

Translation of Catholic lexis from English into Bulgarian in the context of a novel by Oscar Wilde

Mariya Anastasova (Blagoevgrad)

Статья рассматривает католическую лексику в переводе с английского на болгарский язык в контексте выбранного отрывка из романа Оскара Уайльда *Портрет Дориана Грея*. Анализ основан на теориях Итамара Эвен-Зохара и Гидеона Тури о месте переводной литературы в полисистеме литературы любой культуры. Место переводной литературы в болгарской культуре можно определить как центральное в силу отсутствия прочно установленных местных традиций. Под влиянием историко-политических факторов модели заимствуются из иноязычных культур, в число которых не входит британская, что делает перевод романа Оскара Уайльда весьма любопытным явлением. В качестве материала для исследования были использованы три разные версии романа, которые были опубликованы на болгарском языке в течение трех десятилетий. Основной вопрос заключается в том, как в этих переводных текстах передаются католические термины – путем адаптации к православной лексике или путем сохранения их католической идентичности, с учетом того факта, что в Болгарии существует католическое общество.

The article studies the problem of the translation of Catholic lexis from English into Bulgarian in the context of a specific extract from the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde. The analysis is based on the theories of Itamar Even-Zohar and Guideon Toury about the place of translated literature within a literary polysystem. The place of the translated literature in Bulgarian could be defined as central because of the lack of consolidated home traditions. Due to a combination of factors, both historical and political, models were borrowed from specific cultures excluding the British one, which makes the translation of Oscar Wilde in Bulgarian a quite curious phenomenon. The research focuses on three Bulgarian translations of the book published in three successive decades as the main concern of the author is how the Catholic terms are translated in the extract – as an adaptation to Orthodoxy and the target culture or by keeping their Catholic identity considering the fact that a Catholic society exists in Bulgaria.

Key words: translation, adaptation, Catholic lexis, Oscar Wilde.

This paper is mainly concerned with the problem of the translation of culturally marked lexis from English into Bulgarian in the context of an extract from the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde (Appendix 1, p. 44). I find this task particularly provocative as the text abounds in Catholic terms which are largely unfamiliar

iar for its Bulgarian readers because Catholicism is the religious creed of a minority in the country. Another feature of interest is the presented viewpoint of the author on the philosophy of the Christian religion. After establishing the position of translated literature in the polysystem of Bulgarian literature I will focus on the extract itself, on some specific lexical items in it and the way they were translated in three published Bulgarian versions of the book from different periods.

Itamar Even-Zohar presents a theoretical model in which translated literature is represented as an active integral system, functioning within any literary polysystem. The process of translation is highly dependent on this position. A „central“ position of translated literature would mean that there is no clear distinction between „original“ and „translated“ literature and it participates in major and innovatory literary processes within the polysystem. This happens in cases when a literature is „young“, „weak“ or „*there are turning points, crises or literary vacuum...*“ (Even-Zohar 2000: 194). In this case translation is expected to be innovative, creative, strongly based on the original, mainly because it has no home norms to stick to.

The position of translated literature can be described as „peripheral“ when it hardly influences any major processes and generally follows the norms and traditions established by the original one even when translated texts bear innovations. Thus, „*the translator's main effort is to concentrate upon finding the best ready-made secondary models for the foreign text*“ (Even-Zohar 2000: 197).

However, this position is never wholly peripheral or wholly central.

Guideon Toury develops further Even-Zohar's ideas, postulating that translations are always influenced by the literary and social context of a specific period and thus they are dependent on historical facts and culture. According to Toury in order to analyse the tendencies in translation it is necessary to trace translations of one and the same source text from different historical periods. He establishes two poles: of full adaptation and of full adequacy with the original text and positions the translated text somewhere between these two.

In their book on the reception of English literature in Bulgarian Alexander Shurbanov and Vladimir Trendafilov (2000) offer a preface that outlines the reception of the literature that is translated from English in Bulgaria. According to the article the place of translated literature in the Bulgarian literary polysystem can be generally defined as central. As it is widely considered that Bulgarian society and literature are not advanced enough, foreign literary models are borrowed and translation is of great importance. The border between translated and original literature is blurred.

