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THE RISE OF TRANSLATION STUDIES IN BULGARIA

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Abstract. This article sets out to outline the evolution of the Translation Studies in Bulgaria from 1970 till the beginning of the 21st century. It aims to provide a brief overview of some pioneering articles, the studies that marked the development of translation theory from 1970 to 1990 and some works from the post-totalitarian period. In 1976 the Publishing House *Narodna kultura* lays the foundation stone for Translation studies, creating the collection "The Art of Translation". From the 1970s, the Theory and Practice of Translation are included in the courses offered by the Faculty of Western Languages of Sofia University. If the key word defining the translating activity in Bulgaria from the Second World War to the 1990s is confinement, the one that qualifies its state at the beginning of the 21st century is openness. Very controlled in the years 1970 – 1990, the translatological reflection frees itself from the ideological pressure at the turn of the 20st and 21st centuries.

Keywords: higher education; ideology; translation; translation studies

Contemporary translation criticism in Bulgaria is revived in 1974 with the establishment of the Union of Translators. It is notably under the initiative of the Union that in 1976 the Publishing House *Narodna kultura* lays the foundation stone for Translation studies, creating the collection "The Art of Translation". The first volume is published under the direction of Lyoubomir Ognyanov-Rizor, translator of Marx, Engels and Lenin, but also of Shakespeare, Goethe, Heine and Schiller. Rizor and his collaborators do not hide their ambition to publish each year a collective work that deals with translation problems under two aspects: ideological and pragmatic. The following volumes come out in 1977, 1978, 1980. The latest issues of the collection appear under the name of another Publishing House, *Nauka i izkustvo*. The volumes in question are *Linguistic Problems of Translation: Slavonic languages* (1985); *Linguistic Problems of Translation: English – Bulgarian* (1986); *Linguistic Problems of Translation: Russian* (1987).

The transfer of copyright was not a problem, as all Publishing Houses at the time were state owned. Also, it should be remembered that the logocratism,

which directed all intellectual activity in totalitarian regimes, affected, among other things, the translatological reflection. The translation activity was not immune to the pressure on artistic and literary production, exerted by the political context. Within the Publishing Houses there were managers, and even entire departments, responsible for checking the quality of translations, but above all for ensuring that ideological requirements were observed. The translator always worked on a team with an editor (proofreader) whose task was to ensure, of course, the linguistic correctness of the translation, but primarily its ideological correctness. Furthermore, the specialized sections of the socialist press provided criticism and publicity for the translated works. The journalists who wrote the reports were also trustworthy people. In short, everything was monitored at all levels of the editorial and advertising chain, from the choice of the works to be translated, the translator and the editor, to that of the critic. Everything went through an ideological sieve that made it virtually impossible to infiltrate an idea that transgressed the norm. The only way, if not to avoid the damage, at least to reduce its extent, was self-censorship, arguably milder than institutional censorship (Kristeva 2016, 28). As for the translator, they agreed to play cat and mouse with the editorial system to convey a meaning that was poorly judged *a priori*. In short, the censorial mechanism was the major characteristic of this period.

The pioneers

In this climate of ideological pressure and surveillance two significant articles appear in 1969: that of the poet-translator Atanas Daltchev, "Some Fundamental Conditions for the Choice of Classics", and that of the semiotician Alexander Ljudskanov, "The Principle of Functional Equivalents – Foundation of the Theory and Practice of Translation". *The principle of functional equivalents*, introduced by the latter, observes a few requirements: the translation must preserve the function of the linguistic means of the source text; the means of expression are untranslatable out of context; if the target language does not have a formal equivalent of a given linguistic unit of the source text, its function is assumed by another linguistic means; the translation must guarantee the functional accuracy of the target text. The translator plays an important role in the translational process, intended as the *process of encoding – decoding – recoding*, which is analogous to the communication process. It extracts the linguistic message encoded in the source system, decodes it and, after having it recoded, inscribes it in the target system. The translation that is governed by *the principle of functional equivalents* is based on the dialectic of freedom and necessity. It moves away from formal precision to approach functional precision, becoming the functional component of textual *semiosis* (Kristeva 2019, 351).

