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Ileana Neli Eiben, *Sur une visibilité de l'autotraducteur. Le cas des écrivains Dumitru Tsepeneag et Felicia Mihali*, Editura Universitatii de Vest, "Metabole" Collection, Timisoara, 313 pages.

## BOOK REVIEW – *SUR UNE VISIBILITE DE L'AUTOTRADUCTEUR*



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**T**he book that was under review *Sur une visibilité de l'autotraducteur. Le cas des écrivains Dumitru Tsepeneag et Felicia Mihali*, published in 2017 by Editura Universitatii de Vest, appertains to the current scientific research area of translation studies, and submits the analysis of some relatively modestly explored phenomena –the one of self-translation and that of authorial bilingualism. The study is of an interdisciplinary nature, considering its polyvalent approach from a humanities perspective, which addresses translation, terminological, linguistic, literary, but also sociolinguistic aspects, as mentioned right from the introduction (cf. pp. 18-21). The study that was under review, totalling 313 pages, comprises four well-outlined chapters in which the preponderantly theoretical issues are elaborately argued throughout the first two chapters (*Bilinguisme d'écriture et autotraduction littéraire. Repère théoriques; Bilinguisme d'écriture et autotraduction littéraire chez les écrivains roumanis d'expression française. Repère historiques*), while the following two chapters illustrate the case study of Romanian writers of French expression Dumitru Tsepeneag and Felicia Mihali (*Bilinguisme d'écriture. Le cas de Dumitru Tsepeneag et de Felicia Mihali; Bilinguisme d'écriture; L'autotraduction chez Dumitru Tsepeneag et Felicia Mihali*).

Presenting the author-writer and author-translator status, writer-translator's relationship with one's own writing, writer-translator's relationship with native tongue and foreign language,

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exploring the original text by relating to the self-translated one from the perspective of an evaluation on the creativity scale are but a few of the multiple scientific endeavours that the author undertakes in this book. Ileana Neli Eiben circumscribes these specific objectives to the general ones: to identify convergences and divergences between self-translation and authorial bilingualism; to unveil influences in writing and translation that pertain to the author's condition as migrant, as outsider of the receiving culture; to present diachronically various manifestations of authorial bilingualism and of self-translation in the works of Romanian writers of French expression from the nineteenth century until the beginning of the twenty-first century; to analyse passages of Dumitru Tsepeneag's and Felicia Mihali's texts that reveal the author-translator as re(creator) (cf. p. 19).

Emphasising the fact that, generally, translation studies lent little attention to the phenomenon to be analysed, Ileana Neli Eiben renders an in detail discussed image of the works and studies undertaken by English, French, Spanish and Romanian translation scholars regarding her object of study (Rainier Grutman, Nancy Huston, Julia Kristeva, Antonio Bueno Garcia, Michaël Oustinoff, Antoine Berman, Dumitru Chioaru, Georgiana Badea, Margareta Gyurcsik, Irina Mavrodin and others). If, generally, the translator is regarded as being the best and most competent reader of a source text –the ideal reader–, then the writer –translator of own creation– will be the ideal translator. Translating one's own text in another language is considered to have the advantage of a profound knowledge of the text, of the various reasons related to its writing/creation. This contributes to “preserving” many elements that pertain to the authorial conscience. The literary discourse is augmented by the one of translation, which should override the “translation plurality” that Riffaterre was discussing. Non-intermediated translation communication –self-communication/ self-translation– would have the same cognitive data set, therefore, the same comprehension, the same conception, the same ideational context, the same structure of authorial mechanisms, etc. For self-translation also seems pertinent the term “substitution-translation” used by Emil Iordache (*Semiotica traducerii poetice [The Semiotics of Poetry Translation]*, 2003) or the one of “non-simulacrum-translation” encountered in Irina Mavrodin's work (*L'autotraduction: une œuvre nonsimulacre [Self-translation: A Non-simulacrum Work]*, 2007) (cf. p. 49). In the same place, Ileana Neli Eiben presents the attitude of some translation scholars or writers regarding the fact that exile and migration are the foundation of a new form of writing which constitutes the literature of exile, the literature of migrants, and the

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author of this kind of writing adopts either an “identité migrante” [migrant identity] (D. Tsepeneag), or an “identité transnationale” [transnational identity] (Felicia Mihali) (cf. p. 59).

