

Building Cultural Bridges in the Translation of Irony and Humour

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Edited by

Roxana Ciolăneanu

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PREFACE

The idea of this volume appeared during the RostUL9 conference organised in 2021 at the *School of Arts and Humanities* of the University of Lisbon. The topic of irony and humour in translation was intensely debated at the time in a dynamic ZOOM hosted environment imposed by the pandemic context. When the call for papers for the present volume was launched, various participants at the conference plus some other contributors responded positively and enthusiastically to the proposal of (re)thinking the topics of *irony* and *humour* around the idea of building cultural bridges by means of translation.

This book is the result of a wonderful collaboration between the authors of the eleven chapters and the editor. The diversity of the topics proposed as well as the various methodologies of research and analysis employed hopefully manage to give the readers at least a glimpse into the complexity and intricacies brought by *irony* and *humour* in human communication in general and in the process of *translation* in particular.

Each chapter is constructed as a full-fledged text, independent of the other contributions, hence their alphabetical ordering following the authors' last name(s). Nonetheless, many links and recurrent ideas are present across the book, which proves the like-minded perspectives and the many connections that may have been consciously or unconsciously established by the authors despite the different fields of science they belong to or the various methods of analysis and research they have applied. This (in)voluntary interrelations reinforce, once more, the fundamental idea around which the title of this book was created: building *bridges* among cultures without, however, losing sight of the differences among them. The rich diversity brought by differences is what makes cultures essentially unique and, therefore, knowing them and cherishing them is extremely important for the better understanding of our humanity in all its complexity.

Taking all the above mentioned ideas into account, and in light of all the knowledge available to us via a wide range of online and offline outlets, the important role that *translation* plays nowadays as a cultural facilitator and disseminator becomes more than evident.

To conclude, I would like to thank all the contributors for their hard work and patience in making the publishing of this volume possible. It has been an enriching experience for which I am deeply grateful to all of them.

INTRODUCTION

BUILDING CULTURAL BRIDGES: IRONY AND HUMOUR IN TRANSLATION

Preliminary remarks

Building Cultural Bridges: Irony and Humour in Translation is a comprehensive book that takes a transdisciplinary stance and looks at irony and humour principally through the lens of translation and translating processes. It is a book about if and how one essential aspect that makes us humans, which is the ability “to tell the truth with jokes and teach a lesson under laughter”¹, is “translatable” and “translated” across cultures and languages. The chapters of the book are meant to illustrate the multiple facets of the translational endeavour by employing approaches and instruments from both theoretical and applied translation and by exploring various languages and cultural spaces.

The contributors to this volume will analyse critical aspects of irony and humour translation, ranging from their delimitation from other neighbouring concepts, such as sarcasm and parody, to their being deeply rooted in specific cultural paradigms. Topics not explored so far within the scope of translation, such as *humour and despair blend* as a mark of the Eastern/Balkan spirit or the concepts of *censorship* and *self-censorship* in literary works, make the volume unique among similar books already on the market.

Apart from the theoretical findings, the book will provide its readers with a wide diversity of translation strategies and solutions regarding various types of irony and humour. It will also show how the two key concepts can positively impact more practical fields such as language learning and intercultural studies.

¹ Horace apud Paul Carus, “On the Philosophy of Laughing,” *The Monist*, 8(2) (1898): 251.

A few notes on translation

Starting from the Steiner's statement, "[t]ranslation exists because men speak different languages"² and knowing that "translating irony means also translating value judgments"³, in this book we are attempting to look at translation as a linguistic and cultural practice that entails the creative reproduction of these values⁴. Translation is, by a very loose definition, one of the oldest and widely spread processes through which cultures come into contact and get to know each other, in their different as well as similar aspects. It is one of the most important concepts nowadays, in a world defined mainly by globalisation and free movement across borders, be them physical or virtual. By contemplating the multiple and diverse challenges posed by translating irony and humour, the deeper problems that the contributors to this book are actually addressing revolve around various topics: the potentiality of translation to equate or not various types of differences, be them linguistic, cultural, ideological etc.; the necessity to translate all of them or, on the contrary, the lack of it, with focus on aspects that are generally considered untranslatable; and, finally, the degree of creativity the translator is entitled to in applying various translation strategies and how this impacts the problem of *translation entropy*⁵. The term *problem* is used here in its first of the three meanings identified by Toury in the translation terminology:

"**PROBLEM₁** has its place in the discourse about source texts (or parts/aspects thereof, or phenomena occurring in them) and the way they constrain their envisaged translation; this sense may concern translation in general, or, more often, translation into a particular culture, language and textual tradition where the establishment of a translational SOLUTION₁ is set as the goal. PROBLEM₁ is thus a matter of **potentials**, not actual facts; in other words, of **translatability** rather than translation."⁶

² George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 51.

³ Katrien Lievois and Pierre Schoentjes, "Traduire l'ironie," *Linguistica Antverpiensia*, no. 9 (2010): 18.

