Rose Macaulay

*Non-Combatants and Others*

The impact of translation

A translation represents the courage and the burden which the translator might carry in order to give the receiver access to a different culture. It is important to note out the fact that as language changes and evolves, so do the translations and the language approached by writers. In other words, the translator assumes some risks while deciding to translate a book because he or she might be criticised later for using a certain method for translating a phrase, idiom or expression. The author of the book translated puts his or her soul into it. The author describes a part of her existence, in a way or another, in a book, for people to read and connect with the author upon the problem discussed in the book. The one that can make a connection and open a way to the author is the translator. The translator can choose between two sides. As I will present in the later part of the paper, there were discussions about what side to chose while translating a text. A side would be to be source-oriented and to have a translation based on the principle of Fidelity (Ionescu, 47) and the other side would be target-text oriented, meaning that there should be a lot of adaptations for events, situations or phrases.

The aim of the paper is to present the possible mistakes which could occur in the process of translation, as well as what methods are very important to be respected while translating. It is also worth mentioning the fact that a translation depends very much upon the side that you choose. As a human connector between the reader and the writer, there might appear some errors while doing this process of translation, but the important thing is to stay true to the source-text. The translator should not be afraid to err and neither the reader to expect a flawless translation, as the information passed down to people might become distorted during the process. Also, because the language is always changing, words and structures gather new meanings and could be used in various ways.

In the chosen paragraphs there will be a lot of interesting structures, structures which might be outdated, slang, idioms that are hard to translate, especially that the First World War influenced the language at home. They started adopting different codes for specific things, for example for military devices, or even reveal a location on the front.

The First World War came up in a period when people were ready for such an event. People were developing their new weapons and risked very much in diplomacy. Although the war took so much from the people, it also gave birth to new wonderful traditions, monuments and interpretations upon the field filled with fallen soldiers and also new books which described this period of time. New interesting conflicts arose between writers of different sexes, who both decided to commemorate this event. Besides the discovery of the new technology and diplomatic risks, there were discoveries regarding people’s potential.

The First World War was a horrible experience which should not have repeated ever again. Its catastrophes should have been registered in the history of human existence. Because of the fragments of stories, images and conffesions obtained from the front, artists had a hard time in order to organize films, documentaries or books. They thought of a condition of “middleness”, which means that there should not be any involvement in propaganda or strategic problems. (Hynes, 126)

The book *Non-Combatants and Others,*by Rose Macaulay, stands out through the representation of the war life at home. Among her other works that are worth naming, *Crewe Train, Dangerous Ages,*which was awarded in 1922 and is one of the works which stand out (Macaulay, 195) , *Keeping up Appearances, Told by an Idiot, Orphan Island, Potterism* and *Going Abroad,* the book chosen has a great impact upon the British literature, as well as offering information upon the cultural background. In this book, she shares the disappointment of the war. Many writers shared her opinion, such as Helen Hamilton, Cicely Hamilton, Catherine Reilly and many more. She wished that people would fight against war and not in the war. This was the feeling I got while reading the book. She put Alix, the main character into a powerful light. Although she had a weakness and could not enroll in the army, because she was a woman. it looked like what she was interested in rejected her, and later in the book she accepts her faith and tries to avoid the war discussion at the beginning of the novel. Later she decides that she cannot ignore the war no more and tries to fight against it.

Rose Macaulay’s book is not a “war novel” with action which happens on the front, but rather about the people not being one of the fighters on the front. This category does not involve only women, but the people at home. A clergyman in the novel gives the explanation for the title as following (Hyens,127):

“War’s beastly and abominable to the fighters: but not to be fighting is much more embittering and demoralising, I think. Probably because one has more time to think. To have one’s friends in danger, and not to be in danger oneself- it fills one with futile rage. Combatants are to be pitied; but non-combatants are of all men and women the most miserable. Older men, crocks, parsons, women- God help them” (Hyens,127)

