THE SELF-TRANSLATION OF THE COLLOQUIAL DISCOURSE IN *ROUMAINS DÉRACINÉS* BY PAUL MICLĂU

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Abstract

The focus of this study is represented by the self-translation of the colloquial discourse in *Roumains déracinés,* the autobiographical novel of the Romanian writer of French expression Paul Miclau. As the writing of the novel was unfolding, the writer explored the idea of using the colloquial discourse as he practised it in his communication with his students while teaching Romanian for foreign students at the University of Montpellier, the Faculty of Letters and Humanities. The idea of employing this type of discourse arose out of the necessity of using spontaneous phrases in French without interfering with the nature of the language from an ethnological point-of-view. The phrases pertaining to the colloquial discourse are scattered throughout the novel which leads us to believe that the writer-translator made intentional use of this type of language in order to transfigure a surprising universe with a view to gaining the appreciation of the Francophone readership, a goal which the writer accomplished, as in 1996 he won the European Prize granted by Association des Écrivains de Langue Française for his original volume *Roumains déracinés* (1995). If the use of this type of discourse was possible in French, as it was close to the students' jargon, things are quite different when it comes to its translation into Romanian; some phrases were translated into the Banat dialect, their rendering being difficult or even impossible.

Keywords: *translator, writer, colloquial discourse, Banat dialect.*

Self-translation may be regarded as a practical application of the translation process as the translator is simultaneously the author of the original text.

Under which circumstances can any writer self-translate? How can the choice between translating and self-translating be accounted for?

Self-translation may be regarded as an essential part of an author's freedom to translate their own work. Self-translation is defined as the translation of a work into another language by the author themselves.

Self-translation may represent a privileged research territory for, as one ponders upon self-translation, one can get a better understanding of what translation really is[1].

Self-translation is, in fact, the translation or the rewriting of one's own work. The writer-translator may be bilingual or even multilingual, being able to translate or rewrite their own texts in two languages: from French as a foreign language into one's mother tongue and the other way round, placing themselves in a position which conflates the processes of writing and translating: by self-translation, a bilingual author simultaneously creates an original work and a translation[2].

Therefore, self-translation is the privileged space where literature and translation coexist[3].

We may assert that the translation phenomenon is no longer a novelty in the field of literature.

The most common direction in the process of self-translation is from the mother tongue into the foreign language. However, the reverse direction is also frequent, as was the case of Paul Miclău, whose translations contributed decisively to the development of Francophony in Romania as well as to promoting the Romanian literature within the context of French culture.

For Paul Miclău self-translation represented a complex "adventure" which unfolded along three major lines:

1. The translation as part of his teaching career – the translation of his doctoral thesis entitled *Le Signe Linguistique*, published by the prestigious Publishing House C. Klincksieck in Paris in 1970 - in which he submitted an interpretation of the linguistic sign on a Saussurian level. The

Romanian version, translated by the author himself as *Semiotica lingvistică,* was published by Facla Publishing House in Timisoara in 1978 and has become a point of reference in the field. We should emphasise that, in the process of self-translating, Paul Miclăiu preserved the structures existing in the original French version of the text and did not operate too many changes.

2. The prose translation – the paradox of self-translation in which the writer cannot anticipate the end result of his translation. Out of the eight prose works authored by the Romanian writer of French expression we shall focus upon the first volume in French - *Roumains déracinés* - which was written in 1985. As it could not have been published in French, the author translated it into Romanian. The first edition, censored, was published in 1989. The Romanian version entitled *Dislocații* was published in two volumes as a deluxe edition in 1994. *Roumains déracinés* was published by Publisud in Paris in 1995, its self-translation into Romanian being performed under special circumstances.

3. The poetic translation which represented the focus of the activity of the poet and translator Paul Miclău. How can one translate a poetic text into French? Paul Miclău translated by resorting to the use of the Alexandrine which turned into a linguistic exercise for him. As regards the poetic translation from French into Romanian, the writer-translator adapted the Romanian verse to the French Alexandrine and made constant use of the twelve syllable-line – six iambic feet - with a caesura in the middle, which represents a turning point in the evolution of the Romanian sonnet.

Next, we are going to analyse some aspects of the self-translation of the colloquial discourse in *Roumains déracinés* authored by the Romanian poet and prose-writer of French expression Paul Miclău. Mention should be made that Paul Miclău, who was an accomplished bilingual, having excellent command of the French language, started his literary career by writing poetry while he was still a student (1951-1952) – the volume *Din izvor de verb* (2008) stands testimony to this – then he focused his efforts on translation activities. The year 1966 (when he was already in Paris) represented a watershed in his career as he started to write in French. The

texts were published much later in the volume *Fugues* in 2006.