⁴ Lawrence Venuti, ed., *The Translation Studies Reader* (London/New York: Routledge 1991), 1.

⁵ *Translation entropy* is defined as "an information gap between the source text and the target text" by Hassan, Bahaa-eddin A. "Pragmatics". In *The Routledge Handbook of Literary Translation*, ed. Kelly Washbourne, and Ben Van Wyke (London/New York: Routledge, 2019), 419.

⁶ Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies—and beyond* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2012), 38.

Therefore, positioned at the crossroads of various theoretical perspectives, translation is looked at in this book as both a cultural and linguistic process through which meanings and ideas are transferred from one culture into another, thus responding to the “universalizing tendencies of modernity”⁷, which supposedly no longer rejects difference; on the contrary, transcultural exchange holds difference and diversity as core values that lay the foundation of what has been called *epistemological translatability*⁸. In other words, the chapters included in this book address issues related both to *translation proper* (i.e., interlingual translation in Jakobson’s (1959) terms), *translation as a mode of human interaction*⁹ and *translation as transcultural communication*¹⁰.

Apart from its role as facilitator to other cultural spaces and knowledge, translation is also a means through which cultures and cultural images are formed and then spread into the world. Let’s not forget that much of the world we currently live in rely heavily on the process under discussion since a great part of science, film industry, literature, entertainment, advertising and even news produced in English, for instance, arrive at non-English-speaking communities by means of translation. Seen from this perspective, besides its role of creating bridges between various cultures, translation may also take the reversed role of creating barriers by constructing and/or fostering representations and stereotypes that focus on cultural differences, thus sometimes contributing to inferiorising and demeaning the Other. This also happens due to the fact that translation is based on language use, which, in turn, is

“a set of power relationships because a language, at any historical moment, is a specific conjecture of a major form holding sway over minor variables”¹¹

Hence, “translation wields enormous power in constructing representations of foreign cultures”¹². Language as a repository of ideologies and commonly

⁷ Lydia H. Liu, ed., *Tokens of Exchange. The Problem of Translation in Global Circulations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 1.

⁸ (Liu, *Tokens of Exchange. The Problem of Translation in Global Circulations*, 5).

⁹ Seruya, Teresa. “To be or not to be ... a translation ... that is the question. Considerations on Conceptual Identity and Transversality”. In *A New Visibility: on Culture, Translation and Cognition* ed. Peter Hanenberg (Lisboa: Universidade Católica Editora, 2015), 77.

¹⁰ Anthony Pym, *Epistemological Problems in Translation and its Teaching* (Calaceit: Edicions Caminade, 1993), 34-35.

¹¹ Lawrence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation. Towards an Ethics of Difference* (London/New York: Routledge, 1999), 9.

¹² (Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation. Towards an Ethics of Difference*, 67)

shared representations is discussed at length in Fairclough 1989, where it is examined as part of society, as part of social interaction and as a socially conditioned process¹³. Therefore, the most sensible conclusion that can be drawn from everything that has been mentioned so far is that translation is a key process in contemporary society, which “must be at the centre of any attempt to think about questions of identity in human society”¹⁴.

Besides the cultural implications of translation, this book is also interested in the linguistic mechanisms that are used to create verbal and situational irony and humour and the challenges the translator needs to face when rendering the ironical and/or humorous text into the target language. Therefore, this volume includes papers that aim to outline frameworks of humour and irony analysis based on various types of ambiguities, be them phonological, graphological, morphological, lexical, or syntactical, on their degree of *translatability* and the strategies used to transpose them into the target language. Apart from the purely linguistic interest, this strand of the book is felt to be extremely useful also in language classes since it can act as a booster to enhance students’ interest and proficiency in the target language. This comparative perspective on humour facilitated by translation has the potential to reveal not only particular linguistic mechanisms that create humorous effects, but also hidden cultural patterns and beliefs that may be different from patterns and values of the students’ own culture, thus raising awareness of various cultural issues that otherwise go unnoticed. Consequently, besides its contribution to improving language competence, this approach may have a great impact on developing student’s intercultural communication competence and skills.

Given the complicated and complex multifaceted aspects that the translation of irony and humour involves, the central but equally debatable concepts in the field of Translation Studies, *translatability*, on the one hand, and *formal equivalence* vs. *meaning equivalence*, on the other hand, are core concepts of this book, which the authors are going to discuss and illustrate with examples from fields ranging from literature and cultural studies to language teaching, intercultural communication and, obviously, translation studies.

¹³ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 1989), 22-24.

¹⁴ Michael Cronin, *Translation and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2006), 1.

Irony in Translation

There are several ways to look at the relationship between irony and translation. Process-wise, they are very similar since both need to be first correctly decoded to be then adequately understood and interpreted. Irony, as any dictionary tells us, basically means saying one thing and meaning the opposite; consequently, the people involved in the conversation act need to be aware of the intended violation of Grice's first maxim of quality, "Do not say what you believe to be false"¹⁵ as common ground for successful message decoding and understanding of irony. Similarly, translating essentially means that the translator needs to correctly decode the message in the source language in order to then adequately encode it in the target language so that the impact envisaged by the author stays (approximately) the same in the target culture. Contrary to irony, the translator is supposed to obey Grice's maxim and stay as loyal as possible to the source text and author's intentions.

