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(MIS)MATCHING CULTURES.  
*WUTHERING HEIGHTS*: TRANSLATION JOURNEY  
 IN THE WORLD OF ROMANCE LANGUAGES

Abstract

The present paper is an overview of the translation history of the novel *Wuthering Heights* in several Romance languages: French, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, Italian and Romanian. The research focuses on tracing the “cultural afterlife” of the novel in the aforementioned national spaces and aims at finding a pattern in the cultural reception of the novel. At the same time, the study dwells on what makes each cultural space influence and particularise the reception process, given the different historical contexts. Title translation and the views on plagiarism and copyright also shed some light on various attitudes on the process of retranslation, a timebound endeavour that records linguistic and cultural change.

Keywords: *Wuthering Heights*, translation, Romance Languages, retranslation

The title of this article has nothing to do with the contemporary theory of cultural mismatch, but it rather dwells on the diverse reception styles the novel *Wuthering Heights* has had in countries where Romance languages are spoken. The point of departure of our research was a rather superficial comparison between the number of translations of the novel issued in Romania and France that were impossible to parallel and the need to understand the cultural impulses that led to such different response behaviour at national levels. The ambitious desire to find a pattern in cultural reactions made us turn to other countries in Europe, such as Italy, Spain and Portugal, but the findings readily convinced us that the abundance of information exceeds both the limits of this paper and the limits of the continent, as the translations in South American Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese, or those in Canadian French, share the same genealogic criteria as the versions published in the European languages we have chosen for our analysis. Consequently, our paper will only give a bird’s eye view on this Victorian novel’s “cultural afterlife”, as Hila Sachar puts it (2012).

The first translation of the novel in another language was published in France, in 1892, and it was authored by T  odor de Wyzewa, writer and translator of Polish descent. Despite the fact that Wyzewa’s preface to the translation “met en sc  ne l’inscription du ‘mythe Bront  ’ en France”<sup>1</sup> (Coste, 2002: 4), the title, *Un amant* [A Lover], disqualifies the translation. As Paul Deselmme notes, “dans un pays catholique, ant  rieurement    la s  paration de l’  glise et de l’  tat, semblable titre inscrit imm  diatement le texte dans le registre de la d  pravation anglaise, donc d’un Autre dans lequel se

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<sup>1</sup> Staged the writing of the ‘Bront   myth’ in France (our translation).

projetent les angoisses culturelles d'une époque marquée par le cosmopolitisme littéraire"<sup>2</sup> (Deselmme, cited in Coste, *ibid.*). Three decades later, in 1925, the completely different title *Les hauts de hurle-vent* [The Heights of Howling Wind] of Frédérique Delebeque's translation opened the door to a list of creative titles that has no equal in any other Romance Language. Some of them parasitise Delebeque's ingenious creation that remained the sanctioned French title to this day, inspite of more than twenty retranslations published in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Such titles are *Les hauts de quatre vents* (M. Drover, 1934), *Haute Plainte* (Jacques et Yolande de Lacretelle, 1937), *La maison de vents maudits* (Elisabeth Bonville, 1942), *Les hauts de tempestes* (Luise Servicen, 1947), *Le chateau des tempestes* (Jacques Marcireau, 1950), *Hurlemont* (Sylvere Monod, 1963), *Hurlevent de monts* (Pierre Leyris, 1964) etc. Titles are extremely important in the translation history of a literary work, as proven by the fact that fights over title copyright seem to have dried out, for the moment, the creative energy of French translators. In an article entitled *Au commencement était le titre* [In the Beginning, There was the Title], translator Jean Pierre Richard, whose 1994 translation, entitled *Hurlevent*, was the object of a trial, discusses the legal problem of authorship when it comes to the title of a translation and the ambiguity of the law, which fails to clearly show if the person responsible for the title of a translation is the translator or the editor (Richard, 2001: 66). Delebeque's heirs took legal action against Richard's publishing house for using a term that plagiarised the initial title.

