

Rebel with a Cause. Domnica Radulescu's Theatre Translated into Spanish*

Abstract

Translators are not free from the influence of imagology. When dealing with certain images and tropes in literary translation, a translator's options are either to remain "faithful" to the original's impact as calculated by the author, or to modify it (given a presumed set of target readership's expectations). In the case of Domnica Radulescu's theatrical texts the translator's knowledge of both author's background and target readership' duality (comprising host society and Romanian migrants) play an essential role in her decisions. Acknowledging that theatre is the genre that directly exposes the "dialectic reformulation of the Other" (Wolf, "Translation as a Process" 130), this paper focuses on Radulescu's creative solutions when deconstructing myths, stereotypes and prejudices and on the translator's devices in coping with this multi-layered quest.

Introduction

This study approaches two theatrical texts by Romanian-born American writer Domnica Radulescu and their translation into Spanish, with a twofold aim: 1) to show that the translator's choices are reader-dependent and, 2) in spite of a historical perception of translators as neutral, invisible entities, to indicate that they suffer and sometimes succumb to imagological pressure. In order to argue that the readership's and translators' diasporic condition is not trivial but essential in the literary translating act, I will draw on Pym's explanation of "cultural translation", which is inspired by Bhabha's "third space of agency and conflict" and on Wolf's appraisal of translation as "manipulative and emancipatory" with a strong component of hybridity. On the other hand, I will use Leersseen's and Jandt's theorized discussions of ethnotypes, stereotypes and prejudices in order to apply these imagological concepts to literary (theatrical) translation in the case of migrating minorities. I argue that the translator's own diasporic condition leads her to tone down some allegedly offensive images in her Spanish version as compared to the original in English, on the grounds of cultural presuppositions which are confirmed by respondents among surveyed target readership.

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Methodologically, this study comprises a two-stage analysis: on the one hand, the translator's choices regarding the dilemma between form and sense, intrinsic to poetry but equally determinant for theatre, with all its implications at several levels: lexical-semantic, prosodic, stylistic, stage-related and eventually, receptor-focused, in an attempt to gauge the presumed perceptions and reactions to fundamental feminist claims invoked by the playwright. On the other hand, imagological categories (as defined by Leerssen or Jandt) such as stereotypes, ethnotypes, prejudices, or myths which are embedded in the complex fabric of Radulescu's text are analyzed comparatively in the original and Spanish version to detect changes effected by the translator under such constraints as: value judgements, prejudices, conventions, traditions, according to the classification of Kuran-Burçoğlu. The most powerful myth in Romanian oral literature, Miorita, is present in the text together with other enduring traditions which Radulescu questions by means of farcical, ironical, absurd situations. The translator, with target audiences in mind (comprising both Spanish and Romanian diaspora readers/theatre-goers), hesitates at reproducing the same degree of discursive impact. The results of the translational comparative analysis is counterchecked through a small empirical study consisting of an interview with the author and a survey followed by an interview with 16 Romanian female residents in Spain who had read the play in Spanish (10 first and 6 second-generation migrants).

Background information

Domnica Radulescu's creative profile spreads over two genres, drama and prose. The journey as an instrument of exile and catharsis is one of Radulescu's favorite themes, embroidered on the choral canvas of women's solidarity, complicity, hunger for landscapes, and motherhood. As Alexandru (2016) remarks, "in Radulescu's fiction, exploring the complexity of female characters is a priority." As an awarded playwright whose most successful play so far has been *Exile Is My Home: A Sci-Fi Immigrant Fairy Tale* (2014), with a staged reading in Theatrelab (NY) directed by Marcy Arlin and starring Kathryn Kates, followed by the favorably reviewed staging by Andreas Robertz at the Theatre Association in Higher Education, Radulescu wrote, also in 2014, *The Virgins of Seville: An immigrant Fantasy*. Both plays focus on women who convey the playwright's message and activism, as she confesses:

The strong connections, friendship, solidarity, and love between women is an intrinsic part of the feminist tapestry and inner workings of my creative work and like everything else, it is partly by choice and partly by personal drive and intuition, as well as a result of personal experience (Alexandru 11)

Exile Is My Home traces the eerie journey of Lina and Mina, two lovers who cross the galaxies and travel from planet to planet in search of home, peace, memory, a place to belong, after having survived wars and atrocities. They visit planets devastated by wars caused by inane reasons such as the size of penises, or terrifying planets like the one covered in snow, where bodies and hearts are brutally separated and frozen if caught yearning for lost homes and families. They recover a lost son almost forgotten and finally return to planet America, a dystopian landscape haunted by fascist immigration officers and cannibalistic haters.