On the other hand, translation can also be looked at as a test of irony's capacity to transcend the limits of a single language. Language is heavily dependent on the culture it belongs to, and, in their turn, cultures have different mechanisms to produce irony. Therefore, there are different understandings and uses of irony, which can be more or less institutionalised, more or less hostile etc.¹⁶ Many types of knowledge are put at work when translating irony: cultural, situational, personal (to name just a few), which makes irony sometimes so resistant to be carried out from one language into another.

The picture gets even more complicated when the concept of irony and the contexts that reveal it are discussed. Irony covers a wide range of situations that makes it a phenomenon of considerable cultural and literary importance"¹⁷. The chapters of the book look at *irony* and its translation from a diversity of perspectives, given the multiple uses and meanings that have been attributed to it throughout time:

"[it] may be a weapon in a satirical attack, or a smokescreen concealing a retreat, or a device for turning the world or oneself inside out; irony may be

¹⁵ Paul Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1991), 27.

¹⁶ Katharina Barbe, *Irony in Context* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 1995), 145-146.

¹⁷ Douglas Colin Muecke, *Irony* (London: Methuen & CO LTD, 1976), 2.

found in words and attitudes, in events and situations; or we may find nothing on earth and quite certainly nothing in heaven that is not ironic.”¹⁸

Various authors (Brooks, 1971; Muecke, 1969, 1970; Garmendia, 2020 among others) have signalled the many and diverse situations covered by *irony* and, hence, the confusion sometimes created by its modern and contemporary use, and the various names that have been assigned to it taking into account its multiple facets:

“tragic irony, comic irony, irony of manner, irony of situation, philosophical irony, practical irony, dramatic irony, verbal irony, ingenu irony, double irony, rhetorical irony, self-irony, Socratic Irony, Romantic Irony, cosmic irony, sentimental irony, irony of Fate, irony of chance, irony of character.”¹⁹

This prolific terminology employed in relation to irony, its use across disciplines and in diverse life situations shows that the way it is generally defined by dictionaries, i.e., as “the use of words that are the opposite of what you mean, as a way of being funny”²⁰, is unacceptably insufficient to grasp the complexity and subtlety of the term. As Muecke (1969) convincingly shows, reading irony is a complex process that resembles other processes “like translating, like decoding, like deciphering, and like peering behind a mask”²¹. He states that, out of these many metaphors used to explain *irony*, the most appropriate one seems to be *seeing behind a mask or a “persona”* since it involves, besides the substitution of messages, the dramatic engagement of the parts involved (the ironist and the ‘ironee’) “in the form of peering and unmasking” and in the process of meaning reconstruction based on unstated and implicit shared assumptions.²² For the *irony* as a process of meaning reconstruction to work, there needs to exist a complicity between the two and a feeling of superiority over the ‘ironized’ that is taken for granted²³. The shared context becomes of sheer importance

¹⁸ Douglas Colin Muecke, *The Compass of Irony* (London: Methuen & CO LTD, 1969), 3.

¹⁹ (Muecke 1969, *The Compass of Irony*, 4)

²⁰ “Irony,” Cambridge Dictionary online, accessed June 21, 2022, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/irony>.

²¹ (Muecke 1969, *The Compass of Irony*, 33)

²² (Muecke 1969, *The Compass of Irony*, 33)

²³ Toril Moi, *Simone de Beauvoir. The Making of an Intellectual Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 111.

since irony is creatively defined elsewhere as “the obvious warping of a statement by the context”²⁴.

Given the whole complexity that irony has been proven to hold, at least by its two generally accepted main categories, *verbal irony* and *situational irony*²⁵, the book will try and address the social and cultural values engaged in the various uses of irony and how they are translated into the target language. The examples given throughout the book will thus reinforce that translation is, among its many other facets, a cultural practice that “entails the creative reproduction of values”²⁶. The contributors to the book, through their analyses, will cover many kinds of uses of *irony* in various contexts, keeping in mind that there is not only one correct and accurate way of understanding and validating irony, no matter its form. In that, we meet Dane’s (2011) conclusion that

“there is no correct understanding of the word irony, no historically valid reading of irony; and to claim that irony has been constantly misread does not seem to me any different from assuming that every reading of irony, every invocation of irony, is legitimate.”²⁷

Humour in Translation

Generally ignored by Translation Studies²⁸, given its “at times borderline impossible nature”²⁹, humour, unlike irony, is directly associated with being funny, although the concept is much more complex, and the result is not always the laughter. Nonetheless, humour is usually associated with irony and refers to a concept as difficult to define as the concept of irony itself. Humour, much like irony, can be looked at as an instrument to test, on the one hand, the translatability of the conceptual schemes and categories that lie behind humour and, on the other hand, to reveal the emic and etic knowledge associated with them, understanding by emic the form of

²⁴ “Irony as a principle of structure,” Cleanth Brooks, accessed April 1, 2022, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5441df7ee4b02f59465d2869/t/588e94e446c3c4023d8c80ae/1485739236785/Irony+as+a+Principle+of+Structure.pdf>

²⁵ (Muecke 1976, *Irony*, 49)

²⁶ (Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation. Towards an Ethics of Difference*, 49)

²⁷ Joseph A. Dane, *The Critical Mythology of Irony* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2011), 191.

