

Sindre Andersen – A Promoter of Romanian Culture in Norway

Crina LEON

“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania

Sindre Andersen (full name Sindre Stian Andersen, born 1982, in Fredrikstad) is a Norwegian poet (published in anthologies), translator and critic. He has translated works from Romanian, English, Swedish, Danish and German into Norwegian¹. Some of his published translations are *Gravity/Tyngdekraft*, H//O//F, 2017 (author Svetlana Cârsteian), *Polyamorous Love Song/ Polyamorøs kjærlighetssang*, H//O//F, 2017 (author Jacob Wren), *Innocence in extremis/Grenseløs uskyld*, H//O//F, 2016 (author John Hawkes) and *The Thief's Cleft/Tjuvkløfta*, H//O//F, 2015 (author Leif Holmstrand). In 2008 he wrote an MA thesis in the field of history of ideas, entitled *Melancholy and History. The Emergence of Archaic Ontology in Mircea Eliade's Work / Melankoli og historie. Fremveksten av arkaisk ontologi hos Mircea Eliade*, Faculty of Humanities, University of Oslo. He first attended a summer course in Romania, in Cluj-Napoca, then took Romanian online courses offered by the University of Lund, Sweden, and studied half a year at Bridge Language Study House in Cluj-Napoca. Otherwise, he studied Romanian on his own. The interview below, with Sindre Andersen, was taken on 16 August 2018.

¹ For a full list of translations, see http://oversetterforeningen.no/medlemsoversikt/?medl_nr=585.



Photograph 1. Sindre Andersen Photo credit: Sindre Andersen

1. *How did you get interested in Romanian culture in general and how did you get to write an MA thesis on Mircea Eliade at the University of Oslo, the Faculty of Humanities² (in 2008)?*

I became aware of and interested in Romania through reading Mircea Eliade, perhaps more his essays and his biography than his fiction. I realized that Romania had a unique status as a ‘Latin’ culture in Eastern Europe, and an interesting history. In Norway most people had a negative image of the country – unfortunately, they still do. I just found the Romanian language lovely and appealing. To be honest, I guess I am attracted to the ‘tragic’ and melancholic aspects of the Romanian culture, but also to the strength and solidarity of the people. And their sense of humour. The thesis about Mircea Eliade focused on his interwar

² Sindre Andersen (2008): *Melankoli og historie. Fremveksten av arkaisk ontologi hos Mircea Eliade*, Masteroppgave i idéhistorie, veileder: Jan-Erik Ebbestad Hansen, Institutt for filosofi, idé- og kunsthistorie og klassiske språk (IFIKK), Humanistisk fakultet, Universitetet i Oslo.

years, and I became quite happy with it. But nowadays I am no longer so interested in Eliade.

2. *You have translated the volume Gravity (from 2015), authored by the Romanian poet Svetlana Cârstean (born 1969), into Norwegian. How did you get to translate this volume and how difficult is it to translate poetry?*

I had read Svetlana Cârstean before, and found the book in a bookstore. It appealed to me, I started translating it, and became really excited. Fortunately, the *House of Foundation* Publishing house³ wanted to let me do the translation for publishing, and to invite Cârstean to their literature festival in Moss, Norway (namely *Møllebyen Litteraturfestival*⁴ from 2017). The translation was not an easy task, but I learnt a lot from it. Translation of poetry is difficult, but it depends on the vocabulary and the level of language play. However, if you are genuinely interested in the rhythm and sound of the language, and the marvel of poetry, and have good philological assistance, it is not more difficult than to translate prose or fiction.

3. *How large is the market for poetry in Norway?*

It is relatively large for such a small country⁵. Most published poetry books are bought/distributed to the libraries

³ The House of Foundation Publishing house - H//O//F - is based in Moss, Norway.

⁴ Møllebyen Literature Festival is a cross-cultural festival focused on the written word. The 2017 session took place in Moss, between 18-20 August. It was organized for the sixth time at the House of Foundation (see <http://www.mollebyenlitteratur.no/2017/>).

⁵ Nowadays, Norway has a total population of about 5,300,000 inhabitants.

through state funding. But the bigger publishing houses have published less and less poetry in recent years, and the newspapers write less and less about it. I don't have the statistics here, but I would say that few volumes of poetry sell more than 100 copies in the shops.

4. *What is the status of the translation profession in Norway?*

Quite high, although the translators don't get as much attention as they should, for instance in literary criticism. Although I would still say that the awareness of translation as an important part of the literary work has increased in recent years. Nowadays, there are 'translation evenings' held in bookshops and libraries in Oslo. As the payment is high compared to other countries, many Norwegian translators can afford to have translation as their only job.

5. *In your opinion, what makes a good translator: studies, experience, innate skills?*

You need an ear for language and a sense of accuracy. You don't need to be a good writer in your own right to be a good translator, but you need to be able to re-write what someone else has written. I think experience is really important. There are few good translators who are very young, and it is not uncommon to venture on a translator's career relatively late in life.

6. *Do you follow a certain method of translating? Does inspiration come all of a sudden and what do you do when you lack inspiration? Do you need specific conditions in order to translate, e.g. isolation, silence etc.?*

I don't work very systematically. I go through the text several times, check up words and collect questions that I ask to colleagues and the writer himself/herself.

I am a writer myself also (poetry and criticism), and translation is often something I do when I lack inspiration to 'write properly', to get started, so to speak.

7. What is the most difficult for you when translating from a Romance language and do you consider it a disadvantage to translate into a small language?

The musicality of the language is quite different in Germanic and Romance languages. The syntax usually needs to be changed, and that influences the perception of the words, especially in poetry. I consider it more of an advantage, to have the possibility to bring the world to a small country. And, in the case of Romanian, to enrich the Norwegian language with help from another not very big one.

8. What Romanian works or writers are you familiar with?

Quite a few, but mostly from modern literature. Among the classic modernists I really admire Nichita Stănescu, Marin Sorescu, Ana Blandiana and Angela Marinescu. To be honest, I am not (yet) too familiar with the older classics in fiction.

9. To what extent should a translated text bear the mark of the translator? Isn't any act of translation in fact an act of creation? Should the translator's name always be placed on the cover?

I think a translated text needs to be readable as if it were an original text in the language one translates into. That requires a

certain type of creativity, one that is disciplined and ‘hidden’, but also not being too much of a slave of the original language. I don’t think the translator’s name should be placed on the front cover, but definitely on one of the first pages (or on the back cover).

10. *Do you already have any further plans of translating Romanian literature into Norwegian? In which way do you see the development of Romanian-Norwegian cultural relations in the future?*

Yes, I would like to translate for instance the poets Radu Vancu and Adela Greceanu, and the novelist Doina Ruști. But I have no concrete appointments for the time being.

I surely think the cultural relations of the two countries will develop in a positive direction in the near future. Both countries belong to the outskirts of Europe, their history is somewhat similar, and so is their national ‘complex’ towards the world. Romania and the Romanian culture definitely need to acquire more positive connotations among Norwegians in general.

References

ANDERSEN, S. (2008): *Melankoli og historie. Fremveksten av arkaisk ontologi hos Mircea Eliade*, Masteroppgave i idéhistorie, Universitetet i Oslo.

“Andersen, Sindre Stian”, http://oversetterforeningen.no/medlemsoversikt/?medl_nr=585, retrieved on 18 August 2018.

“Møllebyen Litteraturfestival 2017”, <http://www.mollebyenlitteratur.no/2017/>, retrieved on 18 August 2018.