

On Writers as Translators /
Sur les écrivains-traducteurs, Daniela Hăisan, Casa
Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2016, 280 p.

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Daniela Hăisan, Ph.D., is a lecturer in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures of “Ștefan cel Mare” University in Suceava, Romania, as well as the author of over forty essays and of two books on translation studies: *Proza lui Edgar Allan Poe în limba română* (Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2014) and *On Writers as Translators / Sur les écrivains-traducteurs* (Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2016).

Although primarily meant to illustrate a proposition made by the American academic scholar, translator, and fiction-writer Douglas Robinson, that “A person-centered approach to any text, language, or culture will always be more productive and effective than a focus on abstract linguistic structures or cultural conventions”, by spotlighting five Romanian writers and translators (I.L. Caragiale, Emil Gârleanu, Mihail Sadoveanu, Ion Vinea, and Petru Comarnescu) and two Romanian professors and translators (Liviu Cotrău and Muguraș Constantinescu), Daniela Hăisan’s second book unsurprisingly has a lot more to offer than a mere series of translators’ portraits.

Its first part, “Prolegomena”, boldly tackles – in English – a number of interrelated topics, such as “Why Translators?”, “(Socio-)Translation (Studies)”, “The Translator’s Voice /

Agency”, “Portraits of Translators”, “(Translator) Metaphorics”, “Death of the Translator”, “The Translator as Writer”, “Norm(ativity)”, “(Forensic) Stylistics”, “Somatics”, “Habitus”, “Eco-Translatology, Genetics and Choice”, “Translator Studies”, “The Writer as Translator”, and “Technicalities”.

When attempting to find an answer to the question “Why Translators?”, Daniela Hăisan points out that “The sheer necessity to bring translators center stage has been signaled by various translation scholars in the recent past”. Further, under the title “(Socio-)Translation (Studies)”, she demonstrates that “Translation Studies is but a recent field of research”, which has “notably embraced an incredible number of paradigms [...] and borrowed a lot from other (more or less related) disciplines”, owing to the so-called “Pragmatic Turn”, to the “Cultural Turn”, to the “Empirical Turn”, to the “Globalisation Turn”, and to the “Sociological Turn” – a series of phenomena that can be traced back as far as the 1970s. The most recent branch of Translation Studies, called either “Socio-Translation Studies”, or “Sociology of Translation”, or “Translatorial Sociology”, comprises, in its turn, three subdivisions: the sociology of translations, the sociology of translators, and the sociology of translating. Accordingly, the various scholars who discuss either the “sociology of translators” or the “sociology of agents” also talk about the “translator’s role”, or the “translator’s agency”, or the “translator’s voice”, and distinguish between three main types of “translatorial agency”: the “textual agency”, the “paratextual agency”, and the “extratextual agency”.

While the so-called “Portraits of Translators” have been around since 1963, “the analogy with the death of the translator as institution, although not fully comparable with that of the author, was inevitably put forward as well”, soon after the French literary theorist, philosopher, linguist, critic, and semiotician Roland

Barthes had published, in 1967, the celebrated essay “The Death of the Author”. Yet it appears that – if perhaps not to the general public, then, at least, to the translation scholars – the translators are very much alive and can even become, on occasion, a source of involuntary humor, as the theory of translation abounds with “food metaphors” (translations being compared to “powdered eggs” or “omelettes”, among other things), “sexual metaphors”, “musical metaphors”, “botanical metaphors” etc., in keeping with which the translators can be viewed as cooks, alchemists, cannibals, “faithful bigamists”, “guardians of the purity of the text”, artists, musicians, performers, portrait painters, conjurors, actors, tailors, (re-)builders, curators, technicians, craftsmen, goldsmiths, cosmetic surgeons, lawyers, diplomats, tour guides, archaeologists, creative gardeners, perfumers etc. – but also as thieves, plunderers, pirates, hijackers, smugglers, “literary contrabandiers”, gamblers, servants, “beggars at the church door” etc.

Yet it is “The Translator as Writer” that has gained the right to a distinct chapter in Daniela Hăisan’s book, who once more quotes Douglas Robinson (“Translating IS writing.”) and then the American translation theorist, translation historian, and translator Lawrence Venuti, to whom each translator is “a special kind of writer”.

The following chapter, “Norm(ativity)”, explains the way translation scholars (such as Theo Hermans, Jiří Levý, Gideon Toury etc.) approach “the norms which governed the translator’s choices and decisions” or, in other words, “the laws that govern a translator’s behaviour, the methodology he/she follows, the steps he/she takes”, because, as is well known, “Norms cannot be overlooked in any research on the translator’s choices and decisions”. Daniela Hăisan goes on to emphasize that “We retain the deeply social but also psychological side of norms, which

offers a preview into the (more) versatile concepts of *forensic stylistics* and *habitus*". Therefore, the next chapter is dedicated solely to "forensic stylistics", i.e. to those "linguistic habits that are beyond the conscious control of writers"; it has as its starting point Professor Mona Baker's article "Towards a Methodology for Investigating the Style of a Literary Translator" (2000), and it ends with the sensible conclusion that "a translator's behaviour cannot be expected to be fully systematic".

