

CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC PARTICULARITIES OF LITERARY TRANSLATION FROM NORWEGIAN TO ROMANIAN, AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE ROMANIAN TRANSLATION OF MORTEN STRØKNES' *HAVBOKA*

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ABSTRACT. *Cultural and Linguistic Particularities of Literary Translation from Norwegian to Romanian, as Illustrated in the Romanian Translation of Morten Strøknès's Havboka.* The present study aims at presenting the various cultural and linguistic particularities arising within a literary translation, placing a specific focus on the literary translation from Romanian to Norwegian and offering practical examples from the Romanian translation of Morten Strøknès's *Havboka*. The article opens with a discussion on the importance of culture in literary translations, illustrating the essential impact of the cultural element over the preference for a perfect semantic equivalence. The research, then, focuses on those elements which bring out the specificity of the translation proper, providing a varied palette of examples, meant to highlight the cultural particularities of the Norwegian language and the manner in which these particularities were handled within the translation, in order to preserve the unity and meaning conveyed in the source text. Pursuant to remaining loyal to the nature of the source text and to the realities of the target language, the study reflects on the importance of cultural uniqueness, and examines its decisive resonance within the translation proper.

Keywords: *literary translation, cultural particularities, linguistic particularities, Norwegian language, Romanian language, semantic equivalence, significance.*

REZUMAT. *Particularități culturale și lingvistice ale traducerii literare din limba norvegiană în limba română, ilustrate în traducerea cărții lui Morten Strøknès's Havboka.* Prezentul studiu își propune să analizeze diferențele particularități culturale și lingvistice ce apar în cadrul traducerilor literare, punând accentul pe traducerea literară din limba română în norvegiană și oferind exemple practice din traducerea în limba română, a cărții *Havboka* scrisă de

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Morten Strøknæs. Articolul se deschide cu o prezentare a importanței culturii în traducerile literare, ilustrând impactul marcant al elementului cultural în detrimentul preferinței pentru echivalența semantică perfectă. Cercetarea se concentrează apoi pe acele elemente care vizează specificul traducerii, oferind o paletă variată de exemple, menite să evidențieze particularitățile culturale ale limbii norvegiene și modul în care aceste particularități au fost tratate în cadrul traducerii, pentru a păstra unitatea și semnificația transmise în textul sursă. Urmărind redarea într-un mod cât se poate de fidel a textului sursă, dar în același timp și a realităților limbii țintă, studiul reflectă asupra importanței unicității culturale și examinează rezonanța sa decisivă în cadrul traducerii în sine.

Cuvinte cheie: traduceri literare, particularități culturale, particularități lingvistice, limba norvegiană, limba română, echivalență semantică, semnificație.

1. The Importance of Culture in Literary Translations

The cultural aspect has always been of incommensurable importance for rendering the full meaning to translations in general and all the more in the case of literary translations. Literary translations represent a more particular area within the broader field of translations as the full semantic content of a literary translation needs to be accurately integrated within the cultural paradigm it belongs to, while at the same time maintaining the same sense of wholeness and strength of conveyance it renders, in the original language.

Aiming at preserving the meaning of a text in its entirety through a translation is, as such, not only linked to the faithful preservation of an absolutely accurate semantic rendering from one language to another, but also to a careful, sensible and almost intuitive understanding of the cultural background from where the text originates, and which is very well part of the textual DNA, a component that must be carried across all languages into which that text is translated. This is one of the main reasons why translators of literary texts should not only be considered translators of texts, but also translators of culture, a particularity that can be seen at its fullest specifically in the translations of literary texts.

To the untrained eye, the notion of culture might appear as an ambiguous territory especially because of the multifold valences which are attributed to this term. Perhaps, it would be useful to briefly explore what culture is from the perspective of a translator of literary texts. Answering this question by providing a single, straightforward definition of the term could prove to be a never-ending task, which in the end might not even produce a very accurate

result. As such, we could exemplify the notion by considering, for instance, several random examples of words belonging to certain languages which have no equivalents in other languages. These words can be considered as living proof of the fact that language and culture coexist in such a way that they create concepts which are fully accessible only for the native receivers of the culture and language which originated them. This does not necessarily mean that outsiders to the culture cannot understand the concept the word conveys, but rather that finding a perfect equivalent for that word in a different language might prove to be impossible.

