

MINA M. ĐURIĆ

University of Belgrade

Faculty of Philology

mina.djuric@fil.bg.ac.rs

ORCID: 0000-0002-9960-8360

CAN THE SOUND OF TRAUMA BE TRANSLATED? COMPARATIVE READINGS OF CONTEMPORARY SERBIAN LITERATURE IN TRANSLATION

Abstract: Among the works of contemporary Serbian literature that portray certain existential situations, traumatic moments are often articulated through a concentrated dominance of sound. What impression does the sonic quality of such a text leave? What challenges does it pose in translation regarding intonational or rhythmic signals? How does it gain potential cultural (re)contextualizations when transposed across different linguistic systems? Keeping these starting points in mind, this paper explores, through examples from the works of David Albahari, Filip David, Radomir Konstantinović, Mihajlo Pantić, Lana Bastašić, Bojan Krivokapić, Dušan Kovačević, and others, questions related to the aspects of (un)translatability of the sonic metamorphoses of traumatic experiences into other languages. It also examines the persistent need to actively consider Serbian literary works in translations that significantly enhance their global reception and inclusion in comparative studies.

Keywords: contemporary Serbian literature, trauma, sound, translation, reception.

Questions about how the sound of trauma can be observed have so far been the subject of examination in various fields and disciplines. Researchers focusing on the development of specific concepts of music therapy for treating post-traumatic stress disorder have been particularly interested in whether the auditory sphere of trauma can be overcome through

other, auditorily relaxing, vocal or instrumental, musically creative choices in working with individuals or groups (cf. Orth, Doorschodt, Verburgt, Droždek 2004: 443-480). Thus, one aspect of traumatic experience, in this case the expressly sonic, is placed at the forefront so that it can be encompassed, understood, and/or overcome through similar evocative, artistically musical effects with cathartic influence or through completely contrasting sound approaches (cf. Orth, Doorschodt, Verburgt, Droždek 2004: 443-480). On the other hand, from an anthropological standpoint, it was also necessary for concrete case studies to reconstruct potentially hazardous sound situations in marked terrains or within certain groups to further examine whether thus articulated sonic circumstances represent a constant factor in the paralysis of the subject or, conversely, integrate segments of overcoming it (cf. Sur 2020: 144-151). Therefore, it can be noted how the multidisciplinary nature of the phenomenon of auditory trauma, through analyses of various periods and places, has introduced numerous dilemmas addressed by psychology, branches of cultural history studies, sociology, and many other sciences (Cizmic et al. 2004: 511-578). With all of that in mind, this research particularly directs its interest toward the question of which sound transformations in selected literary achievements of contemporary Serbian culture are the mediums conveying trauma, how that sort of experience is contextualized within the framework of selected works by David Albahari, Filip David, Radoimir Konstantinović, Mihajlo Pantić, Lana Bastašić, Bojan Krivokapić, Dušan Kovačević, and others, and how this type of traumatic resonance is portrayed in translations.

How ceaselessly the scholars dedicated to traductology search for the identical otherness of every new translation compared to the original, and how essentially this pursuit is seen as a productive and creative challenge of rereading the original is evidenced by some of the views of Fritz Senn, a prominent researcher of Joyce's works in translation. While implicitly observing how the translational reading is the particularly meticulous one and the traductological "[i]nteraction with the text" a special "kind of substitution," during which "everybody gets something different," Fritz Senn emphasizes how he is most attracted to examining those segments that "are always by definition beyond the translation" (Senn according to Ђурић 2017: 523, 524). This will serve as one of the foundational premises of this research: how challenging it is to identify the sound of trauma

in the same way as in the original and transform it according to another linguistic areal, and how, through such a type of translational transfer of something that, although subjective, sometimes appears as a more universally perceived auditory reaction, essentially different sonic specificities are obtained with regards to implied cultural frameworks.¹

How often it happens that a moment of (perceived) trauma, when transposed into another linguistic milieu, either due to overemphasis or a certain leveling position, undergoes a transformation, is something that can be illustrated by an earlier example from the history of foreign literatures and their translation reception in the Serbian cultural sphere. One of the potential cases that illustrates the previously highlighted (un)expected otherness in translations, especially when dealing with a more specific situation of traumatic disposition, is found in the translation of Anton Pavlovich Chekhov's short story "Vanjka" ["Ванька"] (Чеховъ 1886: 4). At a very delicate moment, being in a sensitive state on a holiday evening, frightened and lonely, in the harsh circumstances of being separated from home, the boy writes a letter to his grandfather, highly emotional in tone, drenched in the traumatic experiences of early apprenticeship, which he concludes with the following words in the Serbian translation:

Несрећан је мој живот, гори од сваког пса... И још ми поздрави
Аљону, ћопавог Јегорку и кочијаша, *а моју рамонику не дај нико-*
ме. Остајем твој унук Иван Жуков, мили мој дедице, дођи. (Чехов
1963; emph. М. Ђ.)

