A Case of Mutilation: Translating Hemingway (and his life) in Communist Romania in the 1960s

Dan Horațiu Popescu*

Abstract:
The paper is a case study, part of a larger and older research project on the reception of modernist American literature in the cultural press of communist Romania in the 1960s. If the 1950s were the toughest years, in terms of censorship and physical atrocities, the 1960s could be considered the *milder* ones, while also anticipating the *enlightened* 1970s. We have been analyzing the Romanian cultural press as going beyond the role of an interface between an *ecriture* terminal and a network of readers: firstly, via translations, more or less accurate, secondly, through interviews and memories from journalists, fellow-writers, friends, family members, as reproduced from publications belonging mainly to the Eastern / Communist Bloc (Cuba included). Our research is also based on investigations run in the archives of the former secret police, the infamous Securitate. The relation between censorship and ideology, between institutionalized and self-censorship is underlined, as well as their effect in the act of literary translation. Our paper focuses on Hemingway as a result of him being the most popular representative of the Lost Generation at the time, in the countries of the former Soviet Bloc. The main text we had in view was *How Do You Like It Now, Gentlemen?* by Lilian Ross.

Keywords: Hemingway's reception, communist Romania, censorship, ideology

1. Introduction: the corridors of evil

When speaking about Romania, probably the first word that comes to one's mind, mainly to people from abroad, is the name of its infamous leader, who was executed on the Christmas night of 1989. In popular culture and, to some extent, in scholarship on countries from the former Soviet Bloc, Nicolae Ceauşescu came to be known as the iconic image of a communist dictator, the embodiment of ultimate ideological evil. What most people from abroad don't know, as well as many younger people from contemporary Romania, is that the worst years in terms of political persecution were those before his coming to power, when Romania was, especially in the early 1950s, in the grip of the Stalinist regime. Unspeakable attrocities were committed, and hundreds

* Associate Professor PhD, Partium Christian University of Oradea, dhpopescu@yahoo.com

of thousands died in forced labor camps and places of detention where horrific experiments[1] were undertaken with the purpose of re-educating the individuals who tried to fight or resist the sytem.

In schools, Russian replaced French as the main foreign language to be taught to younger generations, whereas carefully selected examples and samples from Russian literature were presented as models/patterns to follow for the readers and writers, be they aspiring or with an established reputation. The French intellectual tradition, so dear to Romanian cultural elite, was abandoned as well as the openings to the English culture and civilization, which had started to be intensely cultivated before WWII. Beyond the Iron Curtain, the geographical and ideological frontier designed in the aftermath of the war with the blessings from Churchill and Roosevelt, new legitimizing grand narratives were pushed forward.

Nevertheless, writers and teachers of literature not once attempted and even succeeded to avoid intellectual annihilation, which was one of the objectives of the corosive communist propaganda. Very few of the literary magazines remained, their disappearance echoing Lenin's ideas from the essay *Party Organization and Party Literature*, i.e. stating that writers were actually free to write what they liked. Unfortunately, they "could not expect to be published in Party journals unless they were committed to the Party's political line" (Selden, 1989: 27). Affirming the principle of *partinost*, commitment to the cause of the Party, the essay had been published in the first decade of the 20th century, in 1905, when imperial Russia did have its good share of censorship. The real dimension and mind-blowing effects of it were to be achieved only after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. And just like in Soviet Russia, Romania of the 1950s had no publications free of control from the omniscient and omnipresent Party.

So censorship was going to attain an unprecedented degree, following the Soviet models, with a continuous refining of the means, in order to reach the intended targets. The people in charge would control both texts and images, trying to prevent any ideological infection from the capitalist countries, the leader of which was, obviously, the *imperialist* U.S.A. The graphic aspect, i.e. the visual framing played a major role in adjusting the readers' perspective. No pictures at all or just one picture a week from America would suffice, while pictures from the socialist countries were plenty and larger, as well as those from the

[1] The most famous of them was The Piteşti Experiment, carried out between December 1949 and September 1951. Among those who would later condemn this largest and the most intensive brain-washing torture programme in the Eastern Bloc was Alexander Solzsenitsyn himself.

developing countries. Texts were mainly dedicated to world peace, nuclear disarmament and to the efforts of the African countries to gain their independence.

