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## **Preface as a “pretext” in the communist ideological system (case study – *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* by D. H. Lawrence)**

**Abstract:** “The purpose of this book is...”- this is how prefaces usually develop. Therefore, it is clear from the very beginning that a preface is a subjective opinion imposed by someone who makes a literary assessment of a book. As a rule, this opinion may belong to the author, reviewer, translator or a third party. It may be also approached as a meta-text with the role to elucidate and decipher the wheels within wheels of a paper. However, there are cases when the scope of a preface divagates and becomes a pretext. When the preface becomes a pretext – as a reason given in justification of a course of action that is not the real reason – the writer of preface will disseminate preconceived ideas, codes and manipulating messages. When the preface becomes a pretext – as text that comes before other text – we speak about a meta-text with an informative role. The communist regime took advantage of preface in both cases to filter literature through its ideology and keep it clean from “noxious” foreign elements. *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* by D. H. Lawrence was not an exception. Consequently, the ideology functioned in two stages in this case: first – by prohibiting this book until the 90s in all the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and second – by transforming it into an erotic and vulgar piece of literature. Therefore, this paper aims at observing the filtering mechanism of communist ideology in Lawrence’s work.

**Keywords:** preface, foreword, translation, ideology, communist ideology

**Résumé:** «Ce livre se propose...» – c'est le développement habituel des préfaces. Il devient donc clair dès le début qu'une préface est l'opinion subjective imposée par quelqu'un qui s'exprime sur la valeur littéraire d'un ouvrage. En règle générale, cette opinion appartient soit à l'auteur, soit au critique, soit au traducteur ou à tout autre tiers. Elle peut être interprétée également comme un méta-texte dont le rôle est d'élucider et de déchiffrer les rouages d'une œuvre. Cependant, il y a des cas où la portée d'une préface s'égaré et celle-ci devient un prétexte. Quand une préface devient un prétexte – une raison invoquée pour cacher le vrai motif d'une action – l'auteur de la préface diffusera des idées préconçues, des codes et des messages manipulateurs. Quand une préface devient un prétexte – un texte qui précède un autre texte – on parle d'un méta-texte avec un rôle informatif. Le régime communiste a utilisé les préfaces dans les deux cas afin de filtrer la littérature à travers son idéologie et de la garder bien propre face à tout élément étranger jugé «nocif». *Lady Chatterley's Lover* par D.H. Lawrence n'a pas été une exception. Par conséquent, l'idéologie a marqué cette œuvre en deux étapes: premièrement – en interdisant le livre jusque dans les années 90 dans toute l'Union des républiques socialistes soviétiques, et en second lieu – en la transformant dans un ouvrage littéraire érotique et vulgaire. Cet article se propose donc d'observer ce mécanisme de filtrage de l'idéologie communiste dans l'œuvre de Lawrence.

**Mots-clés:** préface, avant-propos, traduction, idéologie, idéologie communiste

Preface, foreword, introduction, preamble, prelude, exordium – all these terms are used interchangeably to designate the same concept: an introduction to a book, typically stating its subject, scope, or aims. However, there are voices who state that these terms denote different concepts.

For instance, according to Chicago Manual of Style:

A preface is standing outside the book proper and is about the book. In a preface an author explains briefly why they wrote the book, or how they came to write it. They also often use the preface to establish their credibility, indicating their experience in the topic or their professional suitability to address such a topic. Sometimes they acknowledge those who inspired them or helped them (though

these are often put into a separate Acknowledgments section). Using an old term from the study of rhetoric, a preface is in a sense an “apology”: an explanation or defense.

A foreword, according to the same Chicago Manual of Style:

Is most often written by someone other than the author: an expert in the field, a writer of a similar book, etc. Forewords help the publisher at the level of marketing: an opening statement by an eminent and well-published author gives them added credibility in pitching the book to bookstores. Forewords help the author by putting a stamp of approval on their work.