Thus, towards the end of the 1960s, insisting on the need to articulate together the theory and practice of translation, the Vice-president of the International Semiotics Association from 1969 to 1972, Alexander Ljudskanov, applies himself to developing a semiotics of the translation process. To this end, he seeks to highlight the common characteristics of literary translation and technical translation, removing the traditional opposition between the literary approach and the linguistic approach to translation. At the same time, he challenges both the use of different methods of analysis according to potential readers of the target text and the general belief that poetic translation allows more freedom compared to the technical one. In short, he justifies the model he proposes by the undeniable fact that all types of translation are manifestations of the same phenomenon (Kristeva 2019, 342). This universal paradigm, which presents translation as a "semiotic process of transformation", allows the science of translation to be considered as a "branch of semiotics" (Ljudskanov 1967, 86). Starting from the premise that all information exists in the form of a code, Ljudskanov defines translation as a communicative exchange between two semiotic systems, which functions in the same way as a *process of decoding – recoding*, and necessarily requires a semiotic mediation of a cognitive nature. Building a pattern in human memory requires analysis and synthesis. These two phases involve the transformation of signs from one code to another, while retaining the information carried by the message (Kristeva 2019, 344). Ljudskanov's ideas on machine translation contribute, among other things, to pave the way for the penetration of generative and transformational grammar in Bulgaria (Venkova 2017, 233).

To return to the collection "The Art of Translation", all the translation criticism, included in the four volumes supervised by members of the Union of Translators, published in 1976, 1977, 1978 and 1980, bear the imprint of a strong ideological coloring. However, a few articles deserve special attention: "Are Translators Traitors?" by Anna Kamenova who tackles ethical problems; "Reflections on Our Art of Translation" (1976) by Anguelina Terzieva who analyzes certain translation aspects; "On Translation of Some Implicit Structures" by Bistra Alexieva (1977) and "On the Role of Tradition in the Transcription of English Names" by Andrei Danchev (1977), who tackle translation problems from a linguistic point of view.

Translation Studies as an academic discipline

The fact that most of the authors of the articles, published in the volumes of the "The Art of Translation" collection, are university professors, contributes to the decision to insert Translation Studies in University foreign language curricula. Thus, from the 1970s, the Theory and Practice of Translation are included in the courses offered by the Faculty of Western Languages of Sofia

University "St. Kliment Ohridski". Hence the need both for introductory manuals on Translation Studies and for targeted manuals, centered on specific problems posed by the practice of translation.

We should point out the strong impact of the communist ideology on the problematization of translation by university professors. In 1981, Anna Lilova's monograph *Introduction to the General Theory of Translation* is published. According to the author, this volume deals with the theoretical problems of translation, considered to be an integral part of the social system and popular culture. Observing the prescriptions of Marxism-Leninism, it sets out to clarify the dialectical nature of translation, its social essence and its role in society, while insisting nevertheless on the "creative" character of this activity.

The miscellany *Linguistic Problems of Translation*, edited by Ivanka Vasseva and published in 1987, deals with the problems of translation for the Bulgarian – Russian language pair. The proposed texts take into account the differences between the two languages, emphasizing the expressive capacities of the target language. This collective work includes twelve studies that relate to textual linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, semantics and lexicographic practice. Half of the articles have pragmatic orientation and aim at the improvement of the translation quality. Some deal with the peculiarities of translation in terms of generic diversity, namely the translation of poetry, prose and scientific texts.

In another study, *Stylistics of Translation* (1989), Ivanka Vasseva offers a general stylistics of the subject. The first part of the volume is devoted to the specificity of the translation of scientific and technical texts and of socio-political and journalistic texts, the second – to the translation of literary texts. Starting from the fundamental questions in literary criticism, Translation Studies and stylistics, set up at the beginning of each part, the author examines the practice of translation that must respect the style of the original. Furthermore, she highlights the importance of proofreading and illustrates the theoretical claims through an abundant exemplification in several languages: Russian, German, English, Spanish, etc.

1989: the turning point

If the key word defining the translating activity in Bulgaria from the Second World War to the 1990s is confinement, the one that qualifies its state at the beginning of the 21st century is openness. The great extension of translation from 1990 on is accompanied by a critical movement. Translators themselves acquire the right and the courage to speak out about their own work, as well as that of their colleagues. Very controlled in the years 1970 – 1990, their thinking frees itself from the ideological pressure at the turn of the 20st and 21st centuries.

