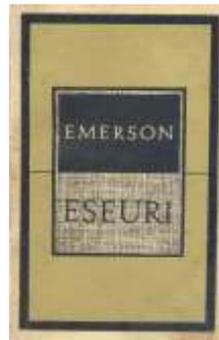
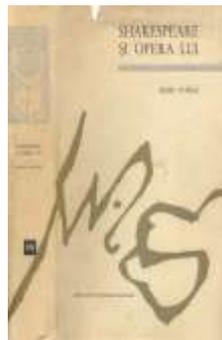


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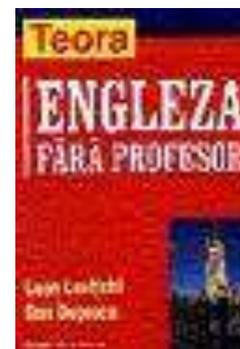
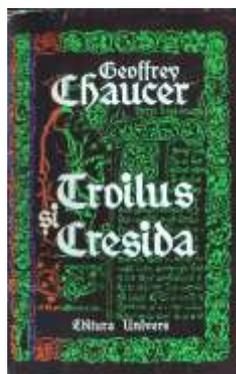


Leon D. Levitchi

Two Great Translators into English

– Levitchi and Duțescu –

Two Personalities to Remember.



**EDITURA PENTRU LITERATURĂ CONTEMPORANĂ
CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE PRESS**

București 2010



EDITURA PENTRU LITERATURĂ CONTEMPORANĂ
CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE PRESS

<http://mttlc.ro/editura/>



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ISBN: 978-606-92387-4-5



LIDIA VIANU

Translation – this Mapping of the Mind...

Dan Duṭescu, Leon Leviṭchi and George Sandulescu were my teachers in the late sixties. Whenever I think of them, I find myself contemplating the prospects they opened up for me – because I met them at an age, and in a world where my mind needed to find a way.

Leon Leviṭchi came first, chronologically, with dictionaries and Shakespeare. Only after graduation did I understand his essential fanaticism for the translation of poetry and his devouring curiosity as far as words – all words – were concerned. He brought rigour to both translation and grammar teaching. He was the true scholar, who knew that one needed to know another language in order to access its literature, to make it known by means of accurate and inspired translation. Poetry translation was his own approach to creation, and, while practising it, he also put order in the Romanians' approach to how one should teach the language of Shakespeare.



Dan Duṭescu and Leon Leviṭchi had quite a number of things in common, from the fact that they were born and died almost at the same time, to their having studied English together, to their teaching side by side at the English Department of Bucharest University for a very long time. Duṭescu was the poet of the two. He was shy, delicate, infinitely obliging – to the point of no return. He would anticipate a thought as quickly as others anticipated a blow – and he would never hurt a sensibility, whether friend or student. His refuge was Chaucer for a long time. I was a third-year student when he taught a course on Chaucer – and I was one of the two students who showed up. A drop in the ocean. But a drop that mattered. Both as a poet-translator and as an aristocrat of sensibility.

The closest in age to me, George Sandulescu, the author of this memento, had been Leviṭchi's student, too. They both examined me in English linguistics and lexicology in my third year. They could not be more different. Leviṭchi was tense and tongue in cheek. Sandulescu was a burning intellect always on the go, or, as this essay puts it, he was a genetic researcher. He set me along the path of British Modernism and Joseph Conrad. I am still in that place of the mind that he made me inhabit before he left Bucharest for Sweden, later for Princess Grace Library in Monaco, for all the international conferences he organized, the books he wrote and published, for Joyce. I have learnt from him more than words can say. There is no better proof of a teacher's value than the extent to which he maps your mind.

Translation happens to be what brings Leviṭchi, Duṭescu and Sandulescu together this time. All three of them are concerned with a Romanian's grasp of English as a foreign language. Leviṭchi



was the grammarian. Duṭescu was the poet. Sandulescu is the one who sees the map of the mind regardless of the language. Together, they have mapped the minds of many Romanian students of English, and their books are still with us, to show us the way.

18 August 2010

Leon Leviṭchi was born on 27 August 1918 and died on 16 October 1991. He translated Shakespeare's work into Romanian. He authored the best English dictionaries for Romanian speakers so far. His grammar books are still the best guide to learning and teaching English in Romania. He wrote the first handbook for Romanian translators into English.

Dan Duṭescu was born on 21 October 1918 and died on 26 September 1992. He wrote handbooks of English for Romanian learners. He translated Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde*.

George Sandulescu has lived, worked, and conducted research and teaching in major institutions in Romania, Sweden, Great Britain, the United States and Italy. After the death in 1983 of Princess Grace of Monaco, he substantially assisted in founding the Monaco Library bearing her name, and organised important International Conferences there devoted to James Joyce (1985 and 1990), William Butler Yeats (1987), Samuel Beckett (1991), and Oscar Wilde (1993).



C. GEORGE SANDULESCU

Two Great Translators into English

– Leviṭchi and Duṭescu –

Two Personalities to Remember.

Soon we commemorate 20 years since their deaths. For they were not only born the same year – 1918 – but they died almost at the same time; Leviṭchi saw the collapse of Communism in Romania, but died soon after – on the 16 October 1991. Duṭescu closely followed him – he died only one year after, or probably less, in 1992.

They were fellow-students in Bucharest in the years of the Second World War, studying the same subject – English – in exactly the same year of academic study. And they remained lifelong friends. Close friends. Very close friends. And they lived, worked and suffered Communist persecution together.

Leviṭchi was the last descendant of a family of Greek-Orthodox priests from the far north of Romania. And his Russian language was practically as good as his native Romanian. All that was a great linguistic advantage, but was at the same time, a great political drawback. Refusing to play the petty Communist games, unlike some of his other fellow students of notorious



renown in the Communist years, and being drawn down by his religious family background (his signature, even throughout the worst years, ended in a subtly placed cross at the end of it!), he was constantly demoted throughout his university career. The most flagrant proof of systematically pushing him to the bottom is that his name was not even included in the *Dictionary of Romanian Linguists*, which was published some time in the 1970's or even early 1980's!

And both Levițchi and Duțescu had the same professional orientation: just like myself, their attention was equally divided between **English Literature** and **English Language**, with special focus on the heavyweights of Poetry. Duțescu took Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400), and made a lifetime target of the job of translating Chaucer's *Complete Works*. And he succeeded! Levițchi took the only other heavyweight left, and did the same: he translated into Romanian the complete works of William Shakespeare (1564-1616). And he succeeded even more brilliantly than his close friend Duțescu, as he had managed to have a far longer academic career. And as such, far better access to the Establishment's Publishing Houses. And the stages of various theatres, by implication.

Now, these two are great personalities for, fundamentally, one single thing – namely, an extraordinary personal and professional integrity. I confess that, having left Romania, I have literally walked the entire academic camp of the West. On both sides of the Pond. But such integrity I have never again come across: they both remain unique to me in this so densely populated Academia of Today.

Why is that **integrity** so fundamentally important ?

For the simple reason that professionally, culturally, and even personally, it remains the essential quality of an excellent translator, husband, father, or even personal friend. And believe me, I did discuss all the facets of the concept of *Excellence* with the English writer Anthony Burgess for nights



on end and over endless bottles of whisky... It was when he was invited to The White House in Washington, D.C. by the newly elected President Ronald Reagan to speak on the very subject.

In a translator, Integrity leads to Excellence, and involves ever so many features that it takes days and weeks to discuss in full. We should begin with Precision, which directly leads to the philosophical concept of EQUIVALENCE - a vast subject in an inter-linguistic context.

But why talk ? I have chosen, in order to commemorate these two great Friends of mine, two great Teachers of mine, and two great Moralists too, the following texts that they have translated into English.

Two gems of Romanian Literature! Gems of translation into English!

Learn them by heart, both of them, you, future translators, and try to understand - the hard way! - what Integrity, and Precision, and Excellence, and Equivalence really mean.

The nitty-gritty of it all. When you have done that, and it may take years, long years to get there, you can say that you have become translators verging on Excellence. But not before!

That is why, it is imperative to pay our tribute to the toil of these two - one of them called Leviṭchi, the other called Duṭescu. Read carefully what they have done, compare their translations!

See how Leviṭchi managed to do Emerson into Romanian (published as early as 1968 in Bucharest). Work out how Duṭescu managed to do Noica into English in the greater detail (translated at the philosopher's personal request).

And then answer the question: What is more difficult to translate - Is it Verse, or is it Philosophy ?