The Virgins of Seville addresses the immigrant experience of Romanians and other East Europeans in Western Europe countries, in particular, Spain. It uses the same tragicomic style with carnivalesque touches, plus the *mise en abyme* technique to solve an unsolvable situation, otherwise tragic in essence, which mirrors the characters' concentric identities, cultural reverberations and hyphenated existences as migrants and displaced people. The text is woven into a dialogue which is quick and charged with irony and absurd elements, especially when dealing with myths, inherited prejudices or clichés. Domnica Radulescu's literary option to make this plea in her theatre is valiant, especially in her case (of an ectopic writer, expected to be even more reverent to the sacred heritage of myths and oral traditions of her homeland), hence the epithet in this paper's title: rebel with a cause.

These Spanish versions produced by a translator of Romanian origin (herself an immigrant in Spain) were published in a bilingual volume (Radulescu, *Dos Obras*) which provides the corpus for this comparative study. Several staged readings of the translated plays have taken place in Alicante¹ and Castellón.²

The approach needs to be intersectional³ because Radulescu's creative writing is, as she acknowledges in her interview with Alexandru⁴. McCall (1778) shows that the multiple identities category challenges case-study methodology by identifying invisible new groups and revolutionizes women's studies which had grown fragmented, in a multidisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary effort until the 2000s (1784). In creative writing, the intersectional perspective adopted by Radulescu poses interesting

challenges to the translator: in the first play, as women and homosexuals, Mina and Lina elicit prejudices among male and female characters; in the second play, as women and migrants, Ramona, the Virgins, Mercedes and Suzon elicit stereotypes and ethnotypes entailing exposure to discrimination on grounds of their “Otherness.”

Trick or treat? Sense or sound? Scary dilemmas for translators

In *Exile Is My Home*, Act III (“The Third Planet, Snow Planet, Snow White”), we discover, at the same time as Lina and Mina do, that they have a son, Billy, whose existence they had forgotten as a consequence of the rapes and tortures they suffered during the war. He was kidnapped at the age of six and their motherhood is lost in the mists of their post-trauma amnesia. Although told in the key of humor, the facts are abominable. In Act III, Mina and Lina need to remember and save their son who is now a talking heart. His body has been separated from his heart and is kept in a drawer by the “Woman Who Eats Hearts” and who is planning to devour him.

Remembrance is ambivalent, a poison and its antidote: the healing effect of the act of saving their son’s life has a counterpart, a recall of the trauma. If we consider the following reply in which Billy seeks to give them a clue and begs them to rescue him:⁵

CHORUS OF HEARTS MEMBER 4: **Mamas,**
mamas, look at me, take me out of
here, please take me back with you.
Remember me? I’m your son.

CUARTO MIEMBRO DEL CORO DE
CORAZONES: **Madres, madres,**
miradme, sacadme de aquí. Por
favor, llevadme con vosotras. ¿Os
acordáis de mí? Soy vuestro hijo.

we notice that there is a *change of register* in Spanish. Billy addresses his mothers as “mamas” and although there is a familiar appellative equivalent in Spanish (“mama”), the option “madres” (more formal and dramatic) seemed to prevail here on grounds of a genre convention: the need to preserve performativity on stage. Although in English Radulescu prefers the more intimate and jocular “mamas” (rather than “mothers”), which Billy probably used when he was kidnapped as a small child, and he retrieves during the reencounter with his mothers as an adult when begging them to remember

him, the translator avoided the Spanish familiar term “mamás” which would have moved the scansion stress from first and third to second and fourth syllables, changing the foot and diminishing the emphasis of this desperate shout intended to make the target audience aware of the tragic load of the atrocious crimes that destroyed families during the Balkan War.

