Received: February 14, 2019 | Reviewed: February 26, 2019 | Accepted: April 15, 2019

UDC 811.111.09`255.4"19"(092)Tolkien J.
https://doi.org/10.62413/lc.2019(1).06 | Research Article Citations

TITLES AND INCIPITS AS LITERARY APPETIZERS: THREE ROMANIAN VERSIONS OF TOLKIEN'S *HOBBIT*, OR THREE FACES OF AN INTERFACE

Daniela HĂISAN
Associate Professor, Ph.D.
(Ştefan cel Mare University of Suceava, Romania)
daniella.haisan@gmail.com, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5533-1064

Abstract

This paper aims to analyse a series of (sub)titles and incipits as interfaces with the (young) readers and as literary 'appetizers' likely to stimulate them to continue reading. Our case in point is J. R. R. Tolkien's "The Hobbit, or There and Back Again" in Romanian translation (with a particular focus on three versions published in 1975, 1995, and 2012 respectively).

Keywords: *paratext, incipit, fantasy, children's literature, translation*

Rezumat

Lucrarea de față își propune să analizeze (sub)titlurile şi incipiturile ca interfețe ale cititorului (tineri) şi ca 'aperitive' literare cu potențial de stimulare a lecturii ulterioare. Studiul nostru de caz porneşte de la romanul lui J. R. R. Tolkien, „The Hobbit, or There and Back Again", în traducere românească (având în vedere cu precădere trei versiuni publicate în 1975, 1995, respectiv în 2012).

Keywords: *paratext, incipit, genul fantastic, literatură pentru copii, traducere*

« Tout commencement est une prise de position » (Andrea Del Lungo).

Introduction

What this paper aims to investigate is the potential value of (sub)titles and incipits as interfaces with the (young) readers and as literary 'appetizers' likely to stimulate them to continue reading. Our case in point is J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again* in Romanian translation (with a particular focus on three versions published in 1975, 1995, and 2012 respectively). Although this is not the result of an empirical research, relying on sociological tools and on statistics, it does take (be it implicitly) into account Reception Theory, as forged by Barthes (1970, 1973), Iser (1976), Jauss (1978), Picard (1986) etc., and, thus, the reader is seen as a participant in the act of literary communication. The analysis we propose is rather of a textual and contextual nature (i.e. the three Romanian versions will be contrasted with the 'original' text, and each of them seen in their corresponding historical, ideological, and cultural contexts, as products of their time, as ruled by different translation norms). (Sub)titles and incipits

will be considered as the predilect locus of the "reading contract" or pact (an agreement readers comply with as they start reading whatever text the author proposes). Once on the threshold of some new story, it is up to the readers to decide whether they will go on or give up reading, and it is usually the title and the very beginning of that story which helps them make a decision.

Although Genette's celebrated study on paratexts (1997) does not go so far as to detail upon incipits, they should not be excluded from paratextuality. Regarding the current status of research on translated incipits, we can no longer speak of an actual shortage of studies (see, among others, Watts (2000), Tahir-Gürçaglar (2002), Pellatt (2013), and an entire issue of *Palimpsestes* discussing "préfaces et paratextes traductifs"). Neither is there a shortage of studies on Romanian versions of Tolkien's books (see, for instance, Ojică, 2003). Nevertheless, the matter is far from being exhausted. What the present paper aims to do is refer to (translated) titles and incipits only, as a sort of metonymic representation of the whole. Our choice is also (partially) motivated by practical reasons: "[u]nlike novels, of course, and most short stories, which are extremely compact in their construction, incipits are shorter and more manageable with respect to the analysis of textual parameters" (Hescher, 2009, p. 101).

After outlining the main conceptual anchors and the corpus we will be relying on, in the former part of the paper we will proceed to examine three Romanian versions of Tolkien's *The Hobbit*.

Due to space constraints (having to do with both the length of the four texts under consideration and with the average length of an article), smaller textual fragments (phrases, sometimes individual words) will be analyzed, without ever losing sight of the 'bigger picture' (the complete English and Romanian versions, the overarching story). Given that the title and incipit are part of a strategic (para)textual territory and illustrative of the entire text as well as of a global strategy, we start our analysis from the premise that they were considered accordingly by translators.

Back-translation (from Romanian to English), usually written between brackets, is always mine. The 'original' fragments are written in italics, whereas the translated ones are between inverted commas (unless they are listed inside table cells).

On Titles

As suggested by Charles Grivel, a title is a primarily functional tool, meant to identify the work, to designate the work's subject matter, and to play up the work (Grivel, 1973). For Leo Hoek, too, "it may that may appear at the head of a text to designate it, to indicate its subject matter as a whole, and to entice the targeted public" (Hoek, 1981, p. 17), but it is equally a set of linguistic signs in a paradigmatic relation with the text, as it partially summarises it (*ibidem*, p. 3). For Gérard Genette, only the designating

function is obligatory, the other two being largely "optional and supplementary" (Genette, 1997, p. 76). Nevertheless, one may never reduce a title to designation (and it is not only the subject matter it designates – the content, the form, or the genre may also be alluded to). The title is hardly a linguistic object only; it is equally a semiotic object, as well as a cultural sign. It fulfills a structural function (in that it provides the text with a global meaning), a poetic function (in that it synthesizes and filters the whole through a single figure of speech), and a dramatic function (in that it sets the tone and creates an expectation). The persuasive function of titles is, likewise, complex: there are important subsidiary functions within it, ranging from provocation to valorization, and ultimately to advertising. In other words, there is much to expect from a title: relevance, originality, clarity, brevity, specificity, engagingness.

On Incipits

The incipit exhibits the 'seeds' of the story to a considerably larger extent than the title. Generally supposed to be a promise of entertainment, of enjoyment, it is of crucial importance within the overall economy of the text. Not only does it set things in motion (narrative-wise), but it often presents the reader with an enigma which helps move the story forward and maintains suspense (as Barthes' "hermeneutic code" stipulates).

