INSTANCES OF (UN)TRANSLATABILITY
IN ION CREANGĂ'S
AMINTIRI DIN COPILĂRIE/MEMORIES OF MY BOYHOOD

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Abstract: *These days, writing about untranslatability may seem courageous, as more and more voices associate this issue with translation incapacity and, instead, advocate for creative remedies or even reject such an instance. This study does not deal with a contemporary novel, nor does it have to do with a powerful textual space. However, we believe that translation theories mainly focus on analyses of a certain category of languages, and raise questions of discrepancies between subordinate and dominant cultures, a tendency which derives from the proneness of the international publishing industry to favour certain languages and types of writing. We are not aiming for a debate around the subject of publishing politics or endeavours, but rather we try to cast some light on the ambitious project of rendering vernacular into a powerful language. This paper deals with the work of a great Moldavian storyteller who contributes significantly to the enhancement of expressiveness through linguistic characteristics that occur informally. We hypothesise that the vibrant vernacular writing "Memories of my boyhood" creates potential instances of untranslatability, due to significant differences between the Romanian variety and English, not necessarily in the linguistic inventory but rather in the cognitive structures of the readership. Therefore, the case study focuses on how source text and target text readers infer meaning from interjections and terms of address, originally belonging to the Moldavian modes of expression. Although the translators re-create these short utterances, due to a lack of a similar background from the part of the receiving culture, we witness a limitation on conveying their original intentionality, emotion and plethora of meanings.*

1. Introduction

Ion Creangă is one of the most distinguished Romanian classics and, even though his prose was very popular in the mid-twentieth century, his writings continue to be an important part in the academic curriculum taught in schools. Lately, some critics have started to reconsider his role in the

175

mentality of our new generations and label him as an author from a distant era, one who belongs to a completely different cultural and historical horizon. However, despite these new-fangled observations, his remarkable style is still a window to understanding vernacular particularities and cannot be excluded from the Romanian literature evolution.

Creangă is the ideal rural narrator who fills his characters with spirit and creates a humorous regional style (Călinescu, 2001: 173). His writings reveal a lot of peasant lexicon and especially proverbs and sayings in a form of erudite refinement. The uniqueness of *Memories of My Boyhood* lies in the depiction of the Moldavian village life and traditional customs. Numerous countryside practices, childish pranks, religious beliefs, and teaching methods are brought to life while creating the symbolical picture of a peasant child's path toward maturity. Although the writer uses a vernacular language for presenting the reality, his approach is much stylized. If the rural narrator uses a limited number of means of expression, Creangă proceeds by accumulation, concentrating in a relatively limited space a diversity of means specific to the vernacular language: simplicity and syntactic uniformity, ellipsis, repetition, conciseness of expression and dramatization of the narrative (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, 1978: 561).

From a linguistic perspective, we should not consider Creangă's style dialectal, but vernacular, because he is a storyteller who obtains his material from country life and processes it like a peasant (Iordan, 1937: 71-72). The differences between dialect and vernacular lie in the phonetic and lexical nature of the language. The dialects of the Romanian language are territorial and have been separated from the common Romanian language, centuries ago, due to migration. The people who live on the Romanian territory speak the Daco-Romanian dialect. Vernacular is subordinated to the dialect and is characteristic to smaller regions. Every Romanian region: Moldavia, Wallachia, Banat, Maramureș, and Crișana, has its distinct vernacular language. The effect is that the expressions and words belonging to each of these rural environments are easy to understand by the inhabitants of any region of Romania.

The Moldavian author makes use of onomatopoeic words with a high degree of expressiveness that create outstanding and unique mental images through pronunciation. This language is enriched with idioms and fixed syntactic constructions engraved in the living memory of the Romanian people (Iordan, 1937: 73). The author's stylistic devices employ to the greatest possible advantage the rhythm of the speech. The breezy tone is unpredictable and suggestive, nurtured by all sorts of syntactic instruments, such as the stream of subordinate clauses, intensified with the help of adverbs and adverbial phrases (Tohăneanu, 1965: 454-455).