The translator’s option, (apparently a modification) is in fact a preservation of the original style with its metrics and rhythm, and the dramatism of the scene. This choice between “sound and sense” postulated by Paul Valéry (1293) (referring to poetry, but equally important in theatre), has always accompanied the literary translator often accused of infidelity, whose enterprise was for centuries regarded as a mimetical, secondary or feminine activity under the shadow of the sacrosanct masculine original (Wolf, “Translation-Transculturation”). The misogynistic metaphor in force for many years (Les belles infidels, sentencing that a translation, like a woman, cannot be both beautiful and faithful) has been displaced by the notion of “intertext” as a creation of the (feminist) translation hybridity or “space-in-between”(Wolf, “Translation as a Process” 138), a space of harmony rather than a “clash of civilizations”(141). Wolf (138) explains how Hélène Cixous parallels the evolution of Translation Studies and Feminist Theory. Elsewhere, Wolf seeks to destabilize the peaceful mediating role of translation, which she instead considers “manipulative and emancipatory” with a strong component of hybridity. This is consubstantial with Said’s (XXV) idea of “unmonolithic” societies which are polyphonic and heteroglossic and with Bhabha’s (37) “third space” of agency and conflict, in a constant process of negotiation with dominant power. However, Bhabha (8) also introduces the term “cultural translation” in a broad sense, beyond binarisms, referring to the mixed discourse of ectopic writers faced with the dilemma of whether to preserve a bastion of untranslatability or capitulate into acculturation. In Pym’s (140) words, Bhabha’s untranslatable quality of translations is “a point of resistance, a negation of complete integration, and a will to survival found in the subjectivity of the migrant.” For Bhabha, cultural translation occurs whenever borders are crossed, not just by migrants but also by feminism, gay and lesbian writings and other minorities. Crossing borders means questioning them and enacting hybridity. Translation guarantees linguistic and cultural plurality and theatre shows it, which led Marinetti to describe how new identities are being constructed on stage. Cultural

translation does not imply a source and target language, but rather a diasporic writer translating into the migrant's dream of survival, as Pym (143) concludes.

This subjectivity of the transplanted writer, in the case of Domnica Radulescu, is embodied in female characters who, like herself, are in permanent movement: "I have at turns felt at home and not at home, rooted and uprooted in different countries and cities of the world, from Paris to Sarajevo to Sevilla to New York, to Chicago or to my home town of 25 years, Lexington, Virginia" ("Theatre"). Inspired by authors such as Marguerite Duras, Sandra Cisneros and Julia Alvarez, Radulescu draws on the ambivalence of exile as a state of alienation, and at the same time as an enriching, empowering dimension that challenges women to keep recreating themselves: "In my play exile is as much a physical state of spatial displacement and 'a nomadism of the mind'" (9). Arriaga Flórez (57) goes further and considers womenkind as "nomadic subjects" who dis-identify themselves with images that the patriarchal culture coined for them. Ectopic female writers (suffering double pressure, as women and exiles) must reinvent themselves and make a choice in terms of the dilemma described by Bhabha. Domnica Radulescu opts to preserve a zone of untranslatability not only of her "Romanianness," but also of her multi-ethnic roots and her Orient-Express style of past. This fleetingness, as a constant feature of her writing is enhanced by translation (an activity already characterized by an intrinsic escapism of meaning): "Maybe in the absence of stable homes, in the exhausting searches for home, the *story* itself is the only reliable home and form of belonging fluid as it may be," she ponders (Radulescu, "Dream").

One of the *dramatis personae* in this play is a "soccer mom," a patriarchal model of woman who is first and above all a "mom" (her other interests and talents being silenced under the metonymy of motherhood). The syntagma describes a whole array of characteristics of a modern-day white middle-class American mother with whom Spanish readers are probably familiar through US television, although they do not enjoy such an efficient nominal phrase in their own language (indicating country, male code, women role, social class). Why? Because the notion behind the term has not been imported to Spain (yet). Therefore, the strategy chosen by the translator was *explicitation* (the character becoming "mamá de suburbio americano fan de las actividades extraescolares") which is the expanded definition of the "soccer mom" notion. Although not recommendable in theatre translation, explicitation is an adequate

solution here, given the importance of the audience receiving the exact image of the person who adopted (actually bought) Billy from the traffickers who had kidnapped him. Radulescu chooses such a *dramatis persona* to make the clash more strident with Mina and Lina (intellectuals, homosexuals, sophisticated women, who read to their little boy about the suicidal Ophelia). Unlike the previous example, this one displays a familiar register in Spanish (*mamá*) meant to sound childish, a reminder of women being reduced to motherhood by the patriarchal discourse in both capitalist and communist societies.⁶ In this case the translator opts for sense (within Paul Valéry's dilemma) rather than for sound, in order to fit into the absurd of the play and preserve the author's feminist stance.