And despite the tragedy of the readers' realization—that, due to an incomplete address and insufficient experience in sending the first letter, Vanjka's sorrow will not be eased—based on the translation of the underlined part near the end of the letter, "but don't give my harmonium to anyone" ["а моју рамонику не дај никоме"] (Чехов 1963) it appears that Vanjka is particularly attached to his instrument, so that, due to the weight

¹ Regarding the layered observations on certain previous studies of the array of questions within the domains of the traductology of trauma, see also: Jean-Charles 2014: 404-412; Müller 2014: 257-271; Pederson 2014: 333-353; Lowenstein 2021: 293-309, and others.

of this phrase, deep distress caused by all the circumstances, and the evident gradient of emotional growth in which it is expressed, the boy has, in fact, made an unintentional mistake here. However, such an assumption when interpreting the motivation behind the child's action must be verified precisely by comparing the emphasized place with the original:

Пропавшая моя жизнь, хуже собаки всякой... А еще кланяюсь Алене, кривому Егорке и кучеру, а гармонию мою никому не отдавай. Остаюсь твой внук Иван Жуков, милый дедушка приезжай. (Чеховъ 1886: 4; emph. М. Ъ.)

Therefore, as can be seen in the example of the original, it is not a trauma-driven mistake, but a specific choice of term used to denote a special type of this instrument—"harmonia" ["гармония"]—which, in a lexicon from the period close to the time in which Chekhov's short story is published, was described as a folk instrument with keys but also a certain degree of air flow, which, being produced in Germany, greatly flooded the Russian music scene at the end of the 19th century, influencing typological changes in the performance of songs (Брокгауз, Ефрон 1892: 134). This kind of specificity in the original was recognized in one of the earliest translations of this short story into Serbian, published in the *Kolo* journal, where, on this occasion and due to the still not fully enriched lexicographical fund in this area, the term "harmonija" ["хармонија"] was chosen—"and don't give my harmonium to anyone" ["а хармонију мою не дај никоме"] (Чехов 1890: 8), while in one of the later English translations, the term "concertina" was selected, which could be a potential Anglophone variant for the Russian word "гармония" (cf. Thompson 2010: 39):

I have such a miserable life, worse than a dog's. And I send my love to Alyona, one-eyed Yegor, and the coachman, and *don't give my concertina to anyone*. I remain your grandson Ivan Zhukov, dear Grandad, do come. (Chekhov 1979: 52; emph. М. Ъ.)

While in the English translation, some other elements, especially in terms of missing punctuation (which is not absent in the original), emphasize the youth and agitation of the one writing (cf. Чеховъ 1886: 4; Chekhov 1979: 52), it is clear that among the choices in some Serbian translations, ranging from "harmonij[e]" ("хармониј[е]") to "ramonik[e]"

(“рамоник[e]”) (Чехов 1890: 8; Чехов 1963), the translation mirrors the extent to which it was felt that this part was soaked in traumatic experience, or at least differently intonated, and thus differently recognized across the ages, with the most frequent choice in school curricula being the last among those translations (cf. Станковић-Шошо 2009: 69; Журић 2019: 112, and others), which colors the word with trauma where the original may not have explicitly included it.² However, this also activates the question of the seemingly opposite direction: whether, in the translations of contemporary Serbian literature into foreign languages, the sound of the trauma of the exile, of the (re)configuration of identity, and the melancholy of memory is recognized where it truly exists?

The drastic fate of the first years of reception of the work *When Pumpkins Blossomed* [*Kad su cvetale tikve*] by Dragoslav Mihailović (Михаиловић 1968) and the play inspired by the novel in 1969 was also interpreted as a consequence of clearly expressed, overly provocative linguistic sonority on stage (cf. Hodel 2020: 152 and onward). The narrative, which includes numerous slang terms of the exile Ljuba the Champion, a former boxing champion, who emigrated from Yugoslavia to Sweden due to an investigation launched at a politically unfavourable time for his family, has, precisely in remaining faithful to the motivations behind what is told, largely conditioned the insufficient verbal competence of the protagonist to convey and mediate everything he had survived (Jeremić 1978: 153 and onward). Therefore, it is not surprising that, due to the lack of an appropriate word, and the need to convey the situation as vividly as possible (see Журић 2017: 355-368), or, paradoxically, to experience the cathartic moment of a repeated sonic recap of traumatic occasions (cf. Orth, Doorschodt, Verburt, Drožđek 2004: 443-480), on three occasions in the novel there are onomatopoeias for punches that were not allowed in the sports competition:

Najzad, odjedanput se saže kao jež, opet mi se uvuče u pleksus, tu me valjda samo dva puta opali, dok me ne otvori, i *duf!* – opet onaj aperkat. Ja ovako, raširenih i ruku i nogu – na leđa! [...]

² Regarding the considerations of Chekhov's works translated in Serbian, see: Човић-Раздобутко 2010: 25-34.

Poleteo je jedanput – i ja sam mu se izvukao. Poleteo je drugi put – ja sam mu se opet izmigoljio. Već malo zaduvan, poleteo je i treći put. Izvukoh mu se opet i tada – *duf!* – iz sve snage ga pogodim u grudi. [...]