In my younger days, Translation was never accepted as a topic for a Doctoral Dissertation. Except in the United States, where the academic standards have always been considerably lower than in Great Britain. But now that **TRANSLATION has gone up in the world**, with the European



Union, and what not – it is up to you to make the most of it! And elevate it to new summits: but most certainly, not the French ones!

Let us respect the professional and moral integrity of our TWO predecessors... **Lev and Dan**. The ones who translated indiscriminately in BOTH directions. And did not wince or whine before a job, but rolled up their sleeves and got to work at once. Occasionally, working for free.

Monte Carlo, August 2010

C. George Sandulescu, M. Phil. (Leeds), Ph.D. (Essex)

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P.S. Remember that by their side, we are all pygmies... Just a handful of humble admirers!

If you think for a second I am kowtowing to them, *study carefully* the following two gem-texts of our own literature. In both versions! And aim to match their multiple skills and talents.

C.G.S.



Luceafărul / Hyperion

By Mihai Eminescu (1850 – 1889)

Translated into English by Professor **Leon Leviḫchi** (1918 – 1991).

The Romanian text was established by Gh. Adamescu, member of the Romanian Academy. It was published by Cartea Românească, Sixth Printing. 1938. pp. 159 to 173.

A fost odată ca'n povești,
A fost ca nici odată
Din rude mari împărătești
O prea frumoasă fată.

Și era una la părinți
Și mândră'n toate cele,
Cum e fecioara între sfinți
Și luna între stele.

Din umbra falnicilor bolți
Ea pasul și-l îndreaptă
Lângă fereastră, unde'n colț
Luceafărul așteaptă.

Upon a time, as people said
In fairy-tales of old,
There lived a highborn, royal maid
Of grace and charm untold.

She was her parents' only child,
In all beyond compare,
As is 'mid saints the Virgin maid,
The moon 'mid stars, so fair.

She leaves the stately colonnade;
Her steps will gain anon
The window where, beyond the shade,
Awaits Hyperion.



Privea în zare, cum pe mări
Răsare și străluce,
Pe mișcătoarele cărări
Corăbii negre duce.

She looked and saw how on the seas
He rose and shone e'rmore,
How the black-painted argosies
On restless paths he bore.

Îl vede azi, îl vede mâni,
Astfel dorința-i gata;
El iar privind de săptămâni,
Îi cade dragă fata.

She sees him nightly, now, anew,
Straight follows the desire;
Him gazing for some fortnights, too,
Grows brighter with new fire.

Cum ea pe coate-și răzima,
Visând, ale ei tâmple,
De dorul lui și inima
Și sufletu-i se împle.

And as she, dreamful, rests her head
Upon her snow-white hands,
To love him her soul is wed,
Her heart with love expands.

Și câ de viu s'aprinde el
În ori și care sară
Spre umbra negrului castel,
Când ea o să-i apară.

And with what brightness does he speak
And glitter every night,
When in the castle's shadows dark
She comes into his sight !

* *

Și pas cu pas pe urma ei
Alunecă'n odae,
Țesând cu recile-i scânteii
O mreajă de văpae.

And step by step pursuing her,
He glides into her room
And weaves a glistening gossamer
Upon his frozen loom.

Și când în pat se'ntinde drept
Copila să se culce,
I-atinge mânil pe pept,
I'nchide geana dulce.

And when, to seek her nightly rest,
Supine in bed she lies,
He strokes her hands crossed on her
breast
And closes her sweet eyes.



Și din oglindă luminiș Pe trupu-i se revarsă, Pe ochii mari, bătând închiși Pe fața ei întoarsă.	Upon her body mirrors cast A flood of golden light, Upon the eyes that beat so fast Beneath the lids closed tight.
Ea îl privea cu un surăs, El tremura'n oglindă, Căci o urma adânc în vis De suflet să o prindă;	She smiled at him with sweet assent, He in the glass did thrill And in her dreams pursued her, bent On winning of her will.
Iar ea, vorbind cu el în somn Oftând din greu suspină: „O dulce-al nopții mele Domn, „De ce nu vii tu ? Vină !	While sleeping deeply in her room, She heaves a heavy sigh: “O gentle sov'reign of my gloom, Will you not come? Draw nigh!
„Cobori în jos, luceafăr blând, „Alunecând pe-o rază, „Pătrunde'n casă și în gând „Și viața-mi luminează !”	Descend, O mild Hyperion, Glide down upon a ray, Into my home and thoughts anon And brighten up my way!”
El asculta tremurător, Se aprindea mai tare Și s'arunca fulgerător, Se cufunda în mare,	The more he thrilled at such discourse, The brighter kindled he; He hurled himself with all his force And sank into the sea;
Și apa unde-au fost căzut În cercuri se rotește. Și din adânc necunoscut Un mândru tânăr crește.	The water where he fell whirled round In ripples and, forsooth, From the mysterious profound Up sprang a princely youth.



Uşor el trece ca pe prag Pe marginea ferestii Şi Ține'n mână un toiag Încununat cu trestii !	A threshold is no easier spanned Than is the window's edge. He has a truncheon in his hand And it is crowned with sedge.
Părea un tânăr Voevod Cu păr de aur moale; Un vânăt giulgiu se'ncheie nod Pe umerele goale;	A very voivode, he was young, Had soft and golden hair, A knotted purple mantle hung Upon his shoulders bare.
Iar umbra feții străvezii E albă ca de ceară: Un mort frumos cu ochii vii Ce scânteie'n afară.	The shade of his translucent face Was white, as white as snow – A handsome corpse with living eyes That cast abroad their glow.
– „Din sfera mea venii cu greu „Ca să-ți urmez chemarea, „Iar cerul este tatăl meu, „Și mumă-mea e marea.	“However hard, I left my sky To gratify your plea, My father is the heaven high, My mother is the sea.
„Ca în cămara ta să vin, „Să te privesc de-aproape „Am coborât cu-al meu senin „Și m'am născut din ape.	To slip into your room and, dumb, To gaze at you from near, Down with my azure am I come, Born from the water's sphere.
„O vin, odorul meu nespus, „Și lumea ta o lasă; „Eu sunt luceafărul de sus, „Iar tu să-mi fii mireasă.	O come, my treasure! Leave afar The world where you abide; My love, I am the evening star And you shall be my bride.
„Colo'n palate de mărgean „Te-oiu duce veacuri multe „Și toată lumea'n ocean „De tine o s'asculte.”	We shall the coral castles gain, There will you dwell for aye, And all the people of the main Shall unto you obey.”



– „O ești frumos cum numa’n vis
„Un înger se arată,
„Dară pe calea ce-ai deschis
„N’oiu merge niciodată;
„Străin la vorbă și la port,
„Lucești fără de viață,
„Căci eu sunt vie, tu ești mort,
„Și ochiul tău mă’ngheață.”

“You are very handsome, yea,
Like angels in a dream –
But I shall never go the way
You show me with your beam.
You’re alien-spoken, alien-bred,
And lifeless is your glow,
I am alive and you are dead,
Your eyes freeze me so.”

*

*

Trecu o zi, trecură trei,
Și iarăși, noaptea vine
Luceafărul deasupra ei
Cu razele-i senine;

There passed a day, then three, then four,
The night closed in again,
And over her the star once more
His beam serene did rain.

Ea trebui de el în somn
Aminte să-și aducă,
Și dor de-al valurilor Domn
De inim’o apucă:

By images of him o’erawed
So often in her sleep,
She felt a yearning for the lord.
Of her unquiet sleep.

– „Cobori în jos, lucefăr blând,
„Alunecând pe-o rază,
„Pătrunde’n casă și în gând
„Și viața-mi luminează !”

“Descend, o sweet Hyperion,
Glide down upon a ray
Into our home and thoughts anon
And brighten up my way.”

Cum el din cer o auzi
Se stinse de durere,
Iar ceru’ncepe a roti
În locul unde pier.

When from above, he heard the girl,
The evening-star shone dead,
The skies began to reel and whirl
Where used to be his stead;



În aer rumene văpăi Se 'ntind pe lumea 'ntreagă Și din a haosului văi Un mândru chip se'ncheagă.	With crimson torches in the air The world's far ends are rife, And from the valleys of nowhere A proud shape comes to life.
Pe viḫele-i negre de păr Coroan'a-i arde pare ... Venia plutind în adevăr, Scăldat în foc de soare.	And on the locks of his black hair His crown seems all ablaze; He came and floated, one would swear, As bathed in the sun's rays.
Din negru giulgi se desfășor Marmoreele braḫe, El vine trist și gânditor Și palid e la față;	The marble arms from the black shroud Reach out as for embrace, He comes so pensive, sad, and proud, And wax-pale is his face;
Dar ochii mari și minunaḫi Lucesc adânc, himeric, Ca două patimi fără saḫ Și pline de 'ntuneric !	But his large eyes, of eerie spell, Chimerically spark, Two passions bottomless and fell And overfull of dark.
– „Din sfera mea venii cu greu „Ca să te-ascult ș'acuma, „Și soarele e tatăl meu, „Iar noaptea mi-este muma.	“ 'Twas hard to leave my sphere and come And lend to you my ear, The night she is my mother glum, The sun, my father, dear.
„O vin', odorul meu nespus, „Și lumea ta o lasă; „Eu sunt lucefăruḫ de sus, „Iar tu să-mi fii mireasă.	O, come my treasure! Leave afar The world where you abide; My love, I am the evening star And you shall be my bride.