Gone with the myth

Leerssen ("Imagology: On Using" 14) encourages a redefinition of imagology in the light of recent developments, showing that the concept gains urgency (as it did after the Second World War), with resurgent nationalisms, due to crisis conditions and to membership of supranational structures, as well as unprecedented migration flows (Hoenselaars and Leerssen 254). However, Leerssen also acknowledges ("Imagology: History" 17) that ethnocentricity always characterized human societies and "anything that deviated from accustomed domestic patterns" was, and still is, *othered* "as an oddity, an anomaly, a singularity."

Ethnotypes are defined by Leerssen ("Imagology: On Using" 13) as stereotypical attributions of national character based on behavioral profiles and described as an occluded form of meta-image, latent in banal situations. Through meta-images, we impute others the way we think they look at us. *Stereotypes* (Jandt 93) are negative or positive judgements made about individuals based on any observable or believed group membership while *prejudices* (93) display irrational suspicion or hatred towards a particular group, religion, sexual orientation. Jandt (76) defined ethnocentricity as the belief in the superiority of one's culture based on negatively judging aspects of another culture by standards of one's own and regards stereotypes and prejudices as "barriers to intercultural communication." Stereotypes are especially harmful to women, who are already homogenized, because they contribute to the perpetuation of asymmetric relations. In the words of Amorós (87) "men are equal while women are identical" in the sense that women are described as a non-discernible mass sharing characteristics

and qualities which can be generalized, whereas men, as perfectly discernible subjects, relate to each other in rankings and homologations. But when the *other* is a woman, the burden is heavier, since stereotypes and ethnotypes intermingle, constructing an “imagined community” especially, as Nash (19) shows, in the case of ethnic minorities or non-western cultures.

Stereotypes have negative effects on communication (therefore on translation) as Jandt (96) argues, making readers assume that a widely held belief is true of any individual, and ultimately puts that population at risk. On the other hand, they affect the “stereotyped” individuals through the “self-fulfilling prophecy,” which, in the case of the myth discussed in this paper, would make members of a society that is defined by resignation and sacrifice feel they are doomed not to rebel against discrimination, inequalities, or exploitation.

Nedret Kuran-Burçoğlu (143-53) found that through translation, the image of the Other is maintained, reinforced, questioned, or modified under such constraints as: value judgements, prejudices, conventions, habits, traditions or power relations. Of these categories, perhaps prejudice is the most dangerous because, as Jandt (118) warns, it may lead to discrimination and hate crimes against a group on the grounds that it is “different.” In what follows, starting from the above-mentioned concepts borrowed from imagology and applied to translatology, I will analyze the presence of the “other” in the form of myths (Miorita) and ethnotypes (non-resilience, resignation, sacrifice as national character of Romanians) in Radulescu’s play *The Virgins of Seville*⁷ and I will discuss the translator’s decision in each example considering Kuran-Burçoğlu’s four-type classification and its subsequent constraints.

In *The Virgins of Seville*, Ramona, like a Brechtian “mother courage,” tries to find her son and take him back to America, the promised-land where every dream is possible, but he accuses her of poisoning his childhood with Romanian tales, myths and traditions. The most powerful of these is perhaps Miorita, the legend of a magic sheep (an ancient oracle) which foretells the tragic end of her owner, a young, handsome, successful shepherd: he is about to be killed and robbed of his herds by envious companions, but he does nothing to prevent it. He accepts his fate and asks his ewe to tell his mother that he married a princess, in fact to replace one rite of passage (death) by the other rite of adult age (marriage) in the Romanian (part pagan and part Christian) tradition which Mircea Eliade (251) called “cosmic Christianity.” The

sheep-cum-minstrel spreads the story of the young and handsome shepherd and his transcendent wedding of universal dimensions in which planets and mother nature took part while his birth mother must accept the tragic and premature loss. Like him, his mother is a victim of human cruelty, envy and greed, but unlike him, she cannot decide upon her sacrifice, which reminds us of the Greek tragedies. If in *Miorita* resignation is the leading thread, the other great myth in Romanian literature, *Master Manole* is based on human sacrifice for the sake of art. Again, masculinity decides upon female sacrifice (in order to raise his church, Manole, the builder, must inter in its walls his pregnant wife, who loves him and understands his ultimate choice). In Lagarde's (12) opinion, patriarchal tradition is preserved through myths, legends and sentimental education (which placed love at the center of all female actions) unlike feminism, which denies the timeless nature of love, its determination by a universal moral, and sees it instead as something temporal, intrinsic to socialization.