²⁸ Chiaro, Delia. “Verbally Expressed Humour and Translation”. In *The Primer of Humor Research* ed. Victor Raskin (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008), 569.

²⁹ Attardo, Salvatore. “A Primer for the Linguistics of Humor”. In *The Primer of Humor Research* ed. Victor Raskin (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008), 126.

constructs shared and validated by members of a certain cultural group, and by etic, constructs considered appropriate by the scientific community³⁰.

One of the first aspects that is worth emphasising is that humour is also a multidimensional concept, involving components of various nature: cognitive, emotional, social, cultural, expressive etc.³¹, thus looking like a “multifaceted linguistic and/or cultural rebus”³². Secondly, humour processing shares the same mechanism as irony: the recognition of some sort of incongruity, based on linguistic or factual/situational material. It is true, though, that not any incongruity is funny, but many times humour and irony overlap, and it is difficult to tell the difference between the two. Cognitively speaking, the theory of incongruity, advocated since ancient times by some great minds of humankind, from Aristotle to Kant³³, is mostly used to explain “the bringing together of two normally disparate ideas, concepts or situations in a surprising or unexpected manner”³⁴ that results in humour. This approach is nicely complemented by the theory of laughter as a triumph, advertised by Carus 1898, which implies the expectation of having “different conditions of that which will induce us to laugh” and, therefore, invites to establish differences between

“the ridiculous and the foolish, the comical and the funny, the satirical and the sarcastic, the ludicrous and the jocular, the odd and the grotesque, the droll and the baroque, the outlandish and the burlesque, mockery and scoff, irony and humour.”³⁵

Once again, irony and humour are paired together in the attempt to show that they are part of human nature.

Besides its potentiality of provoking laughter, which is considered the most acclaimed function of humour and “the privilege of man”³⁶, there are authors who have proven the importance of humour in various other disciplines by successfully identifying three basic functions: structural, when humour helps diminish the impact of some ridiculous situations; psychological, by reducing tension and anxiety; and social, by being an

³⁰ Ruch, Willibald. “Psychology of Humor”. In *The Primer of Humor Research* ed. Victor Raskin (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008), 72-73.

³¹ For various approaches, definitions and examples of verbal and factual humour, see Delia Chiaro, *The Language of Jokes in the Digital Age*. #like #share #lol (London: Routledge, 2018), 8-34.

³² Chiaro, “*Verbally Expressed Humour and Translation*”, 569

³³ As shown in (Chiaro, *The Language of Jokes in the Digital Age*. #like #share #lol, 9).

³⁴ Ruch, “Psychology of Humor”, p. 25

³⁵ Carus, “On the Philosophy of Laughing,” 271.

³⁶ Carus, “On the Philosophy of Laughing,” 250

important part of social communication, which usually requires reciprocity³⁷. Even if not always, humour, in general, is co-constructed³⁸ and frequently fulfils a mediation function, e.g. is used for politeness³⁹. That clearly shows that humour lies at the intersection of many disciplines and areas of studies: anthropology, psychology, linguistics, communication studies, translation studies, to name just a few.

Humour takes various forms, from jokes and puns to visual language and memes on the internet. Referring to verbal humour, Chiaro (2008) states that it is “an extreme area of language use” since the possibility of getting formal equivalence or faithfulness in the target language is extremely weak⁴⁰. It rests to show how the concept of equivalence and/or equation is applied when translating the many and diverse forms of humour. Having said that, the concepts of *equivalence* and *equation* will be carefully analysed and assessed in this volume in the attempt to explain the compromises the translator needs to make when translating humorous texts in order to have the target audience react in the same way (mostly laughter) as the audience in the source culture. From this perspective, one of the conclusions that may be reached in this book is that purpose is probably the essential ingredient in humour translation and one theoretical framework that best fits this approach is Vermeer’s 2000 theory of *Skopos*, which precisely favours the intended function of the text to the detriment of transposing the content literally.

A particular line of interest in this book focuses on the analysis and translation of irony and humour in relation to the Other, i.e. to other groups, generally perceived as being inferior, which may take the form of “nations, ethnic and regional groups, religious traditions, social classes, occupations, genders and any other social or cultural entities”⁴¹. From a cross-cultural perspective, it is interesting to investigate to what extent irony and mockery present a greater degree of universality or, on the contrary, they are more culture-specific, and how the process of translation is influenced by this diversity; in other words, in order to comply with Vermeer’s postulates, where exactly the translator chooses to position its translation on the axis

³⁷ Cf. Korthé & Lechner 2013 apud Elisabeth Cheauré, and Regine Nohejl, eds., *Humour and Laughter in History. Transcultural Perspectives* (New Rockford: transcript publishing, 2014), 8.