From an ontological point of view, the incipit represents the "passage of the threshold between silence and discourse" (Raymond Jean, *apud* Del Lungo, 1993, p. 133), and also the moment of contact between author/ narrator and reader. More often than not, it is at this point that the narrator sets the stage and gives away key information about the rest of the story. A "strategic zone" with significantly variable limits (it ends before the first important "fracture" of the text), the incipit, too, needs to fulfill a number of functions. In Andrea Del Lungo's classification, they are:

1) the *framing* or *codifying function* (which establishes the text);
2) the *interest-stirring function* (which seduces the reader);
3) the *informing function* (which stages the fiction);
4) the *dramatizing function* (which sets the story off) (Del Lungo, 1993, p. 138).

The *codifying function* typically involves two things: installing the narrator and inscribing the work in the history of a genre (often by means of famous intertexts and generic, stereotypical frames, like "Once upon a time," which signifies the beginning of a fairy-tale). The *interest-stirring function*, which goes back to the *captatio benevolentiae* in ancient rhetoric, makes use of anticipation to lure readers into reading more. The *informing function*, which goes back to the rhetorical *inventio*, outlines the setting and creates an ambiance by providing answers to essential questions like *who*, *what*, *where*, *why*, *how*, and *when*. As for *the dramatizing function*, it depends a lot on the ratio between information allocation and action. As noted by Manfred Pfister (1977), if the "point of attack" (the point where the action sets in)

comes later in the narrative, then the incipit will either dwell on previous events or offer extensive description of the characters, setting, or context.

A "place of mediation between the text and its reader, the addressee and the sender, the narrator and the narratee" (Prud'homme, 2001, p. 70), the incipit serves as an interface between author and public, thus fulfilling yet another function, namely the *limologic function* (see Prud'homme, 2001, p. 73), which combines the informing part with the interest-stirring part while also nourishing the virtual contract or pact between author and reader. Prud'homme sees it further as a "privileged space of epiphanies" or "public space" (Prud'homme, 2001, p. 74). Moreover, as noted by Yves Reuter (Reuter, 2001, *apud* Salbayre & Vincent-Arnaud, 2006, p. 87), any beginning is worth analysing precisely because it programmes the rest of the text, the follow-up, and it offers reference points and indixes which will be constantly reiterated throughout the narrative.

On the Author

A distinguished scholar of Anglo-Saxon literature, particularly of the epic poem *Beowulf*, J. R. R. (John Ronald Reuel) Tolkien is now remembered more as a fantasy writer than as a philologist. Born on January 3, 1892, in Bloemfontein, South Africa, he would discover his passion for 'dead' languages and for philology quite early on in life, while at King Edward's School. In 1910, he entered Exeter College (Oxford), where he deepened his studies of languages and premodern texts. He became a public professor, first at Leeds; then, while teaching at Oxford, he befriended writer C. S. Lewis and began working on *The Hobbit*, which proved to be an unexpected bestseller and prompted him to write a sequel, which ultimately grew 'out of control' and turned into *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (published between 1954-1955). *The Hobbit* is thus important for propelling Tolkien's career as a popular writer and for being "the flagship of all of Tolkien's popular writing." (Green, 1995, p. 8)

On *The Hobbit*: Genesis, (Sub)Genre and Status, Narratology

The Hobbit had its genesis in bedtime stories Tolkien invented for and read aloud to his children, as "Winter 'Reads'" (Carpenter, 1977, p. 177). The historical point of beginning is a mixture of the proverbial spark of inspiration and a piece of automatic writing or dictation of thought: Tolkien wrote the famous first sentence on an examination booklet, one summer night in 1928, as he was draggingly grading school certificate exam papers. As he later recalled, "One of the candidates had mercifully left one of the pages with no writing on it, (which is the best thing that can possibly happen to an examiner), and I wrote on it: 'In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit'" (Carpenter, 1977, p. 175). This spontaneous eruption of the unconscious, which William H. Green (1995) interprets in strictly Jungian terms, was, initially, seen as an isolated burst of creativity, but after an

inevitable latency period, Tolkien decided that the "hobbits" were worth detailing upon.

Initiated in 1928, the narrative was worked on intermittingly between 1930 and 1936 – at first, simply for the entertainment of his own children, with no literary pretensions whatsoever. Later on, at the urging of C. S. Lewis and other members of "The Inklings" Literary Club, Tolkien agreed to type and revise the manuscript, which eventually reached the Allen and Unwin publishing house. Stanley Unwin, who believed that the best judges of children's books were children themselves, gave it to his ten-year-old son Rayner to read: the feed-back was, reportedly, enthusiastic, and a recommendation was issued that the book should appeal to all children between the ages of five and nine.

The Hobbit was thus published on September 21, 1937 on the children's lists of Allen and Unwin, with eight of Tolkien's own black-and-white drawings (which he very reluctantly agreed to submit). An immediate success as a children's book, *The Hobbit* received an accolade in the columns of *The Times* barely a few days after the publication: "All who love that kind of children's book which can be read and re-read by adults should take note that a new star has appeared in this constellation. To the trained eye some characters will seem almost mythopoetic." (review quoted in Bloom, 2011, p. 62). In 1951, Tolkien revised *The Hobbit* in order to align it with the mythology he was developing for *The Lord of the Rings*, although the tale itself clearly absorbs epic, mythology, and fairy story (e.g. *Beowulf*, collections by Andrew Lang and the Brothers Grimm, works by Rudyard Kipling, George MacDonald's, *The Princess and the Goblin* and *The Princess and Curdie*, etc.).