Memories of my boyhood was rendered into English by virtue of a joint effort from the part of the Romanian academic Ana Cartianu, and professor of Romance Philology and French Literature Ronald Carlyle Johnston. The translation was published in 1978, nearly a century after the original text, together with other stories and tales written by the Romanian author. In the foreword of the translated collection, the translators point out some of the challenges the peasant dialect poses in translation, an aspect which represents the starting point of our research. Among the lexical issues, the translators mention the names of agricultural tools, church service, religious rites, and superstitions. In looking for English equivalents, they mention the use of archaisms and dialectical words. However, footnotes have been used in the case of native words with no equivalent. Onomatopoeia and its relation to rhythm enhancement is also indicated as representing a chief problem. As for the Romanian proverbs and sayings, although they often have English corresponding forms, their meaning gets transferred to a different level. In the end, the translators conclude: "we have tried to preserve the spirit of the Romanian text, to give a translation easily accessible to the reader who cannot enjoy Creangă's incomparable art and tongue in the original" (Creangă, 1978: 7).

We should not disregard the individual experience of the Romanian author, as it is conspicuously manifested in his literary style. We speak of an author born and raised in an environment of illiterate peasants, at a time when priests struggled to convince people to send their children to school. He offers the experiences of a unique rural universe, in an absolutely exclusivist language. Few Romanian people who have not lived in the country understand all the forms in which this micro-culture is represented. This kind of specificity tends to increase the effort invested in understanding the text even for the Romanian readership, amplifying, therefore, the concept of untranslatability.

We aim to prove that the potential untranslatability, especially in the case of Ion Creangă's writing, captures more than just words; it refers to the utterly authentic language of a small community, with its particularities, pronunciation and syntactic errors, deriving from secular beliefs and practices. On several occasions, these delectable linguistic nuances cannot be rendered in the conventional form of the language of origin either, because Creangă is a specific type of peasant that writes in order to be listened to, and his prose makes use of the lively sprouts of speech, in order to gain brilliance and fully reveal its significance.

2. Critical aspects on the concept of untranslatability

The issue of untranslatability spurs interesting debates that carry philosophical views in the background. If, at the outset of translation theories,

scholars offered a special status to the translation of literature, while making categorical statements in favour of untranslatability, nowadays the perspective is continuously evolving. Is it possible to have a universal theory that applies to every specific language and context? If we consider a case of untranslatability from one language into another, does that mean that the same would happen with every foreign language? Take, for instance, the Romanian word *mărțişor*, which refers to a small piece of ornament fastened to clothing and tied with a red and white braided thread, given as a gift to women and girls on the 1ˢᵗ of March, as a symbol of the spring arrival. This is an old custom specific to the Romanian territories, believed to have originated in the Dacian era. Thus, it is linked to social behavioural practices and deeply embedded in the Romanian people's lives, and, if it is to transfer it to a target language culture that has no similar background, it would be devoid of symbolism and feeling. However, in Bulgarian, Albanian or Macedonian, the word has a perfect equivalent, because the same cultural practice has been preserved by tradition. The question of untranslatability is thus very delicate, because, even if the word and its related custom can be explained, some readers may comprehend it more thoroughly than others. Could this mean that untranslatability should be considered from the perspective of readership, not from the point of view of the translators' interpretative competence? In the end, we should not disregard all three leading actors of the process: author – translator – reader.

Roman Jakobson was one of the first theorists to tackle the issue of untranslatability. He advanced the idea that "poetry by definition is untranslatable", because "the grammatical categories carry a high semantic import" and can only be creatively transposed (Jakobson, 1971: 265-266). But studies have shown that sometimes it is impossible to faithfully translate any literary text, simply because literature is a kind of emotional outburst that intertwines with the mental lexicon that each individual speaker possesses. This means language is not only dependent on grammatical patterns but it also carries semantic and pragmatic imports.

Untranslatability is an issue that appears due to TL linguistic obstacles and perceptual imbalances. The absence of interlinguistic correspondence is an index of the impossibility of translating. However, another common belief related to untranslatability is that it "begins in the source language", as a form of "a defensive attitude, in that it sanctifies the internal quirks and confusions of a language […] that may indeed be wonderful in the hands of a skilled speaker or writer, but hardly sacred" (Vinokur & Réjouis, 2018: 18). Indeed, the writings of the author selected for our research reveal a language devoted exclusively to the single use of the Romanian people. This language entails etymological layers, forms of orality

and offers a window to the microcosm of traditional Moldavian life of the 19th century.