In *Miorita*, the shepherd is doomed to his fate; resignation to destiny without a fight is a sign of ancestral wisdom. This wisdom has been called "apathy" by social psychology, a "romantic distortion of the Romanian peasantry's connection to the land" by ethnographers (Collins 84) or even passivity and a tendency to suffer oppression which, Kligman (181) attributes to the "Weltanschauung implicit in *Miorita*," submitted to the patriarchal society whose order is threatened by two mysteries: death and sexuality. Criticism found it subjacent not only to oral tradition but also to the Romanian literary trends of the twentieth century. As we can see, this myth has been used in all kind of generalizations regarding Romanian temperament. Andrei Codrescu, one of the significant Romanian poets, also exiled in the United States, was deeply inspired by what the great poet and philosopher Lucian Blaga called "the mioritic space"⁸ and, as Collins (84) argues, this concept sustained him in exile: "I left the country and changed languages but I have not stopped telling *Miorita*'s tale." At the opposite pole, Domnica Radulescu, who left her country twenty years later, places the myth before a double mirror: the émigrés in the play ("sick of the Romanian folklore") and the diasporic readership (for whom myths are landmarks of resistance against acculturation). Ritual and myth are extremely important for those who leave a culture behind to embrace another and even more important for exiled writers who, like *Miorita*, narrate themselves round the world, but instead of worshiping the myth, Radulescu chooses rhetoric denial to raise the audience's attention. By permanently rejecting the myth,

Ramona proves how instilled it is in migrants' identity. The following reply from *The Virgins of Seville* illustrates the degree of familiarization Domnica Radulescu's readers are supposed to have with "Romania's most enduring cultural text" (Collins 83) which owes its popularity to "the power and simplicity of its poetry, but even more, to its mythic structure."

RAMONA: Oh, no, not the sheep from the ballad about the mother looking everywhere for her lost son. **I'm sick of Romanian folklore.** I left my country to get away from all that.

RAMONA: Oh, no, por favor, ¿otra vez la oveja de la balada en la que una madre busca a su hijo por todas partes? **Estoy hasta el moño del folklore rumano.** Dejé mi país para escapar de todo esto.

The translator's decision here was to add humor to the target version by choosing the lexical option of a (euphemistic) colloquial verbal locution ("estar hasta el moño," – fed up to the back teeth) instead of the plain "estar harto" (saturated). Through this selection ("moño"=bun, feminine hairstyle, but also a euphemism of "coño" – the vulgar word for vagina) the Spanish version is feminized and Ramona's voice is emphasized. Thus, in Kuran Burçoğlu's terms, the translation *reinforces* the other's image under *tradition* constraints.

Domnica Radulescu, who grew up aware of such literary traditions inhabited by fantastic creatures, archetypal humans, Manichaeic representations of good and evil, does not refute the importance of myths, but rather questions the perennial validity of the values they transmit, such as resignation and (female) sacrifice and advocates for an update. This is how she describes the presence of myths in her literary works:

Romanian folklore which also seeped into my subconscious and conscious mind in my formative years, is replete with fantastical creatures representing good and evil, with stories of space and time travel, with characters that walk the line between the tragic and the comic as well as with powerful female characters or heroines. (*Dream*)

In the following example, Radulescu introduces tropes (epithets) which might sound scandalous ("the stinking sheep") to a readership of Romanian first-generation migrants

in Spain who try to preserve and transmit to second generation migrants their motherland's folklore.

SUZON: I saw him last, truly, he was speaking to a sheep and the sheep was crying. He told me to let you know, something about a **cosmic wedding**. He wanted to live with me in the Jewish district, but I told him to lose the sheep. **He couldn't stay with me as long as he was dragging the stinking sheep after him.**

SUZÓN: Yo fui la última, en serio, le hablaba a una oveja y la oveja lloraba. Me dijo que te contara algo sobre una **boda cósmica**. Quería vivir conmigo en el barrio judío, pero le dije que se deshiciera de la oveja. **O yo o la oveja maloliente.**

The playwright uses a foreigner's voice, challenging (from outside) the very essence of the Romanian myth par excellence, the magic ewe – the oracle and post mortem storyteller – and questioning stances such as poet's Andrei Codrescu, for whom exile is, in Collins' words, "a great preservative of myths":

Cut off from their native soil, cultural customs, rituals, myths and even dialects often develop very differently for exiles than they do for those who remain behind. This applies to art and philosophical notions, as well, whose glory may fade in the place of origin, but when transplanted may take on an added splendor. (88)

Here, not only is the symbolism of the mythical sheep reduced to its animalistic traits (smelling, pasturing the lawn in Sevilla's gem - Parque de María Luisa),⁹ but the philosophic concept of "cosmic wedding" to which much literary critique has been devoted, is also questioned, as is the effect of the myth itself ("macabre piece of folkloric poetry") on present diaspora.