Although hailed as a classic of children's literature from the very beginning, it is precisely the "juvenile status" of Tolkien's children which often attracted diatribes against it, as deserving "little serious, purely literary criticism" (Helms, 1974, p. 52). Some critics believe that *The Hobbit* is somewhat too consciously conceived as a children's book and that Tolkien 'writes down' to children. There are, indeed, many avuncular asides scattered throughout the narrative and a general tone of condescension towards a reader regarded as incapable of fully comprehending the meaning(s) of the story or even remembering its details, and need constant reminders (e.g. as when Bilbo crosses "the ford beneath the steep bank, which you *may remember*" (Tolkien, 2002, p. 383, emphasis mine). The narrative intrusions may include an occasional direct addresses to children, foreshadowing of later events, plot clarifications, onomatopoeia and other sound effects. In his 1939 essay "On Fairy-Stories," Tolkien explained his mistaken belief in infusing his text with a strong didactic purpose (in plain Victorian fashion); in one of his personal letters, he lamented having used a

simplified register, seemingly to cater for children's limited vocabulary, and a "flattening, Bible-in-basic-English attitude" (Letter 234, 22 November 1961; Carpenter, 1981, pp. 310-311). As noted by David Stevens and Carol D. Stevens, there are three basic elements which characterize Tolkien's understanding in 1930 of how best to communicate with his chosen audience of children: the fantastic, the prosaic, and the humorous (Stevens & Stevens, in Bloom, 2008, p. 17). It is the prosaic part, along with inconsistencies of tone and conception, which unsettles some of the critics. "So far from being an accomplished success 'on its own level'", says Brian Rosebury, "*The Hobbit* is an uneasy, if likeable, patchwork of accomplishments, blunders, and tantalising promises of the Middle-earth to come." (Rosebury, 1992, p. 103)

The opposite also holds true: an important sum of critics see precisely *The Hobbit*'s excellence as a children's book as the chief reason it deserves attention in the first place (see Lois R. Kuznets's 1981 study, "Tolkien and the Rhetoric of Childhood"), since the narrator, as obtrusive as he might be, is also quite skilfull at maintaining thematic focus. For Harold Bloom, "[p]erhaps because it began as a fairy tale for children, *The Hobbit* is rather more refreshing" (Bloom, 2011, p. 7) and "may well survive as children's literature", whereas "*The Lord of the Rings* is fated to become only an intricate period piece" (Bloom, 2008, p. 2).

The simple, linear, cyclical plot, the flat (unrealistically polarized, either all good or all bad) characters, the central issue (the battle between good and evil), the omniscient narrator, the lack of stylistic sophistication – are all pertinent arguments to label *The Hobbit* as children's literature. Various fantastic elements, like plot devices, characters (hobbits, dwarves, trolls, goblins/orcs, oliphaunts, wizards, wargs, dragons), events, as well as the three sets of foes (goblins, Gollum, and wargs), and the three distinct *eucatastrophes* (sudden joyous turns), make up the mythological and fairy-tale background on which Tolkien weaves his story. Notwithstanding, even if *The Hobbit* has not but sparingly been taken seriously as fantasy in its own right, it does display the typical duality of children's literature, which never addresses children exclusively. William H. Green calls it a "juvenile masterpiece that hides, like a Trojan horse, an adult story" (Green, 1995, p. 9). Thematically, *The Hobbit* is concerned with increasing maturity: a "parable of growing up" (Stevens & Stevens, in Bloom, 2008, p. 24), or "a variation on the archetypal story of apprenticeship" (Green, 1995, p. 8). Bilbo Baggins, the inexperienced, comfort-loving hero, goes out into the world seemingly as an assistant to a group of dwarves reclaiming an ancient dwarfish treasure now captured a dragon. The causatum of his quest is doubly rewarding: he not only recovers the much-wanted treasure, but he also discovers, through adventures and hardships, his own strength.

The protagonist himself has been a matter of controversy. He is, on the one hand, considered a new, alternative, conscious, 'apprentice' hero, a "male-menopausal protagonist endowed with the energy and appeal of youth, a children's-book hero" (Green, 1995, p. 9) and, on the other hand, an adrogynous, still-childlike, Quixotic, good-natured, spiritually-stagnant, middle-aged character who makes an unlikely hero: "Bilbo Baggins, though an admirable hobbit, is fortunately more a well-meaning burglar than he is a hero. I think we are fond of him because he is a hobbit to whom things happen" (Bloom, 2008, p. 1).

The genetic relationship and the inevitable comparison with *The Lord of the Rings* is responsible, however, for *The Hobbit* still being considered as a largely peripheral creation of the author, a "rehearsal" or an "overture of the grander work, *The Lord of the Rings*" and "essentially a transitional work, a stopping-off point on Tolkien's creative journey from the rudimentary forms of bedtime story-telling to the richly 'realistic' narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*" (Rosebury, 1992, p. 103).

On the Incipit of *The Hobbit*

The instant fame as a children's author brought by *The Hobbit* proved, as it often happens, a double-edged sword, with Tolkien's literary virtues being wildly contested over time. Here is an example verging on vituperation: "Using biblical cadences and greeting-card diction, Tolkien concludes his narrative [...]. That easiness is perhaps the source of Tolkien's appeal" (Stimpson, 1969, pp. 40-43). In spite of this, the opening paragraph (the first two sentences) has become so widely known that in 1980 it was added to the fifteenth edition of *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, while the first sentence (i.e. "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit.") is recognizable as one of the most famous opening lines in (children's) literature.

As previously stated, the limits of incipits vary from one text to another. When it comes to *The Hobbit*, we could take into account three possible incipits: one that ends after the very first sentence; another, which ends after the opening paragraph; yet another, which ends three pages later, at the fist fracture of the text (i.e. the initial humorous interchange between Bilbo Baggins and Gandalf); better yet, the entire first chapter (*An Unexpected Party*) may well be considered the incipit of this otherwise lengthy book. We get to ask ourselves, with Edward Said: "Is the beginning of a given work its real beginning, or is there some other, secret point that more authentically starts the work off" (Said, 1975, p. 3)? Given that the "point of attack" comes later in the narrative, the incipit will absorb an extensive description of the characters, setting, or context; on the other hand, the memorability of the famous opening line(s) makes it/them stand out as the actual, (self-)sufficient, beginning of the story. The apparent 'simplicity' and elasticity of Tolkien's narrative magma allows for such parameter versatility. For

practical reasons (having to do with space), we opted to analyse the medium-sized version (i.e. the opening paragraph). The importance of the this passage cannot be overestimated, as it manages to achieve a lot in just a few words: it establishes the fantasy world setting, it proposes a brand new type (and species) of character, and it introduces one of the major themes of the book (namely the importance of change).