Take for instance the word *hygge*, present in several Scandinavian languages. The word refers to the feeling of coziness. While the English language has found a relatively close equivalent for this word, the notion of *coziness* does not fully describe the meaning of *hygge*, as the word comprises several other meanings such as “a form of everyday togetherness”, “a pleasant and highly valued everyday experience of safety, equality, personal wholeness and a spontaneous social flow”. Collins English Dictionary defines the word as “a concept (...) creating cozy and convivial atmospheres that promote wellbeing”. The case of this word is not singular. In Romanian one can also identify such examples of words which have no equivalents in other languages, such as the well-known example of the word *dor*, depicting a feeling of longing.

The examples illustrated above demonstrate that there is a powerful cultural bias, if one may call it so, across languages, a feature that is closely engendered in the manner in which different nations, as cultural individualities, perceive their surroundings in a way that is so personal, one may even say intimate, that it ends up being reflected in the way they communicate with each other and to the rest of the world, which thus becomes quintessentially filtered into their language. Translating such notions that are more likely to be encountered especially in literary works, is a linguistic endeavor as much as it is a creative effort to unify different cultures and languages in order to obtain a sound and unitary literary work in the translation’s target language.

Perhaps the best way to understand the endeavor of a translator and all the more of a translator of literary texts, is by filtering it through Pushkin’s words. Pushkin considered that a translator is “a courier of the human spirit”. Yet, irrespective of the metaphor one chooses to indulge in when theorizing about literary translation, the unshakeable truth still remains that literary translation cannot exist without a good sense of multiculturalism attached to it or as Robert Wechsler playfully asserts: “it is a celebration of otherness, a truly multicultural event without all the balloons and noisemakers.” (1998: 8)

2. Norwegian and Romanian, a Translator's Quest Conquering both Language and Culture

When specifically referring to literary translations from Norwegian into Romanian, the cultural aspect and the purely linguistic undertaking are very closely intertwined. One of the major challenges that arise when translating a literary work from Norwegian into Romanian stems from the many cultural differences between the two languages and cultures. It is not enough to simply accept that two nations and their languages are different to begin with, when producing a translation of a literary text. Just like in the case of the word *hygge* exemplified above, culture transpires through language, a phenomenon which is best at play in the field of literary translations.

Eco (2001) offers the same perspective over the topic, asserting that a translator needs to take into account considerations that are not solely linguistic, but mostly cultural. Offering a literal translation for a proposition may suggest a similar semantic meaning in the target language, but the same proposition might have a different cultural impact. The difference between the purely semantic meaning of a translation and its cultural apprehension presents an incredibly interesting ground for analysis, because it is this realm of distinction and significance that not only poses challenges for the translator, but that also contains the necessary code to making a literary translation whole within the target language. Omitting the cultural interface, may render a translation incomplete, a translation that might be semantically precise, but lacking in substance, giving the impression that the text itself isn't fully grounded in the target language.

Norwegian and to a good extent Scandinavian culture is extremely particular and quite hermetic, which means that translations from Norwegian especially, are bound to create more than a couple of cultural dilemmas, at least for a native Romanian translator. These dilemmas might arise from favoring a more target-oriented perspective over the translation. Such a perspective needs to ascertain that a semantic equivalence between the target language and the source language must exist in order for a translation to be possible.

Yet, for literary translations that have Norwegian source texts and Romanian as target language, such a perspective proves to be annihilating, since there are so many instances of words or expressions depicting objects, animals, feelings, world-views, that do not have a perfect equivalent or that do not have any equivalent in Romanian. For such instances, the resolution most translators adhere to would be to provide not a perfectly valid semantic translation, but rather to provide a culturally valid interpretation of the terminology, in order for it to gain significance in the target language. There are various strategies that can be used to achieve this end. If semantic inequivalence applies to a

singular word only, one might opt for maintaining the word in the source language and providing additional explanations in endnotes or footnotes. By doing so, the translator can provide the reader with the contextualized cultural background necessary for understanding the context in which such a word is used, the need for using this particular expression and not a similar one which might have a semantic equivalent in the target language and for ensuring that the cultural mark of uniqueness in the source language is adhered to in the target language as well.

Translating strategies might differ when semantic inequivalence applies to more than one word or to a complex phrase. In such a situation, keeping the entire construction in the source language might prove to be a difficult endeavor. The resolution in these highly complex instances, as suggested by Eco (2001), is freely interpreting the source text and recreating it in the target language, with emphasis being placed no longer on the perfect semantic equivalence between source language and target language, but on the effect of the translated text on the target culture.