„O vin', în părul tău bălaiu
S'anin cununi de stele,
„Pe-a mele ceruri să răsai
Mai mândră decât ele.”

„O ești frumos, cum numa'n vis
„Un demon se arată,
„Dară pe calea ce-ai deschis
„N'oiu merge niciodată !

„Mă dor de crudul tău amor
„A pieptului meu coarde,
„Și ochii mari și grei mă dor.
„Privirea ta mă arde.”

– „Dar cum ai vrea să mă cobor
„Au nu 'nțelegi tu oare,
„Cum că eu sunt nemuritor
„Și tu ești muritoare ? ”

– „Nu caut vorbe pe ales
„Nici știu cum aș începe;
„Deși vorbești pe înțeleș
„Eu nu te pot pricepe.

„Dar dacă vrei cu crezământ
„Să te 'ndrăgesc pe tine,
„Tu te coboară pe pământ
„Fii muritor ca mine.”

O, come, and on your fair-haired head
A wreath of stars I'll lay,
That from my heavens you may shed,
More glorious light than they.”

“You are as handsome as in sleep
Can but a demon be;
Yet never shall I take and keep
The path you show to me.

My heartstrings ache when every eve
You vent your cruel desire,
Your eyes, so gloomy, make me grieve,
And scorching is the fire.”

“How could I possibly descend?
You ought to realise
That my life here will have no end,
While yours just gleams and
dies.”

“I do not make of words a choice
I know not how to start,
Though you speak clearly, with men's
voice,
I fail to read your heart.

But if you really want that I
Should your beloved be
Descend on earth from there on high,
Be mortal just like me.”



– „Tu-mi ceri chiar nemurirea mea
 „În schimb pe-o sărutare
„Dar voiu să știi asemenea
 „Cât te iubesc de tare.

“My immortality you take
 As ransom for a kiss;
Yet you must know how sore I ache,
 How sore your love I miss.

„Da, mă voiu naște din păcat
 „Primind o altă lege:
„Cu veșnicia sunt legat,
 „Ci voiu să mă deslege.”

I shall be born, whate'er betide,
 In sin, take a new law;
Though to eternity I'm tied,
 I shall betide no more.”

Și se tot duce... S'a tot dus
 De dragu'-unei copile,
S'a rupt din locul lui de sus
 Pierind mai multe zile.

And off he goes... For a girl's love,
 E'er faster does he wend,
Estranged from his abode above,
 And lost for days on end.

*

*

În vremea asta Cătălin
 Viclean copil de casă
Ce umple cupele cu vin
 Mesenilor la masă,

At this time cunning Cătălin
 A boy brought up so fine
That at each sumptuous banquet scene
 He fills the cups of wine,

Un paj ce poartă pas cu pas
 A 'mpărătesei rochii,
Băiat din flori și de pripas,
 Dar îndrăsneț cu ochii,

A page who step by step does hold
 The robe-trains of the queen
A tramp born out of wedlock, bold,
 With eyes unduly keen,

Cu obrăjei ca doi bujori
 De rumeni, bată-i vina,
Se furișază pânditor
 Privind la Cătălina.

With cheeks like rosy flowers in bloom,
 On tiptoe, oh the sinner!
He steals into the dimly-lit room
 To look at Cătălina.



Dar ce frumoasă se făcu Și mândră, arz' o focul! Ei, Cătălin! acu-i acu Ca să-ți încerci norocul!	My goodness! She is near her prime How lovely is the duck! Well, Cătălin, now is the time For you to try your luck.
Și'n treacă o cuprinse lin Într'un ungher de grabă. "Dar ce vrei, mări Cătălin! Ia las' cată-ți de treabă!"	So when she slid into a nook, He clasped her unawares, "What is it, Cătălin? Now look – Go, mind your own affairs!"
„Ce voiu? aş vrea să nu mai stai Pe gânduri totdeauna Să râzi mai bine și să-mi dai O gură, numai una.”	“What is it?! Thinking stifles you, And you call that great fun! You'd better smile and give me, do, A hearty kiss, just one.”
Dar nici nu știu măcar ce-mi ceri Dă-mi pace, fugi departe! O, de luceafărul din ceri M'a prins un dor de moarte!”	“I don't know what you ask, or why – Leave me in peace, be gone! I'm deadly love-sick, and on high Is he – Hyperion. ”
„Dacă nu știi, ți-aș arăta Din bob în bob amorul, Ci numai nu te mânâia, Ci stai cu binișorul:	“You don't know?! Well, I can – I bet – Show you, and piecemeal, too, What is love – only do not fret, And hold your peace, mind you.
Cum vânătoru'ntinde'n crâng La păsărele lațul Când ți-oiu întinde brațul stâng Să mă cuprinzi cu brațul;	As in the grove the fowler lays His snare upon a tree, When I reach out my arm sideways, With both your arms clasp me;
Și ochii tăi nemișcători Sub ochii mei rămâie; De te înalț de subsuori Te 'nalță din călcâie;	Then, as I gaze into your eyes, Don't move them to and fro, And when I lift you up, just rise On tiptoe and stand so;



Un cer de stele de desupt, De-asupra-i cer de stele, – Părea un fulger ne-nterupt, Rătăcitor prin ele.	There was a sky of stars beneath, A sky of stars o’erhead – Like to a bolt with ne’er a death Among the worlds he sped.
Și din a haosului văi, Jur împrejur de sine, Vedea, ca’n ziua cea dintâiu, Cum isvorau lumine,	And from the valleys of the pit He upwards spun his way; He saw how lights sprang up and lit As in the earliest day.
Cum, izvorând, îl înconjur Ca niște mări, de-a ’notul... El zboară, gând purtat de dor, Pân’ piere totul, totul;	How like a sea they girdled him, And swam and heaved about... And flew and flew, an ache-born whim, Till everything died out.
Căci unde-ajunge, nu-i hotar, Nici ochiu spre a cunoaște, Și vremea ’ncearcă în zadar Din goluri a se naște.	For where he reached there was no bourne, To see there was no eye, And from the chaos to be born Time vainly made a try.
Nu e nimic, și totuși e O sete care-l soarbe, E un adânc, asemenea Uitării celei oarbe.	And there was nothing. There was, though, A thirst that did oppress, A gaping gulf above, below, Like blind forgetfulness.
„De greul negrei veșnicii, „Părinte, mă desleagă, „Și lăudat pe veci să fii „Pe-a lumii scară ’ntreagă;	“From heavy, dark eternity Deliver me, O Lord, For ever hallowed may’st Thou be And praised throughout the world!



„O cere-mi, Doamne, orice preț, „Dar dă-mi o altă soarte „Căci tu izvor ești de vieți „Și dătător de moarte.	O, ask me Father, anything But change my fortune now; O'er Fount of Life Thou art the king, The death-dispenser Thou;
„Reia-mi al nemuririi nimb „Și focul din privire, „Și pentru pentru toate dă-mi în schimb „O oră de iubire...	My aura of eternity, My fiery looks, retrieve, And, in exchange, for love grant me A single hour's leave.
„Din haos, Doamne-am apărut „Și m'aș întoarce 'n haos ... „Și din repaos m'am născut „Mi-e sete de repaos.”	From chaos come, I would return, To chaos, oh, most Blessed, For out of rest eternal born, I yearn again for rest.”
„Hyperion, ce din genuni „Răsați c'o 'ntreagă lume „Nu cere semne și minuni „Care n'au chip și nume.	Wan star, which from the world's confines Dost with the cosmos rise, Ask not for miracles and signs That have no name nor guise!
„Tu vrei un om să te socoți... „Cu ei să te asemeni ? ... „Dar piară oamenii cu toți, „S'ar naște iarăși oameni.	What, would thou deem thyself to be A fellow of those men? If all of them drowned in the sea, Men would be born again.
„Ei numai doar durează 'n vânt „Deșerte idealuri, – „Când valuri află un mormânt „Răsar în urmă valuri;	For it is men alone, who, blind, Build castles in the air; When waves have found their grave, behind Waves simmer everywhere;



„Ei doar au stele cu noroc
 „Și prigoniri de soarte;
„Noi nu avem nici timp, nici loc
 „Și nu cunoaștem moarte.

