

**POLICIES AND STRATEGIES FOR TRANSLATING
AND PROMOTING SOME ROMANIAN AUTHORS IN
THE ANGLO-SAXON CULTURAL SPACE: ION
CREANGĂ AND
MIRCEA CĂRTĂRESCU**

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Introduction

Our study on *Policies and Strategies for Translating and Promoting Some Romanian Authors in the Anglo-Saxon Cultural Space: Ion Creangă and Mircea Cărtărescu*, approaches a research segment that is still at its early beginnings, namely the policies of translation and promotion of the Romanian literature in the Anglo-Saxon cultural space (Great Britain, the United States of America and Canada). The choice of this research theme is justified, on the one hand, by the novelty of the approach, and, on the other, by our strong belief that the promotion of the Romanian literature and culture abroad is nowadays, in the age of globalisation, more necessary than ever. Today, Romania's presence (through translations) is rather limited both in Europe and on the other continents. Europe is already a distinct continent and, even more so, Eastern Europe is an unknown island even for Europeans, not to mention the United States of America or Canada. Therefore, our research follows the evolution of the practices involved in the translation, promotion and reception of the Romanian literature in the Anglo-Saxon cultural space, placing a particular emphasis on prose works.

The notion of *translation policy* is considered in this study in the sense referred to by Gideon Toury, who also regards it as a preliminary translation norm. It comprises the factors involved in the selection of source text types, individual source texts, authors, schools, genres, source languages, etc. "to be imported through translation into a particular culture/language at a particular point in time" (Toury 1995: 202). Thus, starting from the idea that translation is deeply embedded in the historical and cultural context of its production and reception, our analysis will focus on three representative literary pieces corresponding to the three periods in the history of Romania considered in this study. For the pre-communist

and communist periods, our case studies will include the translation of a canonical work in Romanian literature: *Recollections from Childhood* (1930) by Ion Creangă translated by Lucy Byng (for the pre-communist years), *Recollections from Childhood* (1956) by Ion Creangă in A.L. Lloyd's translation, and *Memories of My Boyhood* (1978), translated by Ana Cartianu and R.C. Johnston – for the communist period. For the post-communist years, the translation of Mircea Cărtărescu's *Nostalgia*, a much more recent literary work translated by Julian Semilian in 2005 has been taken into consideration.

Moreover, taking into consideration that, throughout history, there have been various policies of encouraging/discouraging translation, we felt the need to develop a methodological tool for sketching a model for the analysis of the translation and reception of the Romanian literature in the English speaking cultural space. Therefore, our analyses will be based on an interdisciplinary approach, involving recent developments in the fields of translation studies, cultural studies, literary theory and criticism, history, sociology and (cultural) politics.

In fact, most studies dedicated to the cultural exchanges between Romania and the Anglo-Saxon cultural space approach translation in terms of import (translations into Romanian), barely touching (if ever) the other direction. One notable example is Tamara Lăcătușu's *Cultură și comunicare. Raporturi literare româno-britanice, 1900 – 1950*, which dedicates a chapter to both directions of reception. However, her work only discusses the first half of the 20th century. Another outstanding example is Ioana Popa's book, *Traduire sous contraintes. Littérature et communisme (1947-1989)*, which approaches the translation and promotion of Romanian literature in France, focusing only on the communist years.

In our attempt to discuss and evaluate translated Romanian literature for the periods under discussion, we will rely on key concepts and elements derived from various directions in translation studies: elements of the norm theory, derived from the polysystems theory developed by the school of Tel-Aviv (Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury), various aspects of the manipulation theory (André Lefevere, Theo Hermans), considerations on the asymmetrical relations between literatures and the concept of “cultural authority” (André Lefevere, Lawrence Venuti) derived from the postcolonial orientations; issues of minority, the impact of globalisation (Michael Cronin). Additionally, a socio-economic perspective (Gisèle Sapiro, Johan Heilbron) on Romanian literature abroad will be approached.

The book is structured into three main chapters, corresponding to the historical periods considered for analysis. Each chapter opens up with a presentation of the cultural and historical context and it focuses on a corresponding literary work. Although the chapters are centred specifically on a literary work, the incursions into the cultural and historical context of their publishing will also touch upon other translations published during the same period. Moreover, besides the translation policies operating in Romania for “translation export” we will also consider and analyse translations published abroad; in so doing, we will also examine the publishing policies in the target cultural space.