And finally, introduction is about:

[...] the content of the book. Sometimes it introduces what is covered in the book. Other times it introduces by setting the overall themes of the book, or by establishing definitions and methodology that will be used throughout the book. Scholarly writers sometimes use the introduction to tell their profession how the book should be viewed academically (that is, they position the book as a particular approach within a discipline or part of a discipline).

For the purpose of this article I will use the term preface. Thus, to summarize the above mentioned definitions, it can be concluded that a preface is a piece of text placed at the beginning of a book which may belong to the author, a reviewer, or even translator and which contains explanatory, critical or analytical assessments of the book. Sometimes, a preface may be used contrary to its purpose, for example to manipulate or impose somebody’s approach on the reader. This technique was mostly applied in the fascist and communist times in form of censorship or ideological teaching.

If we speak about communism, the communist ideology was diffused in the society through the tool of censorship which had the aim to protect and preserve the portrayal of USSR from any interferences. It is well known and widely accepted that the main faucet of interferences was literature, be it national or foreign. Moreover, the censoring authorities knew about the linguistic potential of a text that might had become either a call for rising against the regime or violation of ideology or depravity of people which may be hard to control and which in its turn may lead to chaos. Thus, authorities were mostly concerned about the meaning-making potential of a book than its words proper. If to apply this formula to Lawrence’s work, the communist ideology wouldn’t have to suffer because of the scores of

“cunt”, “fuck”, “cock”, “erected”, “breast”, “buttocks” etc, used in the book, but because it could germinate an impetus for change of mentality for homo sovieticus which was not convenient for the power. Samantha Sherry calls this “ideological censorship” (*Samantha Sherry* 206).

Ideology is defined as a body of ideas reflecting the social needs and aspirations of an individual, a group, a class or a culture. The communist ideology was a system of social organization that promoted the establishment of a classless, stateless society based on common ownership of the means of production. In respect of literature, the communist ideology was materialized through a well organized censorship mechanism developed and supervised by Glavlit (General Directorate for Literature and Printing Affairs) and its Inotdel office (Department for Foreign Literature), set up in 1922 that was in charge with censoring everything that was against the ideology. Everything had to be in contrast with the “regime’s political rigidity”. Publications which were hostile to the values of the communist ideology were either banned or censored. Censorship was performed by omissions of paragraphs, reformulations, castration, sanitization, expurgation, crossing out the text that was considered dangerous for the homo sovieticus. Glavlit prohibited the following types of written materials:

[...] works treating the Soviet power and communism in a decidedly hostile manner; those putting over ideologies alien and hostile to the proletariat; literature hostile to Marxism; books of idealistic persuasion; children’s literature containing elements of bourgeois moral and lauding old conditions of life; writings by counterrevolutionary authors; writings by authors perished in the struggle against the Soviet power; Russian literature brought out by religious societies regardless to their content. (*Ryzhak*)

Glavlit applied the filter of censorship in all its republics therefore the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) was not an exception. It not only censored books but it was the decision factor in choosing the books which could be translated. The mechanism was as follows: the Gorky Institute of World Literature from Moscow selected the books and provided the list to the Central Committee of the Communist Party for approval. In the MSSR, the mechanism looked a little different: publishing houses provided the lists of books to the Committee for Publishing and Printing of the Ministry of Culture (Comitetul pentru edituri și poligrafie al Ministerului Culturii), which in its turn provided the list to the Central Committee of the Communist Party which had the last word. In Romania, the censorship

authority was General Directorate for Press and Printing (Direcția Generală a Presei și Tipăriturilor) together with the Communist Party.

