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The Translation of G. Pappaffy Archive: Public Discourse and the Greek Community in 19th Century Malta

Thesis

Our paper aims at the presentation of the hermeneutic analysis of letters of formal correspondence between Giovanni Pappaffy, other members of the nineteenth century Greek cultural community of Malta and the British authorities of the same island. Our analysis is part of the decision making (Wilss 1994: 131-150) process¹ for the translation² choices³ of the consolidation of the Greek correspondence around the English word liberty.

Situation of the Source texts (Snell-Hornby 1988: 116-128); the senders are clearly defined – members of the Greek minority community

¹ The entire translation process is part of the e-europe projects of information society-3, with a budget of 210.000 euros.

² The translation of the letters in such a way that the product be acceptable as literary to the recipient culture [Toury 1995: 168] The pre-translation stages of the translation process with priority to the source texts of the letters paid special attention to the cultural and literary aspects of the letters [Snell-Hornby 1989: 32].

³ The translation choices according to Wilss (1994: 131-150) are the results of a decision making process based on the interaction between linguistic, referential, sociocultural and situational knowledge. The main difficulty of translation is solving the problem of the consolidation of two co-occurring translation units: the words freedom and liberty and the solution of this difficulty has its base on the textual facts and on Barthes' position on colonial discourse. Barthes refers to a writing which we call cosmetic, because it aims at covering the facts with a sound of language and brings about a coincidence between norms and facts. (Barthes, 1997: 103)

and the English colonial authorities. Addressees of the Greek letters are the English colonial authorities. The circumstances are also clearly defined and restricted; it is a public discourse (Scollon & Scollon 2001: 123) between the English colonial authorities and the Greek minority. The texts consist of a) a protest on the part of the minority and b) the formal reply of the local colonial authorities.

Function of the target texts (Snell-Hornby 1988: 116-128); as senders of the translation, we issue to Greek native speakers and our aim is to ensure that the readers of our translations are fully oriented towards the wording of our translations.

Semantics and Lexis (Snell-Hornby 1988: 116-128); In the correspondence we are translating, there are two specialized terms, a) Freedom and b) Liberty, which in the conventionalized phrases of the letters will influence our translation choices by the change of the wording for the correspondence of Liberty and Freedom in the Greek texts, even though in monolingual (Hornby 1983: 344, 486) and bilingual (Stavropoulos 1989: 279) dictionaries, those two words can be used in similar contexts. Our description of the Utilitarian discourse (Scollon & Scollon 2001: 116-117) concerning religion and the expression of religious beliefs throughout the correspondence makes a distinction between two levels of meaning for Liberty and Freedom. On the one hand, there is the use of the terms within the impersonal English framework of the British authorities, which eschew the explicit treatment of beliefs and values by taking a rationalistic and relativistic stance (Scollon & Scollon 2001: 189) and on the other hand, there is the Greek minority that uses 'Freedom', pointing to the expression of liberties within the colony of Malta. The utilitarian ideal of freedom of individual expression – in this case, religious beliefs – is proscribed by the British authorities (Scollon & Scollon 2001: 189).

Material: Nine original letters written in English between the 1st of October 1852 and the 11th May 1859 and one letter written in Italian on 29th September 1857. Through the execution of Pappaffy's will, the letters were assigned to the Greek Orthodox community of Thessaloniki. Giovanni Pappaffy among other clauses of his will recommended that the executors deliver the small locked cabinet which contains his

correspondence to the Greek Orthodox community of Thessaloniki so that posterity become better acquainted with his life and follow his industry, diligence, piety and devotion to his nation. As sources⁴, these readings (Belsey: 1995 404-5), are an expression prior to history textuality, “seen as the recovered presence of pure, extra discursive, representative experience” [Buchbinder: 1998 501]. What we analyze through the representative experience behind the documents is the politics of the history of the contest for power expressed by the Greek cultural island which is the struggle [Buchbinder: 1998 501] about the meaning and practice of their cultural life in the context of their colonial discursive and extra-discursive reality.

Methodology:

We have adopted a polysystemic comparative⁵ methodology for the study of the source texts mentioned above through their internal web [Buchbinder 1998: 501] of semiotic relationships [Toury, 1995: 168, 174-5] within the various cultural, political and social systems of the nineteenth century Malta.

A series of questions is produced by the interliterary [Gentzler1993: 108] connections between Greek and British cultures which ensue from the alternation of the letters and the intraliterary relations [Gentzler1993: 108] concerning the continuity of the letters within the structure of their given cultural systems made visible by means of the study of the original texts of the letters. Questions on the interliterary and intraliterary relations within the letters are examined in connection with *ratio facilis expression* [in our examples the right of all citizens of Malta to receive proper funeral according to the law and their religion] and *ratio difficilis expressions* [in our examples the interpretation of the same law by the

⁴ Our corpus, according to Poyatos does not belong to creative or fictional literature. It is however narrative literature contributing to the study of literary anthropology as old chronicles, biographies and autobiographies (see Poyatos 2002, v.3: 228).

