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BOOK REVIEW – *STUDII DE TRADUCTOLOGIE ROMÂNEASCĂ*



Adina CHIRILĂ*
West University of Timișoara
Timișoara, Timiș, Romania

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The two volumes of the book stem from the intellectual endeavor of several scholars who, animated by the main goals of the ISTTRAROM – Translations Academic Center¹, share their opinion and experience on various matters in the field of translation theory and practice. One may approach the problems of traductology with many a bothering question:

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What makes a good translation?, and Who is there to judge?

How many stages does the process of translating involve?, and How complex is (or should be) this process?

Can meaning be accurately presented in translation?

Is loss of certain components of meaning inevitable?

What compensation mechanisms can or may be used to ensure that the target text is not inferior in comparison with the source text?

What are the implications of the failure to transfer both semantic and pragmatic aspects of meaning in the process of translation and cross-cultural communication?

How can developments in the field of corpus linguistics and new methods of discourse analysis contribute to contrastive analysis and translations of texts?

Is there an ethic of translation?²

The implications of such issues are so deep that, had he thought extensively about them, the Romanian scholar Ion Heliade Rădulescu would have been quite tempted to renounce the idea he was coming up with in 1843, of nurturing a project³ that would have provided the Romanian public with the most brilliant works of the European thinkers and writers of the day and of the past: Homer, Aristotle, Plato, Francis Bacon, I. Kant, G.W. Leibniz, Hegel, Giambattista Vico, Voltaire, J.J. Rousseau, Thomas Morus and others. “In the beginning, translations *do* pave the way for original compositions” (emphasize mine) – he used to say⁴, as a direct counter-opinion to that of Mihail Kogalniceanu, who had written, in 1840, on a more nationalistic tone, that “[b]ooks in Romanian come out of typographies almost daily. But what is the use of it!, for these books are mere translations from other languages, and not even good. Translations however *do not* make a literature” (emphasize mine)!⁵

The polemic has become futile; on the contrary – and to the benefit of all parts involved (original author, source-culture of the text, target-culture of the translation, foreign reader) –, the concern with *the quality* of the translating act, in general, or of a particular translation has increased through the years; and with that, the interest for issues like those exposed by the aforementioned questions.

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The book [Engl.⁶ *Studies of Romanian Traductology. I. Translative⁷ Discourse, Meta-Translative Discourse. II. Attempt Towards a Cartography of the Domain*] focuses on various aspects of traductology as theoretical science, as a method of investigation that allows the researcher to follow and comprehend the process of translation, and as an objective set of principles that guide the examination of a particular translation. It is a comprehensive perspective motivated by the development of the field during the last fifty years (see Georgiana Lungu-Badea’s *Preface*, I, pp. 7-9). The two volumes unite 22 papers (I: 15, II: 7) considering the meta-translative and post-translative discourse, the process of translation in both synchronic and diachronic perspectives, the linguistic body of translation, etc. – all paying attention to key problems such as translation universals, translation quality assessments, the translator’s role, alignment and standardization in the multilingual, multicultural and multi-ethnic environments.

The first volume opens with a couple of studies whose theme of inquiry is the relevance of Eugen Coseriu’s linguistic theory in the field of traductology. In their study, „*Mizeria și splendoarea traducerii*”. *Modelul Coșeriu* [Engl. “*The misery and splendor of translation*”. *The*

Coserian model], Ileana Oancea and Nadia Obrocea argue for the idea that a keen observer may discover along Coseriu's line of thinking "the features of a 'realist' theory of translation, which could constitute the basis of a translation linguistics" (I, p. 11). Applying a paradigm as such (in which, e.g., contrastive grammar is the grammar of language *use*, not of language *per se*), the act and product of translating can be rightfully perceived and analyzed with the tools of textual linguistics.