„Din sânul veșnicului ieri
 „Trăește azi ce moare,
„Un soare de s’ar stinge’n ceriu,
 „S’aprinde iarăși soare.

„Părând pe veci a răsări,
 „Din urmă moartea-i paște,
„Căci toți se nasc spre a muri,
 „Și mor spre a se naște.

„Iar tu, Hyperion, rămâi
 „Ori unde ai apune...
„Cere-mi cuvântul meu de’ntâiu
 „Să-ți dau înțelepciune ?

„Vrei să dau glas acelei guri,
 „Ca după ei cântare
„Să se ia munții cu păduri
 „Și insulele’n mare ?

„Vrei poate’n faptă să arăți
 „Dreptate și tărie ?
„Ți-aș da pământul în bucăți
 „Să-l faci împărăție.

Or lucky stars or Fate’s disgrace
 Are only humans’ lot,
While we have neither time nor place
 And death can strikes us not.

From yesterday’s eternal womb
 Lives now whatever dies;
And if a sun should meet its doom,
 New suns would mount the skies.

Although they seem e’er to ascend,
 Death pricks them with his thorn,
All that are born die in the end
 To live on a new morn.

Hyperion thou must remain
 Wherever thou dost rise...
Wouldst thou hear my first word again
 And so become more wise?

Wilt thou that I my mouth should open
 To sing the song that wiles
The mountains with their wooded slope
 The sea’s uncounted isles?

Or wilt thou prove by deeds thy worth
 That right and might canst helm?
I would in clods give the the earth
 To make it a great realm!



„Îți dau catarg lângă catarg,
„Oștiri spre a străbate
„Pământu'n lung și marea'n larg
„Dar moartea, nu se poate...

Or give thee vessels, masts on masts,
And hosts that land and sea
Will cross, the power to ride the blast
But death – that cannot be...

„Și pentru cine vrei să mori ?
„Întoarce-te, te'ndreaptă
„Spre-acel pământ rătăcitor
„Și vezi ce te așteaptă !”

And who, think'st thou, thy death is
worth
Turn back, turn down once more
And see what on the straying earth
There is for thee in store.”

*

*

În locul lui merit din ceriu
Hyperion se'ntoarse
Și, ca și'n ziua cea de ieri,
Lumina și-o revarsă.

Hyperion finds back his way
To his predestined stead
And, once again, as yesterday,
His radiant light does shed.

Căci este sara 'n asfințit
Și noaptea o să înceapă
Răsare luna liniștit
Și tremurând din apă

The sun does with the dusk compete,
The night will gather soon;
Out of the waters, trembling, sweet,
Uprises the full moon

Și umple cu ale ei scânteii
Cărrile din crânguri
Sub șirul lung de mândri tei
Ședeau doi tineri singuri.

To gild with sparkles the soft breeze,
The paths in grass unknown.
Under a clump of linden-trees
A young pair sat alone:



„O lasă-mi capul meu pe sân,
Iubito, să se culce,
Sub zarea ochiului senin
Și negrăit de dulce:

Cu farmecul luminii reci
Gândirile străbate-mi,
Revarsă liniște de veci
Pe noaptea mea de patemi.

Și de asupra mea rămîi
Durerea mea de-o curmă,
Căci ești iubirea mea dintâiu
Și visul meu din urmă. ”

Hyperion vedea de sus
Uimirea'n a lor față;
Abia un braț pe gât i-a pus
Și ea l-a prins în brațe.

Miroase florile-argintii
Și cad, o dulce ploaie,
Pe creștetele-a doi copii
Cu plete lungi, bălaie.

Ea îmbătată de amor
Ridică ochii. Vede
Luceafărul. Și'ncetișor
Dorințele-i încrede:

„Cobori în jos, luceafăr blând,
„Alunecând pe-o rază,
„Pătrunde'n codru și în gând,
„Norocu-mi luminează !”

“O, rest my head upon your breast!
There, sweetheart, let it lie,
Under the heaven's eye, more blest,
More sweet with every sigh;

Imbue my thoughts for evermore
With your light's frozen balm,
Upon my night of passion pour
Your everlasting calm.

Abide o'er me and from above
Assuage with your pale beam
My grief, for you are my first love
And, also, my last dream.”

Hyperion, in heavens, read
Amaze upon their face;
No sooner had he clasped her head
Than she did him embrace...

Two children with long flaxen hair
Are lying 'mid the flowers;
Upon them blooms fall from the air
In scented, silver showers.

Love-struck, she raises up her eyes
And sees the star. Afire
She trusts him in a gentle wise
With her unquenched desire:

“Descend, o mild Hyperion,
Glide down upon a ray
Into the woods and thoughts anon,
Light up my fortune's way!”



El tremură ca alte dăți

În codri și pe dealuri,

Călăuzind singurătăți

De mișcătoare valuri;

He trembles as he often would

In forests, hills and leas,

And guides the awesome solitude

Of ever restless seas.

Dar nu mai cade ca-n trecut

În mări din tot înaltul:

– „Ce-ți pasă ție, chip de lut,

„Dac’ ’oiu fi eu sau altul ?

Yet, he no more, as yesterday,

Falls down into the sea;

“What dost thou care, o shape of clay,

If it is I or he?

„Trăind în cercul vostru strâmt,

„Norocul vă petrece –

„Ci eu în lumea mea mă simt

„Nemuritor și rece.”

You live accompanied by weal

In your all-narrow fold,

Whilst in my boundless world I feel

Both deathless and dead cold.”

Scrisă: 10 aprilie 1882.

Publicată întâi în Almanahul României june aprilie 1883,

reprodusă în Convorbiri Literare XV pagina 69. 1 August 1883.



MEȘTERUL MANOLE

Baladă populară de **Vasile Alecsandri**

Translated into English by Professor **Dan Duḫescu** (1918 – 1992).

PART ONE:

Pe Argeș în gios,	Down the Argesh lea,
Pe un mal frumos,	Beautiful to see,
Negru-vodă trece	Prince Negru he wended
Cu tovarăși zece:	By ten mates attended:
Nouă meșteri mari,	Nine worthy craftsmen,
Calfe și zidari	Masons, journeymen,
Și Manoli – zece,	With Manole ten,
Care-i și întrece.	The highest in fame.
Merg cu toți pe cale	Forth they strode apace
Să aleagă-n vale	There to find a place
Loc de monastire	Where to build a shrine,
Și de pomenire.	A cloister divine.
Iată, cum mergea	And, lo, down the lea
Că-n drum agiungea	A shepherd they see,
Pe-un biet ciobănaș	In years so unripe,
Din fluier doinaș.	Playing on his pipe.
Și cum îl vedea,	To him the Prince sped



Domnul îi zicea:
– Mândre ciobănaș
Din fluier doinaș,
Pe Argeș în sus
Cu turma te-ai dus,
Pe Argeș în gios
Cu turma ai fost.
Nu cumv-ai văzut,
Pe unde-ai trecut,
Un zid părăsit
Și neisprăvit,
La loc de grindîș,
La verde-aluniș
– Ba, doamne-am văzut,
Pe unde-am trecut,
Un zid părăsit
Și neisprăvit,
Câinii, cum îl văd,
La el se răpăd
Și latră-a pustiu
Și urlă-a morțiu.
Cât îl auzea,
Domnu-nveselea,
Și curând pleca,
Spre zid apuca,
Cu nouă zidari,
Nouă meșteri mari
Și Manoli – zece,
Care-i și întrece.
– Iată zidul meu!
Aici aleg eu
Loc de monastire
Și de pomenire.
Deci voi, meșteri mari,

And thus spoke and said,
“Handsome little swain
On thy sweet pipe playing!
Up the Argesh stream
Thy flock thou has ta’en;
Down the Argesh green
With thy flock thou’st been;
Didst thou hap to see
Somewhere down the lea
An old wall all rotten,
Unfinished, forgotten,
On a green slope lush
Near a hazel brush?”
“That, good sire, I did;
In hazel brush hid,
There’s a wall all rotten,
Unfinished, forgotten,
My dogs when they spy it
Make a rush to bite it
And howl hollowly,
And growl ghoulishly.”
As the Prince did hear
Greatly did he cheer,
And walked to that wall.
With nine masons all,
Nine worthy craftsmen,
Masons, journeymen,
With Manole ten,
The highest in fame.
“Here’s my wall!” quoth he.
“Here I choose that ye
Build for me a shrine,
A cloister divine,
Therefore, great craftsmen,



Calfe și zidari,
Curând vă siliți
Lucrul de-l porniți
Ca să-mi rădicați,
Aici să-mi durați
Monastire naltă
Cum n-a mai fost altă,
Că v-oi da averi,
V-oi face boieri,
Iar de nu, apoi
V-oi zidi pe voi,
V-oi zidi de vii
Chiar în temelii!