⁵ We have considered a necessary precondition for the translation process of the letters the sociocultural background of their source culture (Snell-Horny, 1988: 34).

Greek and the English cultures] as introduced by Eco [1979: pp. 218-9]. The description of our examples follows Poyatos [2002: v2, 281-2] as his model of analysis focusing on the forms of *agent, sound and silence, movement and stillness*, offered for the semiotic description of facts and their environment.

In nineteenth century Malta the letters between members of the Greek cultural island and the British authorities of Malta form a socio-political framework in which different types of power relationships are developed through different linguistic and cultural norms.

In the letters, there are four distinct topoi (R. Stolze 1982: 55-74, 286): a.) the Greek cultural island in Malta, b.) the British government, c.) the local administration and d.) a representative of the protestant church. A warning given by the police of Malta to the Greek priest concerning his attire and the funeral procession in the streets of Valletta triggers a debate which brings to the surface a political will for equality, interpreted differently, though, by the Greek and British writers of the letters.

The Greek cultural island in Malta constituted a minority within the colonial British system, with specific religious, linguistic and social norms (mechanisms) inherent in its environment. The interior (Poyatos 2002:v.2: 288-9) environment of the Greek cultural island appears in the letters to be influenced by exterior (Poyatos 2002: v.2, 288-9) interventions from the British authorities.

In the same letters Pappaffy attempts to subvert the dichotomy of interior and exterior environments, that is the dichotomy of Greek subjects and British subjects, by mentioning that, “[...] all the Greeks, especially the British subjects, were highly disappointed. Then occurred to me that the local authorities may not be exactly informed that at present a very great number of the Greek congregation at Malta are British subjects”. The Greeks are this time the interior but the exterior is constituted by the Greeks who are also British subjects. Thus the dichotomy is deconstructed and the power relationship subverted. As the interior environment of the Greeks forms part of the exterior environment and the British government demands in its turn no interaction with other cultures.

Textual analysis

LETTER 127

Pappaffy gives in his letter dated from 16th of October 1852 the Greek requirements which spring from the interior environment of the Greek cultural island, stating that what the British Government proposes and what the Governor of Malta wants to enforce upon the members of the community is, “a very great inconsistency”, as “both Greek and Roman Catholic priests being not prohibited in England to drive in the public streets and to carry ostensibly, within their carriages, objects or symbols of worship, the British subjects of the Greek church, applying for the same religious practice here, cannot be told that – ‘they have no right to demand in Malta what would not be allowed in England’.” After having highlighted the contradiction in the policy of the British government, he goes on to protest for the discrimination against the Greek church by writing that, “[...] all the Dissenters are freely allowed in case of funerals, and on every other occasion, to have their priests and clergymen attired in sacerdotal vestments, or carrying other symbols of worship, either walking or driving in the public streets, according to their respective religious practices; it is singular that only those belonging to the Greek Orthodox church should be excepted”.

LETTER 125

Considering that the interior environment in the present case is the Greek community, which is, “connected with the worship of the Greek church”, the exterior intervention comes from the police warning to the Greek priest and the Governor, who states in the letter of 1st October that, “[...] all ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies should only be performed within the church, and in cases of funerals within the burial ground; and that on no occasion whatever the Greek Priest should appear in the public streets attired in Sacerdotal vestments of any sort, or carry ostensibly there any object or symbol of worship”.

LETTER 126

Our point becomes more explicit in the following letter, dated 13th October 1852, where the exterior norms concerning religious

processions are set out: “But neither Greek nor Roman Catholic Subjects of Her Majesty are allowed to elevate the Cross and make religious processions within the United Kingdom. Both there and here perfect toleration is allowed; and Her Majesty’s subjects of the Greek Church have no right to demand in Malta what would not be allowed in England”. The interior environment – the Greek community – becomes subject to the norms of homogeneity, imposed by the exteriors [the Government].

LETTER 128

In the letter of 18th January 1853, sent by the Governor, the content of the interior and exterior environments changes once more; “[...] we wrote to the Greek Ambassador in London reminding him – that in the last Treaty between England & Greece there is an article stating – the Greek funerals at Gibraltar & Malta are to be on the same level as those of the Protestants”. The exterior in relation to the Greek cultural island of Malta has now become the Greek government and the British government while the interior remains the Greek minority of Malta, represented by Pappaffy.