The novel *Roumains déracinés* is regarded as a self-fiction and even a poetic novel. It describes the deportation of the writer's family to Bărăgan and the first two years of his academic education in the dogmatic context of the respective period.

The book was awarded a prize by the *Association des Écrivains de Langue Française*, the ceremony of granting the distinction being held in the halls of the French Senate. Being the winner of the first prize on a European level the volume was launched within the context of a Francophone book festival at The Council of Europe in Strasbourg as well as at the Book Salon in Paris.

Therefore, *Roumains déracinés* is an autobiographic and self-fictional novel. It is an autobiogaphy evolving around the year 1950 being focused around two main core-situations: the deportation of some of the members of the writer's family to Bărăgan and the first years of his academic education during a period when the Stalinist regime had reached its apex.

It is the frightening story of a family of Romanian peasants from Banat displaced from one region and deported to another in inhuman conditions during the Communist regime. On the other hand, the novel represents some sort of memoirs in which the author "wanted to describe the framework of his existence" which rules out description in order to conclude with: "Six hours from now the champagne will inscribe on our lips the unreadable signs beyond... a new writing mode?!?"[4].

In *Roumains déracinés*, Paul Miclau is at the same time the author, the narrator and a character corresponding to the dramatic events narrated in the text. The author himself underlined that the writing of this novel „came to him as he felt it, as natural as his heart-beats"[5].

Emphasis should be placed on the fact that the Romanian version of the novel, *Dislocații*, does not contain any reference to any real person, place or date being therefore "suspended in space and time"[6].

For an informed Romanian reader the text is quite transparent, nevertheless – as the author himself claimed. As far as the French version is concerned, the writer succeeded in reconstructing and even in introducing the proper names and

the toponyms which represent some points of reference in the text even if their significance for a Francophone reader is quite obscure. These references reconstruct the phenomenon of political exclusion, deportation and cultural amputation; however, the author-narrator, a Romanian peasant's son, was able to pursue his academic studies in French even in such a social context.

We underline that the original French version contains names only in order to refer to animals and secondary characters, which vaguely enhances the fictional substance of the poetic novel. The writing mode in the French version provides the key for the decoding of the Romanian verson of the text. The author himself confessed that, in fact, it is not a fictional novel: "The suffering quill embodies the reality even when it dreams"[7].

As regards the text itself, the author stated that he was not forced to use a type of colloquial discourse but, as a result of his education, he followed his natural and professional impulse. One way of accounting for this is that the original version of the text was written in French and that the author, being a teacher at the time, used the colloquial register in his communication with his students in Montpellier, France which somehow contributed to the spontaneous use of colloquial words and phrases in the translation. Yet, the use of this type of discourse poses a challenge when the author embarks upon the task of self-translating the text into Romanian – namely, how to render this type of colloquial vocabulary? The translator resorted to the use of the dialect spoken in Banat – therefore, the translation process amounted to a return to his origins. We have tried to organize the vocabulary used in the self-translation according to various spheres of interest, namely: family relations, human activities, professions, objects/things, food, plants and miscellanea.

The following theoretical and practical problems arose in the self-translation of the novel *Roumains déracinés:*

- The text in French was written under conscience pressure and was addressed to a Francophone readership. When the translation into Romanian was realized the surprise–element

consisted in the fact that the Romanian readership had changed in the meantime.

- A very accurate translation. The text does not contain any proper names or toponyms. Their absence is due to the censorship during the Stalinsit regime. One of the paradoxes consisted in the fact that the text was too abstract. The Romanian version is very close in substance to the nature of the text.

- The linguistic register in which the French version of the text was produced is to be noted. The French version was written in the colloquial style characteristic of the students' discourse. This is where the challenge arises: how to render this colloquial text into Romanian, how to convey the slangy overtones? It is impossible to translate! However, the translation into Romanian was realized by having recourse to the mechanism of spontaneity according to the language of the peasants in Banat, the region where the writer-translator Paul Miclau was born.

- For the intellectual reader, the translation of this type of colloquial discourse posed many problems as they had to study the dialect spoken in Banat in order to understand the text: *oncle*=*tonton* (in colloquial French), *uica* (in Romanian, in the dialect spoken in Banat).

- From the perspective of the translation theory: the technique of equivalence is widely employed in the self-translation of this novel.

- What are the translation paradoxes in the self-translation of the novel *Roumains déracinés* ?

