

**“BABEŞ–BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF LETTERS**

PhD THESIS

**ON THE HISTORY OF LITERARY CONTACTS IN 19TH
CENTURY TRANSYLVANIA**

SUMMARY

**SCIENTIFIC ADVISOR:
Prof. univ. dr. KOZMA DEZSŐ**

**CANDIDATE:
BERKI TÍMEA**

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KEYWORDS

Translation, literature, Hungarian, Romanian, Hungary, Transylvania, 19th-century history of the elite, religious identity, multilingualism, ethnicity, nation, conflict, cultural anthropology, contextualize.

SUMMARY

The paper deals with the Romanian-Hungarian literary contacts in the late 19th century and early 20th century, the last decades of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Although the title of the thesis promises contacts analysis in Transylvania, in terms of the theme it fits the cultural context of Hungary, namely the Monarchy, because these contacts are not drawn within literature in Transylvania, but outside this region. The extensive bibliography¹, which legitimized the concept of “Monarchy-literature” about the term Central and Eastern Europeanism, marginalizes or does not include the cultures of Romanians in Hungary, considering partially this literature. This bias gives the provocative nature of this literature problematic, positioning it in a broader context that takes the historical and homonymic plasticity of the concept of national literature. This influenced me in defining the topic and thesis of the problems. History of meaning and concept of national literature becomes the central issue of the thesis, as the period studied gives us many examples that go beyond national character of the literatures.

The documentary sources of my work are heterogeneous; analysis of the thesis cannot be included in a monographic study, like is presented in Bibliography of Hungarian-Romanian literary contacts². For example, in terms of translated literary genres, we find texts of popular culture, translations of poems, and artistic translations of the period of institutionalized relationships. Translations of poems by the late 19th century appear in volumes only at the end of the 20th century, generating the belated reception of Romanian Literature among the Hungarian public. The thesis therefore is not a comparative monograph, not a history of reception, but wants to be an experiment in

¹ FRIED 1996, FRIED 2001, FRIED 2002a, FRIED 2002 b, VAJDA 2000. see also: HANÁK 1999, MÓDOS 2005.

² DOMOKOS 1966.

study of the contacts that enriches both thematically and through new documents the history of Romanian-Hungarian translations from the late 19th century.

The reception of the Romanian literature is represented by sporadic translations made by intellectuals, published in various periodicals. The bibliography of literary contacts and the special literature³ gives value to the first translations, which are starting points of the contacts, but from an aesthetic point of view they cannot be classified, because of the limitations of translators. I think that these interpretations operate on a double scale, so the first sentence tries to contextualize gestures of the translators to better understand their synchronic perspective, not from a later point of view of the aesthetic concept of literature.

My research for several years, starting from the reception of poetry of Eminescu cannot be based on the aesthetic concept of the literature, but rather on a functional one. From this functional perspective, the Hungarian translations of a Romanian poem, the practice of the translation, the place of occurrence, the intentions, the skills, the selections of translators are equally important; their reconstruction, because it is defined by preconceptions that someone why, when and what wants to translate, and therefore the transmission between cultures become an ideology of translation. The chronology of the translations, their quantity cannot be defining issues in my work; the quality cannot be measured from a distant perspective. Because of this, and considering the existence of philological research on the reception of the work of Eminescu, the sentence does not deal with comparative and philological analysis of the translations.

The first part of the thesis deals with the debut of Romanian poet Mihai Eminescu in Hungarian literature, the first few of his publications, because until the first translation of his poems we deal with his polemical journalism that helps to explore a new type of document, namely the minutes of the Hungarian Parliament. These documents inform us about issues of ethnicity, how to set up national cultural institutions which takes value from the perspective of the topic of the sentence, being in relation to the process of nationalization, characteristic to this region in the second half of the 19th century.

