

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8138528>

LITERARY TRANSLATIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: OPINIONS AND REALISATIONS

Ludmila BALȚATU

“B.P. Hasdeu” State University of Cahul, Republic of Moldova

Abstract

The primary objective of literary translations consists of the formation of the artistic taste of those passionate about literature through the promotion of literary masterpieces. Thus, owing to translations, the most exquisite literary writings from around the globe became known to Moldova's readers. By way of translation, world-famous literary works have also had an impact on the writers of our country.

Taking into account the significant importance of literary translations, a great number of books of literature from various nations have been translated in Moldova. It is encouraging that certain successes have been achieved as well in terms of the quality of the performed belles-lettres translations. However, unfortunately, as the issue of the theory of artistic translations is situated at the interference of logic, linguistics, psychology, pedagogy, and aesthetics, it is not studied thoroughly by any of these sciences.

In addition, there is another equally important shortcoming, related to the domain of literary translation in our country - the disproportion between the number permanently growing of performed translations of all literary genres and the very small number of scientific articles and studies, in which the quality of these would be investigated and analysed.

It is necessary that the translator's work be appreciated at its due value, taking into consideration the role of translations in the survival and promotion of literary masterpieces. Based on the performed translations readers of all times learn from the literary treasure of different cultures, enrich their vocabulary, and learn to perceive reality analytically.

Keywords: artistic translation, literature, quality, problem, theory

1 INTRODUCTION

Most of our writers and translators regard translation, which is an effective means of communication among nations, as an art, and the translators as artists, that is writers in its fullest sense of the notion. However, a piece of

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0 International License

literature having its main objective to communicate with the greatest number of people requires on the translator's part the observance of some basic principles, namely:

1. The quality of a translated text depends on the degree to which it meets the following requirements: simpleness, clearness, trueness, and intelligibility.
2. Translation is a complex and multilateral process that challenges the translator to overcome difficult barriers and remove hard obstacles.
3. A translator should be always aware of the fact that absolute equivalence does not exist between elements of the two referred languages in translation; it is really difficult to find in each particular case of the source text a proper lexical-semantic and stylistic equivalent in the target language.

For this reason, the use of language resources should be subordinated to the tendency of reproducing the original piece of literature that is to be considered as a whole.

Historians and literary critics have remarked many times in their studies the fact that any writer can be consigned to oblivion in 10-30 years after one's passing away. In order for ensuring one's future survivability it is important to withstand this period of time.

We have proceeded to the above assertions with a view to state the following concept: the promotion of the works of literature by the consigned to oblivion writers is owed, for the most part, to the effort of translators, whose mission is to create, to remake the message which they transpose from one language into another, without compromising, as far as possible, the piece's form and content.

2 METHODOLOGY

The methodological basis of the present article is reflected in some of the most representative studies related to artistic translation written by literary historians and critics, linguists, philologists, and renowned professors of general and comparative literature: Daniel Henri Pageaux, Adrian Marino, Roger T. Bell, Tudor Vianu, George Călinescu, Leon Levițchi, Sanda Radian, Alexandru Dima, Paul van Tieghem, Dan Grigorescu, Gelu Ionescu, Joan Kohn, Mihail Bruhis, Mihai Cimpoi, Sava Pânzaru, Sergiu Pavlicencu, Irina Condrea, Alexandru Burlacu, Dumitru Apetri, etc.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0 International License

The methods and procedures applied in the study have been determined by the particularities of the issues under focus. They are in general referred to as traditional comparatism, including elements of sociological, systemic, typological, and historical-functional approach relating to the performed literary translations in our country, and also of the translations' role and destiny, of their importance in the establishment of closer correlations with literatures around the world.

3 RESULTS

In the following lines, we will attempt to get inside the laboratory of the art of translators, to assess, on its merits, the role of translations in the survivability and promotion among readers of the works of literature of all genres of poetry, prose, and drama; we will also trace the life path of the translations produced some time ago; we will attempt to prove the fact that, on the basis of the produced translations, the reader of today, as well as the one of tomorrow learn much from all over the globe, enrich and perfect the language, learn to think over various problems analytically.

A starting point in achieving the set objectives is the following suggestion made by G. Ionescu:

The result of the transposition should be a piece of literature that appears to have arisen from the depths of the importing idiom's origins, valuable by itself and that can be read as the original literary work [1, p. 28].