³⁸ Attardo, “*A Primer for the Linguistics of Humor*”, 118.

³⁹ Cf. Holmes et. al. 2001, apud Attardo, “*A Primer for the Linguistics of Humor*”, 118.

⁴⁰ Chiaro, “*Verbally Expressed Humour and Translation*”, 577.

⁴¹ Davies, Christie. “Undertaking the Comparative Study of Humor”. In *The Primer of Humor Research* ed. Victor Raskin (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008), 157.

from *foreignizing to domesticating translation*⁴², following the classical and highly metaphoric dichotomy found in Schleiermacher (1813/2003) between moving the reader to the author or moving the author to the reader:

“Entweder der Uebersetzer läßt den Schriftsteller möglichst in Ruhe, und bewegt den Leser ihm entgegen; oder er läßt den Leser möglichst in Ruhe und bewegt den Schriftsteller ihm entgegen”^{43 44}.

It is an arduous task that the translator needs to achieve since

“[j]okes dwell in a special world of their own with its own rules and it is by uncovering these rules that aggregate patterns of joking can be explained and accounted for”⁴⁵.

The Chapters of the Book

The first chapter of the book, “Translating Goran Stefanovski: Balkan Humour and Despair”, is based on the experience of the authors, Micaela Cernăuți-Gorodețchi and Nikola Vangeli, as translators of Goran Stefanovski’s works from Macedonian and/or English into Romanian. The process of translation, seen by the authors of this chapter as a “dialogue between various Selves and Others”⁴⁶, glides on the Eastern-Western continuum as presented by Stefanovsky in his works. The prejudiced and stereotyped views of the two “worlds”, presented most of the times in opposition, are carefully and thoroughly analysed throughout the chapter, as well as the similarities between Southern Slavs and Romanians, e.g. laughter as a last resort solution, the inferiority-cum-superiority complex etc. All these dimensions were taken into account in the process of translation, always emphasising the familiarity of the Romanian audience with such mechanisms of mere survival in a hostile geographical and

⁴² Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, 1991, 7.

⁴³ Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Uebersetzens/ Sobre os diferentes métodos de traduzir* (bilingual edition). (Porto: Porto Editora, 1813/2003), 60/61.

⁴⁴ “The translator either (1) disturbs the writer as little as possible and moves the reader in his direction, or (2) disturbs the reader as little as possible and moves the writer in his direction”, translation into English retrieved from Douglas Robinson, *Western translation theory: from Herodotus to Nietzsche* (Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 2002), 229.

⁴⁵ Davies, “*Undertaking the Comparative Study of Humor*”, 177.

⁴⁶ Cernăuți-Gorodețchi, Mihaela, and Vangeli, Nikola, “Translating Goran Stefanovski: Balkan Humour and Despair”, page 27 of the present book.

political environment, hence the adaptation of the translation strategies to the target public and the lack of necessity in altering “[t]he complex and unique blend of Eastern and Western elements in Goran Stefanovski’s plays”⁴⁷.

The second chapter, “The Romantic Irony in *Viagens na minha terra/Călătorie prin țara mea* by Almeida Garrett”, looks at *irony* from a pragmatic point of view and discusses *context* (time and space) as a key element in this framework. The author’s declared objective is to check what alterations/adaptations were applied in the translation of *romantic irony* in order to maintain the author’s message and intentions into the target language. In order to fulfil this purpose, Vlad Dobroiu chooses to analyse a book written in the Portugal of the beginning of the 19th century, Almeida Garrett’s *Viagens na minha terra*, and its translation into Romanian made by Michaela Ghițescu in 1979, almost 200 years later. The challenge in this case is to discuss the appropriateness of the translation strategies applied so that the 20th century Romanian public be able to understand the Portuguese historical and socio-cultural context in which the book was written.

Interestingly enough, among the various socio-cultural aspects discussed throughout this chapter as possible sources of irony, the author presents the inferiority-cum-superiority complex as being a characteristic of the 19th century Portuguese people. This shows interesting similarities between two quite far away regions of Europe since, as it was shown in the previous chapter, this is also a feature frequently met in the people of the Balkan area and even beyond it.

The third chapter prompts its readers to look into two interesting topics in the area of translation studies: paratranslation⁴⁸ (applied in the translation of comic strips) and the difficulty of working with two very similar languages: Galician and Spanish. Its title, “The Difficulty of Translating Humour and Irony from Galician into Spanish. The Case of Comic Strips”, is self-explanatory: despite the phonetical, morphological and syntactical similarities between Galician and Spanish, the translation from one language into the other is quite complicated given the subtle but sometimes deep differences that may be spotted, especially as far as irony and humour are concerned. Sara González develops her analysis around the concept of *retranca*, the name given to the typical Galician subtle humour, which developed in time given the repressive conditions the language developed

⁴⁷ Cernăuți-Gorodețchi, Mihaela, and Vangeli, Nikola, “Translating Goran Stefanovski: Balkan Humour and Despair”, page 32 of the present book.