The two situations described above proved to be recurrent elements in the translation process surrounding Morten Strøksnes' book, *Havboka*, from Norwegian into Romanian, a book in the translation of which, an in-depth knowledge of Norwegian lifestyle and culture, proved to be an invaluable resource. Whether it is the general topic of life at sea, so near and so deeply engendered in the country's and its people's livelihood or whether it surfaces because of the work's non-fictional feature, portraying Norwegian history and landscape, both subjectively and many times scientifically unbiased, with the astute accuracy of a biologist, historian, insider and objective observer, this masterpiece provides an ample and captivating territory for discussing linguistic and cultural particularities of source to target text differences, from Norwegian to Romanian.

2.1. Cultural and Linguistic Particularities in Morten Strøksnes' Havboka

Morten Strøksnes' novel, *Havboka*, is not essentially a work of fiction. While the author might have made use of those dramatic techniques that provide novels with the artsy fictional support, the novel under discussion is a non-fiction novel. The genre is relatively new and according to The Encyclopedia Britannica, it appeared in 1965, Truman Capote being named its originator, through his book *In Cold Blood*. The fact that Strøksnes' novel is categorized as belonging to the nonfictional genre, because of its increasingly artistic nature, with descriptive accounts and passages rendering the work almost lyrical, which is in a way atypical of nonfictional works, makes the process of translating such a piece of work even more interesting, both from a theoretical and from a practical point of view.

When dealing with a complex text, such as the one under discussion, which in addition borderlines the nonfictional genre, one must understand from the offset that the translation is bound to be suffused in elements presenting cultural and linguistic conflicts between the source language text and the target language text. Taking this general idea as a given, one would have to at least envision that the realm of cultural and linguistic discrepancies would pose various challenges in the translation process, especially when it comes to those linguistic elements which are void of meaning in the target language, in the absence of the much needed background information provided only through creating access pathways to the cultural environment that produced the text in the source language.

2.2. Notions Which Depict Fish, Fishing Tools, Fishing Establishments and the Life of Fishermen

The most important aspects that begin to raise cultural and linguistic discrepancies when translating Strøksnes' text from Romanian into Norwegian, are related to those notions which depict fish, fishing tools, fishing establishments and most of the activities surrounding this lexical area, which is understandably more developed in the Norwegian language as opposed to the Romanian language. Some practical examples are easy to find throughout the novel.

To begin with, we could study the case of such words as *fiskebruk* and *trandamperi*. *Fiskeruk* poses less of a challenge linguistically speaking, since it can be equated to the Romanian *pescărie/fabrică de pește*. Yet, at least to some extent, the Romanian translation is culturally challenged, for what is understood by a fishery in Romanian, cannot begin to comprise the entire range of meaning of a fully functional Norwegian establishment, for the same purpose. The fishery is described in accurate detail later on in the novel, which works favorably for the purpose of the translation as well. Since the description is perfectly accurate and believable, as the account is non-fictional and the building actually exists on the Norwegian island of Skrova, Strøksnes's authorial input helps the translation process, in that it perfectly creates the much needed cultural clarification, enriching the meaning of the simple Romanian equivalent with a description of a traditional Norwegian *fiskebruk*. Furthermore, culturally speaking, the differences between the Romanian *pescărie* and the Norwegian *fiskebruk* are striking and obvious, for while depicting an establishment where fish is procured and processed, the Norwegian word bears more than a purely technical understanding and it is deeply linked to the specific way of life of Norwegian fishermen.

The second example highlighted above, namely the case of the word *trandamperi* is more problematic for the Romanian text. For starters, there isn't

a single word in the Romanian language that can be perfectly equvalated to its Norwegian counterpart. From a strictly linguistic standpoint, it could prove difficult to find an explanation for why a language such as Romanian does not have one word to perfectly match the Norwegian *trandamperi*, however, such a situation is justifiable from a cultural viewpoint. The Norwegian vocabulary is much richer in terminology related to fishing, fishmongery, fish processing, life at sea, the life of fishermen and the tools they use on a daily basis, which are not only part of their day to day activities, but have come to be a definition of their identity and an essence of their being, an aspect which the novel also conveys quite clearly and being a non-fictional text, such pieces of information must be understood as valid, cultural facts.