Masons, journeymen,
Start ye busily
To build on this lea
A tall monastery;
Make it with your worth
Peerless on this earth;
Then ye shall have gold,
Each shall be a lord.
Oh, but should you fail,
Then you'll moan and wail
For I'll have you all
Built up in the wall;
I will – so I thrive –
Build you up alive!"

PART TWO:

Meșterii grăbea,
Șfărite-ntindea,
Locul măsură,
Șanțuri largi săpa
Și mereu lucra,
Zidul ridica,
Dar orice lucra,
Noaptea se surpa!
A doua zi iar,
A treia zi iar,
A patra zi iar
Lucra în zadar!
Domnul se mira
Ș-apoi îi muștra,
Ș-apoi se-ncrunta
Și-i amenința

Those craftsmen amain
Stretched out rope and cain,
Measured out the place
Dug out the deep base,
Toiled day in day out,
Raising walls about.
But whate'er they wrought,
At night came to nought,
Crumbled down like rot!
The next day again,
The third day again,
The fourth day again,
All their toil in vain!
Sore amazed the lord
His men he did scold,
And he cowed them down



Să-i puie de vii
Chiar în temelii!
Meșterii cei mari,
Calfe și zidari
Tremura lucrând,
Lucra tremurând
Zi lungă de vară,
Ziua pân-în seară;

Iar Manoli sta,
Nici că mai lucra,
Ci mi se culca
Și un vis visa,
Apoi se scula
Ș-astfel cuvânta:

– Nouă meșteri mari,
Calfe și zidari,
Știți ce am visat
De când m-am culcat?
O șoaptă de sus
Aievea mi-a spus

Că orice-am lucra,
Noaptea s-a surpa

Pân-om hotărî

With many a frown
And many a threat;
And his mind he set
To have one and all
Built up in the wall;
He would – so he thrive –
Build them up alive!
Those nine craftsmen
Masons, journeymen,
Shook with fear walls making,
Walls they raised while shaking,
A long summer's day
Till the skies turned grey.
But Manole shirked,
He no longer worked,
To his bed he went
And a dream he dreamt.
'Ere the night was spent,
For his men he sent
Told them this intent:
“Ye nine great craftsmen,
Masons, journeymen,
What a dream I dreamed
In my sleep meseemed
A whisper from high,
A voice from the sky,
Told me verily
That whatever we
In the daytime have wrought
Shall nights come to nought,
Crumble down like rot
Till we, one and all,
Make an oath to wall



În zid de-a zidi
Cea-ntâi soțioară,
Cea-ntâi sorioară
Care s-a ivi
Mâni în zori de zi,
Aducând bucate
La soț ori la frate.
Deci dacă vroiți
Ca să isprăviți
Sfânta monastire
Pentru pomenire,
Noi să ne-apucăm
Cu toți să giurăm
Și să ne legăm
Taina s-o păstrăm;
Ș-orice soțioară,
Orice sorioară
Mâni în zori de zi
Întâi s-a ivi,
Pe ea s-o jertfim,
În zid s-o zidim!

Whose bonnie wife erst,
Whose dear sister first,
Haps to come this way
At the break of day,
Bringing meat and drink
To husband or kin.
Therefore if we will
Our high task fulfil
And build here a shrine,
A cloister divine,
Let's swear and be bound
By dread oaths and sound
Not a word to speak,
Our counsel to keep:
Whose bonnie wife erst,
Whose dear sister first,
Haps to come this way
At the break of day,
Her we'll offer up,
Her we shall build up!"

PART THREE:

Iată,-n zori de zi,
Manea se trezi,
Ș-apoi se sui
Pe gard de nuiele,
Și mai sus, pe schele,
Și-n câmp se uita,
Drumul cerceta.
Când, vai! ce zărea?

When day from night parted
Up Manole started,
Climbed a trellis fence,
Climbed the planks, and thence
The field he looked over,
The path through white clover.
And what did he see?
Alas! Woe is me!



Cine că venea?
Soṭioara lui,
Floarea câmpului!
Ea s-apropia
Și îi aducea
Prânz de mâncătură,
Vin de băătură.
Cât el o zărea,
Inima-i sărea,
În genunchi cădea
Și plângând zicea:
– Dă, Doamne, pe lume
O ploaie cu spume,
Să facă pâraie,
Să curgă șiroaie,
Apele să crească,
Mândra să-mi oprească,
S-o oprească-n vale,
S-o-ntoarcă din cale!
Domnul se-ndura,
Ruga-i asculta,
Norii aduna,
Ceriu-ntuneca.
Și curgea deodată
Ploaie spumegată
Ce face pâraie
Și îmfală șiroaie.
Dar oricât cădea,
Mândra n-o oprea,
Ci ea tot venea
Și s-apropia.
Manea mi-o vedea,
Inima-i plângea
Și iar se-nchina,

Who came up the lea?
His young bride so sweet,
Flower of the mead!
How he looked aghast
As his Ann came fast,
Bringing his day's food
And wine sweet and good.
When he saw her yonder
His heart burst asunder;
He knelt down like dead
And weeping he prayed,
“Send, O Lord, the rain,
Let it fall amain
Make it drown beneath
Stream and bank and heath,
Make it swell in tide
And arrest my bride,
Flood all path and track
And make her tun back!”
The Lord heard his sigh,
Harkened to his cry,
Clouds he spread on high
And darkened the sky;
And he sent a rain,
Made it fall amain,
Made it drown beneath
Stream and bank and heath.
Yet, fall as it may,
Her it could not stay,
Onward she did hie,
Nigh she drew and nigh.
As he watched from high,
Sorely did he cry.
And again he wailed,



Și iar se ruga:

– Suflă, Doamne, -un vânt,

Suflă-l pe pământ,

Brazii să-i despoaie,

Paltini să îndoiaie,

Munții să răstoarne,

Mândra să-mi întoarne,

Să mi-o-ntoarne-n cale,

S-o ducă devale!

Domnul se-ndura,

Ruga-i asculta

Și sufla un vânt,

Un vânt pre pământ,

Paltini că-ndoia,

Brazi că despoia,

Munții răsturna,

Iară pe Ana

Nici c-o înturna!

Ea mereu venea,

Pe drum șovăia

Și s-apropia

Și, amar de ea,

Iată c-agiungea!

And again he prayed,

“Blow, O Lord, a gale

Over hill and dale

The fir-trees to rend,

The maples to bend,

The hills to o’erturn,

Make my bride return,

Stop her path and track,

Make her, Lord, turn back!”

The Lord heard his sigh,

Harkened to his cry,

And he blew a gale

Over hill and dale

That the firs did rend,

The hills did o’erturn,

Nor she would retun.

Ann came up the dale

Struggling ’gainst the gale,

Reeling on her way;

Nothing could her stay.

Poor soul through the blast,

There she was at last!

PART FOUR:

Meșterii cei mari,

Calfe și zidari

Mult înveslea

Dacă o vedea,

Iar Manea turba,

Mândra-și săruta,

În brațe-o lua,

Those worthy craftsmen,

Masons, journeymen,

Greatly did they cheer

To see her appear.