Called simply "a hobbit" at first, Bilbo is left aside, with attention given to his comfortable underground home, redolent of the similarly cozy dwellings of Badger and Mole in *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) by Kenneth Grahame. As Tolkien continues to describe the hobbit hole (the door, the tube-shaped halls, bedrooms, bathrooms, cellars, pantries, wardrobes, kitchens, dining-rooms), the reader also learns about hobbits, most notably that "are little people, about half our height" (Tolkien, 2002, p. 30) and they are big eaters.

On *The Hobbit* in Romanian Translation

The Hobbit has, to the best of our knowledge, been translated into Romanian four times so far: in 1975, by Catinca Ralea (publishing house: Ion Creangă, title: *Poveste cu un hobbit*); in 1995, by Junona Beatrice Tutunea (Elit, title: *Povestea unui hobbit*); in 2007, by Irina Horea (RAO, title: *Hobbitul*, reedited in 2012), and, also in 2007, by Dan Sluşanschi (Paideia, title: *Hobbitul, sau într-acolo şi înapoi*, reedited in 2010). Catinca Ralea's version was revised in 2003 by Leon Levițchi and published by RAO with a different title: *Hobbitul*, so we may speak of a total of five Romanian translations. In the present paper, we will focus on Ralea's, Tutunea's, and Horea's versions, as they are not only illustrative of different epochs, but are also available in libraries as well as on the book market, which testifies to their validity as (re)translated texts.

Ralea's version appeared in 1975 (i.e. during the communist period). This means it was regulated by the translation policies of the time, which included purging or censoring any 'harmful' foreign influences. Ralea (a translator, journalist and producer of radio and TV shows) practically introduced Romanians to Tolkien and to fantasy as a genre and, although it was not successful marketing-wise (see also Cernăuți-Gorodețchi, 2002), her translation did pave the way for 'imported' fantasy and is relevant in terms of *preliminary norms* (Toury, 1995), which govern the decision related to the selection of texts (authors, text types, source cuture etc.).

Junona Tutunea's translation, produced twenty years later, appeared in a totally different cultural context. After the fall of communism (1989), a plethora of new, private publishing houses appeared, which made purely commercial interests rule over quality and ethics: "Under the pressure of the demand and drawn by the lure of rapid financial gains, they [the newly appeared publishing houses] printed translations that were performed at a fast pace, with little regard for translation faithfulness or ethical norms. The

massive interest in science fiction – mainly addressing a grown and teen readership – also opened the door to fantasy, which was targeted at children. Similarly, the general approach to the translation of children's literature still followed the orientation of naturalization, with little concern for exposing young readers to the experience of the Other, of the foreign; this time, the purpose of fluency was not to comply with ideological constraints, but to make the text relatable to target readers" (Bîrsanu, 2020, p. 8).

Fortunately, Junona Tutunea's version is not one of those hasty, on-the-spot translations that characterize the 1990s; it contains, on the other hand, a fair share of archaisms which may be as much her own idiosyncrasy as a result of the translation policies applied at the time.

The fact that *The Hobbit* resurfaced after 2003 is attributed by Mihaela Cernăuți-Gorodețchi (2002) to an external event: namely the production of a film version of the original *The Lord of the Rings (I): The Fellowship of the Ring.*

A Comparative Analysis of Titles

The following analysis will deal with the title of the book, in a first instance, and then move on to the title of the first chapter, which sets the incipit up, thus staging the storytelling experience:

Original Text (1937):	**Catinca Ralea's (1975) Translation:**	**Junona Tutunea's (1995) Translation:**	**Irina Horea's (2012) Translation:**
The Hobbit, or There and Back Again	*O poveste cu un hobbit* [A Tale about a Hobbit]	*Povestea unui hobbit* [A Hobbit's Tale]	*Hobbitul* [The Hobbit]

Table 1: *The Title of the Book*

The Hobbit, or There and Back Again is rendered by Ralea as *O poveste cu un hobbit,* by Tutunea as *Povestea unui hobbit*, and by Horea as *Hobbitul.* All three Romanian titles are incomplete; Ralea's 2003 version (revised by Levițchi) is, however, *Hobbitul*, and Dan Sluşanschi's 2007/2010 translation (*Hobbitul, sau într-acolo şi înapoi*) is the only one paying attention to the subtitle.

The intrinsic accessory nature of the subtitle makes it easily dispensable, and omitting it altogether might have to do with the norms regulating the translation of children's literature (which include, among others, reduction and simplification). That subtitles are among the most vulnerable paratextual elements is partly justified historically (think of the kilometric subtitles of 17th and 18th century-fiction!), and partly commercially (you do not want to dissuade a potential buyer from purchasing a book only because of its lengthy, featureless (sub)title). In this particular case, Tolkien's subtitle (*There and Back Again*) serves as "genre indication" (in Genette's 1997 terms), suggesting not only a quest, but also circularity, and possibly also a happy

end, while also preserving a tolerable touch of mystery (i.e. where exactly is *there*?).