When faced with the dilemma of translating a word with no perfect, unique equivalent in the target language as is the case of the word *trandamperi*, a valid option, though not the only solution available in such situations, is to resort to employing a clarification of this establishment's purpose. This was also the course of action taken in the Romanian translation as well, where *trandamperi* was translated as "*fabrică mică de procesare a uleiului din ficat de cod.*" (op. cit) One of the possible cultural explanations for why Romanian does not have a perfect equivalent for this notion could be the fact that the Romanian industry never specialized in processing cod liver oil and therefore, there was no need for the language to create a lexical item to name such an establishment. Despite not having a perfect equivalent to match the Norwegian notion, the target language text doesn't necessarily lose much in terms of meaning or stylistics, in this particular case at least. The justification would be that the Romanian translation, though not employing a one-word-equivalent, still manages to capture the essence of the term, not by finding a perfect equivalent in the target language, but by providing a definition of it, a strategy which, in this case, bridges the gap between the source and the target language.

Another element of great interest also related to this area of fishing and life at sea, comes out in Strøknes's text in the context of describing a hunt for wolffish. While the description of the hunt itself offers a valuable cultural insight into the authentic Norwegian fishermen's life and activities, what is of interest for the present paper represents the use of a particular tool, used when catching wolffish at sea. The Norwegian word for this tool, namely *pik*, constitutes yet another example of a lexical item without perfect equivalence in the target language.

Historically speaking, Scandinavian peoples engaged in complex and rather barbarian hunts for larger fish species. Some of the most hunted specimens were whales of all kinds, which were slaughtered to the point of extinction and exploited for their meat, blood, gray amber and liver oil. During such hunting expeditions fishermen developed various tools to help them handle such heavy

sea creatures and invented, for this purpose, a large and wide variety of weapons, among which, probably the most famously known tool worldwide is the harpoon. However, there are different kinds of harpoons, which were adjusted to the type of fish they were used in catching. One such harpoon is the one referred to as *pik*, which one needs to understand is a smaller type of harpoon used to sting wolffish (the wolffish being smaller in size than the whale, for instance).

As it was a specific tool, a special artifact which needed to be individualized, the target language text perceived it rather as a proper name and preserved it as such, in the original form offered by the source text. The choice was also justified by the manner in which the tool was presented in the source text, where in addition to being named, a description for the tool and its usage, was also provided: "(...) *Hugo și prietenii lui stăteau în larg toată noaptea ca să pescuiască lupi de Atlantic cu pik-ul – un harpon cu vârful întărit care se aruncă din barcă pentru a străpunge lupii de Atlantic sau calcanii care înotau nestingheriți pe fundul apei.*" (op. cit) Thus, as the fragment above demonstrates, keeping the original, source language term feels natural in the target text as well.

The two situations exposed above, that of the word *trandamperi* and that of the word *pik*, bring into discussion the notion of equivalence in translation and whether seeking utmost equivalence is in fact a desirable end result. Eco (2001) states that: "*equivalence in meaning cannot be taken as a satisfactory criterion for a correct translation, first of all because in order to define the still undefined notion of translation one would have to employ a notion as obscure as equivalence of meaning, and some people think that meaning is that which remains unchanged in the process of translation. We cannot even accept the naïve idea that the equivalence in meaning is provided by synonymy, since it is commonly accepted that there are no complete synonyms in language.*" (9)

Understandably enough, aiming for perfect equivalence in the translation of a literary text is not a realistic goal. Languages are not perfect elements in themselves and, at times, it is quite difficult to find a perfect synonym for a lexical element within the same language. The quest of finding perfect equivalents across different languages has more to do with utopia than with the linguistic reality at hand. Thus, the fact that there were no equivalents for the Norwegian words *trandamperi* and *pik* in Romanian, doesn't mean that the Romanian translation loses on account of meaning. Perfect equivalence would be possible if perfect languages existed and perhaps at some ideological level they do exist, but aside from the mystical sense, languages have their imperfections and what can realistically be obtained out of a translation is finding a compatible convergence between source and target language. This way, the quintessential meaning is still preserved, as convergence also helps mend the eventual cultural gaps created

by such notions that are culturally engendered in a language, but culturally absent from another.