The second paper, *Este actual Eugeniu Coșeriu în teoria traducerii?* [Engl. *Is Eugeniu Coseriu substantial in translation theory?*], by Cristina Varga, may as well function as an autonomous study upon Coseriu's views on traductology (in a broad sense), and as a continuation of the previous article⁸, since it offers a detailed image of his direct and indirect contributions to the field. It does so not by digging deeper into the linguist's theory itself, but by taking into account and evaluating the references to Coseriu's work in a corpus of 24 books dealing with problems of traductology, published by various researchers between 2010-2016. Varga's main objective has been "to find valid arguments that Eugenio Coșeriu is still an important theorist in the translation field" (I, p. 37); yet, in spite of her optimistic tone, she herself doesn't seem to be completely satisfied with the proof she gathered: she never hints to the counterpart (except for an acid statement about a critique to Coseriu's didactic activity in the area of translation, I, p. 45), thus the reader is not given the chance to know how vast is the literature which *does not* make use of Coseriu's ideas in pondering over the complex issues of traductology. If he/she finds themselves persuaded that "Eugeniu Coșeriu is a substantial author [today]"⁹ (I, p. 47), it is rather by means of *pathos* and *ethos*, not by means of *logos*.

Muguraș Constantinescu, in her article *Reflecția traductologică mavrodiniană: între practico-teoria traducerii și poetica/poietica traducerii* [Engl. *The Mavrodinian traductological reflection: between the practico-theory of translation and the poetic/poietic of translation*], and Simona Constantinovici, in her study *Irina Mavrodin. În căutarea traducerii perfecte* [Engl. *Irina Mavrodin. In search of perfect translation*], discuss the fundamental competencies a translator should be endowed with, namely cognitive, reproductive and contextual – by resorting to the exemplary figure of Irina Mavrodin, "a significant personality of Romanian culture, great translator, professor and theorist of translation" (I, p. 52)¹⁰, whose work in the field of literary translation has focused on Marcel Proust's writings. In Constantinovici's views (herself a subtle reader and a gifted poet and novelist), Irina Mavrodin was one of the "[f]ew translators [who] have

been able to penetrate the poetic, multi-layered, and dense Proustian text, to carry out the project, and to be left with a generic sense of wonder, capable of mobilizing the spirit infinitely” (I, p. 67).

Similar in her approach to the concept of a valid and effective translation theory is Valy Ceia, who, in *G.I. Tohăneanu, stanțe traductive* [Engl. *G.I. Tohăneanu, translative stanzas*], considers the ultimate product of a translation practice – the Romanian versions of Macrobius’ *Saturnalia*, and Virgil’s *Aeneid*, *Georgics* and *Eclogues*, in G.I. Tohăneanu’s rendition from Latin –, in order to discern the underlying cognitive mechanism of the process. Thus, one can grasp four fundamental elements, simultaneously geared in the act of translation, whose degree of refinement determine the quality of a translated version of a text: knowledge of the profound and the articulations of the source-language; the same knowledge about the target-language; artistic sensibility, especially when it comes to translating poetry; knowledge about the tradition of a text’s rendition and its consequent reception into a foreign language (I, p. 97). In Ceia’s words (with whom the reviewer cannot but agree), “the difficulty of a translation [...] implies the twining of esthetics and ethics, of a creation’s form and content” (I, p. 97; translation mine).

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An interesting contribution is *Traducerea „imperială” și traducerea „națională”. Metadiscursuri și procese reale de traducere din secolul al XIX-lea* [Engl. *The “imperial” translation and the “national” translation. Meta-discourses and real processes of translation in the 19th century*], signed by Larisa Schippel. Relying on Michaela Wolf’s thesis on ‘culture’ and its symbiosis with translation (see her seminal book *Die vielsprachige Seele Kakaniens. Übersetzen und Dolmetschen in der Habsburgermonarchie 1848 bis 1918*, Wien/Köln/Weimar: Böhlau, 2012), the Austrian professor outlines the functions and agencies that the activity of translating may develop in political contexts such as those involving the building of a nation, on one hand, and the survival of a multi-ethnic, thus multi-lingual empire, on the other. Schippel’s fresh perspective results in a convincing plea for an extended view on what should constitute the field of traductology: in her opinion, it should transgress the national frame (where it deals mainly with artistic literature), and embrace the transcultural perspective as well.