Outlining the reception of Eminescu emphasizes cultural aspects of the Romanian-Hungarian relationship. Versions of 19th-century interpretation of Eminescu,

³ BUGNARIU 1964, ENGEL 1964, DÁVID 1976, TODOR 1983.

the future mythical figure, the national poet, now become a cliché, show a strong contrast analyzed in the chapter dealing with the first assessment and interpretation in Hungarian. The two studies in Hungarian, written as doctoral dissertations in 1895, are positivist monographies, but also gives us interesting parallels between the life and work of Eminescu and representatives of Hungarian and foreign literature (Lenau, Schopenhauer, Petofi); they also expose the methodology of interpretation of their authors.

This dissertations are very interesting in terms of language, namely, is a work of a Romanian author (the future Patriarch, Miron Cristea, Ph.D., University of Pest) presenting the Romanian literature, but from the perspective of the language used in the dissertation, is a Hungarian work, and becomes part of the Hungarian literature. This fact holds reception anomalies, unquestioned so far, and the study of this dissertation and its context will make arguments about the use of Hungarian language not as an individual decision, but as an obligation imposed by the power of language in that university. This policy should be studied in relation to these two cultures.

Exploring the context of translation can reinterpret our knowledge about the Hungarian periodicals of the time, because the translations of Romanian poetry appear in local newspapers, which until now were only listed in the press history, without recognizing their value in Hungarian and Romanian literatures contact. The poems of Eminescu translated into Hungarian are published for the first time in the special issue (Christmas 1885) of *Kolozsvári Közlöny*, and in the *feuilleton* of the *Szilágy-Somlyó* newspaper (1889-1891), representing a claim or requirement on the part of press-publishers, on another part of the – multicultural, knowing many languages – readers from Transylvania, and not least the translation and practice of intellectuals discernible in the use of two languages (the politician, the organizer of institutions, József Sándor; the theologian Laurentiu Bran). Their translations are the results of the literary preoccupation from the special literary circles of the religious boarding schools, attended by translators. With everything that Sándor and Bran deal with translating Eminescu's poetry, their work gives us interesting examples of studies of the contacts and cannot be classified by the same criteria.

Among the Hungarian translators of Eminescu we can't find those intellectuals (János Arany, Károly Szász) who are professionals in Hungarian translation studies.

Compared with the project of translation of Shakespeare or Dante, the Hungarian translations of literatures of different ethnic groups, from Hungary, get different accents. József Sándor translated into his native language, while Bran from his native language, which leads to the problem of language knowledge, but implicitly to the homogeneity of literatures and national cultures differentiated by the attribute “Hungarian” and “Romanian”.

This period is characterized by modern society, the concept of the Hungarian state in contrast with the reality of the Austro-Hungarian Dualist Monarchy. The canonization of the concept of the literature is laid to the Hungarian national political process, deepening the distance between the Hungarian nation and the ethnic communities. Hungarian literature defined in terms of a national language, becomes different from the literature of the ethnic groups in Hungary as its subcategories.

To legitimize its existence and the value of this concept, they can return to the principle of the Hungarus identity, for the ethnic literatures the translations remained the only way to be part of the Hungarian literature. Preconceptions of translations should be explored in case of the other ethnic groups from Hungary at the end of the 19th century to see more clearly the interest of Romanians for the Hungarian translations of their literature. The cultural mission of the translation based on knowledge, acceptance and reconciliation between literatures and nations becomes effective only after the mid of the 20th century.

The thesis presents contrapuntally the analysis of the popularity of a poem written by Eminescu, *De ce nu-mi vii*, respectively Endre Ady's criticism about the presentation of the play, *Love of Florica* written by Grigore Moldovan. In both cases the extra literary factors, the song, the dance and the popular costumes gives positive accent to these works of literary / drama. These possibilities of perception, based on visual and acoustic perception, which appear in the written literature, give a legitimated reception of these works. These two examples show that the oral culture and literature of that period has an important effect on the public.