Undoubtedly the most interesting linguistic elements that draw attention in the source text and that are still related to this broader category of fish and sea life, refer to the extremely rich lexical domain that Norwegian reserves for the different types of cod. These multifold variations can name cod fished in different areas, but they also include notions that distinguish between the different manners of processing and preparing this type of fish. For instance, an example would be the notion of *klippfisk*, which refers to a variety of dry, salted cod or *kaffetorsk*, which is a kind of cod that weighs over thirty kilos. Just as in the cases studied above, there is no equivalent for these lexical items in the target language, for which reason, the Norwegian word was preserved in the translation as well, accompanied by an explanation provided additionally by the translator. *Skrei* and not the general *torsk* is the Norwegian word for cod from the Atlantic Ocean.

The existence of this additional terminology referring to cod in Norwegian, suggests yet another interesting cultural particularity of the Norwegian culture and the way in which it is reflected through language. It is not perhaps so surprising, taking into consideration that cod is considered to be Norway's national fish. This means, that culturally, this particular species is an important part of the country's broader national identity, so it feels quite natural that there should be several names within the language to distinguish between the various kinds or species of cod. The name *skrei* in particular would pose problems for any other target languages Strøknes' text might be translated into, as the word only exists in Norwegian. But again, since the aim of a translation is not to seek absolute linguistic equivalence, this dilemma can easily be resolved. One valid option is keeping the original Norwegian word in the target language text as well and yet again accompanying it with an explanation or a description of what it represents, either within the target text itself or in a footnote. Either way, the receivers of the target text should be made aware one way or another of what the word represents in the source text. While perfectly equating its meaning in the target language is neither possible nor desired in the end, a brief description of the term will suffice to create the cultural background that legitimizes the word in the target language and creates that area of convergence between source language and target language.

One last element which could be worth mentioning as part of this category, belongs to the specifics of fishermen life in Norway. Though these aspects are reflected in multifold ways throughout the text, the most striking reflection of a culturally specific distinction regarding the life of fishermen in Norway is represented by the incredibly rich variety of fishing ships, each

adapted to the fishing expedition they were designed for. Understandably, distinctions such as these are common in every well-established culture that bases its livelihood on fishing and exploiting the resources within the seas and oceans of the world. Still, for the purpose of this article, the elements which will be brought forward are just those that are absolutely specific for the area of Norway and arctic fishing.

One such ship is named in the source text as *ishavsskutte*. Once more, we are presented with a lexical element that only exists in the source language, thus having no equivalent in Romanian. The term refers to a special type of vessel which was especially designed for hunting seals; therefore, it was meant to endure extremely low temperatures and to pierce through frozen waters while remaining in one piece. It is quite obviously ludicrous that seal hunts have never been a part of the Romanian culture and such fishing activities have never defined the livelihood of Romanian fishermen, which represent a rather small community and which is by no means as developed as fishermen communities in Norway. This is why, the translation into the target language does not specifically name the vessel, but it refers to it as: “*o navă robustă (...) destinată vânătorii de foci din zonele arctice.*” (op. cit)

The terminology related to sea life and fishing is extremely rich in the Norwegian language. This is one of the linguistic particularities which, as the present paper also shows, has its roots in the cultural background, stemming from the very unique way of life of Norwegian fishermen, that has made its way to language as well. For what we express through language, is not only semantics, it is also an expression of personal identity and cultural bias, a reality which is so well illustrated through the practice of literary translations.

2.3. Notions Which Depict Mythological Creatures Specific for Norse Culture

In addition to offering a thorough, non-fictional account of seafaring know-how and blending in deeply intimate details about Norwegian fishermen's lifestyle and their perception of the sea and sea life, Strøknes's text also descends into mythology, bringing forward a rich palette of mythological Norse creatures that pose interesting dilemmas from a translator's point of view.

The names of mythological creatures remain to a great extent unaltered in the target text. It is after all common sense that such notions should be greatly treated as proper names, despite the fact that they do not possess all the distinctive features that proper names do. One such instance is the case of the word *Ziphius*, a monster belonging to the area of the Faeroe Islands. The contrast between the source language text and the target language text poses a difference in treatment of this lexical item. For a proper illustration of the situation, a tiny

snippet from the source text, will be exposed in parallel with the target language translation below.

Source text:

“Hva gjør man for eksempel om man møter på Ziphius?” (op. cit)

Target language text:

“Ce-ar fi făcut marinarii dacă ar fi întâlnit, de exemplu, un ziphius?” (op. cit)

As it is, perhaps, quite visible, the source text treats *Ziphius* as a proper noun, as the basic capitalization rule of proper nouns is applied, whereas, in the target language text, *ziphius* is converted into a common noun, being accompanied by the indefinite article “*un*”. Up to this point, most of the justifications for preserving a word in the target language in its original form were rooted in the cultural differences between source language and target language, namely that certain activities or tools were not specific for the Romanian lifestyle and therefore they were culturally not included in language. In addition, their form was not altered and, most of the times, they were also accompanied by clarifications already provided by the author or added into the translation. The present situation, however, brings about a completely different situation, mainly because the word is only halfway preserved whole in the target language text.