⁴⁸ For an interesting discussion around the concept of *paratranslation*, see Christiane Nord, “Paratranslation – a New Paradigm or a Re-Invented Wheel?”, *Perspectives*, 20(4) (2012): 399-409.

under. The author discusses a set of 14 comic strips, underlying the multiple social, historical and cultural differences between Galicia and the rest of Spain that make the translation process difficult, and proposing various translation strategies meant to minimise the losses in translation that, according to the author, are inevitable.

The fourth chapter, "Idyllic Irony: Floire and Blancheflor's *Translatio Studii*", explores the medieval process of translating from French into Italian a narrative corpus pertaining to one of the first vernacular romances in the history of European literature, by focusing on the ironic reformulation of the "idyllic" setting and the allegorical relativization of its axiology. Thus, Boccaccio's Filocolo illustrates the creative appropriation of the cultural background of Robert d'Orbigny's Conte de Floire et Blanchefleur, and reshapes its transcendence by projecting Dieu/Dio in-between the polytheist credo prevailing in (fictional) Spain and the emerging monotheist religion of the Roman Empire. In this rewriting process, the conversion of the charming, unfaithful yet inflexible lover (Florio alias Filocolo) is a crucial episode, which occurs shortly after the hero's marriage with his beloved (Biancifiore), and concerns a larger family cluster, a wider proselytist context and a subtler metaphysic background. The study explores the puzzling reconfiguration of the possible worlds of Medieval romance by inviting the reader to apprehend a relevant instance of intertextual dialogue in which ironic strategies enable young Boccaccio to avoid both the excesses of sheer parody and the crux of a politically correct Christianization of the narrative matter. Brîndușa Grigoriu's contribution to the history of "idyllic irony" relevantly addresses the "translatio studii" in its emotional complexity, offering a medieval endeavor of building cultural bridges and an interesting case in point.

The fifth chapter, "Translation and Irony: the Importance of Word and Rhetoric in the Target Text", analyses the mechanisms of irony construction in Lorent Binet's novel, *Civilizations*, and the various strategies employed to transpose them into the Portuguese and Spanish translations of the book. As Helena Antunes convincingly shows, the core of irony is the very genre of the analysed literary work, *uchronia*, i.e. the recreation of an inverted worldview, in which the New World is not represented by America, but by the 16th century Europe discovered and conquered by Atahualpa, the last emperor of the Incas. The author's lexical choices (some of them implying medieval intertext), displacement strategies, various rhetorical devices and other mechanisms that result in ironical effects, as well as the translation strategies used, more or less successfully, to render them in the Portuguese and Spanish versions of the book, are described and analysed in detail. A key part of the chapter is dedicated to the analysis of various stanzas from

the famous Camões' epic poem *Os Lusíadas* included by Laurent Binet in his novel in his own interpretation, which leads to an interesting discussion that places this recreation exercise between translation and rewriting.

The sixth chapter, "Encoding and Decoding Irony: Narrative Unreliability in Translation", looks at the theoretical foundations of the concept of narrative unreliability and shows the challenges posed by translating textual clues and other signals intentionally left in the text by the implied author so that the implied reader may reconstruct the *true story*. In order to illustrate the difficulties of such an intricate process, Lorena Mihăeș examines excerpts from Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* in an attempt to plead for a higher awareness on the translator's part when dealing with an unreliable narrator. The double status of the translator, seen simultaneously as "implied reader" and "the other voice" is discussed at length. Linguistic peculiarities, such as the preference for the impersonal pronoun "one" or the use of hedges to attenuate the impact of the messages, are analysed as tokens of narrative unreliability.

The seventh chapter, "Can One Befriend a Hare? On Translating Arto Paasilinna's Absurd Finnish Humour", revolves around the humour produced in Finnish, generally perceived as a dry language used in a reserved society whose people are not exactly known for their humour. Paul Nanu manages to deconstruct this stereotype by presenting Arto Paasilinna's book, *The Year of the Hare*, as a fluid and humoristically rich one, wonderfully transposed in Romanian by its translator, Teodor Palic. The ultimate proof of the successful endeavor both in Finnish and Romanian is, as the author of this chapter shows, the excellent reception of the book, *Anul iepurelui*, by the Romanian public.

The eighth chapter, "Irony and Subversion in Mircea Ivănescu's Literary Translations" takes us back to the communist times and reveals some of the strategies applied by the Romanian writers when translating literary masterpieces into Romanian. The communist censorship was so aggressively applied that many times resulted in phenomena of self-censorship. The chapter discusses Mircea Ivănescu's contribution to the development of the Romanian literary postmodernism. Through his translations from modern and postmodern American poetry, Mircea Ivănescu has fundamentally contributed to the ingress of Romanian literature in postmodernism by instrumenting an influential policy of poetic irony, legitimised through translations, with high implications at the level of mentality.