- One of the paradoxes lies in the great command the writer had of both languages (French and Romanian). We can state that the writer-translator was a bilingual person.

- The stylistic vision and the perspective upon the characters. In the case of the writer-translator Paul Miclau one may notice "the forgoing of all specialized knowledge" as he resorted to an independent, personalized formula.

- *Roumains déracinés* is a political, fictional novel.

- The introduction of characters, proper names and toponyms in the French version which do not appear in the Romanian translation, due to the severe censorship during the Ceausescu regime.

The following analysis is centered upon the problem of self-translating the colloquial discourse in *Roumains déracinés* from French into Romanian - *Dislocații*. In order to illustrate this facet of the self-translation process, we shall analyze a number of significant examples which foreground both the French vocabulary and the Romanian vocabulary translated into the dialect spoken in Banat. As it has already been mentioned in this paper, the examples have been organized under several headings corresponding to various domains or spheres of interest:

- **The sphere of family relations:**

Family relations	
Mais dans ce sens il devrait passer la parole *à son oncle* (p. 9).	Pentru asta ar trebui să dea cuvântul *lui uică-su*, vestit geolog amator (p. 11).
*Ton **grand-père** Simion* est descendant de la famille d'un prêtre, mais du village voisin (p. 11).	*Taica* este și el coborâtor dintr-o familie preoțească, dar din satu vecin (p. 14).
Tu te rappelles? dit *tante* Anne à sa belle-soeur (p. 20).	Îți aduci aminte? spune *ceica* (p. 28).
Non, *tonton*, c'est au taureau qu'il faut (p. 36).	Nu, *uico* Paule, trebă musai un bic (p. 51).

Writing for a Francophone readership, Paul Miclău used terms belonging to the colloquial discourse in order "to impress" the closest reader on the communication level. In the French version the author often used the colloquial *tonton* for *oncle,* while in the Romanian version the translator used the Banat dialect word *uica* instead of *unchi* and the dialect word *ceica* for *tante* and *taica* for *grand-papa.* As far as the translation techniques are concerned, the faithful translation was employed as the translator placed himself between standard and/or colloquial French on the one hand and the Banat dialect on the other hand.

- **The domain of human activities:**

Human Activities	
Il faut travailler dur et surtout „faire gaffe" (p. 9).	Trebuie *să lucri* țapăn și mai ales să fii cu băgare de seamă (p. 12).
Dans la lumière sacrée du dimanche *on cause* (p. 25).	*Givănim* în lumina sfântă de duminică (p. 35).
Grand-mère apportait le baquet pour que le sang *ne salisse pas* l'endroit (p. 29).	Maica aducea lăvoru pentru ca sângele *să nu ime* locul cu pricina (p. 40).
Je vais me coucher sur le foin dans la grange; autrement, *je suffoque* (p. 16).	Am să mă culc pe fânul din șofru; altfel îmi vine iar *greomântu* (p. 22).

The translator resorted to the use of some Romanian words belonging to his Banat treasure in order to enable the Romanian reader to "hit upon" some significant values. For the verb *causer,* the translator used the Romanian *a givăni* (the colloquial register), a synonym of *a discuta,* just as for the verb *salir - a imi* (the colloquial register), a synonym for *a murdări, a păta.*

As concerns the French verb *suffoquer*, the translator comes up with *greomântu*, synonymous with *sufocare*, *astmă*. This patch of local color delighted the readers in Banat whereas the intellectual readers from other regions in Romania found it quite difficult to grasp the meaning of these dialect words without recourse to a dialectal dictionary. As regards the translation techniques, we can notice the cross translation and the grammatical translation methods as well as the literal translation.

- The sphere of professions:

Professions	
Ce qui n'enpêche pas le grand *prof de maths* de constater qu'il (l'élève) avait perdu la mémoire dans les champs (p. 10).	Ceea ce nu l-a împiedict pe marele *prof de socoată* să constate că-şi pierdu-se, (el, elevul) memoria în lanuri (p. 13).

In the example above, the translator enables all the Romanian readers to decode the meaning of the syntagm *prof de socoată* which easily triggers the connection with mathematics.