Načinim fintu, pa ga levom dvaput, jednim za drugim, potkačim u glavu. Ništa strašno; ali on mi se refleksno otvori i ja opet – *duf!* – još jače nego maločas, u prsa. On se povede unazad, i ostade na nogama. (Mihailović 1984: 23, 99)

The translation of this excerpt from the novel into English was among the first translations of the work to appear outside the Slavic context as early as 1970 (Нинић 2017: 63-65), and the next year, another translator completed a full English translation of the novel *When Pumpkins Blossomed* (Mihailović 1971).³ Translational decisions for these examples in English translations of Mihailović's novel included replacing one onomatopoeia in Serbian with a completely different word, omitting the onomatopoeia entirely in another instance, and, in relation to the first chosen onomatopoeia, varying the selection of the implied sound nuance in the third example:

I knew he was crawling into my stomach, slugging me hard, hard enough to open me up, and then – *oof* – up came that uppercut again. [...]

He came right after me. I ducked, sidestepping him. He rushed me again, but I managed to keep away from him, so that now, when he tried a third time, *he was already winded I caught him with a hard short jab that ground right into his chest.* [...]

Nothing much. But he opened himself wide up in reflex, and again – *thud* – I hit him harder, this time on the chest. He swayed back and forth but stayed on his feet. (Mihailović 1971: 20, 112; *emph. M. Đ.*)

³ Incidentally, the challenge of translating the title of the novel, particularly due to the transfer of elements of ironic duality and the layer of jargon into other languages, is evidenced by the fact that in some instances, the title translation choices were different, often emphasizing the traumatic nature of the situation. This is, for example, shown by the Czech translation of the title *Prohra* [*Loss*] (Mihailović 1979) or the Swedish translation *Dråpslaget* [*The Killing Blow*] (Mihailović 1987). For discussions on the complexity of translational choices in the titles of works of Serbian literature translated into foreign languages, see: Човић 1988: 299-323; Ђурић 2020a: 57-69, and others.

Thus, while the sound of traumatic experience is written three times identically in the original (cf. Mihailović 1984: 23, 99), in the English translations of Mihailović's novel *When Pumpkins Blossomed*, it varies each time (cf. Mihailović 1971: 20, 112). This introduces a certain auditory diversity in reception, but on the other hand, the identical triple sound of trauma in the original is incredibly difficult to link with the motivations of the punch or the ways in which the protagonist experiences and conveys it when read in English (cf. Mihailović 1984: 23, 99; Mihailović 1971: 20, 112). The need for translational precision in terms of melodic-rhythmic accuracy relative to the original text has also been discussed by Ilma Rakusa, who is perfecting this skill in her work on the German translations of Kiš's works: "Translating his books was a lesson in endurance, precision, and creativity" (Rakusa according to Ђурић 2017: 540). Moreover, Rakusa particularly emphasized the sonic character of Kiš's prose, which she strived to convey in her German translations:

It is difficult for me to judge how my own translation of Kiš differs from others. It is clear that I aimed not only for the translations to be accurate but also to convey the melody and rhythm of Kiš's prose. Kiš is a poet, and when writing prose, he uses the finest linguistic register. His 'ironic lyricism,' which paradoxically combines poetic quality and irony, must also be recognized in translation as a typical stylistic device. And where Kiš plays almost cabalistically with words – in the form of anagrams, palindromes, 'syncopations,' and so on – I must repeat that procedure in German, without straying too far semantically from the original. I considered such challenges exciting and sought appropriate solutions. (Rakusa according to Ђурић 2017: 536)

Among the examples that draw attention in analyses of the transposition of sonic trauma into another language, a particularly stimulating observation is the previous one concerning the creation of syncopation when transferring auditory effects from the original into translations (cf. Rakusa according to Ђурић 2017: 536). Syncopation is a term that connects several different disciplines, including its linguistic, musical, and medical meanings (PMC). The least common denominator among these semantic frameworks defines the rhythmic changes expressed in syncopated transference (cf. Ђурић 2022a: 237 and onward). Rhythmic punctuation or melodic parceling in syncopated pulses (cf. Ђурић 2022a:

247) are especially highlighted in the transposition of the onomatopoeia of traumatic experiences, such as the sound of a train associated with the deportation of Jewish families to concentration camps, which repeatedly motivates reflections on memory focused on a difficult moment from childhood (cf. David 2014: 11-12). This is mediated through sonic trauma at the beginning of the novel *The House of Memory and Oblivion* [*Kuća sećanja i zaborava*] by Filip David, in the chapter titled “The Noise” [“Buka”]:

Taj zvuk... često se javlja. Voz u pokretu. Točkovi voza u pokretu. U početku nisam mogao da odredim odakle buka dolazi. Budila me je usred noći. Ustajao sam, otvarao prozore, pokušavao da u noći otkrijem izvor buke. Uzalud. Nigde u blizini nije bilo pruge ni železničke stanice.

Pokrivao sam uši šakama, gurao glavu pod jastuk. Ništa nije pomagalo. Uporna, jednolična, buka nije prestajala.

Bum-čiha-bum-bum-čiha-bum.

Oblačio sam se, izlazio iz kuće, lutao pustim ulicama u nameri da pobegnem što dalje od jednoličnog zvuka voza u pokretu.