LETTER 130

Pappaffy in the letter of 4th May 1853, tries to prove that the interior environment of the Greek cultural island, which he represents, does not exist in a vacuum but forms an intrinsic part of the exterior environment – the colony; “[...] it appears that Her Majesty’s Government does not deny the principal advocated by me in the said correspondence namely, that the funeral of a Greek in Malta should be equally free and placed on a level with that of a Protestant”. The exterior environment in the letters comes from three different sources; Lord Clarendon, who states that, “The English clergyman either meets the body at the gate of the cemetery, or accompanies the friends of the deceased; and in the latter case, he is dressed in plain clothes”. Reverend Archdeacon Mr. Le Mesurier, who informs “Mr. Pappaffy in reply to his communication that the clergymen of the church of England when accompanying a Funeral from the house of the Deceased are in Canonicals – that is – wearing the Gown and Bands – Surplice is more usually put on at

the gate of the cemetery, although occasionally worn in the Procession through the streets” and finally, the Secretary of the Government, who does not send a reply to the above letter.

LETTER 131

The exterior system of the local authorities is directly accused by Pappaffy because of “the arbitrary and narrow restrictions imposed by the local authorities on the public worship of her Majesty’s subjects, belonging to the Greek church, are not only contrary to the Spirit of the Religious liberty which prevails in all Dominions of the British Empire, but they are in direct opposition to the instructions given by Her Majesty’s Government”. This time Pappaffy makes a clear cut distinction between the Authorities (exterior) and the Greek community (interior) by stating that, “In the event of His Excellency persisting to enforce all the observancies and restrictions alluded to in your letter, I beg you would be pleased to inform me of his decision; in order that the Greeks who are natives of Malta, together with some other British subjects of the Greek church, may determine what course should be taken on the subject”. (5 October 1853)

LETTERS 132, 133

The letters dated 27th April 1859 and 11th May 1859, although written six years later present the same Interior and exterior environments. Another warning has been given to a Greek priest, even though, the “[...] regulations have been literally and strictly adhered to by our Chaplain [...] The proceeding of the local Authorities towards our Chaplain is looked upon, by every one of us, as an insult offered to the whole community of the Greeks at Malta”. The interior – the Greek community – is still subject to religious – social interventions by the exterior environment of the Colonial and local administration: “the manner in which the communication was renewed to that Gentleman, cannot certainly be made subject of any complaint...the Superintendent of Police had received him with his usual urbanity and courtesy.”

Through the identification of episodes of *Silence and Sound* (Poyatos 2002: v.2, 283-5, 296-7), we can describe the development of

discourse norms in the colony of Malta, a.) among the Greek cultural island, the colonial government and the local administration and b.) between members of various cultural communities in Malta e.g. the Protestant priest and G. N. Pappaffy. We observed that by imposing silence on the introduction of foreign stereotypes, languages and norms of behaviour, the British Colonial Authorities encourage obedience to the legal, political and colonial system of Malta, establishing at the same time, cultural homogeneity in its population.

The letters between Pappaffy and the Governor of Malta apparently have one argument: religious tolerance. The concept of religious tolerance, however, is constantly seen under a different light, according to who uses the term. The act of forbidding the public execution of ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies to the Greek priest, for example, falls into the category of silence, and is enforced in the name of religious tolerance; “[...] there are sound reasons for protecting the religious processions of the Roman Catholic Church in Malta. But neither Greek nor Roman Catholic Subjects of Her Majesty are allowed to elevate the Cross and make religious processions within the United Kingdom. Both here and there, perfect tolerance is allowed; and her Majesty’s subjects of the Greek Church have no right to demand in Malta what would not be allowed in England.” (see: frame of reference, letter n. 126). The Governor’s argumentation is based on the British colonial system and aims at restricting the introduction of foreign models and norms, so as to safeguard the system’s homogeneity and its continuation. “All ecclesiastical rights and ceremonies should only be performed within the church, and in cases of funerals within the burial ground; and that on no occasion whatever the Greek priest should appear in the public streets attired in Sacerdotal vestments of any sort, or carry ostensibly there any object or symbol of worship” (see: frame of reference, letter n. 125). Silence, in this case, can be viewed as the Silence of the existence of a cultural minority, which is not allowed to ‘disturb’ the cultural norms of the British colony with its different symbols, language and religion.

When studying the reaction of the British Colonial authorities to the Greek community’s protest, we observe that Sound, in this case, is the Silence the British authorities impose on the Greek cultural island, by refusing any ‘real’ dialogue on religious issues; “The manner in which

the communication was renewed to that Gentleman, cannot certainly be made the subject of any complaint” (see: frame of reference, letter... n. 133) Whereas Pappaffy letters address issues of religious rights including *ratio difficilis* expression types, the official reply from the authorities makes an argument shift commenting on the formalities of the act of prohibition activating *ratio facilis* expression types. The dominant discourse, here Sound, is interpreted both as the government’s strict enforcement of the law as “the observances which have hitherto been adhered to, and which in some instances have been attempted to be relaxed, will be strictly enforced”, (see: frame of reference, letter n. 126) as well as its insistence on issues of politeness and formality. The argumentation of the Greek protest for religious rights, however, is met with Silence, as there is no actual discussion on the government’s part, neither providing answers to questions posed, nor suggesting solutions to the problems of cultural minorities.