Under the title "Somatics", Daniela Hăisan elaborates on a term redefined by D. Robinson so as to describe the "synergistic relationship between awareness, biological function and environment", as reflected in the products of the translators' labor. The two more precise terms "idiosomatics" (personal feeling) and "ideosomatics" (social feeling) are also used by Robinson when taking into consideration "both the mind and the body of the translator", and when explaining the very act of translating, through "both programming [...] and creativity". Interestingly enough, similar ideas are to be found in the works of two female translators and translation scholars, the Romanian Irina Mavrodin and the Belgian Françoise Wuilmart.

The longest and most complex chapter in this part of the book, "Habitus", is divided into five subchapters. The first, "*Habitus (Hexis) in Retrospect*", describes the "career" made by the term *habitus*, which "used to be immensely popular in medicine and philosophy before turning into a deeply sociological asset and a widely exploited translational tool", i.e., into a key concept actually "never fully and only fuzzily described" by the French sociologist, anthropologist, and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu, to whom the next subchapter, "Bourdieu's *Habitus*", is dedicated; its premise is the fact that "Bourdieu builds an entire reflexive sociological theory on a series of conceptual pillars such as *habitus*, *capital* and *field*. These central thinking tools were

crucial in his model for the dynamics of power in society”. The third subchapter, “*Habitus* in Translation Studies”, also has its starting point in Bourdieu’s somewhat controversial *habitus*-theory, and it aims to compare and contrast the meanings and usage of the term in medicine, philosophy, sociology, and translation studies, the conclusion being that “Translatorial *habitus* is [...] important insofar as it influences a translator’s practice by determining his translatorial choices”. Under the title “*Habitus, Hysteresis, Conatus*”, Daniela Hăisan introduces two more concepts, which – according to Bourdieu – link the *habitus* to a given “field”: “The mismatch between the field and the *habitus* in its extreme form is called *hysteresis* [...]. With *conatus*, Bourdieu highlights the unconscious aspects of behaviour that are also inherent to the *habitus*”. The last subchapter, prudently entitled “From *Habitus* Back to *Hexis*”, elaborates on yet another concept, the “translatorial *hexis*”, i.e. the “semi-conscious, assumed side of the *habitus*”.

The brief chapter “Eco-Translatology, Genetics and Choice” deals with one of the most recent approaches to translation, which appears to be inspired by ancient Chinese wisdom, and which “is founded on the idea that translation, much like biological evolution, can be analysed in [the famously Darwinist – I.R.] terms of selection and adaptation”. The equally brief following chapter, “Translator Studies”, is dedicated to Professor Andrew Chesterman, the initiator of such studies and the first academic scholar who explicitly acknowledged “the translator’s role in the process and politics of translation, in the target culture, ultimately in society”.

Dealing with “The Writer as Translator”, Daniela Hăisan explains why writers turn into translators at all (“Translation can be a complementary activity, a refuge or a necessity”), and offers numerous examples of “translators of foreign literature into

Romanian who were/are themselves personalities of the target culture”, such as Costache Negruzzi, Ion Heliade Rădulescu, George Coșbuc, Henriette Yvonne Stahl, Otilia Cazimir, Tudor Arghezi, Cezar Petrescu, Lucian Blaga, Irina Mavrodin, Nora Iuga, Radu Paraschivescu, and many more – none of whom are to be found again either in the second, or in the third part of the book, which, had it dealt with that many more writers-translators, would have had to become either a life-long individual project, or a collective volume.

The “Technicalities” detailed in the last chapter of this section amount to a necessary transition toward the second – and, appropriately, most extensive – part of the book, “Portraits”, which effectively prompts the readers to consider looking upon five more or less famous writers as something that most Romanians would hardly ever think of; that is, as (literary) translators.

I.L. Caragiale (1852-1912), one of the classics of Romanian literature, was also an occasional translator who, as many Romanian writers of the late 19th century did, had his translations published by newspapers and magazines. A playwright himself, he also translated for the National Theater in Bucharest. Still, what Daniela Hăisan would like her readers to remember Caragiale as is translator of Charles Perrault’s fairy tale *Riquet à la Houppe*, and mostly of E.A. Poe’s short stories *The Devil in the Belfry*, *A Tale of Jerusalem*, *The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether*, and *The Cask of Amontillado*. He was, she argues, a translator who continues to surprise us with his highly subjective choices, as regards both the tales themselves, and the style he used when rendering them into Romanian; it is such peculiar choices that she exemplifies, discusses and – ultimately – defends, so that her conclusion is, “Caragiale a écrit /

traduit pour son temps [...], mais a anticipé aussi des directions futures”.

Although the writer, translator, journalist, editor, and screenwriter Emil Gârleanu (1878-1914) is mostly known as a children’s writer, Daniela Hăisan’s purpose in discussing him was to prove that he was a passionate, responsible, even perfectionist translator, an “Eco-traducteur avant la lettre”. She focuses on his translations of the novels *Sapho* and *Les femmes d’artistes* by Alphonse Daudet, and of Guy de Maupassant’s novel *Une vie*.