The translation of literary works from English into Bulgarian has a history of 150 years. Initially some mediating language was used. However, in 1947 (the coming of communism in Bulgaria) the cultural contact with the Western world was blocked to be tentatively reestablished in the 1950s. Even in the last days of the communist rule the selection of western literature for translation was very careful. One of the necessary conditions for a western author to be translated in Bulgarian was that they should be either translated in Russian before that or at least admired by a Russian critic. Censorship was strict. Deviations from the style and sense of the original were not tolerated. After the period of communism the control over the selection of texts for translation disappeared. Everything was on the market. Most publishers tried hard to make

the process of producing translated literature cheaper. Editors were rarely used, and sometimes books were in the hands of inexperienced translators. These factors, together with the breaking of the chains of censorship eventually led to the publication of a lot of translations of lower quality. All these social and literary factors somehow predetermine the decisions made by the translators of Oscar Wilde in Bulgarian. Despite the central position of translated literature in communist Bulgaria literary norms and traditions were imported from selected cultures excluding the English one. Translations from English were expected to follow Russian traditions.

Another important fact that has to be taken into consideration for this study is the number of Catholics in Bulgarian society. Presently the official religion of the country is Eastern Orthodox Christianity. According to the latest statistic research of the National Statistical Institute from 2011 the religious affiliation of the people of Bulgaria is as follows: Out of 5 758 301 people participating in the census 4 374 135 self-define as Orthodox Christians and 577 139 as Muslims. The number of Bulgarian Catholics is 48 945 (about 0,8%) (<http://censusresults.nsi.bg/Census/Reports/2/2/R10.aspx>).

As one can see the number of the Bulgarian Catholics is relatively small. Although there are a few Catholic churches and cathedrals and even whole villages consisting of Roman Catholics they remain a minority. This situation makes the question of the translation of Catholic terms into Bulgarian rather interesting.

In the chosen extract Oscar Wilde offers an interesting philosophical interpretation of the Roman ritual and meticulously and with minute detail describes its different aspects – the objects, the ritual and the priest. Although he belongs to the Church of Ireland (which is an autonomous province of the Anglican Communion) and converts to Catholicism no sooner than the very end of his life, the Catholic ritual keeps him attracted. As an aesthete and Beauty admirer he is infatuated with its splendor and profusion.

Within the framework of only one sentence the author offers an interesting personal interpretation of some religious beliefs and symbols. „*The daily sacrifice, more awful really than all the sacrifices of the antique world, stirred him as much by its superb rejection of the evidence of the senses as by the primitive simplicity of its elements and the eternal pathos of the human tragedy that it sought to symbolize*“ (Wilde 1994: 153). By the „daily sacrifice“ Oscar Wilde refers to the holy mass which in Catholicism represents the sacrifice from the New Testament. Jesus Christ sacrifices his life for the good of the people.

The bread and wine represent the body and the blood of Christ. Wilde sees this sacrifice as „*more awful really than all the sacrifices of the antique world*“ because of the cruel death of Christ that it symbolizes. „*The superb rejection of the evidence of the senses*“ again refers to Christ's sufferings, who although in pain never raises his voice against this injustice but accepts suffering obediently. This „rejection“ is „superb“ because it is not humanlike and it makes him a martyr, a saint, a God. By „*the primitive simplicity of its elements*“ Wilde probably refers to the cross as a Christian symbol, but also a symbol of agony. The paradox is the sacralization of an object which is associated with so much suffering. In another work Wilde writes: „*...it is rarely in the world's history that its ideal has been one of joy and beauty. The worship of pain has far more dominated the world*“ (Wilde 2002: 212).

It is obvious that for Wilde the essence of Christianity lies in martyrdom and the deifying of physical and emotional pain – an aspect that does not sit easily with the notion of religious ritual as a source of aesthetic pleasure.

He sees the cross – the central Christian symbol as a symbol of purely human tragedy. Usually the self-sacrifice is offered for a cause, in the name of something that is worth it. Christ gave His life for the sake of those who humiliated, tortured, mocked and eventually killed Him. In *De Profundis* Wilde writes:

...the crucifixion of the Innocent One before the eyes of his mother and of the disciple whom he loved; the soldiers gambling and throwing dice for his clothes; the terrible death by which he gave the world its most eternal symbol; ... When one contemplates all this from the point of view of art alone one cannot but be grateful that the supreme office of the Church should be the playing of the tragedy without the shedding of blood: the mystical presentation, by means of dialogue and costume and gesture even, of the Passion of her Lord (Wilde 1905: 69–70).