The same problem of challenged authorship seems to taint the translation history of the novel in Spanish which, according to Vicente Lopez Folgado, is marred by "blatant plagiarism". Lopez Folgado discusses the novel's gradual rise to fame, despite the initial periods of adverse criticism, and considers that the novel's value is undoubtedly certified by the numerous successive editions and even film adaptations (Lopez Folgado, 2011: 149). Unfortunately, in contrast to the novel's force and originality, some successive 20<sup>th</sup> century Spanish renderings disregard translation copyright, as Lopez Folgado's analysis shows. By focusing on the translation errors present in several translations at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Lopez Folgado discovers that recent translations published by editorial groups are nothing but reprintings of older versions that have not even undergone a revising process. For instance, while translating Joseph's words in Chapter 2, "What are ye for?" he shouted. 'T' maister's down i' t' fowld. Go round by th' end o' t' laith, if ye went to spake to him." (Brontë, 1954: 24), Bachiller Canseco, who translated the novel in 1947, one hundred years after its first publishing in England, cannot read correctly Brontë's transliteration of Joseph's Yorkshire accent and mistakes 'fowld' (dialectal pronunciation of the word 'fold', *i.e.* shelter or pen), for 'fowl' (chicken), and translates: "¿Qué busca usted por ahí? – gritó – El amo está allá abajo, *con las gallinas*. Dé usted la vuelta a esa esquina si quiere hablar con él" (153). While such lexical choices, even if they resulted from faulty documentation, can be understandable in older versions, Lopez Folgado bitterly criticises the fraudulent overtaking of older texts by other translators or publishing houses, that deceive both the real translator, whose work is misused, and the reader, who fails to get the promised new version (153). Bachillar Conseco's translation mistakes can be identified in numerous subsequent works, and this is only one of the numerous examples that are provided in Lopez Folgado's article. The rewriting of the title of the article in the header as "Las traducciones españolas de *Wuthering Heights*: plagios borrascosos" [stormy plagiarism], instead of "*plagios flagrantes*" [blatant plagiarism], as in the main title, comes as a bitter comment on the long series of Spanish translations entitled *Cumbres Borrascosas* [Stormy Heights]. This title belongs to the first translator of the novel, Cipriano Montolin, who published his version of the novel in 1921. Fortunately, there were no legal issues for the following translators, Fernando Duran (1944), Andres Caballero (1945), Pilar Vera (1963), J.Ribera (1973), Mary Mersaye (2012) and Amelia Perez de Villar (2016), among these, and their almost forty editions published up to 2020, that we have managed to count. To these we should add the three translations in Catalan that we have identified, that bear the equivalent title *Cims Borascosos*, authored by Montserrat de Gispert (1996), Pep Verger (2012) and Marta Para Cucurell (2020).

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<sup>2</sup> In a Catholic country, before the separation of the Church from the State, such a title immediately inscribes the text in the register of English depravity, that is of an Other that embodies all the cultural anxieties of an age marked by literary Cosmopolitanism (our translation).

In Portugal, the first Portuguese version translated by Fernando de Macedo is published in 1940 under the title *O Monte dos Vendavais* [The Mount of Winds]. The other six translators use the same title in all the editions published until 1992, with two exceptions: in one of the editions, in 1988, Maria Franco and Juao Cabral de Nascimento use the title *O Monte dos Ventos Uivantes* [The Mount of Howling Winds] and, in her first translation, in 1993, Ana Maria Chavez uses the title *O Alto dos Vandevais*.

The same relaxed collaborative atmosphere dominates the scene of the Italian translation history of the novel. The first translation of the novel in Italian was published in 1926 by Enrico Piceni, under the title *La Tempestosa*, but, in the same year, Rosina Binetti published a second translation entitled *Cime Tempestosi*. Enrico Piceni's title was never used again, except for the name of the place Wuthering Heights inside the novel, but Rosina Binetti's title has been used ever since by all the other twenty-five translators (in many more editions), with one exception, an adaptation entitled *Un'eco nella tempesta*, published in 1965. Other translators that contributed to the rich Italian history and to the interesting journey of *Wuthering Heights* are: Augusta Grosso Guidetti (1950), G. Cavalotti (1952), V. Galante Garrone (1967), Ginevra Bompiani (1971), Susanna Basso (1979), Ana Luisa Zazo (1993), Antonio Meo (1962), Marguerita Giacobino (2001), Mariagrazia Oddera Bianchi (1993), Pierra Matei (2005), Beatrice Massini (2017), Marta Barrone (2018) etc.

In Romania, the journey of the novel *Wuthering Heights* is less spectacular than in any other countries that are part of our research. The first Romanian version was authored by Mary Lăzărescu Polihroniade in 1937 and the title of the translation was *La răscruce de vânturi* [At the Crossroads of Winds]. Even if this is the only title used for subsequent editions, even today, Lăzărescu Polihroniade was never known as the translator of this novel, except, perhaps, for a short period before the installation of the communist regime. The next Romanian version was translated from French, by Henriette Yvonne Stahl, in 1962, and this was the only Romanian translation for the next 43 years. Nowadays three more translations can be found in Romanian, authored by Dana Popescu (2005), Monica Danci (2010) and Alina Lorelay Rogojan (2018).