After these chapters, the second half of the dissertation link to see that methodological issue which sees experience in different cultures as a result of the process of socialization legitimated by the multicultural and multilingual reality of the Monarchy.

Identifying students of the Faculty of Letters at the Royal Hungarian University, later named Franz Joseph, enter into dialogue with history of the university and research on the literary history of cultural contacts, which deals with the Romanian side in this study of intercultural contacts. Repertoires made by Viktor Karády, Lucian Nastașă respectively Cornel Sigmirean can be completed with the reconstruction of careers of these students, using our data about their lives. This reconstruction could improve the statistics of these repertoires, but reveals the issue of the national identification of the students, because this component of the identity, the nationality transcript becomes mandatory field only in the late 19th century. This segment of the research is very important because defines that the Romanian department of the university attract only Romanian students. This reality also explains the lack of professionals between Hungarian translators of Romanian literature, the foreign character of the Romanian language persist until the first decades of the 20th century, against the existing translations. Therefore it cannot be accidental that by 1919 we know only one student who chooses the Romanian specialization at the Faculty of Letters.

The existence of almost five decades of this university is very important for the higher education in Hungary. The events of the 20th century have changed the relationship between Hungarian and Romanian culture, they can also rebuild some careers of the Romanian elite who socialized in Hungarian institutions, careers that ended in mid-20th century, but which continued after 1918, in the changed conditions.

One of the results of this dissertation is the research of the elite, linking that issue with socialization. Along with positive cultural contacts, the paper presents a political conflict, but an argument related to the parallelism of the construction of cultures, to the unequal opportunities, to the inequality of the intercultural relations. In addition, the thesis contains a chapter that reinterprets the literary contacts from the perspective of intellectual careers, representing the different concepts of the cultures, of their characteristics defined by language, by nationality; that implicitly reveals the different policies of cultural transmissions.

Samuel Brassai and Hugo von Sámuel Meltzl are editors of a comparative and interdisciplinary multilingual magazine, based on concepts of universal literature developed by Goethe. Moldovan Grigore passed abandoned publicizing in Romanian,

becoming a Hungarian writer true to the Hungarian national state. Brassai and Meltzl approached by their magazine to cosmopolitanism, universalism, bringing arguments to a supranational identity, and Grigore Moldovan - as shown by the reconstruction of the genealogy of his family – were assimilated: as a Hungarian citizen with Romanian nationality, he was loyal to the Hungarian state, and was considered a traitor from the perspective of his ethnical community. Became a problematic figure of the Romanian nation and for the Hungarian also, and his hybrid identity of this view seemed inaccessible.

The issue of multiculturalism and the multilingualism, characteristic for the end of the 19th century cannot be separated from the study of cultural and literary contacts. The multilingual and multicultural individual and communal identities must be studied in a historical perspective, with appropriate methodology.

The study of the history of elite brings value to dissertation. This study shows the function of the paradigm of the identities contrary to the national identity paradigm imposed by national states in training and leads to recognition of those processes that have led to the relative brevity of the concepts we use and the problematic nature of their use. We recognize that the professional identities of the first professors at the University of Cluj have very different components influenced by their religious identity, their scientific concepts.

The liberal supporter of the tolerance promoted by the Unitarian religion, Hugo von Meltzl, is an intellectual who belongs to an ethnic group (Saxon / German) in Hungary, in the Monarchy, but that affiliation differs from that of Grigore Moldovan, with Romanian nationality but a Hungarian Greek Catholic citizen. This claim is related to the quality of the contacts, the subordinate, unevenly report between them, so the history of cultural relations cannot be separated from issues of power, of ideology.

Sporadic translations of this period, the different conceptions of translators of the Romanian poetry, show the way pieces of Romanian literature are looking for their place in the Hungarian literature. The most important issue of the thesis is that the Romanian-Hungarian literary contacts, the case studies of dissertation cannot be differentiated on the basis of national character, because since the late 19th century the concept of the nation, state, national literature and national culture were still just developing.