Undoubtedly, creation is used in any act of translation, as translators mostly show their skills of interpretative choices (Venuti, 2008/1995: 13). Sometimes, it takes several attempts at finding the most suitable choice to transfer meaning, form and effects. Broadly speaking, some scholars argue against the very existence of untranslatability and describe the situation as a double-faced issue: "firstly, that the efforts that have been made to translate a passage so far do not constitute an adequate translation […]—but also, secondly, that no amount of further effort could ever produce one" (Large, 2019: 51).

We know that translation goes hand in hand with equivalence. But if we consider translation as an act of finding equal meanings, the only true equivalence can be proven in the case of an "invariable back-translation" (Chesterman, 1997: 9-10), which is not something that happens ordinarily. Moreover, the theorist argues that equivalence is unachievable simply because it suggests perfection, which we all know does not really exist. Therefore, translation should not be perfect, and, from the perspective of language use, "everything can be translated somehow, to some extent, in some way — even puns can be explained" (11).

In the case of idioms and fixed expressions, Baker (2018/1992: 74) draws attention to the distinction between untranslatable and "difficult to translate", pointing out that similar parallels may exist even between SL and TL expressions that apparently refer to different concepts, such as the Welsh translation "it rains women and sticks" for the English saying "it rains cats and dogs". It is not the specific items an expression contains but rather the meaning it conveys and its association with culture-specific contexts that determines the level of difficulty in translation.

World Literature is a modern concept, commonly associated with nowadays' translation practices, that accounts for the receptivity of foreign cultures, and thanks to which "contemporary world offers an extraordinarily vibrant and varied literary landscape" (Damrosch, 2003: 17). However, despite its positive implication for increasing literary consumption and cross-cultural understanding, the exploration of this concept has revealed that it is not just "writing that gains in translation" (288). It looks like, once again, the enthusiastic initiative of uniting happens to reveal substantial differences between how people create, imagine and address literature, which inevitably leads to separation. More and more scholars approach a distinction between linguistic influences across the globe, and prove that World Literature should not be viewed as an "autonomous development but as a compromise between a western formal influence (usually French or English) and local materials" (Moretti, 2000: 58). Furthermore, while examining the unequal relations

179

between cultures, theorists notice a homogenous tendency in making the original text understandable and accessible, in other words, "reimagining what in the world the "world" in literature might be" (Apter, 2013: 196).

In a study conducted around the issue of World Literature, Taylor (2021: 22) proposes a redefinition of the theory, in the sense of changing the focus from rendering foreign words into another language to transposing concepts into other contexts. Although this is not some novel insight, the scholar emphasises the importance of working with "etymological and translational analysis and involving a broader circle of languages" (28). This philosophical insight advises researchers to think bigger than the language itself, and to expand the literary portfolio, in the end, to give greater scope to the particularities of untranslatability.

A highly debated work in the field is the *Dictionary of Untranslatables. A philosophical Lexicon,* edited in English by Barbara Cassin (2014), first published in French under the title *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intraduisibles.* According to its introductory section, the ambitious work gathers entries which compare and reflect on the variations across Arabic, Basque, Catalan, Danish, English, French, German, Greek (classical and modern), Hebrew, Hungarian, Latin, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, and Spanish languages. Despite its suggestive title, this dictionary philosophises upon the phenomenon of the tumultuous denotations related to some words, which makes it difficult for foreign languages to pick from and communicate. In Cassin's words, "To speak of untranslatables in no way implies that the terms in question, or the expressions, the syntactical or grammatical turns, are not and cannot be translated: the untranslatable is rather what one keeps on (not) translating" (Cassin, 2014: xvii).

In relation to the dictionary, Venuti bemoans the choice of considering the terms untranslatable, as the entries actually show their translatable character, by enumerating conspicuous possibilities, and concludes that "the translation analysis raises more questions than it answers" (Venuti, 2016: 188-189). Moreover, the American scholar associates this approach to the timeworn romantic idea that translations destruct and contaminate the original integrity of the text (198).

When it comes to untranslatability, there is no shortage of theories, most of which fall under the remits of different perspectives. From a lexical and semantic point of view, untranslatability deals with a lack of equivalents or insufficient implication in meaning. Culturally and historically speaking, the issue may be understood as a gap of knowledge and background that contribute to the production of meaningless concepts. Something viewed as extremely complex in a cultural space may be disregarded and insignificant when transferred to a different ideology. Whichever stance one takes, the

possibilities differ on what may alleviate or impede the process of translation. Footnotes, explanatory additions, borrowing, are all strategies that make the untranslatable translatable. In Venuti's words "translating operates by building an interpretive context in a language and culture that differ from those that constitute the source text" (198), and we cannot undermine this fact. However, we believe that, from the point of view of target text readers' responses, their interpretations may lack experiential and emotional support. Hence, the pragmatic dimensions should not be denied or reduced from the phenomenon of untranslatability.