In the second chapter, researcher Ileana Neli Eiben examines the illustration of authorial bilingualism and translation in the works of Romanian writers of French expression, from the nineteenth century until the beginning of the twenty-first century, discussing and emphasising the historical, political, linguistic and literary context of each period analysed. In an adverse historical context, due to Tatar and Ottoman invasions of the Romanian principalities for almost four centuries, Renaissance Humanism reaches us belatedly, only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In this extremely tense historical context, Romanian culture tries to reach the same stage as the Western cultural movement. Among representative personalities of Romanian humanism stands notable the prominent figure of prince Dimitrie Cantemir (Dmitry Kantemir, prince of Moldavia), encyclopedist scholar and polyglot who wrote most of his history, theology, philosophy works in Latin (*Descriptio Moldaviae* [*Description of Moldavia*] 1714-1716, *Historia incrementorum atque decrementorum Aulae Othomanicae* [*History of the Growth and Decay of the Othman Empire*] 1714-1716, *Historia Moldo-Vlachica* [*Chronicle of the Antiquity of the Romano-Moldavo-Wallachians*] 1719-1722 (cf. pp. 118-120)). Further on, there are presented other important figures in Romanian culture: Alecu Russo (1819-1859), Dimitrie Bolintineanu (1819-1872), Alexandru Macedonski (1854-1920), Panait Istrati (1884-1935). Admirers of French, the aforementioned authors write in this language. Each of them makes valuable contributions to the evolution of Romanian writings and culture through their desire for adherence to Western culture, by creating a distinguishing literature that would retain local colour. The author discusses other relevant names in the exile literature of French expression in the communist era: Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Eugen Ionescu, Vintilă Horia, Paul Goma, Dumitru Tsepeneag, Matei Vișniec and others. They state unanimously that Romanian spirituality and culture are in peril due to the establishment of communist doctrine. In post-communist era, a new generation of writers of French expression (Felicia Mihali, Irina Egli) try to internationally disseminate Romanian cultural values.

The third chapter establishes by examples the theoretical aspects discussed earlier in reference to the authorial bilingualism issue illustrated with the help of the novels *Le mot sablier* and its bilingual version *Cuvîntul nisiparniță* [*The Hourglass Word*] by Dumitru Tsepeneag, who is considered a neoavanguardian experimentalist writer, as well as *Dina* and *Confession pour un ordinateur* [*Confession for a Computer*] by Felicia Mihali, a greatly appreciated Romanian-

Canadian author. Here, Ileana Neli Eiben proves the authorial visibility of these Romanian writers as well as the visibility of Romanian culture and language in the French text through their writing. This way, the French text is a “pretext” or a strategy to display and disseminate Romanian ideas and forms. For example, there is a typical Romanian ambience in Felicia Mihali’s novel *Dina* created by using culture-specific items that are explained in the footnotes: „*tzouica* [eau-de-vie faite généralement de prunes, distillée un eseu le fois], (...) *coliva* [gâteau d’enterrement fait de grains de blé bouillis, mélangés à de la farine et à du sucre] (...) et *colacs* [petits pains, joliment modelés en pâte, servis aux enterrements]” [*tsouica* [brandy usually made of plums, distilled only once], (...) *coliva* [funeral cake made of boiled wheat kernels, mixed with flour and sugar] (...) and *colacs* [bread rolls, of nicely shaped dough, served at interments]] (cf. p. 178) or by either using Romanian simple anthroponyms Florika, Nicoulina, Marin, Cornélia, Nélou, etc. (cf. p. 179), or the names of notable figures in Romanian culture: Panait Istrati, George Enesco, Vasile George, Maria Tanase, etc. (cf. p. 194). After all, Ileana Neli Eiben asserts that: “le bilinguisme d’écriture permet d’inrerioriser la langue étrangère à tel point qu’elle concurrence et remplace la langue maternelle dans le processus de création. C’est cette «naturalisation» de la langue étrangère qui permettra à l’écrivain de s’enservir pour «traduire», dans le sens d’exprimer directement ses pensées en français.” [the bilingualism of the writing makes it possible to internalise the foreign language to the extent that it competes with the native tongue in the process of creation. It is this ‘naturalisation’ of the foreign language that will enable the writer to use it for ‘translation’ in the sense of expressing his thoughts directly in French.] (cf. p. 157).

The last chapter of the study that was under review resumes, in an applied manner, the issue of self-translation in the same authors’ works – Dumitru Tsepeneag (*Pigeon vole* [*Porumbelul zboară!...*]) [*The Pigeon Flies*] and Felicia Mihali (*Le Pays du fromage* [*Țara brânzei*] [*The Country of Cheese*]). The reader of the novel *Pigeon vole* [*Porumbelul zboară!...*] is no longer tested when it comes to Ethno-Romanian elements, archaisms, regionalisms because the self-translation is performed from French into Romanian. Nevertheless, sometimes, writer-translators choose to preserve terms or phrases in French, fact that, this time, makes visible the adoptive language and culture (cf. pp. 219-220). At the end of some charts recommended by the author for analysing the translation procedures that the two writer-translators employ, Ileana Neli Eiben notes that “la suppression des éléments de l’original qu’on retrouve d’une manière plus ou moins explicite dans la texte autotraduit n’aboutit pas à une distorsion du contenu. Au contraire, celui-ci,

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loin d’être ambigu, est considérablement enrichi” [eliminating elements of the original that are found in a more or less explicit manner in the self-translated text does not result in a distortion of the content. On the contrary, far from being ambiguous, it is considerably enriched] (cf. p. 254).

Constructed as an interdisciplinary approach, Ileana Neli Eiben’s book *Sur une visibilité de l’autotraducteur. Le cas des écrivains Dumitru Tsepeneag et Felicia Mihali* is an abundant theoretical and applicative scientific resource for those interested in the phenomenon of self-translation and authorial bilingualism, and also in literature, literary studies and sociolinguistics.

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