What is awful about the Christian sacrifice for Wilde is the inevitable pain one should go through before they become one with God. The fascinating thing is that the church shows this real tragedy of Christ without shedding blood, but by means of language, clothes and gesture. These three aspects of ceremonial enactment of the sacrifice are present in the extract chosen for analysis. The clothes of the priest bear their symbolism: „*the priest, in his stiff flowered vestment*“, „*the garments of the Passion of Christ*“, „*the grave boys, in their lace and scarlet*“ (Wilde 1994: 153). Wilde describes very accurately the priest's movements at a mass: „*slowly and with white hands moving aside the veil of the tabernacle, or raising aloft the jewelled, lantern-shaped monstrance ... breaking the Host into the chalice and smiting his breast for his sins...*“ (Wilde 1994: 153).

These deeply implanted meanings and the specific identity of the text should be preserved in the translation. This probably will hardly posit any insurmountable difficulty as, notwithstanding all the differences between them, the Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox Church are both branches of Christianity. Problems are expected to arise in connection with the translation of lexical units, representing some purely Catholic items.

As it was mentioned above, I am going to compare the translation variants of some specific Catholic terms from the extract in three Bulgarian versions of the book, which were published in three successive decades. (I am aware of the existence of an earlier translated version of the novel – from 1914 but as it is considered to be through Russian it has not been included here.) They are not examined as whole coherent texts since the focal point of the present article is Catholic lexis. The translations taken into consideration are by Krasimira Todorova – the first one published in 1984 and the second – in 1998 and a version by Krasimir Zheliazkov from 2005. When the first of these texts appeared Bulgaria was still under the regime of communism and censorship was strict.

The words chosen for analysis are: *monstrance*, *tabernacle*, *Host*, *chalice*. These objects are well-known to the Roman-Catholic communion but not to the Orthodox

one and I have to confess that I had to carry out a real investigation to discover adequate equivalents to some of them in Bulgarian.

The lexical item *monstrance* denotes an object that is not used in the Orthodox Church and there is not a word for it in the religious vocabulary of non-Catholic Bulgarians. Its proper definition is:

Monstrance (Latin: ostendere, to show, or monstrare, to show)

A metal vessel, usually gold or silver-plated, with a transparent section in which the ostensorium is carried in procession or exposed for adoration. It came into use when processions and expositions of the Blessed Sacrament became common usage... (<http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/ncdlatin.htm>)

The only dictionary equivalent for this word that can be found in Bulgarian is *дарохранителница* (English-Bulgarian Dictionary 2000: 928), which in Orthodoxy represents the holy vessel (usually in the shape of a church) that holds the consecrated bread. However, nobody in Bulgaria will imagine the object referred by *monstrance* when one says *дарохранителница*. The idea given by dictionaries represents relatively the function of the object. This representation is quite tentative because the outlook and function of *дарохранителница* is not exactly the same as the one of the *monstrance*. It gives a vague idea of the object that the word *monstrance* suggests.

In Krasimira Todorova's translation from 1984 *monstrance* is translated as *дарилница*. This word is recognized neither by contemporary Bulgarian Catholics nor by the Orthodox Christians in the country. This term might have existed before, but since it is used no longer and it is not present in any Bulgarian dictionary it sounds quite obsolete to the contemporary reader. In her translation from 1998 she uses the dictionary equivalent *дарохранителница*. This is also the variant used by K. Zheliazkov.

I consulted some Bulgarian Catholics in a Cathedral in Plovdiv where they told me that this was called *Свето причастие* (literally translated – *Holy Communion*, meaning both the consecrated bread and the act of receiving the Eucharistic elements. These two meanings coincide both in English and Bulgarian). An alternative for translation is also the transliteration of the English word, explained by a footnote. The lack of adequate equivalent in the target language is a motive to borrow the term from the source language. However, this would put at risk the natural Bulgarian sounding of the text and the reader would be bothered to read footnotes.

For the unit *tabernacle* dictionaries again give the equivalent *дарохранителница* as well as *табернакул* (English-Bulgarian Dictionary 2000: 1404). According to the Catholic encyclopedia *tabernacle* is:

Tabernacle signified in the Middle Ages sometimes a ciborium-altar, a structure resting on pillars and covered with a baldachino that was set over an altar, sometimes an ostensory or monstrance, a tower-shaped vessel for preserving and exhibiting relics and the Blessed Sacrament, sometimes, lastly, like to-day, it was the name of the vessel holding the pyx. (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14424a.htm>)

If we follow the English-Bulgarian dictionary and the Catholic Encyclopedia, it becomes clear that it is possible for the two words (*monstrance* and *tabernacle*) to be synonyms. However, the context shows us that this is not the case. Otherwise Wilde's sentence would be senseless. Their meaning is very close but generally the monstrance unlike the tabernacle is mobile and it doesn't have a veil. The idea represented by *tab-*

ernacle is closer than *monstrance* to the idea suggested by the Bulgarian word *дарохранителница*. In her earlier translation K. Todorova uses *дарохранителница*, while in her later version she chooses *напаклис*, meaning *a chapel*. My guess is that this variant comes from another meaning of the term. Zheliazkov omits the unit.