3. Instances of (un)translatability in Ion Creangă's *Memories of My Boyhood*

The chosen topic for this study is not a breakthrough in the analysis of Creangă's intricate work in translation. In 2014, Oana Cenac proceeded to establish the particularities of cross-cultural dimensions in the English translation of *Memories of my boyhood*. Starting from the hypothesis that "English, although familiar to the notion of peasantry, could not and cannot be aware of all 19th century Romanian social realities", the study enumerates the cultural and historical coordinates and their English treatment in form and meaning (Cenac, 2014: 159-161). The research also reveals different mediation devices. For cultural customs, objects or religious holidays, the translators chose either to keep the original words and to offer explanations at the bottom of the page, to find English equivalents and to associate them with further clarifications regarding the origin and the habitual practice of the Moldavian people, or to keep their original form and to add English plural inflections (as in the example *hora – horas*).

In terms of idiomatic phrases, proverbs and sayings, the study includes examples that prove two ways of rendering their meaning - literal translation for general language and adaptation for specific contexts, confirming thus the observations made in the translators' foreword (161-162). Another stylistic aspect taken into consideration by the researcher stands in the form of "archaic language patterns" and "figures of speech". Following a table that shows source text utterances and their parallel translation, the study concludes that, because of modern language devices, "the readers in the target language cannot 'taste' the 'flavour' of the Moldavian language" (162). As it happens, the selected examples represent substantial evidence of how certain difficulties have been overcome. So, what is it that makes Creangă's writing so exquisite for the Romanian readership and apparently cannot be reproduced in translation?

In approaching this subject, we do not want to rely on the translators' capabilities in rendering historical or cultural words or expressions, but rather wish to return to the intentionality of the original work. We cannot simply

point at the translated version and consider it a mistranslation, because it proves an earnest effort at reproducing the natural form and meaning inherent in Creangă's speech. However, we were guided by several questions that are pertinent to both pragmatic stylistics and translation theory. Theorists note that pragmatics and literature merge from the perspective of the reader, who animates the characters and the plot through the pragmatic act of reading. "This is facilitated by the ability of readers to adopt a particular type of cognitive stance, the literary stance, that allows them to promptly access relevant background knowledge concerning literary texts" (Panagiotidou, 2014: 132). In other words, textual stimuli and the readers' background knowledge combine and give rise to the same private reading experience. But what happens when the text is transposed into a foreign context that does not share the same encoded information? It should not be hard to translate, if one uses the right strategies, and puts enough effort into interpreting or explaining the units correspondingly, but does the foreign reader actually understand how *colivă* tastes or how *doina* sounds? Does the foreign reader share the same emotions with the Moldavian peasant child, called *Nică*, who puts on a *țoală* ("rug" - TT: 39) and sings at the top of his lungs *Doamne miluieşte, popa prinde peşte* (Halleluja! God give grace, our priest has gone and caught a dace" – TT: 39)?

Driven by postmodern politics and ideologies, contemporary school of thought seems to disregard the existence of untranslatability, so this study tries to consolidate empirical evidence in proving that some literary texts are extremely instinctive and exclusivist in targeting specific readers. Creangă's writing style is shaped according to the rules of a minor language, even though it cannot be considered a type of dialect by definition, because Romania has only regional varieties (in Romanian, *graiuri*), but it does expose Romanian, which is the major language, to a structural depersonalisation. In what follows, we will present several linguistic structures that might stand as instances of untranslatability when viewed from the perspective of readers' comprehension.

Interjections

A first instance that we consider to be possibly untranslatable because of its emotional charge refers to interjections. These describe a use of pitch, characteristic to a speaker or dialect, and their iconic nature lies in their tremendous symbolical potential, as they can evoke images and arouse feelings in the addressee, thereby conveying an emotional state at the same time.