While Manole smarted,

With all hope he parted,

His sweet bride he kissed,



Pe schele-o urca,
Pe zid o pune
Și, glumind, zicea:
– Stai, mândruța mea,
Nu te speria,
Că vrem să glumim
Și să te zidim!
Ana se-ncredea
Și vesel râdea.
Iar Manea ofta
Și se apuca
Zidul de zidit,
Visul de-implinit.
Zidul se suia
Și o cuprindea

Pân' la gleznișoare,
Pân' la pulpișoare.
Iar ea, vai de ea,
Nici că mai râdea,
Ci mereu zicea:
– Manoli, Manoli,
Meștere Manoli!
Agiungă-ți de șagă,
Că nu-i bună, dragă.
Manoli, Manoli,
Meștere Manoli!
Zidul rău mă strânge,
Trupușoru-mi frânge!
Iar Manea tăcea
Și mereu zidea;
Și o cuprindea

Saw her through a mist,
In his arms he clasped her,
Up the steps he helped her,
Pressed her to his chest,
And thus spoke in jest,
“Now my own sweet bride,
Have no fear, abide;
We'll make thee a nest,
Build thee up in jest!”
Ann laughed merrily,
She laughed trustfully,
And Manole sighed,
His trowel he plied,
Raised the wall as due,
Made the dream come true.
Up he raised the wall
To gird her withal;
Up the wall did rise
To her ankles nice
To her bonny thighs,
While she, wellaway,
Ceased her laugh so gay,
And would pray and say,
“Manole, Manole,
Good Master Manole!
Have done with your jest
'Tis not for the best.
Manole, Manole,
Good Master Manole,
The wall squeezes hard,
My frail flesh is marred.”
Not a word spoke he,
But worked busily;
Up he raised the wall



Pân' la gleznișoare,
Pân' la pulpișoare,
Pân' la costișoare,
Pân' la țâțișoare.
Dar ea, vai de ea,
Tot mereu plângea
Și mereu zicea:
– Manoli, Manoli,
Meștere Manoli!
Zidul rău mă strânge,
Țâțișoara-mi plânge,
Copilașu-mi frânge!
Manoli turba
Și mereu lucra.
Zidul se suia
Și o cuprindea
Pân' la costișoare,
Pân' la țâțișoare,
Pân' la buzișoare,
Pân' la ochișori,
Încât, vai de ea,
Nu se mai vedea,
Ci se auzea
Din zid că zicea:
– Manoli, Manoli,
Meștere Manoli!
Zidul rău mă strânge,
Viața mi se stinge!

To gird her withal;
And the wall did rise
To her ankles nice,
To her bonny thighs
To her shapely waist,
To her fair young breasts –
While she, wellaway,
She would cry and say,
She would weep and pray,
“Manole, Manole,
Good Master Manole!
The wall weighs like lead,
Tears my teats now shed,
My babe is crushed dead.”
Manole did smart
Sick he was at heart;
And the wall did rise,
Pressed her in its vice,
Presssed her shapely waist,
Crushed her fair, young breasts,
Reached her lips now white,
Reached her eyes so bright,
Till she sank in night
And was lost to sight!
Her sweet voice alone
Came through in a moan:
“Manole, Manole,
Good Master Manole!
The wall squeezes hard,
Crushed is now my heart,
With my life I part!”



PART FIVE:

Pe Argeş în gios,
Pe un mal frumos
Negru-vodă vine
Ca să se închine
La cea monastire,
Falnică zidire,
Monastire naltă,
Cum n-a mai fost altă.
Domnul o privea
Şi se-nveselea
Şi astfel grăia:
– Voi, meşteri zidari,
Zece meşteri mari,
Spuneţi-mi cu drept,
Cu mâna la piept,
De-aveţi meşterie
Ca să-mi faceţi mie
Altă monastire
Pentru pomenire,
Mult mai luminoasă
Şi mult mai frumoasă?
Iar cei meşteri mari,
Calfe şi zidari,
Cum sta pe grindiş,
Sus pe coperiş,
Vesel se mândrea
Ş-apoi răspundea:

– Ca noi, meşteri mari,
Calfe şi zidari,
Alţii nici că sunt

Down the Argesh lea,
Beautiful to see,
Prince Negru in state
Came to consecrate
And to kneel in prayer
To that shrine so fair,
That cloister of worth,
Peerless on this earth.
There it stood so bright
To his eyes' delight.
And the Prince spoke then
“Ye good team of ten,
Ye worthy craftsmen,
Tell me now in sooth,
Cross your hearts in truth,
Can you bild for me,
With your monastery,
Yet another shrine,
A cloister divine,
Even far more bright,
Of greater delight?”
Then those great craftsmen,
Masons, journeymen,
Boasting cheerfully,
Cheering boastfully,
From the roof on high,
Up against the sky,
Thus they made reply.
“Like us great craftsmen,
Masons, journeymen,
In skill and in worth



Pe acest pământ!
Află că noi știm
Oricând să zidim
Altă monastire
Pentru pomenire,
Mult mai luminoasă
Și mult mai frumoasă!
Domnu-i asculta
Și pe gânduri sta,

Apoi porunca
Schelele să strice,
Scări să le ridice,
Iar pe cei zidari,
Zece meșteri mari,
Să mi-i părăsească,
Ca să putrezească
Colo, pe grinduș,
Sus, pe coperiș.
Meșterii gândea
Și ei își făcea
Aripi zburătoare
De șindrili ușoare.
Apoi le-ntindea
Și-n văzduh sărea,
Dar pe loc cădea
Și unde pica,
Trupu-ș despica.
Iar bietul Manoli,
Meșterul Manoli,
Când se încerca
De-a se arunca,

There are none on earth!
Marry, if thou wilt,
We can always build
Yet another shrine,
A cloister divine,
Ever far more bright,
Of greater delight!”
This the Prince did hark
And his face grew dark;
Long, long there he stood
To ponder and brood.
Then the Prince anon
Ordered with a frown,
All scaffolds pulled down,
To leave those ten men,
Those worthy craftsmen,
On the roof on high,
There to rot and die.

Long they stayed there thinking,
Then they started linking
Shingles thin and light
Into wings for flight,
And those wings they spread,
And jumped far ahead,
And dropped down like lead.
Where the ground they hit,
There were bodies split.
Then poor, poor Manole,
Good Master Manole,
As he brought himself
To jump from a shelf,



Iată c-auzea
Din zid că ieşea
Un glas năduşit,
Un glas mult iubit,
Care greu gemea
Şi mereu zicea:
– Manoli, Manoli,
Meştere Manoli!
Zidul rău mă strânge,
Țâțișoara-mi plânge,
Copilașu-mi frânge,
Viața mi se stinge!
Cum o auzea,
Manea se pierdea,
Ochii-i se-nvelea;
Lumea se-ntorcea,
Norii se-nvârtea
Și de pe grindis,
De pe-acoperis,
Mort bietul cădea!
Iar unde cădea
Ce se mai făcea?
O fântână lină,
Cu apă puțină,
Cu apă sărată,
Cu lacrimi udată!

Hark, a voice came low
From the wall below,
A voice dear and lief,
Muffled, sunk in grief,
Mournful, woebegone
Moaning on and on,
“Manole, Manole,
Good Master Manole,
The wall weighs like lead.
Tears my teats shed,
My babe is crushed dead,
Away my life’s fled!”
As Manole heard
His life-blood did curd,
And his eye-sight blurred,
And the high clouds whirled,
And the whole earth swirled;
And from near the sky,
From the roof on high,
Down he fell to die!
And, lo, where he fell
There sprang up a well,
A fountain so tiny
Of scant water, briny,
So gentle to hear,
Wet with many a tear!



APPENDIX

(1) What is **Integrity** ? It is the opposite of Corruption. You can have a corrupt deal, a corrupt man, a corrupt country, **a corrupt text**. For instance, Communism collapsed successively in Poland, Germany, Hungary, etc towards the turn of the Century because it was a thoroughly corrupt System, the corruption started in its very way of thinking philosophy... Institutionalised corrupt thinking is far more carastrophic than individually corrupt pockets. That's why Noica was in serious trouble: because he was an honest thinker, like so many other honest Romanian thinkers who got in trouble.

But here, we are concerned only with corrupt texts! Corrupt translations, too, do ultimately lead to **distorted collective thinking**, which gradually becomes a cultural danger. A standard instance? Most Shakespeare translations into French. Why? Quite simple: Shakespeare wrote in **iambic pentameters unrhymed**, and made extensive use of **alliteration** (which was a standard form of “rhyming” in Old English, and has lingered on considerably into both Middle and Modern English). The problem with French is partly objective, but the corruption remains... The prevailing form of versification in French is **the dactylic hexameter rhymed**; and the obligatorily **French stress** on the very last syllable makes alliteration practically inoperable. In consequence, most French translators over the centuries meekly followed public taste, and gave preference to the hexameter. The result? Hamlet, which is in itself a very long play, becomes **two syllables longer in every line**. Can you work out the extended length? And the extension in time, on stage? To counteract that, the French often have to make cuts... And the result of that is only an increased corruption of the text. A properly Frenchified text, particularly of Shakespearean descent, is hence, and ultimately, a bowdlerisation.

It is this kind of **text corruption** that both Leviṭchi and Duṭescu were absolutely against. If you want proof of **their Translation Principles**, do study the two attached texts for a couple of weeks **at a stretch**, and you will find them out for



yourselves... If your English is good enough. (I abstain from any comments about your Romanian...)

