DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN ROMANIAN LITERATURE TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

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Domestic violence (DV) is a pervasive violation of human rights, rooted in historical gender inequalities. International frameworks such as the Istanbul Convention and the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women define DV broadly to include physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse in intimate or family relationships [8];[3]. Feminist theory emphasizes that such violence is not incidental but systemic, a product of patriarchal power structures that normalise male authority over women [3].

Globally, domestic violence remains alarmingly widespread. The World Health Organization reports that 1 in 3 women worldwide have suffered intimate partner violence [15]. In Europe, about 33% of women report having experienced physical or sexual abuse; in Romania, the rate is slightly lower, likely due to underreporting [10]. The Republic of Moldova, for instance, reports higher figures: over 40% of women have endured physical or sexual violence and surveys show that 73% of the Moldovan women have faced some form of partner violence [7].

In Moldova, patriarchal norms historically framed domestic violence as a private matter. Legal codes from the 17th century, such as Moldova's *Pravila lui Vasile Lupu* (1646), explicitly allowed husbands to "correct" their wives physically, provided they did so without "malice" [6]. While extreme violence could result in divorce, moderate beatings were accepted as marital discipline. This legal tolerance persisted through the 19th century and even under communism, where the socialist ideal of gender equality failed to address family violence, which remained a taboo topic [3].

Only in the late 20th and early 21st centuries did Romania and the Republic of Moldova begin to recognise domestic violence as a public and legal issue. Romania passed its first domestic violence law in 2003 and ratified the Istanbul Convention in 2016 [11]. Moldova followed with Law 45/2007 on preventing and combating domestic violence, strengthened further after the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in 2021 [12]; [14]. These legal frameworks introduced protection orders, emergency restraining measures and the criminalisation of marital rape.

However, legal change alone has not eliminated cultural attitudes that tolerate abuse. In both countries, underreporting remains widespread. Many victims still perceive domestic violence as a private or shameful issue, preventing them from seeking

help [9]. Public awareness campaigns, such as the UN's 16 Days of Activism, have helped to shift this mindset, but societal change remains incomplete [13].

The Romanian literature has long reflected and questioned the social norms that sustain domestic violence. Three canonical novels – Slavici's *Moara cu noroc* and Rebreanu's *Ion* and *Ciuleandra* – portray domestic violence as a product of rural patriarchy and male dominance.

In *Moara cu noroc*, Ghiță, the innkeeper, places his wife Ana in morally and physically dangerous situations to secure his financial success. Ana becomes a pawn in Ghiță's dealings with violent men, particularly Lică and ultimately suffers sexual and emotional abuse [1]. Her voice is marginalised throughout the narrative, reflecting the silencing of women in traditional rural families. Slavici's work thus exposes the systemic vulnerability of women who are trapped in patriarchal bargains.

Rebreanu's *Ion* presents an even starker depiction of domestic violence. The protagonist, Ion, marries Ana not for love but to acquire her family's land. Once wed, Ion subjects Ana to repeated psychological and physical abuse. Ana, isolated and powerless, eventually commits suicide, underscoring the fatal consequences of unchecked patriarchal violence [1]. In *Ion*, female suffering is normalised within the social fabric of early 20th-century rural Romania, where women were expected to endure abuse silently.

Ciuleandra, set among the urban elite, shows that domestic violence transcends social class. Puiu Faranga, driven by obsessive jealousy, ultimately murders his wife Mădălina in a fit of rage. The novel illustrates how male possessiveness and entitlement can escalate into lethal violence, regardless of the perpetrator's social standing [1]. Rebreanu critiques the psychological dynamics of control and ownership that underlie domestic abuse.

These literary works, while products of their time, challenge readers to confront the realities of domestic violence. Through narrative empathy, they expose the cultural norms that perpetuate abuse and depict the silent suffering of women. Literature thus serves as both a mirror and a critic of its society [5].

Translating these works into English introduces additional challenges. The first English translation of *Moara cu noroc*, *The Lucky Mill* (1919), softened the harshness of the original through archaic and polite language, diminishing the emotional rawness of Ana's suffering [1]. Such domestication risks reducing the impact of the story's critique of patriarchy. Translators must balance fidelity to the original's cultural context with accessibility for target-language readers.

Ethically, translators face the challenge of representing violence without either sanitizing it or sensationalizing it [2]. They must preserve the victims' silences and suffering without adding interpretive commentary that distorts the author's intent. For example, translators might be tempted to give Ana a stronger narrative voice in English, but doing so could misrepresent her historical and social reality. Instead, translators should allow her silence to speak volumes, reflecting the oppressive environment that shaped her fate.

Translation also involves navigating cultural references. Concepts like dowry (*zestre*), patriarchal authority and rural honour codes have no exact equivalents in English. Translators must decide whether to retain Romanian terms (foreignization) or replace them with approximate English terms (domestication) [4]. Both approaches carry interpretive risks: over-domestication may erase cultural specificity, while over-foreignization may alienate readers.

Literature and its translation have the power to raise awareness about domestic violence across cultural borders. By presenting intimate portrayals of abuse, these works foster empathy and understanding. Their translation into English allows readers outside Romania and the Republic of Moldova to engage with the cultural roots of domestic violence and to recognize its universal patterns. In doing so, they contribute to the global discourse on gender-based violence.

Moreover, such translations are useful educational tools in literature, gender studies and translation studies programmes. They spark critical discussions about the historical tolerance of domestic violence and the evolving ethical responsibilities of literary translation. They also highlight the importance of trauma-informed translation practices, which aim to preserve the emotional and ideological weight of the source texts [2].

In conclusion, Romanian literature and its English translations illustrate how domestic violence has been both reflected and contested in cultural narratives. These texts demonstrate that domestic violence is not a private misfortune but a systemic social problem, rooted in historical and cultural patterns of power and control. Literature exposes these patterns, while translation extends their critique to new cultural audiences. Together, they foster a transnational conversation about violence, empathy, and justice. As the thesis concludes, raising awareness through literature and translation remains a vital part of the global struggle against domestic violence [5].

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