The Greek cultural island, on the other hand, through Pappaffy’s letters, turns the imposed Silence of the British authorities into Sound, with the protest that is made in the letters. In Pappaffy’s letters, religious tolerance is not depicted as silent – deprived of religious symbols, vestments and processions. On the contrary, Pappaffy views religious tolerance as giving sound to all aspects of worship; “Now, both Greek and Roman catholic priests being not prohibited in England to drive in the public streets and to carry ostensibly, within their carriages, objects or symbols of worship, the British subjects of the Greek church, applying for the same religious practice here, cannot be told that – ‘they have... no right to demand in Malta what would not be allowed in England.’” (see: frame of reference, letter n. 127) Audible movements e.g. funeral procession, as well as the sounds connected with the symbols of a religious rite e.g. psalms, are intrinsic communicative qualities and their function serves the cultural environment in which they belong. As Pappaffy claims in his letters, their absence – Silence – is charged with cultural and political meaning, “[...] all the Dissenters are freely allowed in case of funerals, and on every other occasion, to have their priests and clergymen attired in sacerdotal vestments, or carrying other symbols of worship, either walking or driving in the public streets, according to their respective religious practices; it is singular that only

those belonging to the Greek Orthodox church should be excepted” (see: frame of reference, letter n. 127).

The Silence imposed by the British authorities is opposed by two different ‘sounds’; Pappafy’s protest as mentioned above, as well as by the statement of a Protestant priest; “Mr. Pappafy in reply to his communication that the clergymen of the Church of England when accompanying a Funeral from the house of the Deceased are in Canonicals – that is – wearing the Gown and Bands –. Surplice is more usually put on at the gate of the cemetery, although occasionally worn in the Procession through the streets”. The priest’s statement connotes that the different cultural systems in Malta are not Silent, as the British Colonial authorities wish to portray them, but have their own specific Sound, through their symbols, language and ceremonies. The answer to this statement was met with more Silence on the part of the authorities; Pappafy writes that, “having received no reply to the above letter, I sent a copy of it to the Colonial Minister” (see: frame of reference, letter n.130).

Sound and Silence is a binary which characterizes the contradiction in the system of government in Malta at the time; for Pappafy, “[...] the arbitrary and narrow restrictions imposed by the local authorities on the public worship of her Majesty’s subjects, belonging to the Greek church, are not only contrary to the Spirit of the Religious liberty which prevails in all Dominions of the British Empire, but they are in direct opposition to the instructions given by Her Majesty’s Government” (see: frame of reference, letter n. 131). This comes in direct opposition with the Despatch N2 dated 26th November 1847, according to which the authorities must “promote ‘harmony and peace’ between all classes of Her Majesty’s subjects at Malta, and to enforce by example and precept a general tolerance, the foundation of Religious liberty which belongs of right to all the subjects of Her Majesty” (see frame of reference, letter n. 131).

‘Harmony and Peace’ appear to be products of Silence for the British authorities and products of Sound for the Greek cultural island. Silence and Sound are reinforced by the concepts of Movement and Stillness; [...] “all ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies should only be performed within the church, and in cases of funerals within the burial

ground; and that on no occasion whatever the Greek Priest should appear in the public streets attired in Sacerdotal vestments of any sort, or carry ostensibly there any object or symbol of worship” (see: frame of reference, letter n. 125) Forbidding movement in connection with the symbols and ceremonies of a certain culture, by imposing stillness regarding the expression of a cultural minority points once more to Silence which serves the interests of the colonial authorities concerning the stabilization and security of the colonial system. It is the British authorities that have the domination to define what is legitimate (Giddens, 1986:30-1); the letter sent in 1857, four years after the correspondence we examine, constitutes proof that the Greek community does not enjoy equal treatment as far as religious rights are concerned, as Pappaffy refers to the issue of a place of worship for the Greek Orthodox Church. “The signatory members of the East Orthodox Church on this island request that you give us a copy of the Decree of the 14th May 1832, according to which, the Government Building in Valletta, 80 Mercanti Street, was allotted to the Greek community of this island, ‘free’, for the formulation of a church which will belong to the “East Greek Orthodox Church”. This letter proves that the main issue in the present case is not the equality of the different religions, as Protestants and Catholics had their places of worship on the island. It was the Greek community, which was deprived of the right for even the legal institutions by the dominant authority of the island (Giddens, 1986 30-1).

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