choose to call Kermit, referring to *the Muppets* series. Because in Romanian the word *broască* has a double meaning of both frog and lock, it does not represent an easy equivalence to be explained within the text. Thus, the reference to the American TV show together with the subtle pun are left aside in the target languages. This is a clear example of domestication in both cases.

At the opposite pole, there are some aspects reproduced with fidelity both in English and Spanish. They refer to specific English expressions such as: “In paradise one is better off than anywhere else” (Manea 2003, 9), “Depression is a flaw in chemistry not in character” (Manea 2003, 5), “The social system is stable and the rulers are wise” (Manea 2003, 13). Apart from these examples, there are also the names of Romanian publications maintained in the translated versions, but also accompanied by their linguistic equivalent: *Dimineața* (*The morning/ La Mañana*), *Adevărul* (*The Truth/ La Verdad*), *România Liberă* (*Free Romania/ Rumania Libre*). Last but not least, the issues related to the communist party find their equivalences as well: Uniunea Tineretului Muncitor is The Union of Working Youth/ Unión des Juventudes, or Ziua

¹ “Amânasem separarea de Patria recuperată în 1945, amăgit, ca într-o hipnoză, că pot înlocui țara cu limba. Nu-mi rămânea decât să-mi iau limba, casa, cu mine. Casa melcului. Oriunde urma să naufragiez, aceasta avea să rămână, știam, refugiul infantil al supraviețuirii” (Manea 2006).

Partidului as Party Day/ Dia del Partido. In these cases, the translator only intervenes in the transfer from one language to another, offering faithful reproductions of the universe evoked in the novel, with its buildings, parties, and publications; This represents a very explicit practice of foreignization.

On the other hand, there are some differences in the translated versions that change the meaning of some paragraphs. The impact of such changes is not considerable, but it is visible when the translation is confronted with the source text. To name a few examples, the English version has omitted a few cultural and historical references; some data concerning the episodes of the Jews' torture is missing, the name of the Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert is omitted as well as the reference to the character of A. Von Chamisso in *The Great Story of Peter Schlemihl*. Additionally, in the source text, when Norman Manea refuses an interview with the Romanian Television, he mentions that he would never accept it even if Nataša Rostova from Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace* had called. This literary reference is missing in English, but the Spanish translation keeps it. Moreover, the same text lacks an entire paragraph concerning the post-war conversation with Maria's husband, Victor Varasciuc, who works at the Cooperative for the Supply of Village Cooperatives. More precisely, the paragraph that illustrates the context of his employment in state trade is missing. Meanwhile, the Spanish version keeps track of all these details. Therefore, for the same paragraphs, the translators used a different approach and none of the translations is false or wrong in these situations. On the contrary, they seem to convey the truth of the community to which the text is to be delivered based on a "political unconscious" (Végső 60) that determines such an approach: "In this sense, what counts is the contextual determination of the translator's practice by social and cultural forces beyond his or her conscious control" (Végső 60).

Nonetheless, the English version includes its own contextual adaptations. There are numerous examples, but for instance, in terms of syntax one can notice how the rhetorical questions of the source text are transformed into affirmations:

Still, the terror of ending up in the trash bin of failure, that creeping fear, expanding and contracting in turn, was with me always, asleep or awake. As for my strategy of escape,

my mistrust of political matters extended even into the area of personal relationships² (Manea 2003, 103).

While in Spanish they are kept as such³, in English a less interrogative space is created in favor of a more descriptive one. It appears that:

discontinuities at the level of syntax, diction, or discourse allow the translation to be read as a translation [...] showing where it departs from target language cultural values, domesticating a foreignizing translation by showing where it depends on them (Venuti 75).

Plotwise, the chapter “The hooligan year” (Manea 2006, 71) describes the idyllic atmosphere of 1934 in Ițcani, a period that is dominated by the confessor’s memories of his beloved grandmother named Țura. The source text offers only the nickname of the character and the Spanish text uses it as such, while in English the translator adds the real name of the grandmother, Haia (Manea 2003, 68). Such additional details represent a clear mark of the collaboration between the author and the translator.