(2) What is *Excellence* ? That is a hard one. Most probably, the shortest thing to say is that it means **to be slightly better than the standard best**. I mean for the moment the institutionalized best. And institutionalising the best has been standard practice in bureaucratic countries like France, Sweden, and Romania for quite some time. Why those three places in particular? The reason is that I am thinking of the successive setting up of their Academies – first France, then Sweden, and, lastly, Romania.

The further trouble is that the three settings-up are historically inter-related. But their purpose was invariably the same, namely the bringing together of all individuals evincing the ‘disease’ of Excellence. And to a certain extent keeping an eye on them... so that they don’t put their foot in it... Whatever IT means in every place... In France, it turned out to be Language in the first place, and Literature to a somewhat lesser degree. The forty members are called ‘les immortels’ on account of **the motto of this Institution being “À l’Immortalité”**. In Sweden, the Academy was somewhat more materialistic: they managed to hijack the Nobel Estate idea, and started dishing out the Prizes, which are today ever so famous, in the first place on account of the vast amounts of money involved for each of the five prizes. And also on account of the **magic Secrecy** involved in the whole operation (there are never any nominations, and never any runner-ups either!). They managed to get the King of Sweden into it too, the most respectable among the most respectable. And so, it is only a most ceremonious job, solely between the King of Sweden and the lonely Winner... most secretly chosen. The Romanian Academy fares worst of the three: It started badly by rejecting Brâncuși! But its by far the most objectionable move came fairly recently: it was the proposition to set up **the position of “posthumous” membership**. Just in order to accommodate Mircea Eliade, and Constantin Noica, and a handful of others that had been made mincemeat of for more than half a century between 1944 and 1989.



But what about non-institutionalised Excellence ? The case of Duțescu and Levițchi in the first place. And of the vast numbers of unknown poets and writers, and other Romanian talents who had died – unknown – on the Russian front ? There is ever so much Romanian talent which had been deliberately buried alive for half a Century on account of the “tongue-tied” policies practised then. And now they are either too old, like some war veterans I know, or even dead. Remember Thomas Gray’s famous line “**full many a gem of purest ray serene the deep unfathomed caves of oceans bear,**” written in *Elegy in a Country Church Yard* (1751).

My discussion on *Excellency* with **Anthony Burgess** (1917-1993) while he was in the process of sorting out his ideas in order to be able to present them in coherent shape to President Ronald Reagan & Co at the White House, without treading too much on anybody’s toes, was the more than curious thing that certain professions do not definitely allow of *Excellence*. An excellent Poet, or an Excellent Teacher – YES! But never an excellent Prime Minister. Not even an excellent ambassador... Though they are invariably addressed to as “Your Excellency”. WHY WAS THAT? We only got as far as the fact that “language does not allow it”, or rather “language use, or subtle usage, blocks it”. Or even, in order to be more technical – it is a question of COLLOCABILITY. A concept of Theoretical Linguistics as important as IDIOMATICITY. Thus, we got as far as saying that there is something wrong with the phrase “an excellent Prime Minister”, just because the two elements of the phrase do not currently collocate. In any Western Language that we could check. (God only knows about the non-Western ones, which are largely inaccessible to us.)

We are now in the area of subtlety. And it must be a point of agreement that Excellence does involve a lot of perceptual subtlety (most often materialised in Language). Hence, An Excellent Translator? YES, OF COURSE! Just look at how subtle he is, and how inventive in the extraordinary equivalents he discovers in his translation of *Meșterul Manole*. To say nothing of Levițchi’s subtle rhymes in *Hyperion*.

How long did it take them to discover those finds? Does it matter? For the genetic researcher, YES it does. It is important to know that James Joyce spent between 17 and 19 years in the writing of *Finnegans Wake* (first published 1939).



But for the average poor translator does it matter? In my opinion, YES it does. For I consider together with many ‘Creators’ that **“In a Work of Art, Time does not count!”**. James Joyce firmly believed in this slogan, and so did Shakespeare, and Christopher Marlowe, and Robert Browning. And Eliot. And Ezra Pound.

And in my opinion, it should be the condition *sine qua non* in any Translation aiming at Excellence. If the final result gets there or not is quite another matter.

(3) What is **EQUIVALENCE** ? It is what all translators aim at. And most of them fail!

Why? For the simple reason that **the following two propositions are simultaneously TRUE**; and that is not at all permitted by current formal Logic. They are the following:

- Any text CAN be translated.
- No text CAN, truly and genuinely, be translated.

Language punning in the first place: (E gol pușcă, dar e sănătos tun!)

I have days when I firmly believe in one of them. Other days when I equally and firmly believe in the other Proposition...

Why? I have spent more than forty years now speaking English practically all the time in Continental Europe (which contains no English-speaking country!). I never write in any other language – largely following the example set by Joseph Conrad in his private life. I only use the local language – be it Swedish, French, Italian, or Swiss German in order to buy either cigarettes, or postage stamps (both on the way out... one kicked out forcibly by the respective Governments through their police force, the other gradually ousted by the Internet). But still, I cannot help being a fairly good speaker (and sometimes writer of Swedish, French, Italian, and German).

And my hobby is Equivalence: formulated as –

Is x in language A EQUIVALENT to y in language B?



And this applies at the level of all the Five Units of Language, which do involve translation decisions, namely: **Sentence, Clause, Group, Word, Morpheme**.

(Just remember that the shout of **HELP!**, uttered by a drowning man is a **Sentence**, which is a **Clause**, which is a **Group** (or Phrase!), which is a **Word**, which is a **Morpheme**. In English. Not so in other languages. Not at all so in French, or Romanian, or Italian.)

If Equivalence is there, the question of **Extent** arises, namely To what EXTENT they are equivalent ?.... For absolutely PERFECT equivalents do not exist.

And that is where Leviṭchi and Duṭescu were the great artists.

In the above texts, and in everything else they did as translators, and teachers.

But let us turn to **The PERFECT TRANSLATOR!**

Who is the Perfect Translator, and does he exist? For me, and for practical, rather than theoretical reasons, I decided there was an embodiment on earth of the Perfect Translator. WHO was he? **Samuel Beckett** (1906-1989), I decided. WHY? The Author translating his own texts at the highest professional level possible...

Sam. Beckett is indeed a Dubliner who studied French in Dublin and Paris, and then became himself a university teacher of French. For a while. Which means he had all the professional qualifications. Then, he became a writer. And wrote almost indiscriminately in both French and English. Some of his texts were first written in French. Some others were first written in English. In my Bibliography of him (q.v.), I try to trace that, and it is not always easy. Eventually he translated himself: what had been French became English. What had been English became French. He never allowed anybody else to translate in his place. I had the honour of speaking in Stockholm about him the very night he received the Nobel Prize (in absentia, for he sent his French Publisher to pick the money, and avoid the speechifying...). I did speak at a stone's throw from the place the Nobel ceremonies were taking place: and, among others, I then made this very point: Beckett was, by definition, the Perfect Translator !

But was he ? Let me give two examples: At the end of the Second World War, he wrote a play in Paris called *En attendant Godot*, which became at once a resounding theatrical success. Not long after, he translated the text himself



into English, and the play *Waiting for Godot* became a great theatrical success in the West End of London. And eventually, New York followed suit. And the rest of the world too. And even the Alcatraz inmates acted it... and were delighted with it: “This is us!”, they exclaimed, somewhat perplexed at their own delight.

So, we have the perfect translator, and the two bits of Language – their respective titles – in the two most accessible languages of the world. My question is (all conditions having been met!): Are the two titles **EQUIVALENT**? I say – NO! They are not, in spite of the general critical consensus that they are. I even discussed this point at the Beckett International Conference I organized in 1991 (which turned out to be the very first one about Beckett). WHY are the two titles not equivalent, in the strict sense? Because of the French particle **en**, which appears in the title that was done first! The EXACT English translation of the French title should be *While Waiting for Godot*. And that **While** is most important, because, in the play itself Godot never appears. The whole play is about the wait, a long dentist’s wait leading nowhere. In consequence, **the English title is elliptical**, and as such clearly more ambiguous... But clearly, more English, more concise. This is all here in order to make you see things you have not seen, and emphasise the fact that, in order to function, **Equivalence must be precise**. And **exact**. And accurate. And to the point.

A second Beckett example, far more appalling this one: in 1969, the year of his Nobel Prize, Sam. Beckett publishes a small prose piece, again in French, enigmatically entitled *Sans* (a French preposition meaning **WITHOUT!**). I happened to obtain the text days after publication; I discussed it in a lecture, and wondered what the English title would eventually be when it would be published... And we all threw guesses at random. But we were all left speechless when the English version was published the year after: the English text was entitled *Lessness*. A word which became **a typically Beckett-specific equivalent**. The situation remains an extreme Equivalence surprise. Beckett had created a new English word. That’s **a Perfect Translator** for you!