The first chapter, *Translating and Promoting Romanian Literature between the Two World Wars*, aims to analyse the translation and promotion strategies and policies that operated in the period between the two World Wars in Romania. Starting from the wider cultural and historical context, and briefly touching upon the ideological and social trends of the time, we aim to identify and analyse the publishing and translation practices focusing on a classic of Romanian

literature, *Amintiri din copilărie* (*Recollections from Childhood*) translated by Lucy Byng (1930). The analyses will be directed towards detecting the translation norms likely to explain/ justify the translator's strategies (based on the classifications suggested by G. Toury and C. Nord). As for the translation evaluation, the pragmatic and functional orientations we intend to use will be accompanied by considerations derived from the area of cultural studies, aimed to investigate the context in which the translations were produced and received. The impact of these translations will be "tested" by the critical reactions published in the Romanian and Anglo-Saxon cultural spaces.

The second chapter, *Translating and Promoting Romanian Literature in the Communist Period*, also begins with a series of general considerations concerning the cultural and historical context of communist Romania. We will try to identify the policies that guided the translation and promotion of the Romanian literature during that period, still following the translation destinies of the same literary work, Ion Creangă's *Amintiri din copilărie*, translated in 1956 by A.L. Lloyd (*Recollections from Childhood*) and in 1978 by Ana Cartianu and R.C. Johnston (*Memories of My Boyhood*). Our analysis will aim both at identifying extratextual norms and other factors that (might) have had an impact on the two translations. Moreover, a number of correlations with works translated and published during the same period will be established.

The third chapter, *Translating and Promoting Romanian Literature in the Post-Communist Period*, is dedicated to the translation and promotion policies that have operated in post-communist Romania. The starting point is, again, the socio-cultural and political context, while the analysis will focus on a contemporary work, Mircea Cărtărescu's *Nostalgia*, translated by Julian Semilian. Based on

a series of considerations on the translation and publishing practices operating at national and international level, and starting from three important initiatives in the Romanian publishing environment (initiated by the Romanian Cultural Institute, the *Observator Cultural (Cultural Observer)* magazine and *Polirom* publishing house), our approach will open discussions on the necessity of redefining the Romanian literary canon, and the image built for the “export” of the Romanian literature, especially in the Anglo-Saxon cultural space.

Each of the historical periods taken into consideration will be illustrated by two types of corpora: one comprising the authors’ texts (source texts and translations), and the other comprising articles and reviews of literary criticism and translation criticism (where available). This will enable us to compare the reception periods and create statistics, in order to better understand the translation policies and the strategies used by translators so as to support these policies.

Our enterprise will involve (contrastive) analyses, syntheses, comparisons, analogies, between the various periods in the promotion of Romanian literature in the Anglophone space. In addition, by adopting a comparative stance, we will compare this with the situation of the translations from Romanian in other countries, and also with the image of the English literature in our country.

The research methods we intend to use in order to carry out a more objective analysis will be both **quantitative** (various kinds of corpus-related statistics), **qualitative** (analyses and interpretations drawing on the discussed theoretical framework(s)), as well as **interactive** (personal communications with translators, authors, and other agents involved in the promotion of the Romanian literature).

As our research is a descriptive study, it combines the **inductive** method of analysing and comparing the literary works

that are part of the case studies with generalisations on translation norms and tendencies for the periods under discussion.

In the analysis of the translated texts, we will also have in view the translators' strategies, the orientation towards the source or the target culture (Toury's initial norm), the strategies used in dealing with the cultural terms that can emphasize, or, on the contrary, obscure the specificity of Romanian literature. For instance, Lucy Byng's 1930 translation of *Recollections from Childhood* is strongly oriented towards the target culture, an orientation governed both by ideological reasons and by the preliminary norms/ translation policies of its production, while the 1978 translation is obviously oriented towards the source culture and ideology, with the preliminary norms (partly) justifying this position.

As far as the **deductive** approaches are concerned, our analysis will be based on the concepts, classifications and models provided by the previously mentioned disciplines (e.g. the cultural and functionalist orientations in translation studies, reader-oriented criticism, etc); these concepts and models will be applied on the selected corpus of texts, in an attempt to analyse and explain in detail the translation policies and strategies for the three historical periods under discussion. These detailed analyses will lead to a better understanding of the way in which the Romanian literature was/ could be (better) promoted in the Anglophone cultural spaces.

The impact of these translations will be assessed by analysing the critical reactions and reviews published (especially) in the target cultural space.

Moreover, by adopting a statistical perspective, we will verify how many important libraries in the Anglo-Saxon space hold copies of these translations, who are the most translated authors (whether they are classic or contemporary) and how many Romanian books in English translation are actually available for the Anglo-Saxon readership.