From the cultural magazines we browsed, we retained the prevalence, in the decade between 1949 and 1959, of the *image*, of the photos and of the political caricatures that accompanied texts. Then followed an intermediate stage, until 1965, when Ceauşescu came to power. Editors were probably searching for the Romanian way, so this might account for the appearance of the first photos from the U.S.A.. They contained a good-solid mix of social protest against injustice, war and, of course, unemployment. Between 1965 and 1971, the most liberal period, one could notice an improvement of the manipulative devices[2]. The period between 1972 and 1978 brought pictures of natural disasters, of marches against unemployment, of illegal immigrants, of the political debates among the members of the US Congress, etc.etc. And the very last decade, until 1989, focused on the cost of arming, and the necessity of disarmament, this time with *texts* prevailing. Still, a future reassessment, based on a more thorough browsing, is worth trying with a view to getting a more profound insight.

2. A writer's portrayal according to Lenin's principles

Definitely, the most important vehicles for conveying the *right* political messages to readers in Romania still interested in fiction and/or similar types of discourse, were the works of writers who seemed to resonate with *leftist* ideology. Lenin's followers adhering to the idea of the superstructure positively influencing the base in the long run, and at the same time practicians of the well-crafted, during Stalin's regime, Socialist Realism, had realized that readers should be given a cliffhanger in the desert of dull individual creations. Translations acted as such but, in addition, some portals could be opened for authors and translators altogether; authors from until then less accessible cultures and languages, and translators, some of them writers whose activity had been banned and who were happy to try their hand at promoting, in those particular circumstances, either new or well-established reputations. Translations, more or less accurate, interviews and memories, all contributed to instil in Romanian readers an increasingly yet ambiguous sense of spiritual independence, freedom and democracy.

Hemingway was among those authors writing in English whose works looked aligned and positive enough as to be accepted by communist censorship. Besides, his past, i.e. taking part in the Spanish Civil War, and his extremely dynamic, almost legendary, way of life,

[2] This is going to be the focus of a separate research.

made him even more appealing and eligible. The articles about him started to be published pretty late, since January 1958, and in this paper we restricted our approach to those circumvoluting his death, in July 1961, but with a major exception from 1964. Out of the 11 articles identified, 3 are by reputed Romanian *translators* from English. Other 4 are *translations*, however *without any translator's name mentioned*, from Russian, German and Spanish. Without access to the originals, our clue to the process is that the American writer needed being introduced while promoters would somehow assume less responsibility, i.e. editors merely taking and adapting from cultural magazines in the Soviet Union, East Germany and Cuba.

Don Ernesto locuieşte lângă Havana / Don Ernesto lives near Havana by A. Alexeev is such an example, accounting also for the speed the materials used to circulate among *brothers* and *sisters* in the Communist Bloc. As stated in a kind of caption box, on 8 February 1960 the First Deputy Premier of Soviet Union, Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan[3], while in Cuba, paid a visit to Hemingway, who was living at the time in San Francisco de Paula. The politician had been accompanied by the journalist, who sent his reportage to "Izvestia" by phone, and from the Soviet News Agency the Romanian "Contemporanul/ The Contemporary" managed to produce its own version no later than 19 February 1960.

Hemingway was presented as wearing very casual clothes, behaving modestly and appearing as a truly "quiet American", therefore contrasting the image of his filthy rich compatriots and of the impudent tourists who used to haunt the land of the Pearl of the Antiles before Castro's regime. His accessibility and popularity among neighbours were a perfect illustration of another of Lenin's principles, *narodnost*, i.e. the writers should adapt their style, avoid confusion, and lower their approach in order to reach the masses. Flattered by Mikoyan for all these qualities, Hemingway answered that he was only trying to make himself useful, the understatement here being that the writer was no partisan of the slogan "art for art's sake".