Ralea's 1975 title, as well as Tutunea's, uses a straightforward, explicit term to indicate genre ("poveste" [(fairy-)tale]) and targetship (children) at the same time – their titles are thus parageneric. But ironically, it is a function word like the indefinite article that irrevocably affects these two Romanian titles (Ralea's, to an even greater extent than Tutunea's): saying "a hobbit" is like saying "any hobbit" – that is, no one in particular, no one special (which is exactly Bilbo's status at the beginning of the book). Of course, *hobbit* is an invented name designating a fantastic creature; it is therefore an element of fantasy, which Ralea introduced for the first time to Romanian readers in 1975, and then Tutunea, for the first time since 1989 – in both cases, it was a first, and it is up to the indefinite article to refer to nouns in order to introduce them for the first time. It was also a way of smoothly importing an unfamiliar concept by integrating it into a familiar pattern. However, Ralea using this article twice ("o poveste" [a (fairy-)tale], "un hobbit" [a hobbit]), along with the preposition "cu" [with], makes this newly introduced character look trivial (it is not a hobbit's story, it is not even a story *about* a hobbit, it is one which happens to include a hobbit). According to Roxana Bîrsanu, "[b]y resorting to a replacement of the definite article with the indefinite one, the translators annihilated the uniqueness of the character and moved the focus on the idea of adventures" (Bîrsanu, 2020, p. 9).

The fact that the latest versions of Tolkien's *Hobbit* in Romanian (namely, Horea's 2007/2012 text and Dan Sluşanschi's 2008 text) make amends for the title, bringing it closer to the original one, corroborated with the source-orientedness of the respective texts, helps validate the long-contested "retranslation hypothesis" (which assigns retranslation a corrective, restorative function). It also shows us that, as Genette used to say, "[i]n actual practice, identification is the most important function of the title, which could if need be dispense with any other function" (Genette, 1997, pp. 80-81).

There are also three different titles, in terms of structure, translation strategy and focalisation:

Original Text (1937):	**Catinca Ralea's (1975) Translation:**	**Junona Tutunea's (1995) Translation:**	**Irina Horea's (2012) Translation:**
An Unexpected Party	*Musafiri nepoftiți* [Unexpected Guests]	*Pe nepusă masă* [turning up / occurring out of the blue, uninvited]	*O petrecere neașteptată* [An Unexpected Party]

Table 2: *The Title of the First Chapter*

Structurally, Ralea and Horea stick to the architecture of the original title, which is based on a noun phrase (*An Unexpected Party*), whereas Junona Tutunea resorts to an idiomatic, prepositional phrase (*Pe nepusă masă*).

The orientation is slightly towards the target in Ralea and Tutunea's case (as in both "musafiri nepoftiți" and "pe nepusă masă" there is a streak of naturalization), and conspicuously towards the source in Horea's case. The literality of the 2012 version of the title is not, however, the most inspired of choices, as it priviliges the more popular meaning of *party* (i.e. social gathering involving eating, drinking, and some kind of entertainment) at the expense of its other – partitive, collective, or uncountable – meanings (i.e. group, alliance, or participant). The importance of togetherness, of solidarity, so touchingly emphasized by Tolkien along the book, is thus significantly tuned down. The ambiguity of *party* works both ways in English (there is a group of people who drop by Bilbo Baggins' house and ultimately turn dinner into a dinner party). As a matter of fact, Tolkien uses *party* quite a few times in the book to refer either to feasts, or, to a greater extent, to the group of dwarves reclaiming the ancient dwarfish treasure captured by Smaug, the dragon (e.g. "The elves had brought bright lanterns to the shore, and they sang a merry song as the *party* went across." (Tolkien, 2002: 93, emphasis mine)). The subtitle of first installment in Peter Jackson's three-part film adaptation of Tolkien's novel, *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* (2012), which incorporates and slightly alters the title of the first chapter, also favours precipitancy (*unexpected*) and adventurous quest (*journey*), therefore dynamism, over repast (*party)*, which is often static.

Of course, translation cannot be expected to recuperate all the possible meanings of a given word, and, in fact, a recent French version of Tolkien's text (Daniel Lauzon's 2012 translation, published with Christian Bourgeois) displays the same literality ("Une fête inattendue" [An Unexpected Party]). On the other hand, "petrecere"/"fête", while lacking the polysemy of *party* (which makes them somehow bland, by comparison), may well prove to be more lucrative in terms of perlocutionary effect (i.e. the prospect of reading about a party possibly acting as a stronger incentive for the young reader than the prospect of reading about a group of people).

Sticking to the nominal structure of the original title is, in theory, a good idea, as the nominal (or "holophrastic", in Kristeva's 1975 terms) makes the best of ellipsis (i.e. it manages to express a complex of ideas in a condensed way, in a single word or in a fixed phrase, yet it also conveys a sense of timelessness, which befits fantasy). Nevertheless, it is Junona Tutunea's phrase ("pe nepusă masă") that really does justice to the original title, in that it manages to allude to both feasting ("masă") and being caught unprepared ("masă nepusă"). It is equally her phrase which strikes a balance between external focalization (by focusing on the unexpected actions of Bilbo's

guests) and internal focalization (by suggesting Bilbo's emotions when faced with something he had not anticipated). The other two Romanian titles are much more neutral and dispassionate, since nominal style is also characterized, according to Leo H. Hoek, by "static, impersonal descriptivity" (Hoek, 1981, p. 64), as well as by a high degree of stereotypy, if not monotony.