The next article, *Despre o traducere în franceză a Jurnalului de călătorie în China al lui Nicolae Milescu (Spătarul)* [Engl. *About a French translation of Journal of a Journey to China by Nicolae Milescu (Spatharus)*], represents Hélène Lenz’s observations concerning mainly the translative protocols developed among several parts in an attempt to establish a diplomatic relation between the Russian Empire and China, at the end of the 17th century, as they transpire from the

journal kept by one of the protagonists of this official attempt, namely Nicolae Milescu¹¹. Lenz's idea is that one can discern along Milescu's notes and concerns about the efficiency of the act of translation in specific circumstances the sound beginning of a Romanian traductology.

Two following studies are dedicated to the same issue: the development and the range of the concept of 'cultureme', in Romanian and Spanish traductology: see Anca Rădulescu's *Dezvoltări ale conceptului de cultureme în lucrările traductologice românești* [Engl. *Developments of the concept of cultureme in Romanian traductological studies*], and Diana Moțoc's *Conceptul „cultureme” în traductologia românească și spaniolă. Similitudini și discrepanțe* [Engl. *The concept of “cultureme” in Romanian and Spanish traductology. Similitudes and discrepancies*]. They are highly descriptive, but, although the authors do not contribute an original point of view on the 'cultureme', their studies offer a much needed synthesis of the definitions of the concept, of the theories that surround it, and of its position in the mechanism of translation, as understood by various researchers in the field of traductology.

Dana Crăciun's rich and well-constructed article, *Incursiuni în palimpstina: traducerea literaturii postcoloniale în context românesc* [Engl. *Excursions into Palimpsestine: translating postcolonial literature in Romanian context*] stems from the author's experience as a literary translator, particularly, in this case, of Salman Rushdie's novels, and also from her experience as a theoretician in the field of traductology. However, Crăciun prefers to remain behind the scene, and discusses not her solutions to punctual problems raised by a certain source-text (which would have merely been a too-transparent self-advertising act), but the core components of the process of translating postcolonial literature. These range from the comprehension of the sensibilities that characterize the postcolonial societies, in general, and the “vulnerabilities” (I, p. 170) of the texts, to the pondering over various scenarios (profitable in various degrees) that could pattern a translator's behavior in a given target-culture (I, pp. 171-172). Crăciun's cartography of a translation's laboratory reveals, in addition, the persistence of some setbacks in attaining a best rendition of a demanding postcolonial piece of literature: the lack of a traductological metatext that would provide the translators with clear theoretical principles and even instances of a good practice concerning this type of translatives; the feeble, almost inexistent critique towards the actual execution of a translated version of a text – a situation that shelters the publication of dubious translations; the insufficient communication between theoreticians and practitioners in the realm of traductology; etc. (see I, pp. 188-189). Crăciun's final observations refer to the Romanian state

of affairs, but, for what it's worth, they may rouse insight into the specific issues faced by any receiving culture, when it comes to a translated text.

One can perceive the following article, *Selectivitatea sintagmatică și constrîngerile lexicale în traducerea reprezentativă* [Engl. *Syntagmatic selectivity and lexical constraints in the representative translation*], by Richard Sârbu, as a partial response to Dana Crăciun's previous denunciation of some of the Romanian traductology's issues, since it offers "a particular, primarily psycholinguistic model of illustrating the main steps that have to be taken to render *Russian verbs of movement* into Romanian" (I, p. 192). The construction of this possible translation guide takes into consideration seven criteria of representativity that a target-text should, in Sârbu's opinion, satisfy in regard to its source-text: semantic consubstantiality, including synonymic selectivity and syntagmatic restrictions; similitude of content, of communicational-pragmatic purpose/intention; convergence of emotional-expressive impact; congruence of functional-stylistic tonalities, attitudinal consensus towards persons/literary characters; specific reproduction of the designated situational frame; syntactic parallelism; touch of the personal/individual style of the translator (I, pp. 193 *et seq.*).