One very specific characteristic of literary translation in the former republics of the Soviet Union was that books were mainly translated through Russian. It was probably an efficient method to control what is translated. Thus, one of the source texts for the Romanian translation of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* by D. H. Lawrence was the Russian translated version. Grosso modo there are four translations in Russian (1932, 1989, 1991 and 2000) that have been performed during the time and printed in more than twenty editions. The 1932 version is an unofficial and clandestine translation which was done in Italy. It is considered clandestine, because the book was banned all over the world in that period so only few had copies of the original. Thus, it is the 1989 version which is considered the official one and Perestroika was the drive for this novel to be translated since its first publishing in 1928.

With its main approached topics – sexuality, the body, man and masculinity, woman and femininity, sex, love, society and class – Romania and the Republic of Moldova produced three versions of translation in 1991. Even though in 1991 the world was facing the collapse of communism and the Soviet Union, the prints of the old communist ideology were still present and they were transferred in the translations, mainly by condemning sexuality and interference of social classes through the words used by translators and the “flavour” they created.

When I decided to consider Lawrence's novel as a case study, I didn't know pretty much about *Lady Chatterley's Lover* but the tag: banned book. The course of my study and collecting as many pre-1991 editions as possible of this novel, unfolded with a lot of incidents that would allow me to write my own empirical extra-textual preface. Librarians smirked and sneered at me, friends – smiled allusively or criticized, book sellers seemed to be the only happy and supporting people who even shared their ideas and recommendations for approaching the novel. After reading several editions published in different periods and comparing them, my approach changed from the popular label of pornographic novel to a book about genders, social class, physical love, life clichés, anthropology. Prefaces of these editions also helped me in deciphering the content of the book and the tackled topics. However, one should be selective with the prefaces written during the communist regime or even after its collapse, because the flavour of ideology can be felt in every line.

Before starting with the analysis, it should be mentioned that the first translations of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in Romania and the Republic of Moldova began after the 90s, being banned and labeled for more than fifty years as immoral and licentious. Thus, the task of translators and preface-writers was to forget about the verdict of banned book and walk away from the infected of ideology preconceptions, and finally, give the novel a new breath, which is a tough mission but not impossible.

*Lady Chatterley's Lover* which was translated in 1991 by Jana Duma and published by Hyperion/Baricada Publishing House in Chisinau, is cited as the first translation from English into Romanian of Lawrence's novel. The book has a foreword (in Romanian – cuvânt înainte) of the translator and preface (in Romanian – prefață) of the author dated 1929, Paris, which is definitely something unusual. In the foreword, the translator describes the novel as “a cry of rebellion of the woman against social constraints and suppressing natural sensuality” (*Amantul doamnei Chatterley* 7). The translator viewed the book as a sincere pleading, and sometimes pathetic, for return to nature, feelings, for the reintegration of eros as a sacred force of life among the essential and perennial values of humanity. So, in the eyes of the translator the novel is a petition for natural feelings. The translator also mentions that her work is the first translation made from English based on the version published by the Scottish Publishing House McIntosh and Sons in 1947, which is considered the best published version. To summarize, I could assess the foreword of the translator – who is a woman as well – as an example of solidarity with Constance, even though it was the 1991 outside and the society was still dogmatic in respect of morality, life values and standards. The translator doesn't condemn neither the act of adultery committed by Constance nor the copulation of social classes, but instead qualifies Lawrence's approach as a cry of rebellion of woman and a cry against the epoch of mechanization and artificiality which didn't consider human feelings.

In the preface, which is written by the author itself, Lawrence declares the book – from the very first line – as an “honest, healthy and necessary book for today's people” (*Amantul doamnei Chatterley* 7). He also added that “obscenity and obscene words were dangerous for the medieval people and not for the cultivated and educated people of today” (*Amantul doamnei Chatterley* 7). Lawrence managed to transform sexuality from a boring mechanism to an alive one. “Obscenity appears only if the spirit despises the body and it's afraid of it” (*Amantul doamnei Chatterley* 8). The author

disagrees with the fact that the book was blamed to contain dirty words and an old-fashioned attitude towards love. Therefore, he condemns the Puritanism, both in respect of class and language.

