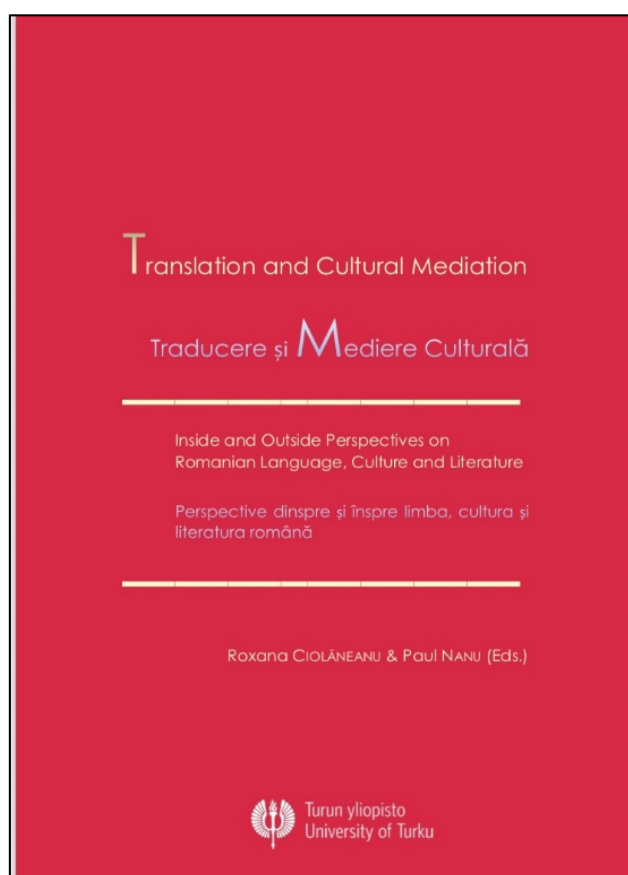


**BOOKS**

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***Translation and Cultural Mediation. Inside and Outside Perspectives on Romanian Language, Culture and Literature*, Eds. Roxana Ciolăneanu & Paul Nanu, University of Turku, 2018, 271 p.**

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In a generous deployment of erudition emerging from different fields of Romanian traductology and philology, the collective volume edited by Roxana Ciolăneanu and Paul Nanu invites readers from the Romanian- and English-speaking worlds to explore the complex theorization of a para-

digmatic change in which translation becomes “an agent of change, [a way in which] cultures meet and engage into a dynamic process of knowledge exchange and mutual influence.” (Introduction, p. 7), rather than a matter of decoding and recoding meaning from one language to another. The Intro-

duction itself (/ Cuvânt-înainte) is a bilingual plea to approach this fascinating interplay of identity and difference.

Bogdan Ghiu's lead-in article, devoted to "Translation as Meta-Theory", illustrates the ambition to produce "singularity" as well as "the replica of a singularity" via the double incarnation of an innovative vision of the "potential of translation theory and practices": along with the Romanian text, an English version, equally inspiring – signed by Sanda Watt – is provided. The author advocates an epistemological revolution in which the main part is reserved to translation, seen as "the true self-consciousness of contemporary world", meant to achieve "universal, unanimous, generalized peripheralisation: the world as a "global periphery", in Bertrand Westphal's felicitous phrase (p. 16). Thus, in order to resonate with other cultural agents in a relevantly empathetic key, one can (and ideally should) contemplate the model offered by French, a strategic language which, "just as translation, [...] lies in between" the position of a formerly hegemonic idiom and that of a rare one, by circulating and integrating literary values from exotic civilizations (p. 25). In the light of this enriching epitome of translation and according to the typically Eastern vision of inter-periphreal communication, the "edge" of the linguistic spectrum has the opportunity to turn into "a margin" (of freedom, of *movement*), while the world is being re-deconstructed in a democratically spiritual manner.

Roxana-Elisabeta Marinescu's study opens the series devoted to intersemiotic translation by analyzing the transformation of political measures into demographical data. The focus is set upon the conversion of a particular text – the Decree 770/1966, by which Romanian women were exhorted to give birth to four children by the age of 45 – into gender roles imposed on the Romanian

society of the communist era. The propaganda strived to restructure feminine agency in an equalitarian guise which was paradoxically expected to lead to the promotion and responsabilization of fecund female citizens as *mothers of the nation* (p. 56). After the revolution of December '89, the language of juridical norms is reshaped in a way that lead to the translation of the decree's abrogation into a drastic increase of abortions, rather than into a mature usage of family-planning policies. The article reveals an interesting instance of center-margin communication and of "(re)production" of semiotic (and seminal!) material throughout modern Romanian history.