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The field of translations' critique is served by Ludmila Zbanț's study, *Abordarea lingvistico-pragmatică a traducerilor prozei pentru copii scrise de Spiridon Vangheli* [Engl. *A linguistic-pragmatical approach to the translations of children's prose written by Spiridon Vangheli*]. The author analyses and evaluates several renditions of Vangheli's stories, in English, French, Russian and Italian, strongly denying the legitimacy of considering this type of texts as "light" literature, thus unworthy of a major translating effort.

Georgiana Lungu-Badea, in *Note cu privire la traducerea numelor proprii literare* [Engl. *Notes on the translation of literary proper names*], rightfully challenges the standardizing, narrow ideas that, either, "names pass from one language to another without being translated"¹², or, as long as they stem from common nouns, their translation may result from the simple evaluation of the denotative content of the words. A strong theoretical foundation, as well as her sharp spirit of observation allow the author to propose instances (i.e., semantic proper names that designate literary characters, and – as ergonims – titles of literary writings) in which the rather easily handled solutions of reporting and trans-coding are in fact detrimental to the translative intention, which is multileveled and intricate: psychological, contextual, semantical, cultural, and ideological.

The first volume of the book ends with two studies that deal with some of the theoretical and practical, general and specific problems that surround the act of translating poetry: *Traducerea de poezie în contextual cercetărilor traductologice* [Engl. *Poetry translation in traductological context*], by Luminița Vleja, and *Abordarea poemelor trubadurești – între rescriere și traducere* [Engl. *Approaching the troubadours' poems – between rewriting and translating*], by Christina Andreea Mițariu.

The case for the science of traductology is reopened with the second volume, in which the authors focus mainly on the development of the traductological research in Romania, during the last two decades. If one is to formulate a conclusion to these excursions into the field of translation studies, they might in fact borrow from Georgiana Lungu-Badea's observation, from *Ipostaze ale traductologiei în România (2000-2015)* [Engl. *Hypostases of traductology in Romania (2000-2015)*], that "the field of current Romanian translation studies relates both to European research and conceptualization, and to well-established Romanian studies on translation prior to 2000" (II, p. 9). For this double truth argue implicitly five authors who, working in the broader Humanities fields of Anglistics (Loredana Pungă), Romanistics/Italian studies (Iulia Cosma), Slavistics/Russian and Serbian studies (Daniela Gheltofan and Mața Țaran Andreici), and Germanistics (Karla Lupșan), are in the position to highlight the contribution of foreign traductologies to the Romanian dynamics of ideas concerning various traductological paradigms: linguistical, literary, cultural, and sociological. In addition, Karla Lupșan's contribution (see her *Repere cronologice în evoluția cercetării traductologice a germanisticii din Timișoara* [Engl. *Chronological reference points in the evolution of traductology in Timișoara's Germanistics*]) reveals the didactic dimension of traductology, by discussing the academic programs that stimulate students' interest, knowledge and creativity, particularly in what concerns traductology as practice.

The last study is signed by Ileana Neli Eiben, whose object of reflection is the auto-translation, in *Autotraducerea în România. De la practica la studierea autotraducerii în limbile franceză și română* [Engl. *Auto-translation in Romania. From the practice to the study of auto-translation in French and Romanian*]. It's a relatively recent topic in traductology; nevertheless, its position as an autonomous matter in the field of traductology is strongly recognized nowadays by theoreticians and practitioners, since it implies a different psychology of the individual involved in the process – author and translator¹³ of his/her own text. Eiben compiles a bibliography of French

and Romanian books, studies, and articles that focus on this very interesting issue, and implicitly argues for its complexity by discussing mainly Irina Mavrodin's ideas on the matter.

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Studii de traductologie românească, vol. I-II, 2017 is addressed first and foremost to those researchers in the field of traductology who master the Romanian language. However, a different reader may get some insight into the content of each study thanks to the English abstracts that appear at the beginning of each contribution. Judging by the information and ideas that its authors manage to bring into the arena of traductology, the book deserves the attention of specialists: it confirms or challenges perceptions, convictions or hypotheses, and may assist a translator in her/his work upon a source-text, towards a (perfect?) translation.