The ninth chapter, "Humour and Irony as Two Possible Operating Discursive Strategies in Foreign Language Teaching-the *Assimil* Method-" is unique in this volume through its two main characteristics: it is situated

in the area of language teaching and learning, and it is written in Romanian, the target language of the process described throughout the chapter. Nicoleta Neșu bases her analysis on one fundamental idea: understading humour is strictly dependent on the cultural background, hence the importance of the *humour competence*, as part of the *intercultural competence* that learners need to develop in order to become effective communicators in the target language. Thus, using humour in language learning classes brings two key concepts together: on the one hand, *incongruency* as the starting point in decoding the humorous message, and, on the other hand, the already mentioned *humour competence*, understood as learners' performative capacity to semantically and pragmatically process a text carrying a humorous message. There are, as the author of this chapter shows, multiple benefits of using humour in language classes: motivation, dialogue stimulation, ludic and ontological competence development and last, but not least, better and more nuanced knowledge of L2 culture.

The tenth chapter, “Humour in Translation: Subtitling *Dean* from English into Spanish”, approaches irony and humour in film subtitling, a widely spread area of translation nowadays, which comes with its own linguistic and extralinguistic characteristics and challenges. Celso Lucas presents and analyses various strategies that he, as a translator, applied throughout the process of translation and subtitling of the film *Dean*. Many of them are related to word plays in English and their translation into the target language, Spanish. Here, as in other previous chapters, the issue of fidelity in translation is revisited and the author convincingly manages to show us how the problem-solving strategies that he applied got the messages across to the Spanish viewers as closely as possible to the way they were intended in the source language.

The last chapter, “Do machines Laugh? Humour, Humans and Automatic Translation”, launches an interesting discussion on one of the biggest challenges nowadays: the use of automatic translation in rendering humorous texts from one language into another. The structure of the chapter is quite complex in the attempt to create a comprehensive and explanatory context of the issue: definitions and theories of humour, milestones in machine translation development, the competition with the machine (in this particular case, Chat GPT) and even the amazing conversation that the author had with it. It is quite an extensive chapter, the only one followed by an appendix containing the actual conversation between the author and the Chat GPT, which is extremely relevant for today's possible interactions between human beings and artificial intelligence.

One characteristic that makes this text different from similar articles about humour is that it goes beyond common approaches and presents laughter as a serious matter, with heavy aesthetic, psychological, social and even political implications⁴⁹. Another interesting feature of this chapter is the discussion of the use of smilies and emojis in rendering the cyberlaugh as a sort of universal language, hence with no need of translation.

Going back to the issue of the interaction between human beings and machines, Oana Ursache manages to show, in the last part of the text, both the impressive recent advances in machine processing and translation as well as its limitations. The case study she presents is Fernando Iwasaki Cauti's book, *El libro de mal amor* (*The Book of Bad Love*) recently translated by her and her team into Romanian. Among the identified translation problems, the author discusses cultural references, wordplays and idiomatic expressions as being the most frequent. The title of the translated book is extensively explained, with all the involved cultural nuances and references. Although the solution found by the machine is considered reasonable enough, the author of the chapter goes deeper into analysing parallel cultural environments and comes up with a new title, more culturally refined and profound, still unreachable by automatic translation. Hence, despite the amazing developments that have taken place recently in the area of artificial intelligence, the human intervention is still essential when it comes to translating humour and irony since it is beyond the machine's reach as the ChatGPT itself brilliantly puts it⁵⁰.

Concluding remarks

Building Cultural Bridges: Irony and Humour in Translation is conceived of as a collective effort to analyse critical aspects of the complex and intricate process of transposing irony and humour from the cultural context of the source language into that of the target language. In other words, it goes beyond the scope of linguistic translation, and it may instead be qualified as an instance of cultural translation that attempts to identify bridges between different worldviews. Hence, translation is seen here as a creative and dynamic process by which linguistic, cultural and social meanings in the source culture are transposed into equivalent meanings in the target culture.

⁴⁹ The "fellowship of laughter" between Clinton and Yeltsin that the author of the chapter describes as an example of *humitas* is extremely relevant for this last type of implications (for details, see pages 207-208 of this book, and also page 207 for the blended term *humitas*).

⁵⁰ For more details, see page 231 of this book.

Although translation from English into other languages is present in the book, the authors also refer to other cultural spaces not often represented in the mainstream literature such as Finland, Galicia, Macedonia and Romania. These multiple worldviews and how irony and humour are transposed from one another add value to the book and make it unique and different from other similar books.

An engaging and very dynamic part of the book is dedicated to the role translation plays in language learning classes with a particular focus on irony and humour. This part proves once more that the language class is a multicultural space and that the mastery of the cultural background of the target language (here including irony and humour) is a must in one's becoming an effective intercultural communicator, fully able to mediate intercultural encounters. The book hopefully manages to prove that translation activities involving irony and humour act as boosters of students' motivation and class engagement.