- The domain of things/objects:

Objects/Things	
Et puis on rentrait tous, dans *la charettte* (p. 13).	Şi hai spre casă, cu toţii-n *cocie* (p. 17).
Les gosses s'amusent dehors sur *la terre battue*, en jouant à une sorte de golf primitif (p. 15).	Puştii se joacă de-a poarca pe *socac*, un fel de golf primitif (p. 19).
Tu noues le sac, le passes sur *le manche* de la faux, arranges un peu ta chemise blanche et tes larges caleçons (p. 16).	Înnozi straiţa la gură, o pui pe *dârjala* de la coasă, îţi chiteşti cămaşa albă şi izmenele largi (p. 21).
Il y a une *assiette* pleine de „bontés": oeufs, saussissons,fromage (p. 21).	Fiecare ia *cineriul* plin de bunătăşi: ouă, cârnaţi, brânză (p. 28).
Grand-mère apportait *le baquet* pour que le sang ne salisse pas l'endroit (p. 29).	Maica aducea *lăvoru* pentru ca sângele să nu ime locul cu pricina (p. 40).
Il n'y a pas longtemps, grand-père t'a aaccompagné en ville, muni d'une *corbeille* de raisins (p. 30).	Nu cu multă vreme înainte, taica te-a dus la oraş, luând cu el o *cotărişă* de struguuri (p. 40).
Papa, m'as tu acheté un *canif*? (p. 65).	Tati, mi-ai cumpărat o *briptă*? (p. 93).
On met une *couverture* sur la bête, qui recouvre tout, y compris le baquet (p. 37).	Se pune o *poneavă* deasupra vitei, care acoperă totul, inclusiv butoiul (p. 52).
Les objets sont accumulés en tas aveec le souci que rien ne manque: outils agricoles, *instruments*, vêtements, bouffé (p. 137).	Lucrurile sunt adunate în grămezi bine aranjate pentru ca nimic să nu lipsească:unelte agricole, *ţăujîni*, haine, hrană (p. 222).
La charette est pourvue de ridelles en planches étanches (p. 202).	*Bocul* are loitre dă scânduri bine-ncheiate (p. 93).
On met *la nappe* par terre, on s'assoit tous autour et on mange avec une discrétion telle que si l'on fait bien attention, on entend les ailes du Saint-Esprit passer au-dessus (p. 186).	Punem *mesăriţa* jos, ne aşezăm roată şi mâncăm cu atâta cucernicie încât, dacă luăm aminte, auzim aripile sfântului duh trecând peste noi (p. 64).

The multitude of the above-mentioned examples which contain various things and objects prompted us to decode the meaning of the respective dialect words by browsing a glossary of the Banat dialect compiled by the author himself in his volume entitled *Comorîştea* (2009), in which we can find the explanation offered by the writer: "My native Banat dialect sounds good for whoever knows how to read it – I did not provide the phonetic transcription, as others had tried before, thus making the reading more difficult both for the natives and for the sharp-tongued educated people in Valahia. I included some pronunciation rules at the end of the volume for the benefit of the latter, should they desire to discover my treasure from

Comorîştea and to hit upon some *values*, in addition to a glossary meant for outsiders too"[8].

We pondered upon this treasure and decoded its meaning. Thus, the following dialect words have literary counterparts : by *cocie* the translator meant *căruţa*; by *socac - uliţă*; by *dârjală* (of Slavonic origin) - *mânerul la coasă; ciner* (French origin) - *platou; lăvor* (French origin) - *lighean; cotăriţă - coş din nuiele; briptă - briceag; poneavă - scoarţă; ţăujîni - unelte, instrumente; boc - căruţă cu ladă; mesăriţă - faţă de masă.* The translator used the Banat dialect out of his desire to preserve the valuable language repository of his birth place, belonging to his forefathers who bequeathed it to him.

- The domain of food and nourishment:

Food and Nourishment	
Le 9 mars, c'est les „Martyrs"; toute la matinée on mange des *crêpes*, préparées sur un grand plateau en fonte, à même le feu (p. 15).	La 9 martie sunt Mucenicii; toată dimineaţa ne îndopăm cu *scoverzi*, gătite pe plita de fontă uriaşă, aşezată pe pirostrii (p. 19).
En ville, on les retire à l'avance et on met du *sucre* à leur place (p. 35).	La oraş se scoate osul înainte, iar în locul lui se pune *ţucăr* (p. 49).
Le premier sillon c'est pour y mettre les grains de *maïs* et de *haricot*, mélangés dans une proportion précise, pour que le haricot n'étouffe pas le maïs (p. 42).	Prima brazdă este pentru a pune boabele de *cucuruz* şi de *păsule* amestecate într-o proporţie exactă, pentru ca păsulea să nu sufoce cucuruzul (p. 59).
Tu laisses couler tes larmes dans la spirale de ses feuilles et, diluées par la pluie, elles descendent aux racines pour revenir après dans la „*mamaliga*" que tu mangeras pendant l'hiver (p. 87).	Laşi lacrimile sa-ţi curgă în spirala frunzelor lui şi, diluate de ploaie, ele coboară la rădăcini pentru a se-ntoarce apoi în *coleşă* pe care ai s-o mânci la iarnă (p. 131).
C'est comme ça. Fille, prends le baquet, il est déjà plein du *lard* (p. 183).	Gata. Fiică ia lăvoru, îi plin dă *clisă* (p. 59).