* Adina CHIRILĂ – Associate Professor at the West University of Timișoara, Romania. Bachelor's degree in Romanian/English (2000), West University of Timișoara, Roumania. Master's degree with specialization "Romanian language in synchrony and diachrony. Controversial issues" (2002), West University of Timișoara, Romania. PhD in Humanities – Philology (2008), West University of Timișoara, Romania. Linguist and philologist, whose work's pillars are observation, proof and reasoning. Author of two books and over fifty articles and reviews concerning the history of the Romanian language, textology, Romanian philology, and diachronic linguistics; author of a critical edition of a 17th century Romanian text; translator of works in the fields of evolutionism, genetics and the philosophy and history of science; member of the Editorial board of *Diacronia* (www.diacronia.ro); member of German Cognitive Linguistics Association, and of *Répertoire des historiens de la traduction*, Ottawa. West University of Timișoara, Department of Romanian Languages. Timișoara, Romania.

Academic curriculum: <https://uvt-ro.academia.edu/AdinaChirila/CurriculumVitae>

Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=HPsRw2sAAAAJ&hl=en>

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4979-0675>

E-mail: adina.chirila@e-uvt.ro

¹ According to ISTTRAROM – TRANSLATIONES's official site (<https://translationes.uvt.ro/ccit/en/research-center.php>), the main goal of this already long-lasting research group is "to establish the link between the theories of translation, the practice and the tradition of translation so that translations schemes should become more flexible". In my opinion, the value of their vast activity (see, e.g., the numerous conferences they held through the years, and the completion of the multi-annual research project *The contribution of Romanian translations (XVIII-XIX centuries) from French, Italian and Spanish to the development of the Romanian language and culture, of cultural exchanges between Romania and the West – 2005-2007*) is given, first and foremost, by the charge of their themes of investigation: various problems concerning synchronic and diachronic aspects of literary translation, and the act of translation as cultural transfer practice.

² Cf. Larisa Ilynska, Marina Platonova, *Meaning in Translation. Illusion of Precision*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016, p. IX.

³ This was only one of several projects that were concocted during the first half of the 19th century in Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania, aiming at creating the necessary book-fund for the cultural emancipation of the Romanians. Some of them, like the one launched by Ion Heliade Rădulescu, were of a more intellectual nature, since the involved translators were expected to provide the Romanian readers with books of philosophy, politics and literature; the others, like the one envisioned by I.D. Negulici, focused on manuals, technical books, and writings on

mathematics, natural sciences, industry and agriculture. Regardless of their orientation, such projects were designed to replicate the idea of a *Panthéon littéraire*, like that of Aimé Martin, of the Saint Geneviève Library from Paris.

⁴ For Heliade's ideas concerning the problems of the Romanian culture at the dawn of the modern era, see D. Popovici, *Ideologia literară a lui Ion Heliade Rădulescu*, București, 1935, pp. 164-169.

⁵ See „*Dacia literară*” sub redacția lui Mihail Kogălniceanu. Studiu introductiv și ediție de Maria Platon, București, Minerva, 1972, pp. 4-7.