Zvuk me je pratio. Bio je sa mnom, u meni, neuništiv. Dovodio me je do ludila.

Bum-čiha-bum-bum-čiha-bum.

Odjednom je prestao. Ali znao sam da će se ponovo javiti. Svaki put sve glasnije, upornije, nepodnošljivije. (David 2014: 11-12).

In the aforementioned chapter of David's novel, the sound of trauma⁴ is recognized as a thanatophonic syncopation of the train rhythm, marking the longer value of the repeated sound between two shorter auditory segments, like tension spreading in a constant loop, or like the prolongation of uncertainty that, unfortunately, is ultimately marked by the fatality of the anticipated end in repetitiveness (cf. Ђурић 2022a: 237 and onward; Lisak-Gębala 2024: 38). Based on the traumatized memory of the locomotive's sound, like the one recorded as a frequent sonic trigger

⁴ Regarding the methods of analyzing literary (re)contextualizations of traumatic war-time events in David's novel, examined in a comparative context in relation to other works of contemporary Serbian literature, see: Живковић 2020: 278-300.

of boundary situations in Holocaust studies, Filip David's novel could be classified as part of a special genre of literature dedicated to the sonic symbolizations of trains as warnings of the potential horror of irreversible deportations (Lisak-Gębala 2024: 38). Although David, by selecting the three-part rhythm of the train's onomatopoeia, opted to replicate one of the most famous kinds of beat implied in Saint-Saëns' musical symbolism of the *danse macabre* motif, which also implies the tragic nature of evoking such sonic trauma (cf. David 2014: 11; Lisak-Gębala 2024: 38; Saint-Saëns 1919), the decision regarding the translation of this segment of David's work into English was different:

That sound... it keeps recurring. A moving train. The wheels of a moving train. At first I couldn't tell where the noise was coming from. It woke me up in the dead of night. I got out of bed, opened the windows and peered out into the darkness, trying to locate the source. It was no use. There were no tracks or train stations anywhere nearby.

I put my hands over my ears, pushed my head under the pillow. Nothing helped. The steady, rhythmic noise would not go away.

Da-Dum-da-Dum-da-Dum-da-Dum.

I dressed, left the house, roamed the deserted streets hoping to get as far away as I could from the droning noise of the moving train.

But the sound followed me. It was with me, inside me, ineradicable. It was driving me mad.

Da-Dum-da-Dum-da-Dum-da-Dum.

Suddenly it stopped. But I knew it would return. Each time that much louder, that much more insistent, that much more unbearable. (David 2015)

The translator's choices regarding the auditory representation of the locomotive, such as the decision to transpose the original "*Bum-čiha-bum-bum-čiha-bum*" (David 2014: 11) into English as "*Da-Dum-da-Dum-da-Dum-da-Dum*" (David 2015), shift from the inherently syncopated rhythmic triplet to identical four-beat stresses. This notably emphasizes the sense of monotony in the sound, which haunts the memories, conveyed through a jarringly repetitive iambic rhythm (cf. Paris, Paris 2012: 133). Following the percussive pulse of explosive consonant choices, as in the

English example, and rhythmically closer to the original's arrangement, the sound of locomotized trauma in David's novel was transferred into German, again in a syncopated triplet reflective of the mirror image—"Rat-ta-rat-rat-ta-rat" (David 2016: 7). These examples of transferring the thanatosonic rhythm of the locomotive's syncopated hum in David's novel (cf. David 2014: 11; Ђурић 2022a: 237 ff.; Lisak-Gębala 2024: 38) illustrate how the universalization of a seemingly subjectively experienced traumatic sound can be perceived very differently depending on the linguistic and literary contextualization of what recognizing such a sound means in the history of a culture. This opens up a special range of questions regarding what types of auditory evocations, through a vertical examination within the frameworks of previous artistic achievements and research insights within the target culture, might be prompted by such translation choices.

The significance of onomatopoeia of the train to the trauma narrative is further evidenced by the fact that the entire first chapter is dedicated to this phenomenon (David 2014: 11-12), and perhaps the most prominent example of the sound of trauma, which is even more conspicuously placed at the title of the novel, is offered in Albahari's *Tsing* [*Cink*] (Албахари 1988). Pursuing the sound of traumatic memory of the father's death, mediated through the irritating intrusion of a metal screech from a hospital bed, is revealed throughout the novel in the form of an autopoetical echo in the auditory quality of the title of this work by Albahari:

Тага се зачуо необичан звук, као да су се доишакла два метална врха или као да је неко рекао цинк, њихо, њихо, сасвим њихо, све док слово к не зајуцкеџа на крају даха. Пас се истог трена пробио из траве и гурнуо ми главу међу ноге. Још увек нисам ништа схватао. Требало је да следеће вечери пас угине: тек тада сам увидео шта ме је пробудило оне ноћи у Тел Авиву. Није то био очев крик – отац је ћутао, а почео је да стење тек када сам му се приближио – нећо истии њај звук, као да је неко њихо изјоворио цинк њоред мој уха. Сетио сам се како сам изненада отворио очи и загледао се право изнад себе, ни у шта: нисам знао зашто сам будан. Ако сам нешто осећао, били су то празнина и немоћ, као да преко мога тела прелазе мрави вечности. После тога, а није то могло дуго да траје: неколико секунди, ништа више, погледао сам према очевом лежају у супротном углу и према његовом положају – једна рука му је

висила као сломљено кормило – препознао да нешто није у реду. То сећање је истог часа замењено другим: видео сам рабинову руку с ножићем и одсјај сечива, што ме тада нагнало да затворим очи. *Тада сам затворио очи, а сада сам чуо звук: цинк.* (Албахари 1995: 69; *emph.* М. Ђ.)