The writer's spacious, well-lighted villa, bought during the Spanish Civil War, was described as surrounded by modest houses, almost shabby, which spoke forth about the working class condition of their inhabitants. Another of Lenin's principles might have been at work in

[3] One of the very few Russian leaders who survived purges and fights among different factions of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, and managed to retire peacefully. "Highly intelligent with the driest of wits, he had a gift for languages, understanding English and, in 1931, he taught himself German by translating *Das Kapital*" (Sebag Montefiore 2004: 86).

the rhetoric of the article, i.e. *classovost*, meaning the writer was capable to overcome his middle-class barriers by deciding to live among poorer people. In this respect, *bourgeois* journalists and "other snobs" came under attack, as they used to twist the author's words and give him a bad name.

Inside the house no extravaganza could be noticed, no bad taste and no "abstract painting on the walls". The understatement here is that Hemingway was a realist and consequently he opposed non-figurative art. When given, among other presents, the two volumes of his *Selected Works*, from the Russian edition the circulation of which comprised 300000 copies, the writer was deeply impressed by the figures (readers were told nothing nothing about royalties!). The comment that followed was another example of how words by "capitalist" authors would serve the communist propaganda. The Soviet readers, according to Hemingway, were to be praised for being "extremely demanding" and for not "needing *comics*"; the latter mentioned products, iconic for large categories of readers in the U.S.A., were deemed (by the writer or by the journalist?) not *serious* enough.

A few months later, in May 1960, *Întâlnire cu Hemingway / Meeting Hemingway* by Sergo Mikoian[4], appeared in the Romanian "Gazeta Literară/ Literary Gazette", apparently a fragment from a larger article published in the Russian "Literaturnaia Gazeta/ Literary Gazette". Mikoyan's son, also a journalist, who had accompanied his father in Cuba too, presented the writer as "amazingly spontaneous, lively and cheerful". Hemingway seemed amused by his being "reputed as a great writer", and according to Sergo Mikoian, he did not put on airs, something that might be "specific to [only] true greatness." (Mikoian 1960) New details about the visit at Finca Vigia are given. To the presents mentioned in Alexeev's article, i.e. a Sputnik model and a bottle of vodka, a Matryoshka was added, but it was the vodka that stirred the conversation around, among other issues, Hemingway's intended visit to Soviet Union, possibly accompanying President Eisenhower.

The fragment was rounded up with a reference to another article, *Hemingway şi revoluţia / Hemingway and the Revolution*, published in "The Worker", the periodical of the Communist Party U.S.A, which Sergo read a few weeks later, in Moscow. It is hard to tell whether the conclusions of the fragment came from this last mentioned article or actually belonged to Sergo, so in this respect it might also be counted as a sample of Romanian editing. Hemingway, although *not* a revolutionary, was labeled as a great realist and a romantic at the same

[4] This is the Romanian way of spelling the name.

time, for there was no revolution without romanticism and only true realism could explain the cause of revolutions. His hesitations made him, actually, a *humanist*, but in what our research is concerned, we would retain the triumphalist conclusion, that "authentic humanism is always, ultimately, on the revolution side" (*Ibidem*).

Scriitorul şi marea / The Writer and the Sea by G. Borowik, was translated, again *without any mention of the translator's name*, from "Rum and die Welt/Around the World", 9/1960, an East-German publication, the September issue. Again, as the Romanian translation or adaptation (no one can tell), was published on 15 September 1960, one might ask whether that was not a concerted action, part of a larger plan in countries of the Soviet Bloc, meant to promote/emphasize the image of a certain personality at a given time with a view to attaining obscure political purposes. Borowik's article, for instance, resumed discussions mentioned at the beginning of the year in Alexeev's, i.e. Hemingway's attitude vis-à-vis Castro's regime, and Hemingway was quoted as being categorical about it in "a conversation with Anastas Ivanovici Micoian".