During the last decade of the 20st century, the translatological reflection looks at specific problems. In 1990, Sergei Vlahov and Sider Florin publish their monograph *The Untranslatable in Translation*. Dealing with the translation of referents, the book takes up the basic ideas of their eponymous article published in 1969 in the collection "The Art of Translation" by the Publishing House *Narodna kultura*. The major contribution of the work consists in the proposed definition of the notion of *realia*: "We will call *realia* the words of the popular language, which signify objects, concepts and phenomena, typical of the geographical place, of the material life or of the socio-historical peculiarities of a people (a tribe, a community) or a country, which therefore bring a national, local or historical color and have no exact equivalents in other languages" (Vlahov & Florin 1990, 33 – 34). The authors propose their typology of *realia* according to a few criteria: the object, the place, the time, and the way of translating. Thus, the three main categories of *realia* are: 1. geographic and ethnographic *realia*; 2. the *realia* of material life; 3. socio-historical *realia*. Vlahov and Florin think that *realia* cannot be translated out of context and that translation does not offer the best possibility of their transmission. There are two major premises for their untranslatability: the lack of equivalents in the target language and the almost impossible reproduction of the national and/or historical color that characterizes *realia*. Among the strategies for translating *realia*, we can retain transcription, calque, bulgarization, resorting to the use of synonyms, description, and explanation. The numerous examples indicate the steps that need to be followed by the translator, depending on the case. The two authors insist on the cultural color of the translation, which derives from the fact that any referent belongs to the culture or the period to which it relates. In other words, any culture or any period is distinguished by its own referents; and any referent is associated with a culture or a period, including in the case of a foreign language and literature.

Païssy Christov examines the problems of poetic translation, and in particular rhythm and metrics. His monograph on the translation criticism of poems by Victor Hugo, Charles Baudelaire and Paul Verlaine, *Linguistic problems of Rhythm in Bulgarian Translations of 19th Century French Poetry* (1995), and his article "Rhythm and Metrics in Translation" (1994) point out the importance of the adequate recreation of rhythm. In order not to alter it, the translator of the poetic work should concentrate their efforts at the same time on the stanza, the syntax, the metrics and the phonetics. The study of Germanist Ana Dimova focuses on the stylistic adequacy of the translation of Austrian literary texts, entitled *Impressionism and Translation* (1995).

The magazine *Panorama*

The magazine *Panorama*, the organ of the Union of Bulgarian Translators,

has established itself over the years as the forum for translatological reflection. It was created in 1980 at the initiative of Leda Mileva, a writer and translator, daughter of the expressionist poet Gueo Milev. The magazine hosts translations of literary texts, as well as articles dealing with different aspects of the translatological research. Several editors have succeeded at the head of *Panorama*: Leda Mileva (1980 – 1991), Gantcho Savov (1994 – 1997), Valentina Boyadjieva (1997 – 2003), Zhela Gueorguieva (2003 – 2013), Emanouil Vidinski (2013 – 2016), Valentin Dichev (2016 – 2018) and Nevena Panova (2018 –). The magazine's format was overhauled in 2004 under the leadership of Zhela Gueorguieva. Two specialized sections have been set up: "The Pickwick club" draws portraits of eminent Bulgarian translators, while "The Art of Translation" covers history, criticism and theory of translation. This last section is of particular interest because it publishes texts by intellectuals and writers who have marked the translatological thought: Maurice Blanchot, Jacques Derrida, Umberto Eco, Wolfgang Iser, Octavio Paz, Ezra Pound, Paul Ricœur, Georges Steiner, and many others. Through the diversity of approaches and the richness of themes, the magazine *Panorama* rewards the efforts of the editorial teams who have succeeded one another, and who, despite the difficulties linked to the economic crisis, have done their utmost to allow the magazine to remain a melting pot of translatological reflection in Bulgaria, a privileged place for the exchange of ideas and intercultural dialogue (Jeleva 2013, 176 – 178).

In conclusion, it can be said that at the turn of the 21st century, the reflection of Bulgarian researchers and translators on the translation problems goes in two directions: theoretical and practical. Theoretical research is focused on the development of a particular theory of translation that takes into account the specificities of the Bulgarian language and favors the linguistic and functional aspects of translation. To give an example, Tanya Kirova's monograph, *Temporal Categories in the Particular Theory of Translation* (2006), takes a contrastive approach to the treatment of the stylistic and pragmatic aspect of speech, based on the Bulgarian – Russian language pair. The practical dimension is oriented towards the reception of the translations, the translation criticism and the implementation of pragmatics and stylistics of translation according to the expressive potential of the Bulgarian language (Jeleva & Kristeva 2020, 10).

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