The translator's strategy in the last part of Suzon's reply is *compression* designed to achieve a more forceful formula for the ultimatum Marco is given by his girlfriend ("o yo o la oveja maloliente" / "it's either me or the stinking sheep"). This choice is probably cued by the genre convention (more performability is achieved through more textual economy) and by the theatricality these rhetoric dichotomies acquire on stage.

In Ramona's reply, the strategy employed is *compensation*.

RAMONA: Oh no, not the cosmic wedding. The hell with Romanian folklore and the cosmic wedding! Why did I leave **bloody Romania** to have to decipher the loss of my own son in some **macabre piece of folkloric poetry**? I went to America to get away from all of that.

RAMONA: Oh no, la boda cósmica no. Al diablo con el folclore rumano y la boda cósmica. ¿Para esto me fui del **maldito país**? ¿Para tener que descifrar la pérdida de mi hijo en un **poema macabro del folclore rumano**? ¡Si me fui a América precisamente para huir de esto!

Instead of “bloody Romania,” the translator softened it into “maldito país” in order to avoid a more offensive association (“maldita Rumanía”) with the toponym, but compensated by introducing the adjective later: “un poema macabro del folclore rumano” for “macabre piece of folkloric poetry” through which the binomial symmetry (noun+adjective) was preserved, and the on-stage delivery enhanced. Here, in Kuran-Burçoğlu’s terms, the translator *modified* (softened) the image of the other under a *prejudice* pattern, by anticipating the target audience’s reaction and preventing possible offence.

Author’s retrospective and audience’s perception

Following the publication of the Spanish version of her theatrical texts, I interviewed Domnica Radulescu on the creative process of both plays and of all questions, two are especially eloquent for this study. One refers to stereotypes in both plays: are they intrinsic to Romanian (diasporic) identity? Do they pursue Romanians wherever they choose to live or is this a more general stance in the playwright’s life/feminist activism?

D.R.: I try precisely to explode, undermine and mock the stereotypes about Romanian and Roma immigrants in Spain and Western Europe. I am always irritated and angered by any stereotypes about any groups of people. I believe that seeing the world and people through stereotypes offers a very impoverished view of the world and reduces all the beauty, nuances and complexities of humanity to one sided sketches of the human adventure besides also forming the ideological basis for racist violence, discrimination, and social injustice. I believe humor has great power of awakening critical thinking and is

a great strategy of survival and of subversion of social inequities, stereotypes included. (Radulescu, *Interview*)

As expected, the author deliberately introduces stereotypes and prejudices to expose and caricature them, aware of the force their “ontological half-life” acquires as latent possible mental attitudes embedded in our banal acts, in Leerssen’s (25) words “diluted” and “half-remembered, at the back of our minds.” The other question tackles one of the translator’s perennial preoccupations: target readership and their perception. I enquired whether the author had gauged the reaction of diasporic Romanian audience and the possible offence they might take when faced with the systematic de-construction of myths, allegedly sacred for cultural heritage, identity, and the traditional system of values which one tends to reinforce during the colportage of symbols that the migration process implies.

D.R.: I write theater not to be nice but to create an art that is politically engaged while also telling an engaging story in an interesting aesthetic shape. There will always be people who get offended by one thing or another. Theater that is transformative is not supposed to protect the audiences from thinking, understanding, grieving or being angry, but to do precisely that is: transform, awaken something in us that was dormant before, make us ask questions we have not posed before.

Again, the author reveals her several commitments or pledges, of which to “transform” or deconstruct ethnocentric discourse and “awaken” critical reason seems to be her priority. In fact, theatre (or literature) is, according to Íñigo (7), “a space of reality with its ideological constructs and as such, it is an ideal territory to discover, expose and deconstruct sexual roles inherited.”¹⁰

This plea was conveyed by the translator, although at times with nuances. Bassnett (137) observed that translation, as a “sign of fragmentation, errance, exile, putting the original in motion to decanonize it” is a powerful image in the late twentieth century. In this case, the ectopic (women) writing does so and the translation reinforces this decanonization.