The theme of the book regards the war experience seen through outsiders, through the eyes of the people at home, which is “embittering, demoralizing and miserable”. (Hyens,127) This theme is allows people to see both sides. As all the attention regarding the war was on the front, there were not so many points of view focused upon the people who have to endure such a burden. In David Crane’s book, *Empires of the Dead,* he talked about the people at home being upset with the decisions taken on the front, mainly about the graves. Besides the fact they were at home, living their lives, they could not even decide if they could, or not, have a personal touch upon their dead relatives. Also, the major plot in this novel regards Alix finding her own peace, “a slow recovery shared by the novel’s author” (Emery,154) During the war period, she lost many important people in her life such as Rupert Brooke, who was her inspiration for Basil Doye, Alix’s friend, and her father. (Emery, 153)

Although Rose Macaulay was not a pacifist from the beginning of the war, her novel was labelled as such, a “pacifist novel”(Brown,133-134). Initially, Rose Macaulay thought of war as an adventure like those presented in books. She did not think that being a nurse was an adventure, but rather being on the front and fight for the King and Country. She soon realised that the war is a horrible experience . She was scared for her life and imagined herself dying just like Alix’s brother, Paul .(Emery,149) Because of the death of her father, she created “her own ideal mother and what she did share with her real mother, was the activism, the other features which Daphne Sandomir earned, are of Macaulay’s father. Daphne Sandomir becomes towards the end of the book the main character, as being the powerful, independent character.(Emery,154)

Alix was the “surrogate mourner”. Through her, Rose Macaulay could express her feelings and reactions towards the events which took place: “The “nervy” Alix speaks with Rose’s second voice, her most private self during the early war years”. (Emery,149) Macaulay’s idea upon the war was divided, expressing through Alix the fact that she does not stand the khaki: “I can’t bear the sight of khaki, and I don’t know whether it’s most because the war’s so beastly or because I want to be in it…It’s both.” (Emery, 150) In Emery’s article regarding Rose Macaulay, it is said that she transformed into Alix later in life, adopting her way of being. (Emery,150)

The action in the book, shows the main character trying to avoid the war, in the beginning, but then, decides to fight against it, once with the death of her brother. Alix’s attitutde towards the war was put in contrast with the path that her mother had chosen. (Brown, 135) She moved away from her aunt’s house because of the discussions over the war, which she hated. After moving to London, where indeed, there she could have lived in ignorance, the events in her life start to change her. Once she found out about her loved ones, her brother and her friend, she realised the importance of fighting against the war. Alix wanted to change something, she realised the fact that she cannot pretend any longer that , eventually, the war will come to and end and everyone would be happy. She realised that without trying, nothing will change and it may become worse. The main character was confident in “working against war” and joined the church . (Brown, 133)Unfortunately, she was not able to join the war. Her reaction, however is similar to the sentiments expressed by Rose Macaulay in her poem *Many Sisters to Many Brothers*. (Brown,134) In this poem she promotes the idea of going to war and is happy for her brother going to war, while she was left alone at home, knitting. (Simmer, George; *Rose Macaulay:”Many Sisters to Many Brothers”* ) The idea presented in the last part of the poem represents the admiration for her brother, who is lucky to join the war, “the blood and muck” ( Macaulay, *Many Sisters to Many Brothers)* . I believe that this enthusiasm was a naive one, as people at home believed that the war will end by December. (Brown, 134)

I believe that she realised the importance of the war after she found out that her brother, Paul might have killed himself. His death was rather suspicious, Alix thinking that maybe he wanted to harm himself in order to be sent home or that he could not handle the pressure on the front and committed suicide. That was the important moment for Alix because she realised that if people do not get involved into this problem of war, the war will end them, just like it did with her brother. (Brown,136) This caused her determination to become stronger and joined the church hoping that this step would help for stopping this cruel war which only brings sadness and destroys families. Alix’s regrets about the war are the loses of the irreplaceable minds and talents. This idea refers to Basyl, especially after the severe wound from which he suffered and could not continue his artistic life. (Emery,153)

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