Catholic Bulgarians use both words *табернакул* and *дарохранителница*. Therefore both can be used as variants for translation here.

The Host is another term, related to Catholicism. It refers to: „the bread after the Act of Consecration, when it has been changed into the Body of Christ, Victim of the Sacrifice.“ (<http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/ncdlatin.htm>)

The term corresponding to this meaning in Orthodoxy is *нафора*. Both *нафора* and *Host* have the idea of the bread that represents the body of Christ but as objects they are completely different and both Catholic and Orthodox priests agree that the *Host* is not *нафора*. Here the use of the word *нафора* in the Bulgarian translation would represent another adaptation to the target culture. This is what has been done in all the published versions under consideration here.

Surprisingly it appears that locally the Host has plenty of names used by Bulgarian Catholics: *Хостия*, *Евхаристия*, *Свето причастие* or just *Тяло Христово*. Catholics do not associate the word *нафора* with the object referred to by *Host*.

Chalice is a term the meaning and function of which are shared both by the Catholic and the Orthodox Church. In Bulgarian the term for this object is *номип*. So, one can use it safely as a translation equivalent here since its meaning and function are similar in the source and target language. Zheliazkov omits the unit and so does Todorova in her first version of the translation. In the second version she uses *номип*.

The general impression is that the tendency in the translation of Catholic lexis in Bulgarian is toward adaptation independently of the period of translation. All the Catholic terms are either omitted or converted into the more familiar Orthodox terms. Because of the central position of translated literature in Bulgaria we may expect the translated text to sound innovative and creative. However, the analysis of the different translations of this extract shows that this is not always the case. Probably the reason for this in the earliest considered translation is the strict communist censorship and keeping away from foreign western influence (Bulgarian communists regarded Catholicism as a foreign influence because, unlike Orthodoxy, it had no relations to Russia). A possible reason for this to continue in the later versions is that this strategy tends to take up the status of a tradition. The three considered translations illustrate marvellously Toury's view that „translations are facts of target cultures“ and thus need proper contextualization in the polysystem of the target culture“ (Toury through Kaplan 2002: 436).

However, an important fact is the existence of a Catholic minority in the country. The Bulgarian Catholic readers of the book will be fully aware of all these Catholic items and this poses the question of how foreign the text is from cultural point of view. Is it necessary to adapt Catholic items through converting them into the corresponding Orthodox ones since, though few, Bulgarian Catholics exist?

The contemporary Bulgarian reader is intelligent enough to be aware of the existence of different religious affiliations. The modern world of open boundaries broadens the mind and we are no longer intentionally blinded for the sake of a certain political

ideology. It seems absolutely logical to see unfamiliar terms in a Catholic text when your own religion is different. This change of people's attitude proves once again that any translation has an expiry date and needs to be revised and upgraded after a period of time elapses in order to be adequate and serve properly the needs of the new society.

Appendix 1

*It was rumoured of him once that he was about to join the Roman Catholic communion, and certainly the Roman ritual had always a great attraction for him. The daily sacrifice, more awful really than all the sacrifices of the antique world, stirred him as much by its superb rejection of the evidence of the senses as by the primitive simplicity of its elements and the eternal pathos of the human tragedy that it sought to symbolize. He loved to kneel down on the cold marble pavement and watch the priest, in his stiff flowered vestment, slowly and with white hands moving aside the veil of the **tabernacle**, or raising aloft the jewelled, lantern-shaped **monstrance** with that pallid wafer that at times, one would fain think, is indeed the panis caelestis, the bread of angels, or, robed in the garments of the Passion of Christ, breaking the **Host** into the **chalice** and smiting his breast for his sins. The fuming censers that the grave boys, in their lace and scarlet, tossed into the air like great gilt flowers had their subtle fascination for him. As he passed out, he used to look with wonder at the black confessionals and long to sit in the dim shadow of one of them and listen to men and women whispering through the worn grating the true story of their lives.*

(Wilde 1994: 153)

References

- Boyanova 2000: С. Б о я н о в а и др. *Английско-български речник*. Велико Търново: Габелов, 2000. [Първо издание.]
- Even-Zohar 2000: I. E v e n - Z o h a r . The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem. – In: L. V e n u t i (eds.). *The Translation Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 2000, 192–197.
- Gentzler 1993: E. G e n t z l e r . *Contemporary Translation Theories*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Jones 2007: T. J o n e s . *New Catholic Dictionary*. – <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/> (accessed 27th September 2012).