For the food area, the translator used a wide range of dialect words which are difficult to explain if it were not for the glossary provided by the author. The dialect word *scoverzi* has the synonym *clatite;* to *ţucăr,* of Slavonik origin, corresponds *zahăr; păsule - fasole; coleşă - mămăligă*, otherwise, the translator used the word *mamaliga*, as it is untranslateable; *clisă - slănină.* We consider that the translator's use of these terms suggests his longing for the return to his place of origin.

- **The vegetation domain:**

Plants	
Le plus pénible c'était entre les champs de *maïs*, qui attiraient les bêtes (p. 33).	Cel mai nasol era printre lanurile de *cucuruz*, care atrăgeau vitele (p. 46).
Mais avant, il faut fait faire la toilette des *ceps*: les logoter avec des fils de raphia, ou, comme ça devient rare, avec des fils tirés des lanières de tilleul (p. 46).	Dar mai înainte trebuie făcută toaleta *ciocoţilor*, legatul cu fire de rafie, sau, cum aceasta e din ce în ce mai rară, cu fire dezlipite de pe scoarţa de tei (p. 65).
Les „*croix*" ont bien résisté à l'orage (p. 186).	*Crâstaşii* n-au fost doborâţi de furtună (p. 63).

All these words are meant to evoke the beautiful Banat village situated close to the Yugoslavian border, midway between Moravița

and Oravița: *cucuruz*, of Slavonik origin - *porumb*; *ciocoți* - *butuci de vie*; *crâstași* - *14 snopi în cruce*.

- **Miscellanea**:

Miscellanea	
Le troupeau s'établit quelque part dans un verger de pruniers; mais certains agneaux, plus chétifs restent à la maison (p. 15).	*Cioporul* se adună undeva într-o livadă cu pruni;dar unii miei,mai firavi,rămân acasă (p. 20).
Je vais me coucher sur le foin dans *la grange*; autrement, je suffoque (p. 16).	Am să mă culc pe fânul din *șofru*; altfel îmi vine iar greomântu (p. 22).
Quand arrive le sexe, je trébuche, on tombe tous les deux daans *la meule* de foin et on se suicide dans l'étreinte (p. 18).	Când se dezlănțuie carnea, mă clatin, cădem amândoi în *poșorul* de fân și ne sinucidem în îmbrățișare (p. 24).
Ce fut une honte, car le blé on le ramasse à l'„aire", où l'on construit *des meules* fantastiques (p. 22).	A fost o rușine, căci grâul e adunat la arie, unde se clădesc niște *jirăzi* fantastice (p. 30).
-Eh, Fleur, t'as pas l'impression qu'il y a six jambes *au pieu* (p. 30).	Bărbatul ei, la un moment dat:măi Floareo, nu crezi că sunt șase picioare pe *strujac*? (p. 42).
Moi, tu sais, c'est pas pour *le fric*, ça m'intéresse de guérir, de soigner les autres (p. 79)	Mă, e o chestie, nu mă interesează *biștarii*, eu vreau să vindec, să tratez bolnavii (p. 117).

The domain of miscellanea contains words which are used colloquially both in French and Romanian, such as *fric* (*argent*) in French and *biștari* - *bani*, *gologani* in Romanian, as well as pieu (lit) in French and *strujac* – a mattress made of corn leaves. For the other examples we can notice the following: *ciopor* for *turmă*; *șofru* for *hambar, șopron*; *poșor* for *căpiță de fân*; *jiradă* for *claie*. For the informed reader these dialect words are well-known but for other categories of readers, their meaning is quite difficult to decode, which leads to the incomprehensibility of the local folklore due to the placement of the colloquial discourse.

Conclusions: The novel *Roumains déracinés* was highly successful in France. The French version is hardly known in Romania. However, the Romanian version is quite famous. The process of prose translation is a real challenge. In the self-translation of this novel Paul Miclău avoided the translation trap which consists in the adaptation technique. The impersonal tone of the novel is characterised by the spontaneity and sincerity of the writer-translator.

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