The reduced number of translations before 1989, when Romania was freed from the grasp of the communist regime, may have various reasons. Censorship is one of them, as the publishing houses, controlled by the state, were allowed to publish a limited number of foreign authors, especially English ones. In a chapter entitled *Traducción y censura: Cumbres borrascosas en la dictadura franquista* (Pajares Infante, 2008: 56), Eterio Pajares Infante wonders what exactly inside the novel felt threatening to the political regime of the time. Kucich and Sadoff (2012: 13) comment upon Gertrude Himmelfarb's characterisation of the Victorian workers, "who viewed 'life' (or social position?) as 'natural, right, and, for the most part, happy.'" Himmelfarb's adjective 'remarkable' – which chimes throughout her book – identifies her fable as a postmodern fantasy of Victorian working class heroism, in which every 'tedious, backbreaking task' is a moral victory over poverty. In Himmelfarb's paean to an 'orderly and satisfactory' past, then, the triumph of morality over poverty becomes a model for postmodernism's nostalgic retrospective look at its own origins". The communist regime would have used such an image that was concurrent with their daily discursive practices, but in *Wuthering Heights*, unlike in other Victorian novels, the theme of moral redemption through poverty is barely present. In contrast, as Pajares Infante pertinently remarks, "lo que si es evidente es la voluntad transgresora de la autora y su rebelion ante las normas morales y sociales de su tiempo. Emily se decanta por la libertad individual frente al sometimiento colectivo. Esta imbuida por la idea roussoniana de que el hombre es bueno por naturaleza y es la sociedad la que le corrompe"<sup>3</sup> (Pajares Infante, 2008: 57). Lockwood's perspective on the place is illustrative in this respect: "Thus, when he describes Wuthering Heights as a space which both mirrors and is shaped by its landscape, he is not simply providing an innocent description of a rural dwelling. Rather, Lockwood locates Wuthering Heights and its surrounding landscape within the ideological boundaries of privacy and enclosure, domesticating the romanticised Sublimity of his encounter" (Sachar, 2012: 18). In his work, *A Battle for Neutral Europe*, 2013, Eduard Corse speaks of the double load of Spanish anxiety against the

<sup>3</sup> What becomes obvious is the writer's transgressive disposition and the rebellion against the moral and social norms of her time. Emily chooses individual freedom over collective submission. She is full of Rousseau's idea that people are naturally good and it is society that corrupts them (our translation).

English, given by both the World War and the Civil War: “In february 1944 there were still famous English language books, such as *Gone with the Wind* (...), *Rebecca* and *Wuthering Heights*, that continued to be banned in Spain which shows just how far the British council had to come to overturn the ingrained anti-British views in many areas of the Spanish Government” (150). In 1940, however, the publishing house La Nave requested permission to publish the novel. The permission was readily granted, “con gran elogio de la novela referida y propuesta de autorizacion” (Pajares Infante, 2008: 59), therefore Miguel Perez Ferrero’s version was published in Madrid and the version of Juan G. de Luaces was published in Barcelona. Five other translations were published the following year.

When dealing with such a large number of translations, finding a common pattern to guide the interpretation of their reception history might prove a difficult task. While we were unable to identify French and Portuguese translations after 1994, and 1997, respectively, more than half of the translations in Spain (and Romania) and almost half of those in Italy were published after the year 2000. In her study concerning the process of retranslation, Sharon Deane Cox underlines the fact that there is usually “no discernible rhythm to retranslation”, with intervals between the appearance of new target texts ranging from the sporadic to the periodic and the simultaneous (Cox, 2016: 1). That is why, two or more translations can be in competition for readers in the same timespan. The growing market for products related to the Victorian era can provide a good reason for such an increase in the number of translations. Kucich and Sadoff argue that “consumer culture has shared in postmodern nostalgia for the nineteenth century, but (...) – it uses the Victorian past to aestheticize contemporary reality” (Kucich & Sadoff, 2012: 13). Since retranslations are productions of other texts that have previously been translated in a certain language, the factors that motivate retranslation can be aesthetic, linguistic, ideological and even commercial (Gambier & Doorslaer, 2012: 172). The larger cultural context of the target language and the personal context of the translator generally dictate which of the aforementioned factors will take precedence over the others.

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