In February 2022, I contacted Norman Manea to see if he would like to be interviewed with regard to the English translation of his book. The name of the person who helped with the later improvements was not revealed during our email exchange, but the conversation was compelling from other perspectives. Asked about the paragraphs that were omitted, the author explains that the omissions were not intentional, and they are rather leaks of the publisher he was not notified of⁴. Norman Manea confirmed the fact that the text sent by Angela Jianu represented a first draft, a primary text, on which he has worked together with another editor to bring it to a final

² The original text: “Spaima de groapa eșuaților? Spaima ghemuită, dilatată și iar retrasă, ațipită și nu prea? Strategiile eschivei? Retractilitatea față de politică se extinsese asupra relațiilor afective”, Norman Manea, *Întoarcerea huliganului*, Polirom, Iași, 2006, p. 103.

³ The Spanish text: “¿Miedo a caer an la fosa de los fracasados? ¿El miedo que se encoge, se dilata y vuelve a encogerse, adormecido pero no mucho? ¿La estrategia del escaqueo? Mi postura retráctil con respecto a la política se había extendido a las relaciones sentimentales”, Norman Manea, *El regreso del huligan*, tradus de Joaquín Garrigós, Tusquets, 2005, p. 115.

⁴ The email exchange took place in February-March 2022. Norman Manea sent me his answers on 1st of March. The original answer to the issue of omission was the following: “Omisiunile la care vă referiți nu sunt intenționate. Atât referirea la poetul polonez Herbert, cât și cea la personajul Schlemihl, din povestirea lui Chamisso, discuția cu Victor Varasiuc, etc sunt scăpări ale redactorului de editură de care nu am fost avizat.”

form suitable for printing. This means that the initial translator that won the competition organized by the publishing house did not deliver a satisfactory text for the target language. Despite the additional help the author had, a second translator's name is not on the cover. With reference to Venuti's *Translator's invisibility*, it appears that the term of invisibility applies to the situation of ghost translators as well. The concept of ghost writing is extremely wide and has various interpretations with both its detractors and defenders. The purpose of this paper is not to debate upon the realities of this habit as it is extremely common. However, it is a certainty that it reached an enormous expansion in many fields from medical literature to journalism, judicial fields, speechwriting, cinema, literature, and probably many others. Ghostwriting represents the practice of a writer taking on the writing responsibility of another author who becomes a client. Despite the mystery that seems to surround this concept, it is no secret at all that such practices are turning into real business. A simple search of the phenomenon on any browser will display many pages related to it, depending on the field. There is a confidentiality agreement between the ghostwriters and their clients, usually stated under clearly defined contracts. In the arts, this represents a common practice in the field of cinema, especially for higher budget movies (Bonetti). A ghostwriter is approached when the screenwriters lack inspiration, or when they are overwhelmed by deadlines. This involves a mutual agreement between the involved parties and the costs of anonymity are usually very high. It appears that this concept can be adapted to the world of translation, as well. For our case study, however, the author had the intention to publish the second translator's name on the book cover, but the publishing house refused to do so. Furthermore, what makes the situation even more memorable is the character of the editor who helped him improve the text:

I hired an editor with a rich editing experience who started over the entire manuscript in the version received by the publisher and brought it to a suitable printing form. The editor was warmly recommended to me by a female friend, a well-known American writer, the publisher had nothing to do with it. What is more, we asked the publisher to find a way to mention the name of this helper, but they did not agree. The most unusual part of the experience was the editor's personality, as he was extremely irascible and expressive, as there was always a looming danger, materialized a few times, that he

would reach the point of exploding with frustration and discarding everything. It took a lot of patience and diplomacy, so I always had to be extremely careful⁵ (my translation).