Numerous interdisciplinary clinical studies of trauma have shown that “when people feel threatened, they experience a significant narrowing of consciousness, and remain focused only on central perceptual details” (Van der Kolk, McFarlane, Weisaeth 1996: 285; Pederson 2014: 335). The title’s emphasis on something that is later revealed to be a sound mediating the pain of the father’s body and petrified in a memory with a strong traumatizing effect, as if representing a certain literary metamorphosis of a sign of an acute crisis of consciousness, is imbued with metapoetical significance in Albahari’s auditory image (cf. Албахари 1995; Van der Kolk, McFarlane, Weisaeth 1996: 285; Pederson 2014: 335). In this regard, it is especially important that, in the author’s translation of this novel, both the title and its narrative elaboration were adequately adjusted for the English-speaking audience, as illustrated by the following example from Albahari’s *Tsing* in English:

A strange sound could be heard then, as if two metal points touched, or as if somebody said tsing, quietly, quietly, very quietly, until the final sound ng burned out when the breath ended. [...] It was not my father’s cry – he was silent and begun to moan only when I came closer to him – but the same sound, as if somebody had quietly said tsing next to my ear. [...] I looked at Father’s bed in the opposite corner, and his posture – one of his arms hung like a broken rudder – told me that something was wrong. This memory was quickly replaced by another one: I saw the rabbi’s hand with the tiny knife and the reflection on its blade, and at that time it made me close my eyes. I close my eyes then, but now I heard the sound: tsing. (Albahari 1997: 87-88; *emph.* М. Ђ.)

In order to avoid one of the greatest challenges in the sound of trauma getting *lost in translation* (Jean-Charles 2014: 404), Albahari’s translational choice of the onomatopoeia “tsing” (Albahari 1997), as the closest approximation of the original sound and adaptable to the target language system, opens up an entire range of specificities in the implementation of this auditory symbol within the context of the target culture. Indeed,

research also shows that the onomatopoeic sound “tsing-tsing,” representing the movement of leaves and possessing a healing, soothing, or even hypnotic effect, is revealed in a repetitive onomatopoeic combination, particularly in certain holistic approaches to healing (Bruce 2002: 4). When this perspective is applied to the interpretation of the original, it is noticeable how the effect of auditory trauma is implicitly mediated, so as to convincingly convey the impression of thanatosonic holism that weighs down both the story and the narrator (cf. Lisak-Gębala 2024: 38; Bruce 2002: 4), and which influences the methods of deconstructing narration and the symbolism of the entire poetic paradigm.⁵ In this sense, we can observe how these examples implicitly reflect the typology of translation approaches proposed by Walter Benjamin: “For to some degree all great writings, but above all holy scripture, *contain their virtual translation between the lines. The interlinear version of the holy scriptures is the prototype or ideal of all translation*” (Benjamin 1997: 165; *emph. M. Đ.*). *The interlinear variant of the text*, which potentially encompasses even *virtual translation possibilities* (Benjamin 1997: 165), precisely implies a deep transformation of the ways in which trauma is represented in works (in)directly, and in fact, the delicacy of the essence of the act of translation (cf. Müller 2014: 257-271).

The traumatized memories of the father’s death invoke questions of (re)building the language of inherited creativity and (de)constructing the potential of the typology of the great story, as shown not only in the works of Kiš, Albahari, and several other authors but also in Radomir Konstantinović’s *Death of Descartes* [*Dekartova smrt*] (Konstantinović 1996; cf. Rosić 2005). The year 1993, in the final part of the text of *Death of Descartes*, represents the boundary between personal and collective trauma (Konstantinović 1996: 220), opening numerous questions about whether to last in the Cartesian way means being “closed-mouthed” [“zatvorenih usta”] (Konstantinović 1996: 18), since (trans)formation of identity is largely revealed as “*just a pause in the sentence-thought of my father*” [“*samo pauza u rečenici-misli moga oca*”] (Konstantinović 1996: 19). While this segment is quite faithfully conveyed in the English translation, apart

⁵ For analytical models approaching these and related themes in Albahari’s work; see: Šaponja 1989: 296; Марићевих 2012: 46-47; Аврамових 2014: 525-546.

from the omission of underlining also the *pause* as a key determination of selfhood: “I’m merely a pause in the *thought-sentence of my father*” (Konstantinović 2020), the question arises as to whether and how the meta-poetically significant change in the quotation from Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* (Joyce 1939) in Konstantinović’s novel will be recognized (cf. Ђурић 2023: 120). As a certain antithesis to the traumatic attempt to free oneself from the father’s authority, the literary paradigm of the mother’s reading choices not only offers one of the most polyglot works in world literature but also reveals the freedom of change; thus, instead of a direct quotation from Joyce’s work – “And trieste, ah trieste ate I my liver” (FW 301.16), in Konstantinović’s novel it reads – “*And Trieste, ah Trieste eat I my liver*” (Konstantinović 1996: 37; cf. Ђурић 2023: 120).