However, by examining the heritage of the translations produced in our country, we can conclude that, on the whole, there have been mainly carried out translations from the works of literature by valuable authors, appreciated by readers. As proof, there are the following examples: the translator Argentina Cupcea-Josu transposed the literary works by H. Stendhal and M. Twain into Romanian; owing to the inspired work of Naum Bernștein, literary writings by A. Kronin, D. Granin, G. de Maupassant, H. de Balzac were translated into Romanian; the writer V. Beșleagă undertook the translation of Erasmus of Rotterdam's *In Praise of Folly*, H. Beecher-Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and the ancient Greek novel *Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus. On the list of these hardworking artists of the word - translators of literary works of World Fiction, famous personalities, such as A. Busuioc, A. Cosmescu, N. Ischimji, etc. are also included

The writer Vladimir Belistov occupies a special place among the translators of World Poetry. By means of translation of Goethe's literary works into

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0 International License

Romanian, Belistov contributed significantly to the familiarisation of our reader with the creation of this great representative of the German Enlightenment, in whose poetic art various influences (folk German, ancient, Oriental) are fused, by the force of his genius of creation.

A considerable contribution to the growth of our heritage of values, as well as to the refinement and enrichment of our language, was made through the literary transpositions by poet and translator Igor Crețu. As a confirmation, in this respect, academician Mihai Cimpoi made the following statement:

Definitely an artist, he put a faithful mirror in front of many literary writings of World Literature... We could state that, by the hard effort of Igor Crețu, the blanks of our national culture have been filled in [2, p. 5].

Concerning the poet and translator Paul Mihnea, one can say with certainty (on the basis of his translations of literary pieces by Vergil, Rilke, Valery, and Verlaine), that he managed to remain in his literary interpretations the poet whom we've known – free of forms and templates, sensitive to any artistic vibration. “He managed to extract, from the inexhaustible fund of dreams, sounds and colours which have had their harmonious response, carrying to our modernity the entire thrill of a secret world” [3, p. 4], notices the writer, Ion Ciobanu.

As regards translations of poetry, it is important to mention that they are far from being secondary or mechanistic. They would rather be a creative process. “Translation should be raised up to the value of the original literary writing's dignity, by setting on the basis of the literary interpretation the principle “no loss, no gain”, in case any loss occurs, it is to be compensated” [4, p. 14], thinks the literary critic A. Balaci.

As opposed to prose and poetry, much fewer translations from World Drama have been published within our cultural and linguistic space. This is quite understandable, as the literary critic and translator Argentina Cupcea Josu states:

The reproduction of a play into another language is a stumbling stone, one of the most challenging ones for a translator, for the reason that, in dealing with a monologue and a dialogue, it is necessary to work with subtleties, nuances, semitones, by taking into account not just the reply's oral form and naturalness, but especially the concerned character's nature, emotional state, feelings” [5, p. 34].

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0 International License

In this respect, the following translators rank high on the list of those who translated drama in our country: the playwright Rahmil Portnoi (*The Cherry Orchard* by A. Chekhov), the poet and prose writer Iurie Barjanschi (Schiller's historical drama *Wilhelm Tell*), the poet and playwright Andrei Lupan (Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet*), etc.

Lucian Blaga, the prominent philosopher and author of poetry, epic writings, plays, and novels, stated the following about drama:

Drama is not complete just by being written by an author for being read, but it becomes really a play when it is performed. Thus, for this reason, literary dramas are to be written in such a manner so as they can be performed" [6, p. 200].

Accordingly, it is a completely explicable reason why Alexandru Cosmescu, a gifted Master in Philology, and translator of plays by A. Chekhov and M. Gorky, takes on the role of his characters' nature and destiny, demonstrating his entire artistic talent, giving evidence of thorough knowledge of the source and target languages.

In the lines above, we have listed several renowned translators from our country and named the works of literature translated by them from World Literature into Romanian. Conversely, it would also be necessary to approach another aspect: as regards the literary works written by our national outstanding writers - into which languages have they been translated? The main emphasis will be put on Eminescu's literary creations, for obvious reasons.

No one can doubt nowadays that Eminescu, the greatest and most influential Romanian poet, is a universal poet as well. However, the degree to which he is perceived abroad keeps being of interest to scientists. Thus, in our time, experts look more insistently for the answers to the following questions: in what manner is the poet reflected by encyclopaedias and dictionaries? What criteria of appreciation and recognition of the poet's universalism have been established by the exegesis and monographs published in foreign countries? To which extent have the translations succeeded in rendering readable a poet considered untranslatable? Did the translations succeed in determining the perception of this national and universal poet at the same time by the consciousness of the foreign reader?