Another important aspect that the book successfully manages to illustrate is how the mechanisms of censorship and self-censorship are put to work in translation with a view to complying with the political and ideological requirements of the time. The function of these mechanisms is analysed in reference to past regimes, such as the communist regimes, in which the concept of *subversive translation* was established.

By exploring such culture-sensitive mechanisms of creating and translating irony and humour, rendered by equally sensitive linguistic strategies and solutions, *Building Cultural Bridges: Irony and Humour in Translation* presents itself as a transdisciplinary book that sets out to bring together multiple perspectives and analyses on *irony and humour* under the arc of translation. Given its eclectic character and the theoretical and practical issues it tackles, the book may interest a wide range of people: translation scholars, linguists, language teachers, translators, interpreters, translation graduates and postgraduates.

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CHAPTER 1

TRANSLATING GORAN STEFANOVSKI: BALKAN HUMOUR AND DESPAIR

MIHAELA CERNĂUȚI-GORODEȚCHI
AND NIKOLA VANGELI

Goran Stefanovski (1952-2018) was an outstanding Macedonian playwright, a brilliant essayist, a highly regarded scriptwriting professor (in his birth country, as well as in the UK, his country of adoption), a vibrant, charismatic orator, and an artist with a conscience. His life and career were shaped by extreme existential circumstances. He had to move with his family abroad and live in exile, because of the fratricide Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. He knew and enjoyed success and recognition anywhere he went, but he never ceased to feel uprooted, as he never ceased to see and express himself as an authentic Balkan representative, advocating for ever improving East-West European relations.¹

Towards the end of the year 2018, a mere few days after Goran Stefanovski sadly passed away, an anthology of his plays in our translation appeared in Iași, Romania.² Although he was not able to see nor hold the actual book, he knew of our project and regularly kept in touch with us during the several years we worked at it. He was happy and excited at the prospect of thus becoming better known to a relatively new audience, that he had been introduced to some 10 years before, courtesy of a series of Romanian translations by Ioana Ieronim and (later) Filip Ristovski.³

¹ For more details, see the monography published in Romanian by Nikola Vangeli, *Goran Stefanovski în căutarea Itacăi pierdute* (Iași: Junimea, 2018).

² Goran Stefanovski, *7 piese de teatru* (Iași: Artes, 2018).

³ See Goran Stefanovski, "Hotel Europa – scenariu pentru un eveniment teatral," in *Dramaturgie contemporană din Balcani*, ed. Andreea Dumitru (București: Fundația Culturală "Camil Petrescu", 2008), 145-82; Goran Stefanovski, "Un om ca oricare," in *Antologia Festivalului Internațional de Teatru* (Sibiu: 2009), 237-59; Goran Stefanovski, *Povești din Estul Sălbatic*, ed. Ioana Ieronim (București:

Our selection of Goran Stefanovski's plays includes the following titles (with parentheses referring to the Macedonian and, respectively, English versions of each):

- 1) *Zbor pe loc* (*Лет во место*, [1981] 2002; *Flying on the Spot*, 1985).
- 2) *Suflete tatuate* (*Темовирани души*, [1985] 2002; no English version available).
- 3) *Sarajevo. Povești dintr-un oraș* (*Sarajevo: Tales from a City*, [1992-1993] 1994; *Сараево. Приказни од еден град*, 2002).
- 4) *Hotel Europa* (*Hotel Europa*, [2000] 2009; *Хотел Европа*, 2010).
- 5) *Viața lumii sau orișicine (imoralitate)* (*Everyman: An Immorality Play*, [2002] 2004; *Секој: а-моралитет*, 2004/Жив човек, 2010).
- 6) *Odiseu* (*Oducej*, 2012; *Odysseus*, 2012).
- 7) *Figurae veneris historiae* (*Figurae veneris historiae*, [2014] 2015, in Macedonian; the English version, published in 2019 under the same Latin title, *Figurae veneris historiae*, was not available to us when translating the Macedonian text into Romanian).

Only two of these plays (namely, no.4 and no.5 in the above list) had already been published in other Romanian translations—by the already mentioned Ioana Ieronim and Filip Ristovski. In each case, we decided that our version was different enough from that of our colleagues to justify our keeping it in our anthology, especially as, in our view, both texts rank among Stefanovski's best plays and, besides, mark turning points in his playwriting. As Romanian translators of Goran Stefanovski's plays written in Macedonian and/or English, we believe that our discussing here a few aspects of our work could be relevant for people—concurrently or alternatively—interested in: Cultural and Area Studies (namely, Balkan/East-European Studies); Translation Studies; Romanian Studies, since Romanian is the target language in our case study and, historically, Romanians have had multiple and strong connections—as well as conflicts—with various Balkan nations, which has resulted in interesting cultural changes and influences going both ways.

On many distinct levels, in more than one aspect, any of Goran Stefanovski's writings, in any language, is an epitome of Eastern Europe. During all his life, he tried to help the West meet the East (and vice versa), constantly refuting prejudices and false arguments. Although after he left