Ramona Tănase's concept of "synergies" encompasses the contextual relevance of six novels, *Moromeții* and *Cel mai iubit dintre pământeni* by Marin Preda, *Dangerous Liaisons* by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos and *Legături bolnăvicioase* by Cecilia Stefanescu, *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie and *The Forest* by José Maria Ferreira de Castro, by disclosing the "filters" projected by their movie adaptations. The author rightfully remarks that such a "translation" from text to film implies "transforming [the book] into an object of marketing". However, the author's ambitions go beyond these intersemiotic renditions – which sometimes involve significant diachronical displacement – hoping to reach "the motivation behind each esthetical choice" of the pertinent cultural agents (p. 76).

An interesting counterpart to the poetics of adaptation is offered by Claudia Vlad's approach to the cultural transposition of Pieter Bruegel's painting into modern poetry. In spite of its apparent clarity and even facility, William Carlos Williams' *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* reveals "multiple layering of translation, in which the verbal sign can be interpreted through a system of non-linguistic

signs and vice versa" (p. 80). This case of "transmutation" concerns not only the visual composition, but also the underlying irony of the protagonist's invisibility, possibly hinting at the Flemish proverb "No plough stops for the dying man" (p. 87). Translating Williams's own intersemiotic translation requires a thorough acquaintance with the painting's implications as well as a creative interpretation of the poem's literary substance as such.

After the stimulating experiments of Intersemiotics, the section "Cultural and Literary Translation" addresses the more canonical practices of text-to-text adaptation and appropriation.

In a postmodern world thriving on ambiguities, Lorena Clara Mihăeș approaches the difficulties raised by the translation of Kazuo Ishiguro's Nobel-prize-winning novels. The main challenge here lies in the linguistic and narrative treatment of the literary cooperation set by the unreliable narrators and undermined by the use of an unsaturated vocabulary. The Romanian versions of *Never Let Me Go* and *A Pale View of Hills* sometimes fail to render this deliberate unreliability by missing the novelist's clues (especially hedges) or by underestimating and even dispelling esthetic ambiguity.

Without being "lost in translation", Carmen Andrei focuses in her study on the main traductological issues posed by Paul Emond's novel *As Far As Eyes Can See* (2011), where register equivalents are missing in Romanian. In a literary universe verging on the untranslatable, the reader is incited to participate in a ludic activity disturbing the expectations provoked by set phrases, in order to build on syntagmatic developments meant to estrange one from stereotypical thinking. The translator's sharing of her interlingual solutions and her disclosure of the

limits of intercultural reception – especially regarding the relative equivalence of French and Romanian argots used in modern joy houses' milieus – configure a precious piece of evidence serving the collective endeavor to explore "Translation and Cultural Mediation".

Ștefan Gencărău and Ema Ileana Adam devote particular attention to the peritextual labels of *Baltagul* [*The Hatchet*], one of the most widely translated works of the Romanian novelist Mihail Sadoveanu. Although the abstract establishes a corpus restricted to the French versions of Al. Duiliu Zamfirescu and Profira Sadoveanu as well as its English foil by Eugenia Farca, the Romanian masterpiece is generously incorporated in the larger European context. Such collections as "UNESCO's lists", with their financial policy in the 60's, are deemed more relevant than a purely contrastive study. The title's puzzle ("Baltagul") is elucidated through a careful lexical, biographical, cultural and traductological contextualization which provides a just picture of the different ways in which languages parcel out reality. Rather than an interlingual critique of the elements of hybridity provided by the said corpus, the article offers a useful panorama of the novel's reception across Europe.

Oana Ursache embraces an even larger degree of generality in presenting the translator's role as a fundamental cultural producer, from the *Memorandum on Translation* (back in 1949) to Google's revolution in the field of machine translation (in 2017). The study is encyclopedic in its scope and ethical in its underpinning motivations: from the evocation of an emblematic saint striving to become the Bible's translator into Latin – saint Jerome – to the assessment of the dehumanized tool provided by machine trans-

lation software, the deontology of vulgarization is luxuriantly scrutinized in this panoramic, erudite and entertaining article whose latitude is that of an academic course on the history of translations.