In this regard, one of the fundamental questions that arise is whether this modified quotation will be recognized and thereby transposed in translation, i.e., whether the mother’s liberation from the legacy of the traumatized relationship with masculine authority, the patronage of citation (cf. Rosić 2012: 57-69), and the indicated dynamization (meta) poetic changes in Konstantinović’s novel can be followed in translations into other languages. For instance, in the Slovak translation, Konstantinović’s intervention in Joyce’s quotation is retained – “*And Trieste, ah Trieste eat I my liver. Aj v Terste prší? Prší, a ty ješ sendvič, na schodoch kostola (ako sa ten kostol volá?) alebo vo vstupe do Standu, sendvič s ementálom*” (Konstantinović 1999: 38), but without an additional intertextual note, this type of (re)contextualization is clearly made more difficult.⁶ However, further changes in the quotation, emphasizing Konstantinović’s greater focus on the topos of Trieste in relation to the polyphony of meanings from the original quotation (cf. FW 301.16; Konstantinović 1996: 37; Mitrović 1998: 224-239; Ђурић 2023: 120), represent an attempt to conquer the space of detraumatization of feelings in relation to the necessity of the prescribed sequence of citations of narrative superstructures, as a potential metaphor for related attempts at regenerating in relation to the imposed authoritarian position of the literary predecessor (cf. Bloom 1995).

⁶ Regarding the value of translational notes in translations of Serbian literature into foreign languages, see: Ђурић 2020b: 48-64.

Another indicative example that represents modes of surviving a convincing narrative perspective implied by the experience of war trauma, particularly through the integration of sound effects into a kind of stream of consciousness of a preaching voice, can be observed in the short story “Ah, Good Drivers Who Glide Through Summer Black Nights” [“Ah, dobri vozači što klizite kroz letnje crne noći”] by Mihajlo Pantić (Пантић 1993: 13-24), which was later included in the collection *New Belgrade Stories* [*Novobeogradske priče*] (Pantić 1994). The impression of confusion, the feeling of displacement, and the nervous breakdown of one who survived the wartime hardships is particularly enhanced by the need to integrate the sound of traumatic experience into the hypnotized narrative flow of consciousness with the potential for a cathartic effect in the continuity of fluctuation (cf. Orth, Doorschodt, Verburgt, Droždek 2004: 443-480):

Пожелио сам да се нешто догоди, нешто што би ме мало покренуло, макар и нагоре, али није вредело, већ данима ми се, од доласка из В., ништа није догађало, био сам сâм себи непознат, све што се збивало, збивало се неком другом, не мени, боже колико слика, упамћених без разлога и мимо воље, колико затамњеног простора, сетио сам се да је до шуме требало прећи стотинак метара, преко минског поља, трчећи цикцак, само са једном мишљу у глави, нећу нагазити, нећу нагазити, у даљини се видео град у рушевинама и напола пресечени, клонули далеководи са покиданим жицама које су додиривале земљу, негде у близини чули су се кратки, рески рафали, *ћак-ћак-ћак*, однекуд је допирала потмула грмљавина топова, трчао сам и већ сам био надамак шуме, још само неколико корака, и онда је нешто нагло блеснуло, ништа нисам чуо, неко је преко мојих очију навукао црни повез, последње што сам видео била је нечија мртвачки бела рука која ми показује да кренем према њој... (Пантић/Пантич/Pantić 2023: 54-55)

The repetitiveness of the rifle-like echo of the auditory trauma – “*tak-tak-tak*” [“так-так-так”] (Пантић/Пантич/Pantić 2023: 55), integrated into the entire confessional stream of the traumatized, significantly influences the rhythm of the narration, reflecting events from the front transformed through deep post-traumatic changes, resonating with the effect of re-experiencing (cf. Orth, Doorschodt, Verburgt, Droždek 2004: 443-480). The discourse of sound trauma thus becomes the traumatized

effect of the text, which, incorporating experiential elements into its fabric, (un)successfully attempts to offer relief (DeMeester 1998: 649-673), which is well recognized in Elena Sagalovich's Russian translation and in Jörg Schulte's German translation:

Мне захотелось, чтобы что-то случилось, что меня бы расшевелило, пусть и самое плохое, но все зря, целыми днями после приезда из В. со мной ничего не происходило, я был сам себе незнакомцем, все, что случалось, случалось с кем-то другим, не со мной, боже, сколько сцен, оставшихся в памяти без причины и помимо воли, сколько темных пространств, – я вспомнил, что до леса надо пройти каких-то сто метров, по минному полю, петляя зигзагом, только с одной мыслью в голове – я не наступлю, я не наступлю, – вдалеке виднелся город в руинах и рассеченный пополам, покосившиеся линии электропередач с оборванными проводами, висевшими до земли, где-то поблизости слышались краткие, резкие очереди, *шак-шак-шак*, откуда-то слышался приглушенный гром орудий, я бежал и был уже почти у леса, еще пара шагов, и тогда что-то внезапно вспыхнуло, я ничего не услышал, кто-то натянул на мои глаза черную повязку, последнее, что я видел – чья-то мертво-белая рука, которая мне показывает, чтобы я двигался к ней... (Пантић/Пантич/Pantić 2023: 116)