A Comparative Analysis of Incipits

The following table presents the 'medium-sized' version (i.e. the opening paragraph) of the incipit – the original text and the three Romanian versions envisaged in this paper:

J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1937	**J.R.R. Tolkien, *O poveste cu un hobbit*, traducere Catinca Ralea, Editura Ion Creangă, Bucureşti, 1975**	**J.R.R. Tolkien, *Povestea unui hobbit*, traducere Junona Tutunea, Editura Elit, Ploieşti, 1995**	**J.R.R. Tolkien, *Hobbitul*, traducere Irina Horea, Editura RAO, Bucureşti, 2012 [2007]**
In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat: it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort.	A fost odată un "hobbit" care locuia într-o gaură în pământ. Nu era o vizuină din acelea antipatice, murdare sau umede, pline de capete sau cozi de viermi şi cu miros de mîl; nu era nici nisipoasă sau lipsită de apă, sau o vizuină în care n-ai pe ce să te aşezi sau pe ce să mănînci; era o vizuină de hobbit, şi asta înseamnă confort.	Cândva, într-o vizuină săpată în pământ, trăia un hobbit. Aceea însă, nu era o vizuină oarecare, îmbâcsită, jilavă, colcăind de viermi şi răspândind miasmă de mlaştină. Şi nu era nici prea uscată, fără strop de apă – ce mai, o biată scobitură nisipoasă, în care nu găseşti un locşor unde să te aşezi sau unde să mănânci. Era o vizuină de hobbit, aşadar foarte plăcută.	Într-o vizuină în pământ trăia odată un hobbit. Nu era o vizuină urâtă, murdară, jegoasă, plină de rămăşiţe de viermi şi duhnind a mocirlă. Şi nici o vizuină nisipoasă, uscată, goală, în care să nu ai pe ce să te aşezi sau pe ce să îţi pui blidul cu mâncare: era o vizuină de hobbit, cu alte cuvinte – dichisită.
	[Once upon a time there was a "hobbit" who lived in a hole in the ground. It was not one of those unpleasant, dirty, wet dens, full of	[Aforetime, in a den dug into the ground, there lived a hobbit. That was, however, no stuffy, clammy, ordinary den, crawling with worms, spreading	[In a den in the ground there lived once a hobbit. It was not an ugly, dirty, filthy den, full of worm remains and

	worms' heads and tails, with a oozy smell; neither was it sandy, nor waterless, nor a den with nothing to sit down on or to eat; it was hobbit's den, and that means comfort.]	a marshy stink. It wasn't too dry either, without a drop of water – in a word, a mere sandy hollow where you can't find a little place for you to sit down on or to eat. It was a hobbit's, hence very pleasant, hole.]	stinking of mud. Neither was it a sandy, dry, empty den, with nothing to sit down on or place your dish: it was a hobbit's hole, in other words – it was posh.]

Table 3: *The (Medium-Sized Version of the) Incipit*

As can be observed, Tolkien's incipit manages to establish, in but a few words, a special kind of topos, an idyllic microcosm, a very unfamiliar, yet convincing physical background. All the elements constituting a beginning, according to Said (Said, 1975, p. 42) – namely a time, a place, an object, a principle, and an act – are present in these first few lines of the story.

Of even greater importance is the very first sentence of the incipit, which we will isolate from the rest of the text:

Original Text (1937):	**Catinca Ralea's (1975) Translation:**	**Junona Tutunea's (1995) Translation:**	**Irina Horea's (2012) Translation:**
In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit.	A fost odată un "hobbit" care locuia într-o gaură în pământ.	Cândva, într-o vizuină săpată în pământ, trăia un hobbit.	Într-o vizuină în pământ trăia odată un hobbit.

Table 4: *The Very First Sentence*

Whether reminiscent of the ubiquitous "Once upon a time" of traditional story-telling, or of the incipit of Norse sagas, usually starting with "there was...", *there lived*, in Tolkien's text, serves as both a formal, conventionalised story onset, and a signal that particular narrative forms will ensue. It is not only a trademark, but a powerful incentive, a true appetizer, whetting one's appetite for more reading. "The use of shifters to the fictional world, fiction's equivalent to the fairy tale's "Once upon a time," is also an invitation to read. These shifters are markers to indicate to the reader that the story is about to begin, that he can adjust his posture accordingly, settle more firmly into his armchair, let go of the real world" (Collinge-Germain, 2013, n.p.).

Aware of the importance of this formulaic introduction, Catinca Ralea chooses to focus on it, by extraposition ("A fost odată un 'hobbit'..."). Junona Tutunea also uses fronting, but she prefers a poetic "cândva" [once, aforetime, in the olden days] to the time-honored "Once upon a time", which manages to convey a sense of remoteness and antiquity. In Irina Horea's version, syntactic literality considerably diminishes the impact of the

rather frugal "odată" [*once*]. Nostalgia, timelessness, heavenliness and everything else this *once* was supposed to express simply fades away. Or, as pointed out by Brian Rosebury, such a seemingly unimportant word is actually suggestive of a grander, global philosophy: "Tolkien is, of course, in this opening chapter building a land of heart's desire by elaborating the fairy-tale formula "once upon a time" and adopting the perspective formed in childhood (but deeply embedded in adult consciousness) of the world as concentric circles centred upon Home" (Rosebury, 1992, p. 105).

There are, then, four occurrences of *hole* in Tolkien's incipit, a term for which all three Romanian translators use a slightly more technical and more elegant "vizuină" [*den, burrow, lair*], thus laying emphasis on the hobbit's animal side. To decrease repetition (one of the most common translation universals), Ralea uses once "gaură" and thrice "vizuină".

The word *hobbit* itself, supposedly a worn-down version of *holbytla* [hole-dweller] is used in the first sentence (and, in fact, in the first passages) is used to introduce Bilbo generically: he is a hobbit like any other at the beginning of the book; he only becomes *the* hobbit towards the end, after many trials and tribulations. Significantly, Ralea introduces the new common name, the new species, between inverted commas, thus highlighting its foreignness, its uncanniness. Tutunea and Horea, on the other hand, lay emphasis on it by placing it at the very end of the sentence.

Moving on to the analysis of the 'medium-sized' incipit (Table 3), we will first observe that the special type of litotes Tolkien uses (stating something by denying its opposite) is preserved as such in all the Romanian versions under debate here ("Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole..." but a "hobbit-hole, and that means comfort."/" Nu era o vizuină din acelea antipatice, murdare sau umede..."/"Aceea însă, nu era o vizuină oarecare, îmbâcsită, jilavă..."/"Nu era o vizuină urâtă, murdară, jegoasă...").