In Creangă's speech, interjections substitute or accompany the predicates and create, through their phonetic structure, a special effect, particularly in intonation. Thus, the phrase becomes accentuated and even the word that follows receives vibrant expressiveness (Tohăneanu, 1965: 456-

457). In the example below, the interjection not only takes the place of a verb or possibly of an insinuation (*a șterpeli* – 'to snitch'/ *a se alege cu ceva* – 'to receive something with very little effort'), but it also alludes to the speed of the gesture, while indicating the rubbing sound of the object when hastily taken. Moreover, associated with punctuation, it produces pauses and slackens the rhythm. Therefore, intonation keeps the readers guessing, creates suspenseful moments, and should be taken into account as an element of (un)translatability.

"Duminicile bâzâiam la strană, și <u>hârști</u>! câte-un colac!" (ST: 16)	"On Sundays we would hum away in the pew and, <u>slap! bang!</u> there was a cake for each of us pinched from the offerings!" (TT: 19)

Another interjection with expressive function and deeply rooted in the mentality of the Romanian people is the exclamation that accompanies the gesture of a blow, used in children's language, usually repeated, with noun value and referring to beating an object, for instance, after a child bumps different body parts into objects and starts crying. It is possible to find foreign language equivalents, but we believe that its childish tone, which brings back memories of soothing maternal voices for any Romanian reader, cannot be accurately rendered.

"Na, na! –" (ST: 32)   "Take that!" (TT: 36)

The same implicature is conveyed by another interjection that occurs in the first years of childhood, used when lifting a child up, with outstretched arms, at the same level or above the height of the adult, to suggest how much the child has grown or still needs to grow. The voice becomes high-pitched and even melodious as the vowels lengthen in duration.

"tâta mare!" (ST: 33)   "what a tall boy!" (TT: 38)

The interjection "măi" represents yet another ST specific case of conveying different emotions through a sound. The word is addressed to one or more males, less often females, and expresses a wide variety of feelings, like admiration, wonder, surprise, confusion, dissatisfaction or irony. This interjection is not used to address a person you respect. In a study conducted around the issue of the Romanian utterances used in order to address (Rusu, 1959: 52) and following the answers of the Romanian peasants, the author states the existence of a verb derived from this interjection, *a măi*, unattested by linguists, similar in meaning with *a tutui* (Fr. *tutoye*r - using the familiar

183

forms of the pronoun "you"). This only proves the affective tone of a term conceptualized in oral speeches, a linguistic ornament that cannot be rendered or understood when taken out of its particular context.

"Măi!!! s-a trecut de şagă!" (ST: 13)	My word, this is past a joke (TT: 19)
"Ce-i de făcut, măi Nică?" (ST: 13)	"What's to be done about it?' I kept asking myself" (TT: 19)
"Măi omule, măi!" (ST: 21)	"my man" (TT: 24)

The two forms of the interjection indicate a difference in establishing the relationships between speakers. *Mă* is even less polite than *măi,* and can also be used to oppose or refuse to accept something.

"Trăsnea, mă! scoală!" (ST: 68).	"Hei! Trăsnea! Get up!" (TT: 77)
"Ho, mă! ce vă este?" (ST: 80).	"Hey you! what's come over you!" (TT: 99)

Terms of address

Affection plays an important role in the use of different terms of address. A particular trait for the Romanian language is the use of honorific titles that encode the relative social status of the participants in a conversation. *Bădiţa* or *bade* is a popular term of address, used in Transylvania, Banat, Moldavia and Bessarabia. According to the online version of *Dicţionarul Explicativ al Limbii Române*, the term coincides with the Bulgarian *bata*, *batju*, term for addressing an older brother, and it may be the native form of the Indo-European root for *father*, according to *baci* and the Russian language *batjuska*. Taking into account the different linguistic specificities of each Romanian region, deeply influenced by political contexts or invasions, it is not surprising that even across Romania this word is understood differently, varying from addressing an unknown older person to being used only by women as a form of endearment to call their husbands. In Creangă's speech, it applies to higher-in-status persons, as in the case of *bădiţa Vasile,* the church's teacher, and to an older brother. The English translation goes for *Master Vasile,* indicating a male teacher, and in the second instance uses the generic term *brother.* However, we believe the implicature of the original word, in relation to its unique nature, can only be understood by Romanians.

