

Bogdan GHIU, *Everything must be translated: the new paradigm [Totul trebuie tradus: noua paradigmă]*, Cartea Românească, București, ISBN print: 978-973-23-3101-9, 2015, 235 p.

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In the contemporary context of globalization through technology, the aspect of translation plays an important role since it tries to flatten out the differences between cultures. However, Bogdan Ghiu brings to our attention a new perspective over this issue with his manifesto book *Everything must be translated*. The book continues a previous publication of the author, launched in 2014 and entitled *Linia de producție. Lucrând cu arta [The production line. Working with art]*. There, he claimed that art finds itself in metaphor and, he completes, it exists in translation. In consequence, art must be approached at its entire potentiality because it owns a significant international dimension, which has a worldwide manifestation. With his new volume Ghiu expresses a series of arguments for reconsidering the implications that translations have in contemporary society.

His discourse focuses on social studies from a translator's point of view where the object of his work (i.e. translation) represents the key in the international process of intellect exchange. In his opinion one's culture it is defined not only through its own self, but also through the borrowings from other cultures. Therefore, he says: "Numai culturile care se iau in serios traduc" [Only the cultures which assume themselves, translate]. The author does not focus on a theory of translation, but over its implications. Thus, the structure of the book has the aspect of a mosaic. The volume has a heterogeneous structure, bringing together a series of texts representing his or others' notes over the concept of translation. The allure

of personal meditation over the subject comes from his great experience in the area as he is a translator of contemporary French philosophy. Hence, some of the authors that he translated are quoted and discussed in his book (Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, etc.). This composite structure allows him to bring together many ideas without concentrating the text.

Moreover, particular contents were originally essays published online or inserted as postfaces to other works that he has translated (e.g. the chapter “De ce iubim mașinile” [Why do we love machines] which is also the postface of the translated version of Deleuze and Guattari’s *Kafka: Towards a minor Literature*). As well, some of them are used as appendices that complete or bring more arguments to the idea stated in the chapter to which they are attached. From the very beginning, Bogdan Ghiu assumes the fact that he is writing a manifest and, throughout the book, he gives the reader constant reminders on this matter in order to show his devotion and respect for his own initiative:

“Pregătindu-mă să scriu rândurile care urmează, îmi dau seama că ele au un caracter (de) manifest pe care, prin urmare, trebuie să-l respect, să-l redau, să-l ‘traduc’ ca atare” [Preparing myself to write the following lines, I realize that they have the pattern of a manifest which, as a result, I have to respect, to express, to translate it as it is]

The first chapters have an air of urgency, translation is presented as a solution for minor cultures to grow and to approach the hegemonic ones. The challenges of this process determine a permanent auto revitalization: “Traducerea e noua paradigmă și noua conștiință politică, singura pe măsura globalizării lumii” [Translation is the new paradigm and the new political consciousness, it is the only one which suits world globalization]. He provokes further thought on the attitudes of a culture which can be either passive or active. This aspect comes with a status described in terms of subordination and minority. However, the author appears to praise minor cultures since they have the courage to assume a subsidiary pattern and to involve in the process of appropriating the other’s intellectual achievements. What is more, he approaches the subject of multilingualism which, in his opinion, represents a post-translation level of cultural exchange. It manifests as a degradation of translation which may lead to its disappearance. That would be the case of a “postbabelical” time, as the author calls it; the biblical reference is meant

to explain today's ideal to reach the adamic, original language. In postmodernism, the technological vector has laid to the foundation that enhances the communication among countries, determining the new paradigm of translation. Cross cultural communication gives the individual the possibility of speaking "in languages" whenever he wants, despite his localization. The negative connotation that Bogdan Ghiu focuses on is the loss of cultural identity. Since the language is manipulated by technology, it is committed to a set of mechanical transformations which do not manage to reveal the linguistic insights too. As a solution, he pleads for the change of the epistemological metaphor of interpretation into that of translation. The target is to assure trustworthiness by keeping the diversity of identities that might loose in translations.

Not unexpectedly, another concern that follows the topic is the phenomenon of author multiplication due to the disappearance of censorship which allows a free market. In correlation with the characteristics of an author, a translator's role is close to a demiurgical one: he is both omnipresent and invisible. The role of the translator (whom he names "contra-om politic" [counter-politician]) illustrates and summarizes the endeavours of the polyglot to fight a potential concession. He has control over other cultures and over the political and the economical systems. Therefore, if the translator gets the value of an author but not the same commerciality, the act of lecturing is valued in the author's perspective only when we translate:

"Abia când traducem *citim* cu adevărat. Traducerea trebuie concepută ca un act ireductibil de lectură." [Only when we translate we really read. The translation must be perceived as an irreducible act of reading].

The discussion on language and literature reveals the infinity of a culture and its possibility of progress through the act of reading as translation. A culture's refusal for translation represents a sign of primitivism, a tendency to ignorance as translation is now seen as a creative act.

Furthermore, the book also contains a political dimension which illustrates the impact of the old communist system's collapse over our culture. However, he prefers to generalize the term, admitting that politics are formed while rationing since the act of thinking, he claims, is always political and allows a permanent

reconfiguration of power. Therefore, translation is strongly linked to all the political systems and cultures by dint of the fact that every individual lives in a state of permanent interpreting. The author fights against standardization and offers a realistic review of automatic or mechanical translations, which he declares to have a great impact on literature itself. This strategy of mass cultural exchange not only does it diminish its value, but it also gives it a negative connotation, by giving rise to the ideology of mass literature.