That comfort is extremely important for hobbits is clear from Tolkien's text: we are told from the very beginning that the dwelling described is by definition comfortable ("it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort"). We are then informed that Bilbo was a very well-to-do hobbit, who owned a "most luxurious hobbit-hole" his father, Bungo, had built for his mother, Belladonna Took – a detail which, again, implies not only cozyness, but also a certain degree of opulence. Furthermore, no less than 52 instances of *comfort* and its derivatives or compounds (e.g. *comforting, comfortless, comforted, comfortable, uncomfortable, comfortably, uncomfortably, comfortable-looking*) can be found in the entire text. *Comfort* is a key-word which speaks about a deeply human predilection: "Bilbo Baggins's preferences for comfort and a sleepy existence persuade because of their universality. [...] *The Hobbit* remains a rather funny book, so long as it gives primacy to Bilbo's good sense that adventures are 'wretched, tiresome, uncomfortable' " (Bloom, 2008, pp. 1-2). Yet, the concept as such was overlooked by all Romanian translators (who prefer to express pleasantness and poshness) except for Catinca Ralea.

Food, of equal importance for hobbits, is usually delivered in a binary opposition: feasting versus battle, which is incorporated into the novel in three ways, as shown by Jane Chance: thematically (through the confrontation between Bilbo and various monsters which may well eat him), structurally (through an alternation of party chapters with battle chapters), and symbolically ("through the internalization of the conflict within the hero") (Chance, 2001, p. 63). Bilbo has frequent daydreams of food, and his last name probably comes from bagging, which, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is "used in the northern counties of England for food eaten between regular meals; now, especially in Lancashire, an afternoon meal, 'afternoon tea' in substantial form." (Tolkien, 2002, p. 30). The fact that the hobbit-hole was "nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat" already informs the reader of the significance of food in a hobbit's life. Catinca Ralea renders this part with surprising deference to the source text ("nu era nici nisipoasă sau lipsită de apă, o vizuină în care n-ai pe ce să te așezi sau pe ce să mănînci"). Junona Tutunea leaves her personal imprint, by using exclamations ("ce mai!") and diminutives ("locşor") ("ce mai, o biată scobitură nisipoasă, în care nu găsești un locșor unde să te așezi sau unde să mănânci"). As for Irina Horea, she resorts to an informal word of Slavic origin ("blid") ("Şi nici o vizuină nisipoasă, uscată, goală, în care să nu ai pe ce să te așezi sau pe ce să îți pui blidul cu mâncare"), which instantly places the hobbit in a befitting rural context. Sfter all, Tolkien himself had declared: "The Hobbits are just rustic English people, made small in size because it reflects the generally small reach of their imagination, not the small reach of their courage or latent power" (Carpenter, 1987, p. 180).

What is definitely noticeable from the very first lines of the Romanian texts is a different approach to register. The lexis employed by Catinca Ralea in the given extract seems rather bland and consistent as compared to the other two, although the rest of her text shows inconsistencies in terms of the (in)formality of the language employed. As noted by Roxana Bîrsanu, the 1975 translation "presents itself as a product of its time, which complies with the standards and expectations of its epoch, but it also goes beyond it, in an attempt to enrich the then existing literary framework" (Bîrsanu, 2020, p. 12). Neither blatantly target-oriented (as one might expect from a first translation), nor annoyingly source-oriented, Ralea's incipit is, like her entire text, an example of fluency and balance. Tutunea's, on the other hand, "through the constant interventions in lexis and syntax, the massive use of additions and archaisms, reveals an effort to make the text sound as an original to the point of suggesting a rewriting of the source text" (Bîrsanu, 2020, p. 11). All three Romanian versions strive to create a familiar setting for target readers, but Irina Horea's text displays (from the incipit to the very end) an utterly discordant register. In the extended incipit, we find archaisms, regionalisms,

very popular terms and exclamations (e.g. "jegoasă", "duhnind", "blid", "megieşi", "pântecoşi", "soață", "bazaconie", "hărmălaie", "mătăluță", "măiculiță!", "moşu'", "aoleo!", "povestelnicul") along with technical terms like "hublou".

Conclusions

The three Romanian versions of *The Hobbit* analysed here all manage to offer, from the very beginning (in the titles, subtitles and incipits) "glimpses of an exhilarating temporal and spatial scope" (Rosebury, 1992, p. 104). Moreover, if we take into account Mircea Breaz's binary opposition *intentional* stylistics versus *attentional* stylistics (Breaz, 2008, 2013), all of them are clearly *attentional* (literarity aims at the reader's attention) rather than *intentional* (literarity consists of discursive properties exemplified by the text). The interest-stirring function fulfilled by these incipits is certainly the most powerful, if variable, of the functions.

However, they are also different: Tutunea's text strikes as the most poetic of them all, Ralea's as the most 'faithful', and Horea's as more of a "readerly" than a "writerly" text (i.e. a text which does not necessarily challenge the reader's position as a subject, in Barthes' 1974 terms). There are all sorts of norms regulating the translation of children's literature: preliminary norms, literary and educational norms, pedagogical norms, and business norms (see Desmidt, 2003). The fact that the latest translation, which happens the most reedited (thus, the most successfull?) of them all, is also the one that points to the current trend in translations: various economic considerations (in other words the so-called *business norms*) prevail over any other type of norm.

All in all, it is a good thing there are multiple Romanian versions of one and the same text. If the incipit is an interface between the author and his/her public, then, paraphrasing Tolkien's (full) title, we, too, may speak of the incipit of *The Hobbit*, or three faces of an interface.

Corpus

Tolkien, J.R.R. (1937). *The Hobbit*. George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

Tolkien, J.R.R. (1975). *O poveste cu un hobbit*. (Catinca Ralea, Trans.). Editura Ion Creangă.

Tolkien, J.R.R. (1995). *Povestea unui hobbit*. (Junona Tutunea, Trans.). Editura Elit.

Tolkien, J.R.R. 2012 [2007]. *Hobbitul*. (Irina Horea, Trans.). Editura RAO.