This analysis would remain incomplete if it did not also approach the opposite end of this communication flow, the target readership, in this case, one part of which is represented by diasporic female readers. In order to obtain feedback on thorny issues regarding the complex fabric the translator was required to re-weave in the target

language in the case of *The Virgins of Seville*, a sample of Romanian residents in Spain were interviewed on their perceptions after having read Domnica Radulescu's play in Spanish. The methodology consisted of a survey followed by an interview conducted among 16 Romanian women (10 first and 6 second-generation migrants). I considered second generation those minors –now in their twenties– who migrated with their parents in their early adolescence, three of whom attended secondary school in Romania. Ages ranged from 20 to 56. Questions referred to: the play's message and criticism; national values and character (qualities, defects, stereotypes, ethnotypes); migration and image; the images Romanians and Spaniards have of each other; and the image of gypsies. They were also presented with seven statements from the play to select those with which they identified themselves. For this paper's purposes I will choose questions 10,11,12 and 21.

Question 10: What does the presence of sheep in the play suggest, especially the magic ewe?

Most of first-generation female migrants (60%) recognized either Miorita or some legend or myth in oral literature related to transhumance-nomadism and resignation. Only 40% thought the “spirit of a herd” alluded to the Romanian people's lack of initiative and good governors. The results were totally different in the second-generation's surveys: only one respondent recognized Miorita, one understood it as a reference to the Romanians' backwardness compared to the EU countries, one decoded the sheep as the agrarian type of society Romania used to be, while 3 out of six pointed at the “herd” metaphor (lack of initiative).

Question 11: What does the “cosmic wedding” mean to you?

This question has similar results: except for the 20% who thought the “cosmic wedding” represents migrants' dreams for better life, 80% of the first-generation respondents associated it with the death metaphor it actually is, (of whom 20% specified Miorita and 20% Eminescu, the national poet and his masterpiece, “Luceafărul” / “The Evening Star”, also including a cosmic wedding). Among second-generation respondents though, only one recognized the death metaphor, two had no image at all, one thought of the national poet, one of a religious service and one thought it reflects migrants' dreams of prosperity.

Question 12: Ramona says she is sick of Romanian folklore and she left for America to escape from it. What does she refer to? Do you think Romanian myths are outdated? Should they be modernized or preserved intact and transmitted to children?

This question offers particularly interesting information. While all 16 women considered myths, legends, tales, folklore and traditions should be part of their children's heritage, 60% of first-generation migrants thought they should be transmitted in an adapted way (from a feminist, modern, critical approach), while 40% would like myths and legends to remain intact and be transmitted in their original form to children. This idea was also held by 80% of the second-generation migrant women while 10% would "smooth down negative aspects" before sharing them with their offspring, and 10% did not answer.

Question 21: Did you feel offended when reading this text? Why?

Again, differences were registered between first and second-generation migrants. Eighty percent of the first-generation respondents declared they did not feel offended, but half of them did feel "saddened" because they acknowledged the facts described to be "true" and "real," as is the image of Romanians roaming through Seville in poverty. The other half did not identify with the image at all. Only 20% felt offended because, either "Romanians are not like those characters, they are honest and hard-working," or "the author only shows the evil and silences the good parts of Romanian character; she should be less harsh." The second-generation migrant women were divided: half did feel offended because "the author generalizes and only shows prejudices"; "Romanians are not like that" and "she should not be so biased but also show positive aspects" and half did not feel offended because "unfortunately we are used to being treated like that"; "this is part of a migrant's life"; "because she just describes reality as it is."

The results of this brief empirical study seem to show that second generation migrants (even those who attended elementary school in Romania) are less acquainted with myths, legends and traditions than first generation migrants who immediately recognized the references (magic sheep, cosmic wedding). However, strangely enough, most of the younger women, brought up in the diaspora, defended the transmission of folklore in an intact, unaltered manner, whereas more than half of the first-generation migrants advocated revision under the light of feminism and critical thinking.