In the Romanian rural life of the 19th century, the pious peasant, the major model of piety, is closely accompanied by the priest, perceived as an

184

intellectual, a keeper and preacher of the national culture. This image is due to the fact that for a long time the priest was one of the few literate people in the village, which propelled him as an inspiring leader for the community, a person with unlimited access to knowledge (Cosma, 2014: 101). At that point in time, the priest was not required to prove schooling and study-gained knowledge but to be able to serve in the church. The education received from the monasteries could go from the superior religious culture, to utter ignorance, covered by the memorization of prayers. This education was aimed at teaching priests to read and write without a special attention to organized knowledge (Călinescu, 1998: 52), which results in a paradox regarding the image of the peasant priests. Although they are often perceived as counsellors, mentors to their parishioners, some of them show immoral and corrupt behaviour. In this sense, Creangă uses two different terms that entail opposite perceptions of the priest: *popă* and *părinte*. The first one is rather disparaging, even though sometimes coincides with the popular form of the profession. Nică's parents have heated discussions around the subject of him pursuing his studies and becoming *popă*. However, some of the most humorous sayings include persiflage of the general behaviour of a peasant priest:

"Dacă-i copil, să se joace; dacă-i cal, să tragă; și dacă-i <u>popă</u>, să citească…" (ST: 34).	"A child shall play; a horse shall draw; a <u>priest</u> shall read" (TT: 39).
"Doamne miluieşte, <u>popa</u> prinde peşte" (ST : 34).	"Halleluja! God give grace, Our <u>priest</u> has gone and caught a dace!" (TT: 39).
"<u>popa</u> are mână de luat, nu de dat ; el mănâncă şi de pe viu, şi de pe mort" (ST : 78).	"a <u>priest</u>'s hand will grasp rather than give away; he thrives upon the living and upon the dead" (TT: 88).
"Picioare de cal, gură de lup, obraz de scoarţă şi pântece de iapă se cer unui <u>popă</u>" (ST : 78).	"If a <u>priest</u> has a horse's legs, a wolf's mouth, a thick skin and a mare's belly, he'll want nothing else" (TT: 88).

At the same time, the narrator differentiates these two terms when describing different types of peasant priests. We notice that *popa* is mostly the round-figured cunning mischievous priest who enjoys the benefits of church life but gets angry quickly, and does not prove his spiritual grace, whereas *părinte* describes a priest who deserves respect for his tireless effort in urging peasants to send their children to school and in teaching the children to read and write. The English equivalent 'father' is a term referring

185

to an elderly and venerable man, used as a title of respect and has identical effects to its Romanian correspondent. However, in the English translation the term 'parson' refers to a cleric having full legal control of a parish and does not match the disparaging implications of the Romanian *popa*.

"era om hursuz şi pâclişit <u>popa</u> Oşlobanu" (ST: 36).	"for <u>Parson</u> Oşlobanu was an ill-tempered, crusty fellow" (TT: 42).
"să învăţ carte şi să mă fac <u>popă</u>, ca <u>părintele</u> Isaia Duhu, profesorul nostru. Bun mai era şi părintele Duhu […]" (ST: 58).	"I should study and become a <u>priest</u>, like <u>Father</u> Isaiah Duhu, our teacher. Father Duhu was a kind man […]" (TT: 65).

Terms of address play an important role in understanding the way a person is spoken to and, to a greater extent, how that person is perceived in the community. For example, the narrator calls Nică's mother *Smaranda*, showing respect and consideration by not altering her baptismal name, whereas his grandfather addresses his daughter *Smărandă*, a phonetically different form, used especially when offering indications or advice to someone lower in accomplishment. This form, which cannot be classified as affectionate, accentuates thus a disproportionate relationship, and is used from the position of a protective father who has lived to tell the struggles he had to endure. In those days, the elderly were seen as authority figures, who had gone through life and who could offer many lessons to the younger ones. Thus, the vocative form also suggests his perception of Smaranda's unawareness of those difficult times. We must not overlook the high pitch tone, with an exclamatory nuance when reiterating the difficult moment of being forced to leave their home.

"Pe acest deal, <u>Smărandă</u>, am fugit în vremea zaverei, cu mă-ta, cu tine şi cu frate-tău Ioan […]" (ST: 23).	"Upon this hill, daughter Smaranda, we took refuge at the time of the 1821 uprising, with your mother, yourself and your brother Ion" (TT: 26-27).

A similar tone is used by the narrator when describing de comical situation of his mother finding out he had licked all the curd from the milk. This time the tone is lower and reinforces the mother's confusion and amused reaction. Also, the form is not an old-fashioned variable but it continues to include the inflection *-ă*, normally used for singular feminine nouns, but this time showing affection.