In Alexeev's article, when answering some of Mikoyan's questions, Hemingway underlined the importance of self-discipline in writing, which is a voluntary type of activity. Sacrifices should be imposed, such as giving up parties and receptions, or paying visits. The writer insisted on his having still so many issues to tackle and on the limited amount of time at his disposal. In Borowik's article, Hemingway stated, during a fishing expedition, that work was the most important thing in his life, that working set one free from troubles, and, of course, work was like a great love that had to be protected from an intruder's eyes. What the authors of such articles probably wanted to convey, apart from the writer's apparent willingness to visit the leading communist country, an issue which Hemingway cunningly avoided, was his creed in a certain *work ethic*, up to the point of becoming "a slave of self-discipline".

The same work ethic was highlighted indirectly, through the image of the house, by Fernando Campoamor, a Cuban friend of Hemingway, in the article *Hemingway şi Cuba / Hemingway and Cuba*, written especially for "Gazeta Literară/ the Literary Gazette", and published on 23 November 1961, four months after the writer's death. The East-German G. Borowik had noticed the simplicity of the four-roomed house, with an adjacent (ivory?) tower[5]. And Campoamor quoted Hemingway answering his friend, the gossip columnist Earl Wilson[6], when the latter asked him about the reason for living in Cuba. "Dear

[5] Yet Hemingway worked neither there nor in his study. Actually, the bedroom was the laboratory of creation, stacked with bookshelves, like all the other rooms.
[6] But who had a good reputation for being fair and for double-checking his facts.

Earl, you stayed in my house, didn't you? Didn't it look to you as the best place to work?" (Campoamor, 1961).

And he continued by challenging Wilson to find him a similar place in Ohio, "on a hill, fifteen minutes from Gulfstream", where he could stay with his "own fruits and vegetables, and with [his] fighting cocks and [his] dogs" (ibidem). "Fighting cocks" looked like the destabilizing element of the series meant to induce a paradise like-image of Cuba (the article was extremely politicized), as the perfect place to write, and it was going to resonate with the facts in the 1964 article we felt, and already mentioned, as a major exception from this line of representation.

3. Another Hemingway

3.1. Minor translation's labour's lost

Published in November that year, in "Secolul 20 / Twentieth Century"[7], it was a long translation, *this time with the translator's name mentioned*, of Lillian Ross's *How Do You Like It Now, Gentlemen?* And the very first paragraph must have been intriguing for the Romanian readers:

> Ernest Hemingway, who may well be the greatest American novelist and short-story writer of our day, rarely came to New York. For many years, he spent most of his time on a farm, the Finca Vigia, nine miles outside Havana, with his wife, *a domestic staff of nine*[8], fifty-two cats, sixteen dogs, a couple of hundred pigeons, and three cows. (in Weeks, 1962: 17)

"A domestic staff of nine" betrayed not just Hemingway's well-off condition, constantly and skillfully overlooked by the authors of the articles previously discussed, but also the fact that he was a *good employer*. One may say that Lillian Ross was American and that her article had been published in 1950, and that Hemingway perfectly fitted the pattern of the successful writer who used to make it to the tabloids in capitalist America, etc.etc. Moreover, the realities referred to were from the previous decade, when Cuba was not yet benefiting from the blessings of a communist regime. Nevertheless, when playing with such anachronisms, our major focus should be the Romanian readers of the mid 1960s, probably the same with those in the late 1950s, who must have built for themselves a standardized image of the writer and were now faced with some spectacular, in our opinion, adjustments, which they might have hesitated to call *improvements*.

[7] The best Romanian cultural magazine in those years, the early sixties and the decades to follow, reputed for its liberal way of promoting theoretical issues and masters of world literature

[8] Italics ours.

According to Lillian Ross, Hemingway had expressed his agreement about meeting her in New York, before departing to Europe. As he was coming from Cuba and it was supposed that not much time could be allotted to the New York interlude, he stated very clearly the places he wanted to visit, among them "the Bronx Zoo, Metropolitan Museum, Museum of Modern Art, ditto of Natural History" (in Weeks, 1962: 17) And he displayed *no interest in non-figurative art* – "Want to see the good Breughel at the Met, the one, no two, fine Goyas and Mr. El Greco's Toledo" (*Ibidem*).