Mihail Sadoveanu (1880-1961), the quintessential Romanian novelist, a brilliant story-teller and, at the same time, “un traducteur de(s) finesse(s)”, is portrayed as translator of Guy de Maupassant and of Ivan Turgenev. Daniela Hăisan’s thesis is that Sadoveanu the translator and Sadoveanu the writer were never at variance with each other; the well-endowed author always stayed loyal to his very own style. Although it is nowadays occasionally regarded as obsolete and too little appealing, his characteristic choice and arrangement of words has left a strong impression upon Romanian literature as a whole.

A left-wing journalist, avant-garde poet, and ghost-writer, Ion Vinea (1895-1964) was also an accomplished translator, “by necessity, but also by design”; however, he constantly “turned to those writers that meant something to him, with whom he shared ideas and ideals”, such as Shakespeare, Poe, Washington Irving, Halldór Kiljan Laxness, Eugen Ionescu, Balzac etc. Daniela Hăisan’s study focuses on him as translator of Poe’s prose (“In rendering Poe into Romanian, Vinea displays a confident, expressive, natural tone. [...] Mention should be made that Vinea is also extremely responsive to Poe’s endless resources of stylistic intensification which he renders precisely [...].”) and of five of Shakespeare’s plays: *The Life of King Henry V*, *Hamlet*, *Prince of*

Denmark, Othello, the Moor of Venice, Macbeth, and The Winter's Tale.

A well-known pre-war polemist, journalist, and editor, turned post-war art historian and art critic, Petru Comarnescu (1905-1970) had, at times, to make a living as the translator of various Russian authors. Still, he was most passionate about English and American literature. It is therefore Comarnescu as translator of Daniel Defoe, Sir Walter Scott, Eugene O'Neill, and Mark Twain that Daniela Hăisan chooses to present to her readers, in order to be able to arrive at the opinion that "By means of accents and rhythm, he gives longevity, not only to the translated works of art, but also to translations themselves".

The third – and, with good reason, briefest – part of the book, "Dialogues", is dedicated to two contemporary translators and mentors of its author, both of whom are not only introduced bibliographically, but also interviewed, i.e. given the immediate opportunity to make the readers acquainted with their impressive careers, with their perspectives on translation, in general, and on their own translations, in particular, as well as with their current and / or future translation projects.

Liviu Cotrău, formerly a professor at "Babeş-Bolyai" University in Cluj-Napoca and at "Partium" Christian University in Oradea, has published various literary studies and critical editions. He is also a celebrated translator of – primarily – E.A. Poe, as well as of several other foreign and Romanian authors; his motto could well be, "in matters of translation I strongly believe in the sanctity of words as conveyors of ideas".

Muguraş Constantinescu, professor at "Ştefan cel Mare" University in Suceava, has not only translated the works of notable authors such as Charles Perrault, Pascal Bruckner, Gilbert Durand, Gérard Genette, Alain Montandon etc., but also written a number of translation- and / or translator-focused studies – last,

but not least because “C’est la critique des traductions que je pratique et théorise sous la forme de ce que j’ai appelé « lecture critique des traductions », intimement liée à l’histoire des traductions et à la « mentalité traductive », idée qui m’intéresse également beaucoup.”

There follow a six-page summary in French (“Résumé”), a “Bibliography / Bibliographie” (with the six sections “Corpus”, “English Titles / Titres en anglais”, “French Titles / Titres en français”, “Romanian Titles / Titres en roumain”, “Other Languages / D’autres langues”, and “Webography / Webographie”), as well as an index consisting of ninety-five English and French concepts discussed and exemplified in the book, which – for the sake of a better understanding of it as a whole – we wish to enumerate here, in our turn: *adaptation, agency, agent, apprentissage, archaïsme, auteur, author, biographical, biographie, biographique, biography, calque, capital, choice, choix, cible, conatus, context, contexte, corporeal, corpus, créativité, creativity, culture, disposition, eco-traducteur, eco-translatology, écriture, écrivain, edition, édition, explicitation, ghost-translator, habitus, hexis, hystérèse, hysteresis, idiosomatique, incrémentialisation, introduction, intuition, language, langue, lecteur, literal, literature, littérature, ludique, mediator, memetics, metaphor, métaphore, modalisation, norm, norme, note, omission, original, paratext, paratexte, portrait, preface, préface, proper nouns, public, reader, report, retraduction, retranslation, shift, simpatico, sociology, somatics, somatique, source, style, subconscious, subjectivity, sur-traduction, target, telos, text, texte, traducteur, traduction, translation, translator, transposition, version, visibilité, visibility, voice, voix, writer, and writing.*

Still, another, more intimate way of reflecting on Daniela Hăisan’s book is the one suggested by the author herself, whose

acknowledgment reads as follows: “The overarching aim of this book is twofold, as it dwells on a sociology of translation in both theory and practice. On the one hand, it seeks to provide a theoretical overview of this newly emerged interdisciplinary field; on the other, its main concepts are put to the test while analysing translation as a side activity (as delivered by writers and / or academics). The study focuses on (seven) Romanian translators only but is intended as a tribute to translators in general.”