On the other hand, the book's subject is also debated under certain quotations belonging to a series of authors that Ghiu translated. By paying attention to the opinions expressed by the others on this matter, he does not pretend his work to be unique. On the contrary, his volume follows a comparative strategy regarding translation studies. Not only does he speak from his own experience, but he also weights his theories with others'. For example, under the chapter "Nota traducătorului" [Translator's note] he inserts eight essays regarding the concepts used by some of those philosophers that he translated and explains the difficulties that he encountered when interpreting new concepts. A special attention is given to *A thousand plateaus* by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, mostly due to their intention to generate notions that for a translator may easily become miscellaneous. Hence, he reasons on several pages his interpretation of words such as *plateaux* or *agencement*, explaining them lexically and linguistically. With regard to another book written by them, *Kafka. Toward a minor literature*, Ghiu establishes two phases that he reached in translating the couple Deleuze-Guattari: translation and de-translation. Therefore, he firstly obtained a semantical version of the book which he used afterwards to realize the aesthetical phase of the process.

In order to introduce an additional issue, the author gives examples of some Romanian translators and their different interpretation of the same volumes. In fact, he unfolds the fact that our culture uses old translations of canonical books that were at that time under the communist oppression. On that account, he gives the example of some Romanian misleading translations, such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, made by Petru Comarnescu. He has no reliability in that author's opinion since he remarks the manipulative strategies of the old regime, such as the omission of some paragraphs related to religion or faith. As a consequence, in Romanian culture Daniel Defoe's work is underestimated and considered to be a children's book. Hence, he claims that every generation needs to translate:

“Fiecare generație trebuie să-și facă traducерile ei. Să zicem, în cazul operelor canonice, cel puțin două pe secol.” [Every generation has to make his own translations. Let’s say, in the case of canonical works, at least two per century]

Bogdan Ghiu makes of himself a real example of both a translator and a researcher that attributes to the book a documentary value. In order to reveal the subtleties and the contradictions between Romanian translators he also compares Adelina Piatkowski and Ștefan Bezdechi’s versions of the seventh letter from Plato’s Epistles. As the short comparison that he makes shows differences in word interpretation, Ghiu emphasizes two types of translations: literary translation (Bezdechi) and the translation which alters (Piatkowsky). He would settle for the first one as the second type tends to avoid key words and to diminish one’s cultural identity.

When it comes to Benjamin Walter, Ghiu admits that he is also a difficult author to translate and opens a key for further discussion on translation studies. He aims for a widening of this field on our territory as Romanian translators should consider translation from a more critical perspective. Moreover, while encouraging the young Andrei Anastasescu in his translations on Benjamin’s work, the author states the necessity of someone or of an institution to develop a criticism on Romanian translations. Other perspectives regarding the translational domain and the experiences it provides are given through extracts from Olivier Mannoni, Paolo Quintili, Vlad Alexandrescu, and Bruno Latour. Nonetheless, what Bogdan Ghiu values in our contemporary Romanian society is the fact that the philosopher is now involved in the process of translation, sometimes translating even himself.

However, even if occasionally his ideas seem to succeed randomly, the chapters appear to continuously link the universal with the particular and vice versa. On that account, Bogdan Ghiu gives credits to the East for the translational perspective with the intention of bringing to attention the francophone domain which he equals with determined critical thinking. Then, he attains a more particular case, that of Romanian cultural history which comes across as changing from a literary form into a visual one due to the political context of communism and to the emergence of the new Romanian cinema.

Similar arguments have also been observed in George Steiner’s book: *After Babel*. In fact, Bogdan Ghiu admits to have taken certain ideas from him and

transform them into a key of his policy statement. The last chapter closes the loop of reminders over the fact that the volume launches a manifesto. After evoking the biblical Babel Tower and the issue concerning the rupture of the original divine and unique language, he pretends to be a successor of Steiner's *After Babel*. In addition, Ghiu sees globalization as a fake Babel Tower and he pretends to reactivate his postulations as they both believe that the human being lives in a continuous process of translation. Hence, Bogdan Ghiu deserves credits for converting George Steiner's elaborate book not only into a manifesto, but into a wake-up call for the translators' community. If his ideas find roots in the French born philosopher's volume, his style of translation reclaims from another mentor that Ghiu adopts:

“Modelul meu *practic*, în același timp etnic și etic, îl constituie întotdeauna, Irina Mavrodin, politica ei pacificatoare, umanistă, simplificatoare, detensionantă, geniul ei militar de a traduce prin apropierea tactilă, haptică de original” [my practical model and both my ethnical and ethical one, is always represented by Irina Mavrodin, her pacifistic, humanistic, simplifying, tempered policy, her military genius of translating through tactile approaching, haptic for the original]

Therefore, he tries to establish in his translation the same equilibrium Mavrodin had, since they share a similar interest in translating French philosophy and literature.

Altogether, the book coagulates a series of essays which, ordered in Bogdan Ghiu's preference, come as arguments to the imperative launched by its title. However limited his current potential might be, it is essential that it offers the possibility to be assessed. For now, it is impossible to predict its impact over the community of translators as there are not any immediate Romanian similar initiatives. In terms of political and economical consciousness, translating does not only imply overcoming cultural barriers, but appropriating them. *Everything must be translated* is an innovative book also because it opens new keys for debates over the concept of translation which is proposed to replace the term of communication. The author's suggestion is a brave one and it stands up because it is presented as a necessity and as the only way for a culture to flourish. Furthermore, it also functions as a guide into the world of translation, stimulating the reader towards it.