In this context, the opinions of our contemporary literary historian and critic Theodor Codreanu are of interest:

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0 International License

The fewness of reference works in the Romanian literature of those times, the tardiness of the manuscript submission, the late publishing of the literary works, of the critical editions, and a lack of respectable critical references delayed the positioning of Eminescu on a deserved place in World Literature. But especially the linguistic garment constituted and is still constituting a barrier in the manifestation of the poet's universalism. Even though the transpositions of his literary creation into other languages have influenced the world circulation of Eminescu, they haven't situated him yet on that well-deserved peak, to which the other poets have passed much easier. The effort had to start from the inside of the geographic area, in which he appeared like a Hyperion. However, this happened to a great extent by means of individual initiatives. There haven't been any central policies for promoting the treasures of the Romanian language abroad, without which a national literature doesn't become known. We have waited for too long for others to translate (or write) about the national poet of the Romanians" [7, p. 25].

The necessity of translating Eminescu's literary creation in order to integrate the poet into European culture has been stressed repeatedly. Scholars consider that, faced with Eminescu's universe, with its unique musicality and purity of language, which was achieved through hard work, the evidence of which is the great number of variants and notes, the translator must be a secondary creator, who tries to attain the conceptual depths and linguistic incantations of the author.

Even though Eminescu's literary creation has been translated into 64 languages, into those of international circulation (English, German, French, Italian, Spanish), as well as into languages of narrower circulation (Swedish, Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Estonian, Armenian, Albanian, etc.), into the Latin language or into the Sanskrit one, these more or less successful transpositions have only partially achieved the intended objective, Eminescu still remaining, for a large part of the world, an unknown poet. It is of the essence how he has been translated. Paraphrasing P. Constantinescu, we'll conclude that Eminescu's genuine physiognomy is to be integrated, in its defining value, related to World Literature, on the level of which the Poet established himself from the beginning.

In this regard, the remarks of Grebing R. are of interest:

The initial phase of the world's perception of Eminescu would be the one in the poet's lifetime and once after his passing away. In the German area, he was included in encyclopedias from his earliest years, he was the most translated poet and, nevertheless, he wasn't perceived as he would have

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0 International License

deserved, not having the opportunity which the German poets had. The first translation of Eminescu's creation is due to Queen Mary and to the German poet, settled in Bucharest, Mite Kremnitz, the first anthology "Eminescu - Alecsandri" comprising 21 poems in the German language, for the selection of which the poet himself had been consulted" [8, p. 150].

From the same source, we learn that Eminescu was known during his lifetime in the Italian area. For the first time, he was presented to Italian readers by the translator Pier Emilio Bashi and then by Lovera.

Eminescu's creation also enters the French language: the fairy tale *Bel Enfant de la larme* (*Făt Frumos din lacrimă*), the first writing translated into French, appears almost a year after the poet's death. The fairy tale was included in the volume *Rhapsodies Roumaines*, published in 1890 at the Publishing house A. Bargeaud, Paris-Lausanne. Two years later, in 1892, the first volumes entirely dedicated to Eminescu's poetry appear in the French language (*Quelques poésies de Michail Eminesco*), translated by Margareta Miller-Verghy. In 1907, the poem *Emperor and Proletarian* (*Împărat și proletar*) translated by Adolphe Clarnet appears in a deluxe edition in Paris. The book comprised rich illustrative material, wood engravings, and a portrait of M. Eminescu, all these due to the Parisian artist Théophile Steinlen.

Dissatisfied with the way in which Eminescu was perceived abroad, N. Iorga wrote down with bitterness in 1903: "What vicissitudes lie in the destiny of reputation and interpretation of Eminescu", whereas Mite Kremintz asked rhetorically, in 1910: "Who is this human? – The most outstanding poetic talent of the Romanians! – Who knows him? Beyond the narrow borders of his homeland, almost no one" [9, p. 150].

By reproducing the above information about Eminescu's fate, we aim to carry out certain objectives: first of all, to demonstrate that a large portion of our culture and civilisation is realized by means of translated literary pieces, either into our language or into other languages that we know. Gelu Ionescu, a literary historian and critic, asserts in this respect:

The authority of the great world writers couldn't have been realized otherwise than through a vast and polyglot interpretation of their literary works. The immense influence of Shakespeare on Romanticism wouldn't have been possible without the translations done into the other languages of international circulation – the one by August Wilhelm Schlegel in the German language (elaborated between 1797 and 1810), usually taken as a

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0 International License

model... To conceive literature without translations is exactly as one would say that literature of the future will be created in a single language for the reason that the issue of translation disappears [10, p. 22].