In a similarly meta-theoretical stance of defense of the venerable humanism professed by core traductology, Ovidiu Ivancu envisages translation as a complex process requiring the ability to grasp the mindset (*forma mentis*) and the social paradigm of a source culture, in order to restore it into the target intellectual environment. The ideal translator is a human agent who can actualize a way of thinking that is either lost because of diachronic estrangement, or inaccessible because of contemporary civilizational distancing. This upgrading is compared to the deft placing of a new mirror in front of an inner landscape captured by an old one, with one inexorable requirement to meet: that of keeping the optical parameters similarly tuned so that the “fecund spasm of the spirit” (p. 195) be enacted afresh in the new context. However, no perfect fidelity can be expected, as approaching a text differs fundamentally from observing the sky (by seizing images of the past in spite of the time gap): the transposition of contemplation into a particular vision is a matter of present-day bias. In his refreshing interpretation of the cliché “traduttore, traditore”, the author salutes the persistence of the same mindset across Europe, and epitomizes it with Caragiale’s extensive use of the verb “a traduce” (to translate) meaning “a trăda” (to betray). In an attempt to deepen the lucidity of cultural agents dealing with the epistemology and ethics of textuality, the philosophic dimension of this study encompasses the time-sensitive dimension of intracultural and inter-cultural translation.

The closing angle of the kaleidoscopic *Inside and Outside Perspectives on*

*Romanian Language, Culture and Literature* is devoted to the linguistic sphere of traductology, without neglecting its cultural background, which remains the main focus of this collection of transnational, overarching, interculturally relevant papers.

In a detailed analysis of the paradigmatic challenge of transposing language-specific lexical units into Romanian, Silvia Mihăilescu presents a series of relevant strategies such as periphrasis, amplification, transposition and modulation, which can prove useful in rendering the complex semantics and morphosyntax of the Bulgarian prefixed verbs used to represent aspectual values. Far from adopting a merely normative outlook, the study examines a corpus formed by the novellas of the Bulgarian writer Iordan Radicikov in Mihail Magiari’s translation, whose merits and weaknesses are constructively analyzed.

Adopting an anthropological methodology inspired by Stephen C. Levinson’s comparative outlook on intercultural pragmatics, Roxana Ciolăneanu explores a corpus of spoken interlingual and intersemiotic translations of the English prepositions *in* and *on* in Romanian and Portuguese contexts. As “most of the studies on prepositions developed their argumentation having English as a focal point, thus ignoring the fact that space may be differently expressed in other languages” (p. 218), the author designs and runs two tests for bilingual (and possibly trilingual) students: a “decoding” form in which subjects are asked to read the sentences in English and provide the proper equivalent in their target language (either Romanian or Portuguese), and a second “encoding” questionnaire in which respondents are invited to react to a set of images by describing the spatial relation between them and by using the preposition they consider appropriate. The results are properly systematized and analyzed, the common point

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between the three languages being the presence of a distinct perspective on space which proves to be anthropomorphically and egocentrically determined. Thus, the significant deviations from the “ideal meanings” assigned to prepositions – those of “support and containment (*on, pe, em*)”, and “containment (*in, în, em*)” – make automatic translation unmanageable in the absence of a properly contextualized lexicon, which is under construction.

The section closes with Cristina Alice Toma’s contribution on the history of Romanian terminology in the fields of mathematic and geographic didactics. Embracing a textual corpus ranging from 19<sup>th</sup> century to present-day textbooks and methodological tools, she demonstrates to what extent professional terminology impacts accurate translation of specialized languages in a world where the desideratum of a “scientific Esperanto” has not been accomplished. A context-sensitive approach rooted in the history of the target language – Romanian, with

its own “realia” – must be privileged in the scrutiny of the varied French, Greek, German and English domain and subdomain categories, whose “denotative mobility” and relative stability are explored in their intricate dynamics.

Each of the articles in this generous volume illustrates the cosmopolite erudition, the universalist scope and culture-specific insight of Romanian scholars into traductology, terminology, language pedagogy and, last but not least, into the very field of translation expertise and bio-bibliography. The *Inside and Outside Perspectives on Romanian Language, Culture and Literature* advocate the creation of a world in which the translator is acknowledged as a hero in his / her own right, so that the “translation paradigm” can become “a thinking pattern” relevant in itself, translation being celebrated, in the year of Romania’s centenary, as a successful process of century-old cultural mediation.

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