

BOOK REVIEW

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***The Culture of Translation in Romania/
Übersetzungskultur und Literaturübersetzen in Rumänien***

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The edited volume *The Culture of Translation in Romania* traces the development of thinking about translation in Romania, which developed in close interaction with literary trends and views on (literary) translation, and the role of translation in the development of national identity under given political and cultural conditions.

This collection of essays is the outcome of a large-scale project called “Writers and Translators. Transnational Literary Workshops” launched by Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu (Romania) and co-financed by the National Cultural Fund Administration. Most of the contributors are academics working in departments of literature. This explains the stated objectives of the editors: they aim to (re)introduce “the topic of translation as a topic of interest into the national literary agenda”. This means that the volume has a literary bias, and is addressed to literary rather than Translation Studies (TS) scholars. Yet it may hold a lot of interest for TS, since history of translation is an integral part of TS. The framework of the project determined an interdisciplinary approach, yielding a volume which is situated, as we shall see, at the confluence of several disciplines – from translation studies to hermeneutics, phenomenology, geocriticism, literary theory, literary history and cultural theory.

The volume is expected to be relevant for both Romanian and international audiences. For the former, it could be important because it highlights the complexity of translation as a cultural phenomenon and directs the attention of readers, including literary scholars, to the importance of studying translation as an integral part of the literary polysystem, something that has been neglected in the literature departments in Romania. For the latter, through the example of Romania, it provides a useful introduction to the intricacies of interrelations among translation, literature and political and social development. Thus, the volume has a literary

and historical approach to translation and translation theory, while also providing quantitative information on the role of translation in Romanian literature, placing it in the wider context of culture, social and political life.

The twenty-one texts written in English and German by experienced and aspiring researchers from Romania and Germany are divided into three sections (*General Analysis and Quantitative Studies*, *Close-ups of Literary Translations* and *A Translator's Perspective*). Section I looks at the emergence of translation theory in Romania from 1829 until the present day. Although the authors tend to avoid unnecessary theorizing and methodological discussions, there is a noticeable connection with the perspectives specific to world literature. Most of the theoretical essays are related to Even-Zohar's polysystem theory. Indeed, the unifying thread running through the volume is how Romanian writers, critics and translation theorists tried to cope with a situation in which Romanian literature was seen as a peripheral literature dominated by central literatures. Accordingly, several of the papers are based on the concept of centre and periphery, as described in polysystem theory.

Section II offers insights into the work of some outstanding Romanian translators. Some of the papers in this part deal with current topics in Translation Studies, such as the stylistic manifestations of the translator's gender identity and the status of translators in the age of digital globalization. Section III contains a series of translators' confessions. It also explores the difficulties of translating and considers possible solutions to particular situations.

From the above it is clear that the papers in this volume offer a considerable variety of topics.

Before turning to the individual papers, a short description of the history of translation and translation studies in Romania is appropriate here. The first translations into Romanian date back to the 17th century, but systematic thinking about translation and theories of translation emerged only in the 19th century. In this era, a generally unstable socio-political context and shifting state borders exerted considerable influence on cultural and literary frontiers. During this critical period, which led to the founding of Romania as a national state and the emergence of a standard language and national identity, the issues of possible relations between national specificity, national identity, and the Western world were widely debated. Issues of national identity were closely related to the development of national literature, and the latter to issues of translation. A special feature of Romanian history was that Romanian literature was heavily influenced by Western (mainly, or even exclusively, French) literature, and it had to define itself in terms of its relationship to French influence, mediated by translation – offering an excellent example of the relationship between central and peripheral literatures. French culture was indeed so dominant in Romania that it even brought about a