The explanation is quite simple and resonates well, with one of the views that Eco (2001) expresses as well and which refers to the fact that translators are actually permitted to make alterations to the literal meaning of the original text, and quite interestingly, Eco continues asserting that even alterations to the original text’s reference are permitted, as long as the effect created in the translation resonates better in the cultural context of the target language. In the case of *Ziphius* the alteration is not too major, but within the framework of the receiving culture, where a *Ziphius* is not so clearly distinguished as a mystical creature, the translation “*un ziphius*” resonates far better, as it hints to any such representative of a certain species. And thus, the mental picture the translation creates, doesn’t do any disfavor to the source text, especially since it helps create the necessary reference which culturally might not have existed in the target language. Notably, though, the interpretative task of the translator is of considerable importance in such situations.

Continuing the journey of the source text into the depths of Norse mythology, the figure of the *draugr* emerges as an element of interest from the perspective of the Romanian translator. Not quite distinctively, Romanian folk culture is no stranger to the creation of mystical and maleficent creatures of

demonic nature, mostly due to the religious feeling that suffuses Romanian folk beliefs. *Draugr*s are very good equivalents of the Romanian *strigoi*, because, just like the Romanian *strigoi*, they were believed to be reincarnations of dead men, and even their descriptions are cross culturally similar. A *draugr* was described as having red, lifeless eyes, it preserved the physical abilities it possessed during its lifetime, but gained certain magical abilities through death, which were used for the purpose of evil. Norse culture and mythology distinguish between land-draugr and sea-draugr. Sea-draugr represented embodiments of dead fishermen coming to hunt the living. Strøksnes's references sea-draugr. This is quite clearly because he provides a detailed description of these creatures picturing them having heads that looked like clumps of seaweed, which is specific for sea-draugr and not land-draugr.

The case of the word *draugr* is extremely interesting as part of the translation endeavor. To start with, we have a situation in which the target language offers a close equivalent to the source language word, namely that of *strigoi*. As shown above, there are certain similarities between the two notions, when it comes to their features in a sort of a cross-cultural bestiary. It goes without saying that automatically and unequivocally accepting *strigoi* as an equivalent for *draugr* and creating a translation where *draugr* translates to *strigoi*, would have been an overstepping within the target text translation. In a manner of thinking, this problematic reflects the issue of sameness and reference discussed by Eco (2001), but the end result is a reversed process of the example Eco uses in order to illustrate the matter from the perspective of the translator. Eco (2001) presents a situation in which a poetic reference sending back to Leopardi in an Italian source text, was altered to Keats in the English translation, as by way of interpretation the translator sees Keats as a better choice for the English target text. In a reversed manner, while *strigoi* would have been perfectly integrated in the cultural background of the target language, in this case Romanian, so the choice would have been culturally justified, a great deal of the Norse specificity of the source text would have been considerably lost in exchanging *draugr* for *strigoi*. Thus, it is worth underlining that relying solely on cultural equivalence in a translation is not sufficient. A literary translation is a quintessentially complex artifact which needs to consider various aspects, of which cultural particularities and semantic equivalence represent just two of the various interfaces.

It would be impossible to ignore one of the most representative creatures in Norse mythology which could not forego being mentioned in Strøksnes's text as well, the frightening *kraken*. But perhaps because it is so well engendered within cross cultural references, it has, in a manner of speaking, become the most iconic beast of the Nordic mystique. Elements such as this, that have become

iconic across cultures, raise very few problems in the translation process. There is no point in even considering changing or translating their name within the target language text, because by being so representative for the culture they belong to, no other literal translation or externally inserted interpretation is necessary.

Strøknes's non-fictional accounts of the mystical Norse creatures are taken from bishop Erik Pontopiddan's *The Natural History of Norway (Norges naturhistorie)*, a work, which in its time was considered to be a scientific chronicle of the existing marine monsters inhabiting the coasts of Norway. Ignoring the fact that the beliefs of the time (1752) are no longer valid for today's modern world realities, and that the existence of Erik Pontopiddan's terrible monsters is, from a modern perspective, a fictional account, rather than a scientific undertaking; from a translator's perspective, the monsters presented there, that are further mentioned in Strøknes's text, should nonetheless be treated as scientific terminology, for which a literal translation in the target text is not recommended.