That being said, it seems that the English text involved a long collaborative process. Had it not been for this shared exercise practised regularly over the source text, perhaps the final result would not have had the same impact. There were periodical meetings between Norman Manea and this mysterious editor. Whenever a newly translated excerpt was ready, the author made his remarks, which were either approved or rejected, and sometimes they even led to heated discussions⁶. The English version may have been the one with the most adjustments and revisions, adapting the target text to perfectly fit the American community. The practice of *domestication* is stronger in this case compared to the Spanish adaptation, as the text often shows a simplified meaning of the phrase so as to avoid an overly sophisticated style. Even though *The Hooligan's Return* was approached only from the two angles of its translations, each version highlights a specific aspect of the original text:

Even though the translator wants to keep the particularities, and the local atmosphere of a text, he cannot use excessive words or institutions' names that have no meaning to the reader. Even when he is lucky enough to know the target language, the author is not always capable of noticing these subtleties. I will give a few examples: for the *Hooligan's* translation, I was told by the readers certified in both languages that the irony was not successfully conveyed into the German translation. Maybe it is the translator's fault or the structure of the language. In Chinese, I was told how well the socialist atmosphere of

⁵ The original answer of Norman Manea, written in Romanian on the 1st of March: "Am angajat un editor cu lungă experiență de editare care a reluat întreg manuscrisul în versiunea primită la editura și a adus-o la o formă publicată. Editorul mi-a fost călduros recomandat de o prietenă, cunoscută scriitoare americană, editura nu a avut niciun amestec. Mai mult decât atât, am cerut editurii să găsim un mod de a menționa numele acestui ajutor, dar nu au fost de acord. Partea mai pitorească a întâmplării a fost caracterul mai mult decât dificil al acestui editor, extrem de irascibil și pitoresc, cu care exista în fiecare moment pericolul, produs de câteva ori, de altfel, să explodeze și să arunce totul la gunoi. Trebuia enormă răbdare și diplomatie, deci a trebuit să fiu mereu extrem de precaut".

⁶ Norman Manea's answer, received via email on 1st of March 2022: "Ne întâlneam periodic, el venea cu noul fragment tradus, îl citeam, făceam observații pe loc sau în întâlnirea următoare, el aproba sau respingea revendicarea mea, uneori discuțiile erau aprinse, eram precaut considerând firea lui dificilă și mergeam mai departe".

the time was perceived while the contextual irony was more difficult to catch⁷ (my translation).

Conclusions

All in all, my intention was not to overlook the history of translation theories but to outline a brief summary in order to understand how their different terminologies find common frameworks from an anthropological point of view. The comparison between the two translations of the novel brought to the surface small differences in terms of style, the preference for certain phrases, the addition or, on the contrary, the abandonment of some phrases which emerged in the process of fitting one culture into another. The English version accessed mainly by the American community conforms to simplistic principles of life, without too much academic load, data, or references, so the target reader does not get bored or overwhelmed. On the other hand, the Spanish version remains a faithful replica of the text, which may provide its readers with access to an authentic sensibility without noticing the translator's influence. In our case study, the foreignization and the domestication methods work together to a different extent depending on the socio-cultural background of the target community. Therefore, the evolving dynamic of translation theory is meant to highlight the value of the anthropological factor when it comes to demonstrate the plurality of literature.

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⁷ Idem: "Chiar când vrea să păstreze «culoarea locală» nu poate să abuzeze cu cuvinte denumiri de instituții etc. fără sens pentru cititor. Autorul, chiar când are norocul să știe limba în care se traduce nu este totdeauna capabil să sesizeze aceste subtilități. Am să dau câteva exemple: în cazul traducerii *Huliganului* mi s-a spus, de către cititori avizați în ambele limbi, că ironia nu a reușit, totdeauna, să treacă în germană. Poate din vina traducătorului sau a structurii limbii. În chineză mi s-a relatat cât de bine a fost receptată atmosfera socialistă a timpului, dar mai dificil ironia contextuală".

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