The sentence that followed – "Don't want to go to Toots Shor's." –, appeared distorted in the Romanian translation Our guess is that the translator, L. Voita, had found the information on Toots Shor's, a very famous restaurant and lounge in Manhattan, less relevant for Romanian readers, and he omitted the name, so that he wouln't have to come up with more details, which might have conveyed an inappropriate image of the writer. Toots Shor's had a famous list of *ordinary* customers with a *glamorous* life style, starting with Joe DiMaggio, and which included Frank Sinatra, Marilyn Monroe, Judi Garland, Orson Welles and, of course, Hemingway

But a true challenge must have been the title, *How Do You Like it Now, Gentlemen?*, which although occurred for five times in the article, having an intended role as a leitmotif, was totally suppressed in the Romanian translation. We believe that the word *gentlemen/domn* was the cause, as the Romanian standard conversational/social vocabulary of the time allowed no room for *Sir* or *Mister*, also translatable with *domn*. Instead, people would use *tovarăş*, which was the translation for *comrade*. So, the translator's final decision was that Romanian readers should forget about *gentlemen* and enjoy *O zi cu Hemingway*, which in English would sound *A Day with Hemingway*!

We had two versions of the original text to compare, one published at the already mentioned date, soon after Hemingway's phone conversation with Ross at the end of 1949, setting the details of his visit and of their encounter. The other version appeared in a volume following the author's death, a colection of essay, so Lillian Ross had to adjust some of the verb tenses, especially in the introductory paragraph. Therefore, in the 1962 version, the verbs are in the past tense, which is understandable, whereas in the 1950 version, the verbs are in the present tense, which is logical as the author was still alive – "Ernest Hemingway, who may well be the greatest American novelist and short-story writer of our day, rarely *comes* to New York. (...) he *spends* most of his time on a farm, ..."

Nevertheless, both versions continue, for the immense majority of the article, in the past tense; however, the Romanian translation, and this

is the paradox, uses the present tense when rendering it. One can understand the translator's option, i.e. the events presented are added certain freshness and vividness. Other solutions, employing a certain aspect of the past tense in Romanian, would have augmented the text with a kind of nostalgia, but we are not sure whether that would not have been more suitable, given the context of the writer's disappearance three years earlier.

Another intriguing aspect was the translator's decision to divide the text in sections with headings of their own, which are not present in the original. So, the Romanian readers could experience "Nostalgia Europei / Nostalgia of Europe", in which Paris and Italy were remembered, "Despre scris, scriitori şi critici/About Writing, Writers and Critics", in which Russian and French models of inspiration were discussed, "Marlene Dietrich apare / Shows Up/" in which the benefits of being a grandparent were emphasized, "Destăinuiri, aduceri aminte / Confessions, Bringing Back Memories", in which the writer spoke about the disadvantages of being self-taught, and "Cezanne, Degas, Bach and Brueghel", the last one speaking for itself. Perhaps the length of the original text had scared the translator and he must have convened with the editor of the cultural magazine that such divisions were necessary and affordable.

3.2. The glasses to be fixed and the glasses to be filled

The most striking aspect in Lillian Ross's article, and in its avatars in the Romanian traslation, remained, in our opinion, the contrast, if any, between the *glasses to be fixed* and the *glasses to be filled*. Both our underlined phrases speak of the writer's nonchalance, even carelessness, in the long run. When talking about her husband's eye-glasses, Mary Hemingway was reported to have said – "He's had that same piece of paper under the nosepiece for weeks. When he really wants to get cleaned up, he changes the paper." (in Weeks, 1962: 20) However, one sentence further, we move from *nonchalance* to *joie de vivre* – "The bartender came up, and Hemingway asked him to bring another round of drinks" (*Ibidem*).

The "round of drinks" might belong to a presumed *drink* series, if we were to apply a Bakhtinian reading of the text, in the spirit the Russian theorist acted when he approached the fictional world of Rabelais. Except that here we are given such series in a non-fictional text, by an external observer. Nevertheless, in Hemingway's case, with so many alleged overlaps of his life with his work, we feel that the approach is sustainable. On the other hand, scholars and readers alike cannot deny that one great item Hemingway and Rabelais had in common was an all-encompassing *joie de vivre*.