It is also recommended that the following aspect be taken into account: although, as a result of the economic, social, political, or cultural development, gaps or lexical blanks in the system of signs of the target language may occur in relation to the source language, within which there have been linguistically coded yet certain realities, untranslatability is only apparent. Each idiom disposes of a wide variety of latent expressive resources, that being updated by a necessity, can offer surprisingly equivalent ad hoc solutions. The quality of adaptability of languages to various linguistic situations has been highlighted by many scholars. Paraphrasing the linguist E. Coşeriu, we attest that languages entirely different from each other, such as, for example, German, Romanian or Chinese, allow identical attitudes relating to the surrounding world because, above all, each language can express a certain thing like every other language, even though it is realized by different categories and different expressive means.

Along the same lines, R. T. Bell's concept comes to complement E. Coşeriu's views:

Translation competence refers to the translator's ability to analyse, compare and convert two cultural systems while respecting the forces of conflict from within the culture that is being considered, as well as the interplay of these forces at the time when the two languages and cultures are brought into contact. This means that the translator works continuously within each culture taken separately, and meanwhile, he deals with comparison and converting, that is with the transformation of one culture into another [11, p.54].

Moreover, developing this idea, R. T. Bell emphasises that the competence of the translator who performs the belles-lettres translation reflects namely the ability to be an intermediary between two languages, two different cultures. He creates and recreates connections that have never existed. The entire process of reading and interpretation represents a cultural activity directed to the target language, that is, to the translation itself, the translator being an intermediary between two situations of intercultural communication. It is based on how s/he perceives the cultural equation and on cultural competence. The translator who takes the responsibility to perform a belles-lettres translation should have bilingual and bicultural competence, which, combined, constitute translational competence.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0 International License

4 CONCLUSIONS

All things considered, we can conclude that, at present, there is an increase in the number of scientists who pay close attention to the issue of the treatment of literary translations. That is because literary translation needs due approach at the present stage, when modernist movements have contributed to a significant approach to literature and to the great extension of the literary values sphere, and when, in general, around the world, people use to read more literature in translation than in the original form.

Every age needs to have its own literature translations. Moreover, unlike the literary creation, which is definitive, translation is to be renewed from time to time, for the reason that every generation has not only a specific vocabulary sensitivity, or aesthetic but also its own requirements for translation.

On the other hand, society demands of authors specific forms of literature, according to its own literary standards, which, in their turn, need to be translated. It is, therefore, necessary that writers keep up permanently with the times, which implies relevant knowledge in the domain of languages, literature, literary criticism, culture, etc.

It would be practical to point out that there is the necessity to appreciate at its true value the work of those who stand behind the literary translations and artistic interpretations of world literary works. Appropriate conditions should be provided for them to create, the editorial policies need to be revised and, not least, it would be welcome to have university faculties specialized in the formation of specialists in belles-lettres translation, where the students could acquire experience and knowledge in the complex nature of literary translations.

REFERENCES

- [1] G. Ionescu, „Orizontul traducerii”, *Horizon of translation*, Bucharest: Univers, p. 28, 1981.
- [2] M. Cimpoi, „Oglinda credibilă”, *Credibile mirror*, // Foreword to the lecture „Din poemele lumii”, *From world poetry*, Chişinău: Literatura artistică / Belles-lettres, p. 5, 1992.
- [3] I. Ciobanu, „În atmosfera muzicii şi a poeziei”, *In the atmosphere of music and poetry // Moldova literară Literary Moldova* (Supplement to the newspaper „Moldova Suverană”, *Sovereign Moldova*), p. 4, February 14th, 1996.
- [4] A. Balaci, „Studii şi note literare”, *Studies and literary notes*, Bucharest: Eminescu, p. 14, 1979.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0 International License

[5] A. Cupcea-Josu, „Ferestre spre cultura universală”, *Windows to world culture*, Chișinău: Basarabia, p. 34, 1997.

[6] L. Blaga, „Teoria dramei”, *Theory of drama*, Craiova / Romania: Scrisul românesc / *Romanian writing*, p. 200, 1995.

[7] T. Codreanu, „De veghe la steaua Eminescu”, *Of wakefulness at the Eminescu star*, Bucovina literară, *Literary Bucovina*, p. 25, 2001.

[8] R. Grebing, „Mite Kremnitz și Mihai Eminescu”, *Mite Kremnitz and Mihai Eminescu*, Iași: Junimea, p. 150, 1985.

[9] Ibidem, p. 150.

[10] G. Ionescu, „Orizontul traducerii”, *Horizon of translation*, Bucharest: Univers, p. 22, 1981.

[11] R. Bell, „Teoria și practica traducerii”, *Theory and practice of translation*, Bucharest: Polirom, p.54, 2000.