*Lady Chatterley's Lover* which was translated in 1991 by Antoaneta Ralian, was influenced by the "Obsessive decade" (in Romanian – obsedantul deceniu) which refers to the 1950s, a decade full of widespread abuses from the Stalinist authorities. Specifically, this expression is used to refer to the Romanian literary works and translations of literary works in that period. Under the influence of this phenomenon, A. Ralian was obliged to eliminate from her translated book all the erotic passages due to censorship and the dogmas of the socialist realism. Moreover, it was an after-communist period. This is the reason why Antoaneta Ralian's translation of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was republished in 2001. The front page of the book has a picture of Adam and Eve by Enrico Bajo. The picture is very relevant, since it has a nude woman and man touching each other. The book has a preface of Frieda Lawrence which provides an overview on the book but no commentary of the translator. She mentions that Lawrence created the novel while being in the Toscan mountains. "He wrote the story with fear" because he probably predicted the impact that the novel would have on the society. She also mentions that Lawrence rewrote the book three times but she liked more the first version. He was sure that people will say about his book that it is "pure mysticism" (*Amantul doamnei Chatterley* 5). The first version is considered a human one while the next two versions are impregnated with the remarks and concepts of his contemporary fellows. He revised the 3 versions in 3 consecutive years from 1925 to 1928. He wanted to eliminate the prejudgment of pornographic, sensational and scabrous novels because "words are not obscene by themselves and it is the man who confers them the denomination" (*Amantul doamnei Chatterley* 6). He tried to destroy mentalities. He had the courage to write something in British conservative times and he didn't write pour épater le burgeois but because he felt that way. He was accused of being communist, fascist and a sexual pervert. Therefore, as can be outlined, Frieda Lawrence's preface is mostly a pleading for changing mentality in respect of class, body and physical love which were taboo topics in the conservative British society.

The translation of the novel in Romanian by Solomon Penchas in 1991 and published by Evenimentul Publishing House lacks any preface but all you need is just a paragraph from Penchas' translation to understand

that there was no ideology related fear or inconvenience on behalf of the translator:

Ce curfrumos ai tu, spuse el îndialectulsăuguturalșimângâios. Ai cel mai frumoscur care poate exista. Ai cel mai frumoscur de femeie! Tu nu ești o femeiedinaceleacucurul ca un boț. Tu ai colo forme dulcișicurbe, așa cum le placbărbațilorși-i impresioneazămult. Ai un cur care-arputeasăducălumeape el. Tu eștiadevărată. Da, da! Așaești tu, puțincurvă. Peaici te caci, șipedincoace te piși. Îmi pun mâna în amândouă locurile. Și te iubesc cu astea cu tot<sup>1</sup>. (*Amantul Doamnei Chatterley* 233)

If we speak about the translations of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in Russian, there are 4 versions: 1991 (Moscow), 1992 (Minsk), 1992 (Chisinau), and 2000 (Moscow).

The 1991 version was translated in Moscow by two translators which is very unusual. The first ten chapters were translated by I. Bagrova, while chapters XI – XIX – by M. Litvinova. What is also unusual, is that the book has “послесловие” (afterword or epilogue) and not a preface. Moreover, it was written neither by the translators nor the author, but by a third person, N. Paliteva. Her ideological background justifies her idea that all the repugnance against this book comes from the people's lack of knowledge about their own bodies, eroticism, desire, sex since history and censorship transformed these notions into something boring, mechanic and disappointing. Paliteva explains that the rhetoric about these topics is done through “непечатные слова” or “четырёхбуквенные слова” (vulgar words