186

„Şi când căuta mama să smântânească oalele, smântâneşte, Smarandă, dacă ai ce…" (ST: 38)	"When mother came to skim the cream, skim it, <u>Smaranda</u>, if there is any!" (TT: 44)

We also notice a differentiation between the ages of the people referred to. The young priest's daughter whom Nică fancies, is caressed *Smărăndiţa popei,* "the priest's own little Smaranda (TT: 14). The choice of the diminutive form implies the playful, delightful, arousing image of the young girl, as opposed to *Smărănducă*, another diminutival, only this time used by Nică's grandfather when speaking to his daughter. The suffix of the latter indicates parental affection and desire to protect.

"Ei, măi Ştefane şi <u>Smărănducă</u>, mai rămâneţi cu sănătate […]" (ST: 24).	"Now, you two, Ştefan and <u>Smaranda</u>, God keep you in good health […]" (TT: 28).

To show the age of the person in question, Creangă uses the addressing term *moş* to indicate a senior citizen. In peasant mentality there is a clear distinction between *moş* (lit. *an old man*) and *bătrân* (lit. *old*), the former implies respect and endearment, whereas the latter is a form of mockery (Rusu, 1959: 53).

The Romanian language contains a large number of politeness formulas, used in various situations, determined by social interaction and contributing to their maintenance. One of these forms addressed to older people, relatives and those to whom you want to show respect, is the singular form of the personal pronoun *dumneata* (representing in Romanian a semi-polite form of *you)*, which Creangă uses even when speaking to his readers. These represent interventions for maintaining the relationship with the interlocutor, and their English translation cannot show their distinct character.

Another particularity which poses questions of untranslatability is linked to the use of nicknames. The main character is called *Ion*, but everybody knows him as *Nică,* a short form that indicates his youth, but his aunt nicknames him *Ion Torcălău* ("John Spinster"– TT: 56), as she used to call a gipsy man from another village. This is extremely offensive because it derives from the verb *a toarce,* and, in the popular belief, only women were supposed to swing the shuttle. Besides, its suffix indicates great size and dumbness, which the English translation does not render.

Conclusion

The writer impresses by an outstanding phonetical aesthetics in his careful selection of words that create certain sound effects in the representation of the peasant life in Moldavia. His speech cannot be

187

perceived as harmonious, pleasant or melodious; instead, it is harsh, dissonant but intensely comical in exaggerating the characters' emotional structure. In his narrative, Creangă plays all the characters in turn. When the narrator speaks, the composition is well written, but not exceptional, however, when the heroes begin to speak, their gestures and words provide a caricature show (Călinescu, 1998: 235). This stylistic feature can only be accessed and interpreted in relation to specific sets of contextual assumptions. As presented in the examples, the particularities of the Moldavian way of life, inaccessible to the English readership, must be considered when speaking of untranslatability. Interjections, which occur so spontaneously in any language, emerge from a special social context that favours their distinct form and use. However, in the case of the selected instances, their unicity cannot be compared to the interjections of another culture which lacks the same conditions in development.

The writing procedures used by the Romanian author are very simple. In his speech we do not meet an abundance of outstanding images, or smart figures of speech; his language is as simple as its place of birth. A piece of every peasant's heart is reflected in the healthy, spontaneous, unsolicited humour that causes uncontrollable giggles to its Romanian readers. The author offers a stylistic form of the vernacular, realized with careful attention, which makes the unit so well-adjusted that it is impossible to assume that by disentangling its components it will remain unaltered. The terms of address that undergo grammatical inflection impose not only an alteration in the tone of the voice, but also in the mental states of the person speaking. As the English language does not make use of diacritical marks this change in meaning cannot be rendered. Also, the polite and semi-polite forms of address or the honorific titles specific to Moldavia prove such particularity of the commonly spoken language in the region, that cannot be completely matched to a different environment.

Our intention was to cut apart some of the tiniest components of speech, which remain mostly neglected in any translation, and to explain their inferential process in judging and understanding the text. Of course, the implications may be extended to syntactic or phonetic layers, as the text entails an immeasurably great number of possibilities. We believe that we are closely hinting at possible situations of untranslatability, although the phenomenon should be considered in relation to more than one foreign context.

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188

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189

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