The issue of offence is more delicate. The majority of the elder migrants did not feel offended by Domnica Radulescu's stance, whereas half of the younger generation did. At first sight, one would be tempted to draw a conclusion in dialectic terms: the impetus of youth versus the wisdom of maturity, but if we look at the reasoning for each answer, things are refracted. Half of those who were not offended in both generations admitted this is not because they identified with the farcical, ironical tone adopted by the playwright, but because "the author only shows the reality," referring to poverty and crime (i.e. the "thieves, beggars and prostitutes" label), hence the "self-fulfilling prophecy" effect mentioned by Jandt. Those second-generation women who do feel offended explain their reaction in terms of non-recognition ("we are not like that"), whereas the other half of the second-generation migrants were able to detect generalization, bias, prejudices deliberately introduced by the author in the text, (as she herself says, to "explode, undermine and mock the stereotypes about Romanians") although their capacity to assume the art convention is doubtful.

Conclusions

In the analyzed excerpts, the Spanish version is slightly toned down as compared to the original in English. The results of the translational comparative analysis have been counterchecked through a small empirical study consisting of an interview with the author and a survey followed by an interview with 16 Romanian female residents in Spain who had read the play in Spanish (10 first and 6 second-generation migrants). When asked if she was worried about the reaction her plays could cause among Romanian diaspora, Radulescu was categorical in her plea to respect the independent nature of literature and the transforming value of theatre especially when feminist desiderata are at stake. However, the translator, herself a member of the Romanian diaspora and foreseeing her compatriots' reaction used the translation act to avoid presumed offence. The results of this brief empirical study seem to show that second generation migrants (even those who attended elementary school in Romania) are less acquainted with myths, legends and traditions than first generation migrants who immediately recognized the references. Strangely enough, younger women raised in the diaspora, mostly defended the transmission of folklore in an intact, unaltered manner, whereas more than half of first-generation migrants advocated revision under the light of feminism and critical thinking.

As for the stereotypes and prejudices included in the text, most of the elder migrants did not feel offended by Radulescu's decision to expose rather than bury them in the sand, whereas half of the younger generation did. Half of those who were not offended in both generations explain their feeling in terms of an alleged truth that they accepted ("the author only shows the reality") with reference to poverty and crime. Younger generations were able to detect generalizations and prejudices deliberately introduced by the playwright but felt alienated because they did not identify with the characters in the play. The general conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that a substantial quantity of work remains for researchers in literary translation, cultural studies and in all humanistic fields to reassess the essentialist discourse related to nation and ethnicity and to deconstruct gender prejudices and stereotypes.

Notes

1. Teatro Principal; Centro "Mario Benedetti"; Cursos de Verano "Rafael Altamira" – University of Alicante.
2. Institute for Feminist Studies "Purificación Escibano."
3. The concept of intersectionality emerged as a methodological need to cover the complexity of subjects from multiple dimensions of social life. Societies were built on foundations of exclusion and male dominance, and therefore a scientific method claiming to be objective and reliable was required to account for experience at points of intersection until then neglected (between gender, race, class, sexuality).
4. "Being a woman in a man's world is already a state of exile and of living in the margins. Being a woman exile, or immigrant, or refugee partakes both of the general state of alienation, grief of uprooting, excitement, and fear of resettling and of new beginnings characteristic of both men and women and of the marginalization and gender inequities that women suffer indifferent societies. Therefore, women exiles are doubly so, and as a result of the overlapping marginalization because of a societal or class condition and of gender status they can be subjected to more violence, stereotyping, idealizing, or demonizing compared with men refugees." (Alexandru 10)
5. The bold in the examples is mine.
6. In his study on women's political identity in the discourse of the communist regime in Romania, Morar Vulcu (2002) shows that Marxist dialectical definitions failed to find

a counter category to oppose women in a dichotomy such as proletariat-bourgeoisie; progressive – reactionary, so two types of definition emerged: one differentiating women from peasantry, laborer's, ethnical groups, in terms of their roles and competencies, and another identifying subcategories (women-Communist Party members; women-collectivized peasants; women-laborers), leading to a double discourse: on the one hand, the communist discourse underlined women's private efforts as opposed to men's public efforts and on the other hand, a normative discourse revealing a partially incompetent woman entailing a paradox between the image of women as children educators and the infantilized image of women who need to be educated by the party.

7. Radulescu's choice of Andalucía is not random, since it is literarily known as a territory constructed by foreign travelers in the collective subconsciousness.

8. Referring to the Romanian identity defined through landscape and the stylistic matrix of culture.

9. Built in 1914, the first urban park of Seville, a symbol among historic gardens.

10. My translation.

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