2.4. Unique Terminology Specific for Northern Norway

This brief research study of the elements comprising the linguistic and cultural particularities in the translation of Morten Strøknes's *Havboka*, would not be complete without stopping upon a few quite intriguing lexical items included in the text of the novel, a set of lexical items whose uniqueness is dictated by the fact that they only exist as part of the very restricted vocabulary of Northern Norway and the archipelago of Lofoten in particular.

Quite scarcely spread throughout the text, Strøksnes exposes terminology that is utterly specific for the area of Northern Norway, inserting instances of local vocabulary specific for Lofoten. The archipelago of Lofoten is one of the most mysteriously beautiful regions of Norway. Part of its mystery is owed to the fact that the archipelago is located north of the Arctic Circle, turning it into a world which has long sparked the interest of many explorers both because of its location and its beauty.

Strøksnes dedicates several entries to the description of Lofoten, not only through his very own authorial lens, but also through various chronicles that were written about the region. The nature of textual uniqueness which this region poses for the present article, refers to the insertion of a couple of lexical items that do not exist anywhere else with the exception of the Lofoten area. The most striking examples in this respect are listed below, together with an explanation of their meaning.

Examples of unique terminology specific for the Lofoten area:

sybårturn - the sound of the ocean heard through a bedroom window on a summer night.
transtill - the rare occasions when the sea is perfectly calm.
hundredagene - the hottest period in the year between July 23rd and August 23rd
opplætt - referring to the time when the sea hasn't quite calmed down in the aftermath of a storm
mjøll - a thin and smooth layer of snow
brækkar - a larger wave which results from several smaller waves come together
rennedrev - a combination of stormy weather and snow
hjeller - pyramidal drying racks (used for drying pollock)
snag - a promontory that rises above sea level, but that also continues deeply under the sea

All of these lexical items, markers of the uniqueness of the vocabulary in the Lofoten area, are vivid representations of the strong cultural ramifications that can occur within language and that remain unparalleled in any other languages, of which Romanian is no exception. From a translator's point of view, such terminology, as the examples mentioned above, needs to be preserved in its original, source text form, in order for the cultural component of the message to be transferred as wholly as possible in the target language text. In the specific situation of these very unique words, they were preserved as such, both in the Romanian and the English translations. Domesticating these lexical items, to use a term suggested by Eco (2001), is quite impossible in this case. These words reserve no possibility for being domesticated in any target text, because their existence is uniquely linked to activities, feelings, natural phenomena, that are too characteristic of the archipelago of Lofoten and thus, individualizing them to the same extent in any other language is close to impossible.

Once more, it would seem that, at times, strong cultural particularities have a greater impact upon translations in the detriment of linguistic equivalence. Still, acquiring equivalence at all cost should never be the end goal of a literary translation, because a literary translation in itself, both in terms of what it represents, and as an end result, consists of a ramification of processes, each complex in its own way.

3. Conclusions

Analyzing the linguistic and cultural particularities of literary translations from the perspective of Morten Strøknæs's text, has offered impressive opportunities for discussing the impact that cultural elements can have on a translated text

with Norwegian as source language and Romanian as target language. The text of this non-fiction novel is rich in terminology that is specific for the Northern area of Norway and even more so, for the area of the archipelago of Lofoten.

Thus, cultural particularities have an astounding impact from a translation's point of view, as they raise several problematics which cannot be accounted for linguistically (see the cases of *skrei*, *pik*, *trandamperi* or the cases of *sjybårturn*, *transtilla* etc.) and which can be resolved through the translator's intervention in the target language text. Resolving cultural dilemmas raised by certain linguistic elements, is a task of increased complexity, which has nothing to do with the blind quest for perfect semantic equivalence, but rather with an interpretative act on the part of the translator, an endeavor which aims to integrate the source text into the realities of the target language.

The effort that needs to be made in order to mend the breach between the linguistic element and the cultural diversity engendered within each language, is towards achieving a good degree of convergence, thus admitting that the source text and the target text are not necessarily equal, but that they are rather equally valid, both from a linguistic and a cultural viewpoint, within the realities of their languages and the cultures that contain them.

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