The series started right at the beginning, when the young reporter had just met, at the airport, the mature writer and his wife, whose impatience was tamed by Hemingway after having finished to count the luggage – "Let's not crowd, honey. Order of the day is to have a drink first" (Idem, 19) And when he got his "double bourbons", after waiting "with impatience", his *impatience* seemed to have been of a different order and degree than his wife's, as he "took several large swallows". Then he continued a kind of peroration against humans in front of the coffee-drinking reporter, and praised animals like the one Montana bear who once "slept with him, got drunk with him, and was a close friend" (*Ibidem*).

With all these details present in the Romanian translation, the Romanian readers were offered, all of a sudden, an image of Hemingway that had been carefully avoided in the previous articles introducing his life and work. As already mentioned, the *work ethic* idea had prevailed, and the only entertainment allowed was going fishing, as a means of not getting obssessed with the writing process, which Hemingway considered much more necessary for him than even eating or drinking (Borowik, 1960). One may object that in Lillian Ross's article the writer was about to leave on holiday, yet further elements were going to inflame the *drink* series to an extent difficult to imagine for the *still* frozen ideological context of the 1964 Eastern-European country.

At the airport, while projecting their staying in the city, the first things the Hemingway couple thought of ordering, once arrived at the hotel, were caviar and champagne. "I've been waiting months for that caviar and champagne." (in Weeks, 1962: 20) – confessed Mary Hemingway, as if they had been at the end of an extended period of reclusion, possibly related to the book the writer was working at the time, *Across the River and Into the Trees*.[9] So, the *drink* series was reinforced through "champagne", and the *food* series was added through "caviar", but the one name present in the context – "First we call Marlene" (*Ibidem*) –, brought Romanian readers to a world they had stopped dreaming at when communists took power after WWII.

The world of Hollywood movie stars, the world of glamour, which had been denied to masses in those years of intense propaganda, started to make their way back through cultural magazines and translations. At the hotel, however, the flamboyant Marlene Dietrich, although wearing a mink coat and gladly accepting a glass from one of the "couple of

[9] He was going to complete it while staying at the Ritz hotel in December, so after his November meeting with Lillian Ross (Trogdon, 2002: 235).

bottles of Perrier-Jouët, *brut*." (Idem: 22) the Hispanic[10] waiter had brought, refrained from acting like a diva. After taking a piece of toast with caviar spread on it, which Marry Hemingway had ofered, she underlined the reason for her change of attitude – "I have to behave because I am a grandmother" (Idem: 25).

A tamed diva, turned into a careful and protective granny, worked well from the ideological point of view, and that might account for the fragment being preserved in the edited text. Moreover, although while taking a sip of champagne, the actres boasted on her baby-sitting and cleaning maid skills – "As soon as they leave the house, I go around and look in all the corners and straighten the drawers and clean up. I can't stand a house that isn't neat and clean" (Idem: 26). The Romanian housewives and would-be readers of the sophisticated cultural magazine must have been delighted.

What was bizarre, though, was the choice for the Romanian translation of the adjective describing the look given by Hemingway at the news of her becoming grandmother for the second time. Although he was going to have a grandchild too, his very first, what Lillian Ross captured was a "bleak look". There are but limited translation possibilities for *bleak* in Romanian, yet what readers got was *stranie*, which in English would be a perfect *strange*. Could that have another ideological motivation, i.e. the great writer, humanist and friend of ordinary people shouldn't have been exposed as not being happy at the idea of becoming a grandfather, i.e. a true *patriarch*?[11].

The communists did encourage a *patriarch* mythology, with any *lider maximus* perceived as the ultimate father of the nation. Answers could be searched for with other translation instances as well in this material, and our attempt at building an indeological frame of reference and interpretation would be better than nothing. Still, the worst, if any, was yet to come.