In 1840, Mihail Kogălniceanu's severe opinion was part of a programmatic discourse meant to inspire original writing, as a counter-action to that of mere translating. His critique was aiming at the dominancy of the translated literature on the Romanian market, *as well as at the quality of these translations*. In his words, “Dorul imitației s-a făcut la noi o manie primejdioasă, pentru că omoară în noi duhul național. Această manie este mai ales covârșitoare în literatură. Mai în toate zilele ies de sub teasc cărți în limba românească. *Dar ce folos! că sînt numai traducții din alte limbi și încă și acele de-ar fi bune*. Traducțiile însă nu fac o literatură. Noi vom prigoni cît vom putea această manie ucigătoare a gustului original, însușirea cea mai prețioasă a unei literaturi. Istoria noastră are destule fapte eroice, frumoasele noastre țări sînt destul de mari, obiceiurile noastre sînt destul de pitorești și de poetice, pentru ca să putem găsi și la noi subiecturi de scris, fără să avem pentru aceasta trebuință să ne împrumutăm de la alte nații. Foaia noastră va primi cît se poate mai rar traduceri din alte limbi; compuneri originale îi vor umple mai toate coloanele.” [Engl. “The taste for imitation has become a dangerous mania among us, for it kills the national spirit. This mania is particularly overwhelming in literature. Books in Romanian come out of typographies almost daily. *But what is the use of it!, for these books are mere translations from other languages, and not even good*. Translations however do not make a literature. We shall reject, as much as we can, this mania that's killing the original taste – the most precious characteristic of literature. There are enough heroic acts in our history, our beautiful counties are large enough, our traditions are picturesque and poetical enough, so as we be able to find here subjects for writing, without having to borrow from other nations. Our publication (i.e. “*Dacia literară*”; Engl. “*Literary Dacia*”, note mine) will receive as rarely as possible translations from other languages; original compositions will fill its columns.”; translation mine; emphasize mine].

⁶ All titles appear in Romanian; their English translation belongs to the reviewer.

⁷ Cf. L. *translativus* ‘that is to be transferred’, i.e., ‘from one language to another’.

⁸ An overzealous reader of the two texts might observe a mild redundancy of information concerning Eugen Coseriu's bibliography on the matters of traductology: see and compare I, pp. 15-16 and pp. 39-41.

⁹ Which might be true, of course.

¹⁰ The intellectual stature of Irina Mavrodin, and the span of her traductological preoccupations are again under scrutiny in the last article of the book; see II, pp. 156-158.

¹¹ For the sake of the scientific exactitude, I should clarify that, although a great personality of the Romanian culture, Nicolae Milescu cannot be rightfully described as “the first translator of the Bible into Romanian” (I, p. 117; cf. I, p. 134; translation mine): he is, however, the one who managed to give the first integral translation of the Old Testament into Romanian, between 1661-1664; before him, in 1648, Simion Ștefan finished the translation of, and published the New Testament in Romanian, at Alba Iulia (then, Bălgrad). The Bible printed in Bucharest, in 1688 – the so-called “Șerban Cantacuzino's Bible” (see Lenz's reference, I, p. 117), is roughly a revised version of these two parts. For details concerning Milescu's biblical translations, see Alexandru Andriescu, *Locul Bibliei de la București în istoria culturii, literaturii și limbii române literare*, in Alexandru Andriescu, Vasile Arvinte *et al.*, *Monumenta Linguae Dacoromanorum. Biblia 1688. Pars I Genesis*, Iași, 1988, pp. 7-45; and N.A. Ursu, *Noi informații privitoare la manuscrisul autograf și la textul revizuit al Vechiului Testament tradus de Nicolae Milescu (Spătarul)*, in Vasile Arvinte, Ioan Caproșu (Eds.), *Biblia 1688*, II, Iași, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2002, pp. I-LIV.

¹² Michel Bréal, *Semantics. Studies in the Science of Meaning*. Translated by Henry Cust, New York, 1900, p. 176.

¹³ To exemplify this situation, Eiben refers to Dimitrie Cantemir (1673-1723), one of the first Romanian writers who happened to practice auto-translation, when, after he had written the first version of a historiographic book in Latin, he translated it in Romanian, as *Hronicul vechimei a romano-moldo-vlahilor, întâi pre limba latinească izvodit, iară acmu pre limba românească scos, cu truda și ostenița lui Dimitrie Cantemir, voevodul și de moșie domn a Moldovii și svintei roșieștii împărății cniaz* (transliteration mine, from the original Cyrillic alphabet; emphasize mine). I bring thus the attention to the correct title of the book, in which Cantemir alludes to the Roman (Latin) (i.e. “*romano-*”) origin of both the Moldavians (i.e. “*moldo-*”) and the Wallachians (i.e. “*vlahilor*”); cf. Eiben's notation of the title, II, p. 153, which obliterates Cantemir's vision on this particular line of ethnic evolution.