Ich wünschte, daß etwas geschehe, etwas, das mich ein wenig bewegen würde, sei es auch zum Schlechten, aber es nützte nichts, schon seit Tagen, seit der Ankunft aus V., hatte sich nichts ereignet, ich war mir selbst unbekannt, alles was geschah, geschah mit irgend jemand anders, nicht mit mir, mein Gott, wie viele Bilder, die sich grundlos und gegen meinen Willen einprägten, wie viele verdüsterte Räume, ich fühlte, es wären hundert Meter bis zum Wald, über ein Minenfeld, im Zick-zack-Lauf, nur mit dem einen Gedanken im Kopf, ich will nicht darauf treten, ich will nicht darauf treten, in der Feme war, in Ruinen und entzweiggeschnitten, die Stadt zu sehen, hingen Fernleitungen herab mit abgerissenen Drähten, die bis zur Erde reichten, irgendwo in der Nähe war ein kurzes, scharfes Rattern zu hören, tack-tack-tack, von irgendwoher das dumpfe Donnern einer Kanone, ich lief und war schon in der Nähe des Waldes, nur noch einige Schritte und da blitzte etwas jäh auf, ich hörte nichts, über meine Augen zog jemand eine schwarze Binde, das Letzte was ich sah, war eine todbleiche Hand, die mir deutete, ich solle mich ihr entgegen bewegen... (Пантић/Пантич/Pantić 2023: 181)

And although the syntactic constructions in these linguistic systems are significantly different, the choices to follow the original as closely as (im)possible underscore the translational challenge of mediating the polyglot force of consciousness in such an effect (cf. Пантић/Пантич/Pantić 2023: 54-55, 116, 181), as well as the need to exert the echo of sound trauma in the context of the stream of consciousness in order to work on the possibilities of cathartic overcoming of traumatic experiences in the narrative that remembers (cf. Orth, Doorschodt, Verburgt, Droždek 2004: 443-480; DeMeester 1998: 649-673).

The events of boundary situations imply that the sound of naming the other often becomes literary, suggesting a certain trauma. Interpretations of the dilemma about what the right to name a friend in boundary circumstances represents open a whole range of questions regarding the poetics of address within *the politics of friendship* (Derrida 1997: 101; cf. Devere 2005: 79). The proximity and/or remoteness of the names of heroines in the context of critical changes caused by traumatic circumstances are often connected to the autofictional establishment of articulating the voice of the self through the voice of the other, which is strikingly observed in the paratextual elements of Lana Bastašić's short story collection *Milk Teeth* [*Mliječni zubi*], full of Balkan motifs and dedicated "to Lina, who is seven years old and looks at the Moon" ["Lini, koja ima sedam godina i gleda u Mjesec"] (Bastašić 2021). This kind of selection of duality of names and their creative transformations greatly testifies to the parallel established between the heroines of Bastašić's novel *Catch the Rabbit* [*Uhvati zeca*] (Bastašić 2020) and the famous protagonists of the Neapolitan chronotope of the 1950s in Elena Ferrante's works (cf. Ferrante 2011 and others), particularly emphasized in the inscription by Jasmina Vrbavac on the first page of the English edition of Bastašić's novel: "Lewis Carroll meets Elena Ferrante in a Balkanized Wonderland" (Vrbavac according Bastašić 2022).⁷ Doubts regarding how it is possible in the complex traumatic circumstances of the wartime or post-war period, oscillating between re-evaluating each determination of "Friend," "Freu(n)d," and "Feind" (cf. Derrida 1997), to preserve the focus of the self in relation

⁷ Concerning the ways in which the variations in naming characters in the works of Elena Ferrante and Lana Bastašić can be interpreted from the perspective of a creative dialogue with Joyce's works, see: Đurić 2024: 131-132, 134-135; Ћурић 2022b: 600.

to the naming of a friend, are largely contextualized in the works of Elena Ferrante and Lana Bastašić:

Rino's mother is named Raffaella Cerullo, but everyone has always called her *Lina*. Not me, I've never used either her first name or her last. *To me, for more than sixty years, she's been Lila. If I were to call her Lina or Raffaella, suddenly, like that, she would think our friendship was over.* (Ferrante 2012: 12; emph. M. Đ.)