3.3. A case of mutilation

The divisions operated within the text by the translator & editor, apart from fragmenting it, although with the good intention of guiding the readers, revealed certain misconnections that eventually led us to a disconcerting discovery. Large chunks of the original text had been ommitted in the Romanian translation, and when doing the maths within the electronic version at our disposal, we realized that 22 % of it, almost

[10] Presumed Hispanic as, according to Ross, Hemingway "said something in Spanish to the waiter. They both laughed, and the waiter left" (in Weeks, 1962: 23).

[11] According to one of his sons, as stated in the documentary *Wrestling with Life*, he was not very happy having children around when he was writing.

a quarter, was missing, thus giving the phrase *lost in translation* a weirdly different meaning.

We strived to identify the cast away fragments, which did not take long, but what followed became the real challenge, as we were trying to understand the sound reasons underlying the cuts. Was there simply a lack of space in the magazine issue, although it was regularly edited and published in a book format, once a month, with an average number of pages exceeding 300? Or, once again, was it for political/ideological reasons that such omissions were performed, given the fact that the magazine was in its very early years?[12] But in 1964, the spectre of Stalinism was gone, and the Russian army had left Romania in August 1958.

We started to look for discrepancies in content between what remained and what had been ousted, but we could find no particular difference. All of the missing fragments reflected the same issues, and we could recognize, as in the very short one below, the *drink* and *food* series, if we were to apply the Bakhtinian key of analysis.[13]

> Mrs. Hemingway said she *would order lunch* while he got dressed. Still *holding his glass*, he reluctantly got up from the couch. Then he *finished his drink* and went into the bedroom. By the time he came out – wearing the same outfit as the day before, except for a blue shirt with a button-down collar – a waiter had *set the table for our lunch*. We couldn't have lunch without a *bottle of Tavel*, Hemingway said, and we waited until the waiter had brought it before *starting to eat*.[14] (in Weeks, 1962: 29)

And the episode continued in the same note, with Mary Hemingway assigning domestic tasks, one of them being the aquisition of a new coat. That was meant to cover, literally and metaphorically, Papa's nonchalance when "wearing the same outfit as the day before". Another domestic task was fixing his eye-glasses, but the writer, once again, showed more concern for *filling* glasses with a *joie de vivre* the type Bakhtin exposed in Rabelais – "Pantagruelism", said the Russian theorist, "means the ability to be cheerful, wise and kind" (Bakhtin, 1981: 186)

> "Papa, please get glasses fixed," Mrs. Hemingway said.
>
> He nodded. Then he nodded a few times at me—a repetition of the sign for attention.

[12] The first issue had been published in January 1961.

[13] The full denominations are *drink and drunkenness* and *food and dining*.

[14] All italics ours in the fragment quoted.

> "What I want to be when I am old is a wise old man who won't bore," he said, then paused while the waiter set a plate of asparagus and an artichoke before him and *poured the Tavel*. Hemingway *tasted the wine* and gave the waiter a nod.[15] (in Weeks, 1962: 29)

Lillian Ross's pioneering article has all the attributes of a non-fictional novel, with scenes and characters in full swing so, again, our belief in the suitability of her text to being applied the critical apparatus for fiction is beyond doubt. In Rabelais, for instance, "everything of value," according to Bakhtin, "must achieve its full potential in temporal and spatial terms", whereas "everything evaluated negatively (…) must be destroyed" (Bakhtin, 1981: 167-168) This extraordinary faith in earthly space and time is typical not only of Rabelais, but also, according to the Russian theorist, of Shakespeare and Cervantes. Shall we ad Hemingway's Ross to this illustrious series? Then what is there to be *fully achieved* or, on the contrary, *destroyed*, could be left for the readers to decide in the following, *missing from translation*, fragment:

> Hemingway stood looking sadly at the bottle of champagne, which was not yet empty. Mrs. Hemingway put on her coat, and I put on mine.
>
> "The half bottle of champagne is the enemy of man," Hemingway said. We all sat down again.
>
> "If I have any money, I can't think of any better way of spending money than on champagne," Hemingway said, pouring some.
>
> When the champagne was gone, we left the suite. Downstairs, Mrs. Hemingway told us to remember to get glasses fixed, and scooted away (in Weeks, 1962: 30)