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1. The translation of Solomon Penchas from 1991 is tagged as very vulgar for the post-Ceausescu period. The provided paragraph is a Romanian translation of the following English excerpt: “*Tha’s got such a nice tail on thee,’ he said, in the throaty caressive dialect. ‘Tha’s got the nicest arse of anybody. It’s the nicest, nicest woman’s arse as is! An’ ivery bit of it is woman, woman sure as nuts. Tha’rt not one o’ them button arsed lasses as should be lads, are ter! Tha’s got a real soft sloping bottom on thee, as a man loves in ‘is guts. It’s a bottom as could hold the world up, it is!’*” If words have degrees of vulgarity, Penchas used words with the highest degree of vulgarity with no ideological, moral or elocutionary filter. Also, his translation sounds very “physiological” which makes it disgusting for the elevated readers. But what triggers my attention, is that the other translators, who are both women – Jana Duma and Antoaneta Ralian – were not as vulgar as Penchas, who is a male, even though the translations were performed in the same year, 1991. Therefore, can we speak about the dichotomy male versus female translator or should the gender of the translator be a matter of consideration in the translation process? But this is another topic which shall be approached in next studies.



or four letter words) which refer to taboo words or censoring by omission of any references to taboo topics. She also believes that the repulsion for this book does not come from the topic or words used in the book, but from a mentality which rejects the body and is afraid of it. This fear is expressed through taboo words and under-developed sexual thinking. The reviewer condemns the idea that sex should be mechanic, conventional, puritan in favour of eroticism. She also considers that Lawrence attempted to make sex emotional but this was labeled by the society as fantasies of a 14-year-old boy. (*Любовник леди Чаттерлей* 233)

In respect of Lawrence's works, only 4 from his 10 novels were published until the 1950s. A Russian unofficial translation of the novel was published in 1932 in Riga and only those who were travelling could get hold of the book. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century only some of his lyrics were translated and published in the USSR and only the soviet literary specialist could read the originals. In 1985, when one hundred years from his death was celebrated, more short stories were translated and published but not the *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Thus, it was the merits of the magazine "Иностранная литература" that managed to translate and publish the novel. USSR, as UK, rejected the book for non-orthodox writing. In fact, the book – besides describing normal relations between a man and a woman – was a manifesto against class division in UK, a parody of British society. And the British new that. Lawrence wanted to put an end to puritan taboos regarding emotions. He was a starter of sexual revolution in literature by encouraging people to explore their sexuality.

The 1992 version published in Chisinau is a copy of the I. Bagrova and M. Litvinova version of translation. The book also contains a commentary, which is the same "послесловие" (foreword) of N. Paliteva from the 1991 translation from Moscow, which is more an essay about woman psychology.

The 1992 version published in Minsk is the same translation of I. Bagrova and M. Litvinova. However, this version does not have any introduction or commentaries on the novel or translation. The only very short description of the novel states that the main topic of the books is the awakening of woman's desire and psychology of women.

The 2000 year version was published in Moscow and translated by V. Ciuhno. In the preface of the book, the translator mentions that the book is an explicit description of love between a man and a woman that the English literature did not know before. This courageous approach was beyond anything that was done in literature until those times. He explained this by

stating that he always wanted to show the intimate relations between a man and woman as they are by undeceiving the real feelings. The book cannot be considered pornographic because the love scenes between the lovers are described with tenderness and affection. (*Любовник леди Чаттерлей* 15) However, this argument was not considered by the critics and the censors, since they could not see any poetry or beauty, tenderness of feelings in the sexual scenes, and the book was prohibited for publishing.

I must confess that I never read prefaces because they are always spoilers of the plot, message, ideas, leit-motif, theme, etc. As a rule, I read prefaces after finishing the book. Thus, as for me, prefaces should become postfaces because this would give any reader the possibility and freedom to confront and compare his/her approach with the generally accepted by critics and academia. Besides its role to describe and provide tips for reading, a preface will always represent a subjective opinion, and literature by nature cannot be subjective. Moreover, in times of political restraint and limited freedom of expression, prefaces may become manipulating tools in the hands of wrong ideology or people. This is what communism did by providing the “correct alphabet” of reading a book, albeit reading doesn’t need instructions.

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