Bibliography: C.George Sandulescu, *A Beckett Synopsis*. Colin Smythe, Gerrards Cross. 1986.



(4) What is *Collocability* ?

And this, too, applies at the level of all the Five Units of Language, which do involve translation, namely: **Sentence, Clause, Group, Word, Morpheme**.

Collocability is roughly **the degree of** (stylistic?, or better, cliché!) **match... or ... mismatch !** The Welsh poet **Dylan Thomas** (1914-1953) was famous for violating phrasal constraints, like in the following instances from his *Poems* –

- In the next room **so loud to** my own. (page 137)
- **A grief ago**. (page 54)
- Once it was **the colour of saying**. (page 89)
- **The shadow of a sound**. (page 101)
- For love, **the long ago she bird** rises. (page 121)
- In **the far ago land**. (page 122)
- **Once below a time**. (page 132a+159)
- **All the sun long**. (page 159)
- And **fire green as grass**. (page 159)

Dylan THOMAS, *Collected Poems 1934-1952*. J. M. Dent Ltd. London.

Noam Chomsky (b.1928, and still alive and kicking!) – or ‘**Homski**’ – as Roman Jakobson more than delighted in invariably calling him (by his genuinely BeloRussian name) – , made extensive use of **collocability** when he produced, out of his own pocket, the more than famous sentence –

Colourless green ideas sleep furiously.

just in order to prove that a Sentence can be syntactically impeccable, but still be an absolute mess from the point of view of meaning. He probably didn’t quite know that he was doing exactly the same thing as Rudolf Carnap (1891-1970) had done long before him in German, when analysing his self-invented sentence –

Piroten karulieren elatisch.

Homski never produced a single line of poetry of the Dylan Thomas kind. But it remains eternally true that his five elements in his own sentence **DO NOT IN ANY**



WAY COLLOCATE: Ideas never sleep. Sleep is never furious. And green is never colourless. The nearest you can get to a collocation is that one can indeed be “green with fury”! And many academics were really so, particularly in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s when the Great Rift took place between Language Studies, on the one hand, and Literature Studies, on the other. Which was largely Homski’s own doing...

That Regrettable Homski-generated Rift turned professionals like Levițchi, and Duțescu, and myself and many others into **half-breeds**. There became a fashion for the Language people to be ‘illiterate’, and for the Literature people to be non-language-oriented. *Du tout. Du tout.* The Age of the over-versatile Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), and of Roman Jakobson (1896-1982) had come to a sad end...

But Roman Jakobson’s criticism of Homski remains and will remain for ever not only the most virulent, but also the most lethal of them all: “What do you expect of him? He doesn’t know languages!” An attack within **the same single territory of linguistic ability!** (And that was said to me in a private conversation at table in the Staff Refectory of Harvard University.)

The conclusion, however, should be crystal-clear: **Collocability** does indeed lie **right on the borderline** between Language and Literature. And the Excellent translator must be proficient in **FOUR distinct domains**: not only the Two Languages, but also the Two Literatures. A very hard job that! That is why, the French are wise, when they fuse the two, naming their subject of study *Langue et civilization*.

(5) What is **Idiomacity**? Another hard nut to crack! It could be simply defined as “phrasal specificity to one particular Language or another” like **tiré à quatre épingles** in French, or **to cross your t’s and dot your i’s** in English, or **die Gelegenheit beim schopf fassen** in German. You want one in Romanian? **e cald nemțesc!**

If you move from phrasal level to sentence level, you gradually enter the field of **(national) Proverbs**, professionally called **Paremiology**. Some Proverbs may be identical in several languages, largely for enigmatic reasons, others are so very culture-specific that sometimes they have absolutely no equivalent in the target language. As both *Luceafărul* and *Meșterul Manole* are clearly folklore-oriented, I



presume here to present you with a fairly wide variety of national Proverbs I happened to be collecting over the years. It would be a good idea to try and find some Romanian Equivalents. IF YOU CAN! (Do you find them downright **CRAZY**, or just **OUTLANDISH** ?)

- * **Empty gossip jumps with one leg.** [Estonian].
- * **Dry pants catch no fish.** [Bulgarian].
- * **Mistakes ain't haystacks or there'd be more fat ponies than there is.** [American].
- * **When you see a village with nine houses and ten inns, flee from it.** [Bulgarian].
- * **The ground is always frozen for lazy pigs.** [Danish].
- * **He who depends on people hangs from a tree.** [German].
- * **Lying a little, stealing a little, will get you nicely through the world.** [Estonian].
- * **Barbers, doctors, pleaders, prostitutes: all must have cash down.** [Indian].
- * **Do not praise a day before sunset, a horse before a year, a wife before she's dead.** [Czech].
- * **When you shake hands with a Greek, count your fingers.** [Albanian].
- * **Throw the fortunate man into the Nile and he will come out with a fish in his mouth.** [Egyptian].
- * **If a low-bred man obtains wealth, he will carry an umbrella at midnight.** [Tamil].
- * **Drink and sing: an inch before us is black night.** [Japanese].



* **Why should a man without a head want a hat?** [Chilean].

The theoretical Conclusion is that **inter-language Full-Sentence Equivalence** is the one which is by far the most difficult to handle...

(6) What is *a Language Gap*? In the practical stage, there are certain words that have no equivalent in another language... For instance, several Latin-derived languages, like French or Romanian have no word for **brown**... whereas a fairly simple and insufficiently developed African language may have as many as seven different and specific words for brown!

Romanian has no single word for **toe**. Both French and English do!

Romanian has no word for **clock**, as distinct from **watch**.

There are almost hundreds of other instances that could be quoted and analysed as part of a systematic discussion of language gaps... But the point has, I think, been more than amply made.

At the philosophical level, we must go to *Rostirea Românească*, an important book by **Constantin Noica** (1909-1987), who extensively discusses words like DOR etc. To begin at the beginning, the word **Rostirea** itself is hardly translatable into English! What can you say? Discourse is the closest you can get to it, but the equivalence in itself is no good at all!

Taking the two books, we can list a few words worth looking at. First, I quote at random a few chapter titles from the book *Creație și frumos în rostirea românească* (first published 1973):

- Introducere la **dor**.
- **Depărțișor**.
- **Ispitire, iscodire, iscusire**.
- **Răs-bunare**.
- **Lucru și lucrare**.
- A **săvârși**, sfârși, **desăvârși**.



- **Către** și apropierile.
- **Întru** și stihiiile.

And from the book entitled *Rostirea filozofică românească* (first published 1970):

- **Rost** și **rostire**.
- Trecere, **petrecere**.
- Vremea **vremuiește**.
- “Mă **paște** gândul”
- **Nebun** și **netot**.
- **Comunicare** și **cuminecare**.

Try and translate them – either as such, separately, or alternatively in longer phrases or sentences...

Going a step further try to read some or all of these chapters and decide for yourselves whether they are translatable or not...

(7) A CODA ON VERSIFICATION.

I used to meet Leviḫchi and Duḫescu often and discuss. We used to discuss about everything under the sun – ranging from Unidentified Flying Objects (U. F. O.) to Madame Blavatsky. Except two topics, I noticed, that none of us three ever touched... What were they? Well, one was Politics. Simply because we all considered it, and quite rightly so, as subAcademic. But the other one was – paradoxically – Versification, both the practice and the theory of it. Why was that? It was indeed because of me: I was an almost self-confessed outsider to the subject. Leviḫchi even tested me once – as a student – with a fragment of *Hamlet* to translate, and I failed lamentably: only because I foolishly produced a text in plain prose, instead of the standard iambic pentameter unrhymed; and the choice of text had been a tricky one too...

It is only now, in later life, that I have started my studies of versification for the first time ever. And I am doing this in earnest, on account of an extraordinary book entitled *The Ode Less Travelled* by Stephen Fry, recently issued in London in



print and sound simultaneously: just imagine nine hours of recorded theoretical discussion of the intricacies of versifying. A mini Academic Course.

I am spending time on it almost every day of the week – perhaps as a modest and solitary tribute to the memory of the two great poet-translators **Leon Leviṭchi** and **Dan Duṭescu**.

Could I possibly induce you all to do the same? A collective tribute of effort to an almost forgotten Art – the strictly formalised rules of Poetry of so long ago.

C. G. S.

Stephen Fry. 2005. *The Ode Less Travelled. Unlocking the Poet Within. Read by the Author.* 7 CDs. Approx. 9 hours.

www.rbooks.co.uk

ends