There were other, numerous sequences of the same type omitted, with other series or patterns involved, the epitome of which being placed at the very end of the text, when Hemingway refused to appear in a commercial for a beverage – "I told them I wouldn't drink the stuff for four thousand dollars," he said. "I told them I was a champagne man". A morally unsuitable ending for the Romanian readers, who instead were cut short 772 words earlier, with the writer coming out of the Metropolitan Museum, in the rain.

4. Loose ties or, instead of conclusion

In order to understand and hopefully decipher the mystery of this slightly distorted, at times, and partly, if not severely, mutilated translation of a text about Hemingway in the mid 1960s Romania, we tried our best at tracking, after so many years, the only people who could have had reasonable answers to our questions. Lillian Ros was still alive in 2013, when we initiated our research on writers of the Lost Generation and their reception in communist Romania. But it took a

[15] All italics ours in the fragment quoted. The waiter, just like in other similar situations, seems to be more like an accomplice than an employee performing regular duties.

good amount of time for the people at the "New Yorker" to put us in touch with the reputed journalist, yet not before trying to tempt us with discounts, reduced subscriptions, and all that.

One of our major questions for Lillian Ross was if anybody from Romania had contacted her, in 1964 or earlier, asking for the permission to translate the article, or whether she had ever been aware of the existence of that translation. From her relatively quick answer, we found out that we could get *Portrait of Hemingway* by Lillian Ross from Amazon, which she recommended as being "fast and inexpensive." And that we could also watch the video *JFK Library hour with Lillian Ross and Susan Morrison* with no charge. Envisaging a scary cul-de-sac, we reiterated the previous message, this time with more specific questions, while letting her know about how strictly we adhered to her instructions. Which she reiterated in turn – well, this time the Amazon services were "quickly and inexpensively" – and with the same "Best wishes". There was though, an encouraging part – "These should tell what you want to know."

We were still left the translation portal, however the one thing we came to learn, after extensive coverage of the articles in the cultural press of those years, was that almost everybody was under surveillance. Therefore we resorted to files in the archives of the former and infamous Securitate, open to public after 1990, in order to find out more about this L. Voita, who eventually proved to be a Leopold or a Leonard.[16] His files bore the labels *Informer* and *Network*, which meant that he was not an ordinary person and that he was collaborating with the system. In this respect he had to have a code name *and* a pen-name.

He had been a war correspondent during WWII, and after that he wanted to continue as a journalist, but he abandoned as he was suspected of Nazi sympathies. He tried to lose his track, working as an electrician, but he was once again suspected, this time of sympathy for the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. In the 1960s, he was back in the business of writing for the cultural press, where he signed as Leonid Voita. He either agreed or was persuaded to collaborate. They had copies of his war articles and a relative of his, a woman, who left for Italy and came back, was suspected of having been recruited by the Italian Service 4.

His father had been of Czech origin, and his mother of German and Hungarian origins, so one can understand why in a note in one of the files he specified that he knew well German and Hungarian. To which

[16] This may sound confusing, but it was not often that, although it was obvious that the accounts related to the same person, the name had been changed. If that was simple negligence or it was on purpose, it is very difficult to assess.

French and Italian were added, but we could find no reference to English. Moreover, the only book bearing his name on it was a *Gauguin His life and Work* album, with him being responsible for the section translated from German. Still, on a list of his connections that might "present an interest for our operations", there are the names of a few reputed Romanian translators from English.

And there was the end of our investigations. He might have acted as coverage for some of his fellow translators, who had been denied publishing at the time, just like some script-writers did in America of the McCarthy's years. We have not found any such reference so far. Surely, a good, even substantial, article can be written on Leopold/Leonard/Leonid Voita, based on the information in his relatively modest, in terms of the number of pages, Securitate files. But not on him as translating literary texts from English. Not yet.

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