Tolkien, J.R.R. (2002). *The (Annotated) Hobbit, or Then and Back Again*. Annotated by Douglas A. Anderson. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Tolkien, J.R.R. (2012). *Le Hobbit*. (Daniel Lauzon, Trans.). Christian Bourgeois.

References

Barthes, R. (1973). *Le Plaisir du texte*. Seuil.

Barthes, R. (1974). *S/Z. An Essay*. (Richard Miller, Trans.). Hill and Wang.

Bîrsanu, R. (2020). Applying Descriptivist Norms to Fantasy Translation. *European Scientific Journal* (October edition, Vol. 16, No. 29, 1-13).

Bloom, H. (ed.) (2008). *Bloom's Modern Critical Views. J. R. R. Tolkien*. Infobase Learning.

Bloom, H. (ed.) (2011). *Bloom's Guides. J. R. R. Tolkien's The Hobbit*. Infobase Learning.

Breaz, M. (2013). *Literatura pentru copii. Repere teoretice şi metodologice*. Editura ASCR.

Carpenter, H. (1977). *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography.* George Allen and Unwin.

Carpenter, H. (ed.) (1981). *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*. George Allen and Unwin.

Carpenter, H. (1987). *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography*. Houghton Mifflin.

Carpenter, H., ed. & C. Tolkien, assistant (1981). *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*. Harper Collins.

Cernăuți-Gorodețchi, M. (2002). Sub semnul croşetei: Tolkien şi românii. *Convorbiri literare,* 3, 75.

Chance, J. (2001). *Tolkien's Art. A Mythology for England*. The University Press of Kentucky.

Collinge-Germain, L. (2013). The Reader at Play in "Auggie Wren's Christmas Story" by Paul Auster. *Transatlantica.* http://journals.openedition.org/transatlantica/6567.

Crabbe, K. W. (1988). *J. R. R. Tolkien*. Continuum Press.

Del Lungo, A. (1993). Pour une poétique de l'incipit. *Poétiques* (no. 94, 131-152).

Desmidt, I. (2003). 'Jetzt bist du in Deutschland, Däumling.' Nils Holgersson on Foreign Soil–Subject to New Norms. *Meta,* 48(1-2), 165-181 (*Traduction pour les enfants/ Translation for Children*).

Genette, G. ([1980] 1972). *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. (Jane E. Lewin, Trans.). Cornell University Press.

Genette, G. (1997). *Paratext: Thresholds of Interpretation.* (Jane E. Levin, Trans.). Cambridge University Press.

Green, W. H. (1995). *The Hobbit: A Journey into Maturity*. Twayne Publishers.

Grivel Ch. (1973). *Production de l'intérêt romanesque*. Mouton.

Helms, R. (1974). *Tolkien's World.* Thames and Hudson.

Hescher, A. (2009). A Typology for Teaching Novel Incipits. In *AAA – Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* (Band 34, Heft 1, 101-122). Gunter Narr Verlag.

Hoek, L. H. (1981). *La marque du titre: Dispositifs sémiotiques d'une pratique textuelle.* Mouton.

Kristeva, J. (1974). *La révolution du langage poétique*. Seuils.

Kuznets, L. R. (1981). Tolkien and the Rhetoric of Childhood. In *Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives.* Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimhardo (Eds) (pp. 150-62). University of Kentucky Press.

Iser, W. (1980 [1976]). *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (translation of *Der Akt des Lesens*, 1976). John Hopkins University Press.

Jauss, H. R. (1982 [1978]). *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*. (Timothy Bahti, Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.

Ojică, S. M. (2003). *Hobbitul* – Aventura călătoriei inițiale / *The Hobbit* – The Adventure of the Initiating Quest. *Acta Iassyensia Comparationis* (no. 12, 59-64).

Pellatt, V. (2013). Introduction. In V. Pellatt (ed.), *Text, Extratext, Metatext and Paratext in Translation* (pp. 1-6). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Pfister, M. (1977). *Das Drama: Theorie und Analyse*. W. Fink.

Picard, M. (1986). *La Lecture comme Jeu*. Minuit.

Prud'homme, J. (2001). L'incipit: frontière et lieu stratégique de contact en littérature québécoise pour la jeunesse. In *Tangence* (*L'écriture pour la jeunesse: de la production à la réception*), 67, 69–80.

Ready, W. (1968). *Understanding Tolkien and The Lord of the Rings.* Warner Books.

Rosebury, B. (1992). *Tolkien: A Critical Assessment.* Palgrave MacMillan.

Said, E. W. (1975). *Beginnings. Intention and Method.* Basic Books.

Salbayre, S., Vincent-Arnaud, N. (2006), *L'analyse stylistique. Textes littéraires de langue anglaise*. Presses Universitaires du Mirail.

Stevens, D., Stevens, C. D. (2008). The Hobbit. In *Bloom's Modern Critical Views. J. R. R. Tolkien*, Bloom, Harold (ed.), (pp. 17-42). Infobase Learning.

Stimpson, C. R. (1969). *J. R. R TolMen.* Columbia University Press.

Tahir-Gürçaglar, Ş. (2002). What Texts Don't Tell: The Use of Paratexts in Translation Research. *Crosscultural Transgressions. Research Models in Translation Studies II: Historical and Ideological Issues.* Theo Hermans (ed.), St. Jerome.

Tolkien, J. R. R. (1939). On Fairy Stories. In *The Monsters and the Critics.* Christopher Tolkien (ed.). Harper Collins Publishers.

Toury, G. (1995). *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond.* John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Watts, R. (2000). Translating Culture: Reading the Paratexts of Aimé Césaire's. *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*. *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction,* 13(2), 29-46.

Bun de tipar 01.05.2019. Garnitura Book Antigua. Comanda nr. 181. Tiraj 100.
Tipografia Universității de Stat „Alecu Russo" din Bălți. Mun. Bălți, str. Puşkin, 38.