'Je l' ti smeta što te zovem Lejla?', pitala sam je. Nikada ranije nisam tako mislila o tome. Bila sam ponosna na to kako sam je oslovljavala, kao da je samo meni bila dostupna neka suštinska tajna o njenoj *prirodi, suštini*. Sada sam sjedila za onim šankom, pila crno pivo i shvatila da je imala samo jedanaest godina kada su joj dali novo ime. Pokušala sam da zamislim dijete od jedanaest godina. Nisam uspjela. Shvatila sam da je to slovo *j*, koje sam uporno dodavala njenom imenu zapravo služilo kako bih se *ja* osjećala posebnom i drugačijom. (Bastašić 2020: 212)

And while the play on name choice, despite traumatic reflections, is more evidently translatable in the case of Ferrante's work,⁸ in Bastašić's *Catch the Rabbit* the complexity of this play in defining self-understanding, as well as the gulf of difference, could be more challengingly transferred without additional commentary into English: "It dawned on me that the little *j* which I stubbornly added to her name was only there to give *me* the feeling that *I* was special, different" (Bastašić 2022: 245). The difference between naming the female friend as Lejla or Lela in Lana Bastašić's novel represents a duality of the traumatized experience that attempts to be overcome in the proximity of recognition of the friendship (Bastašić 2020: 212; cf. Đurić 2024: 131-135),⁹ yet this, although conceived as deeply immanent, paradoxically proves more difficult to affirm as universal in the variant of some translations.

⁸ Compare the previous English translation (Ferrante 2012: 12) with the Italian original: "La madre di Rino si chiama Raffaella Cerullo, ma tutti l'hanno sempre chiamata Lina. Io no, non ho mai usato né il primo nome né il secondo. Da più di sessant'anni per me è Lila. Se la chiamassi Lina o Raffaella, così, all'improvviso, penserebbe che la nostra amicizia è finita" (Ferrante 2011: 15).

⁹ Regarding interpretations of Lana Bastašić's novel in the context of related novels that emphasize the experience of war, see: Пантовић 2024: 155-179.

Especially challenging for translation are the layers of literary works that, by representing a certain traumatic circumstance, such as exile, impossibility of return, and an impasse in the general (mis)understanding and (mis)acceptance of one's identity, encompass degrees of intermedial reference, as seen, for example, in the title of Bojan Krivokapić's novel *Spring Is Setting Out On Its Journey* [*Proleće se na put sprema*] (Krivokapić 2017). Based on the polyphony of fates captured in the narrative during traumatic war circumstances, and particularly in the last lyrically toned chapter of the novel, where the (im)possibility of return is actualized in the final image, the title is intertextually connected to the second line from the scene of Dušan Kovačević's drama *Gathering Center* [*Sabirni centar*], in which a choir of the deceased performs a song that begins with the words "The cherry blossoms in the mountain" ["Цвета трешња у планини"] (Ковачевић 2019). Considering that Gregor, the main protagonist of Krivokapić's novel, in an attempt to overcome trauma and with the will to present who he really (is)n't, sings this number (Krivokapić 2017: 169), it is noticeable that the interreferential aspect also involves the melodic transposition of these verses, which was made for the film adaptation (Goran Marković, director) by Zoran Simjanović.¹⁰ Since the song is in a symmetrical eight-meter, which is also accompanied in Simjanović's choral scores by a choice of four-four time, it is evident that the ninth syllable in the German translation of the title – *Der Frühling macht sich auf die Reise* (Krivokapić 2021) – is not able to melodically transpose the cathartic release of the traumatized feeling (cf. Orth, Doorschodt, Verburgt, Droždek 2004: 443-480), which, in the mentioned recontextualization of the song, besides (geo)poetic invocation, possesses a potentially metaphysical outcome as an activated symbolic level. However, in the Slovenian translation of the title, the choice actualizes somewhat different interpretative possibilities, which primarily point to the phraseological value of the expression—*Pot pod noge* (Krivokapić 2022; cf. Keber), which indicates varying degrees of complexity assumed by the cathartic tension aimed at attempting to relieve trauma in relation to the activated literary paradigm and ways of reflecting it in translations (cf. Orth, Doorschodt, Verburgt, Droždek 2004: 443-480).

¹⁰ Namely, the folk melody, with a slightly different text – "Karanfil se na put sprema, ej sprema" – was also recorded in Albert Lord's collection, with Bartók's musical notation (Bartók, Lord 1978: 495).

From the previously analyzed examples, it is evident how complex and challenging the dynamics of translating sounds of trauma in works of contemporary Serbian literature into foreign languages is. Sensitive moments of vulnerability, the loss of close ones, and identity tensions have often been transposed precisely through onomatopoeic marks, and the levels of these universalizations of subjective reactions have been differently recognized and emphasized through translations: from distinct rhythmic determinations, through variations of identical onomatopoeias in diversified translational choices, to examples that show innovations in how sound is transposed in translation, thus sparking stimulating genealogies of perception in the reception vertical of the target culture. This type of observation actualizes yet another important implication for more active contextualizing of works by Serbian authors in translation through careful readings, compared to the originals. In the ideal projection of *interlinear connections between texts* that activate and invoke *translation possibilities* (Benjamin 1997: 165), some of the most complex hermeneutic questions of contemporary Serbian literature could be simultaneously viewed in different horizons of their linguistic transformations. In this direction, it can be concluded that the authorial and translational originalities regarding auditory articulations of traumatic experiences, as well as examples from contemporary Serbian literature, have opened up branches for comparative research in the context of world literature, contemporary theoretical perspectives, and numerous interdisciplinary approaches.

Translated by Doroteja Balaban

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