- Kaplan 2002: R. Kaplan. *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Knight 1997: K. Knight. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. – <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/> (accessed 27 September 2012).
- Lazarova 2000: Е. Л а з а р о в а . Лирическите уроци на принц Парадокс или непознатият Уайлд. София: Коралов и сие, 2000.
- NSI 2011: Национален статистически институт. *Преброяване на населението и жилищния фонд в Република България 2011. Население по местоживее, възраст и ве-роизповедание*. – www.nsi.bg (accessed 26th September 2012).
- Quirk 1999: R. Quirk. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 1999.
- Shurbanov, Trendafilov 2000: А. Ш у р б а н о в , В. Т р е н д а ф и л о в . *Преводна рецепция на европейска литература в България. Английска литература*. София: АИ „Проф. Марин Дринов“, 2000.
- Toury 2000: G. Toury. The Nature and role of norms in translation. – In: L. Venuti (eds.). *The Translation Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 2000, 198–220.
- Wilde 1905: O. Wilde. *De Profundis*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1905.
- Wilde 1984: О. У а й л д . *Избрани творби в три тома*. Т. 1. София: Народна култура, 1984. [Прев. Красимира Тодорова / Translated by Krasimira Todorova.]
- Wilde 1994: O. Wilde. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. London: Penguin books, 1994.
- Wilde 1998: О. У а й л д . *Портретът на Дориан Грей*. София: Кибее, 1998. [Прев. Красимира Тодорова / Translated by Krasimira Todorova.]
- Wilde 2002: О. У а й л д . *Афоризми*. София: Кибее, 2002.
- Wilde 2005: О. У а й л д . *Портретът на Дориан Грей*. София: Фама, 2005. [Прев. Красимир Желязков / Translated by Zheliazkov.]

*Превод от английски на български език на католическа лексика
в контекста на един роман на Оскар Уайлд*

Мария Анастасова (Благоевград)

Статията разглежда проблема с превода на католическа лексика от английски на български език в контекста на избран откъс от романа *Портретът на Дориан Грей* от Оскар Уайлд. Предизвикателството за преводача на български произхожда от факта, че католиците в България са малцинство и църковната лексика, която използват, за да обозначат обекти и ритуали не е много популярна сред останалите българи. Подробното описание, което авторът на романа предлага, разкрива дълбокото му познание и неговата ангажираност към ритуала от естетическа гледна точка. Основната дилема за преводача е дали да загуби част от идентичността на текста и автора и да адаптира превода към културата реципиент като използва православни еквиваленти на католическите обекти или да бъде лоялен към изходната култура, но с риск да създаде трудно разбираем текст за повечето българи.

Анализът се основава на теориите на Итамар Евен-Зохар и Гидеон Тури за мястото на преводната литература в полисистемата на литературата на даден език. Според теориите, мястото на преводната литература на български може да бъде определено като централно, поради липсата на стабилно установени традиции в приемната литература. Поради историко-политически фактори, модели се заемат от определени култури, които не включват британската. Това прави ситуацията с превод на Оскар Уайлд доста любопитна. Тъй като изборът на преводача е исторически и политически обоснован, за целта на изследването са използвани три различни версии на романа, публикувани на български в три последователни десетилетия. Статията обсъжда как са преведени католическите термини *monstrance*, *tabernacle*, *Host* и *chalice* в тях – чрез адаптация към православната лексика или запазване на католическата им идентичност с оглед на факта, че в България съществува католическо общество.

Резултатите доказват още веднъж необходимостта от превод на произведенията през определен период от време. Освен живата и непрестанно променяща се система на езика, постоянно се развива и променя историята, обществото и неговата рецепция на чужда литература. Това налага необходимост от нови преводи, които да бъдат правилно позиционирани в приемащата култура.

e-mail: maridiana16@gmail.com