ON THE FIRST WOMAN TRANSLATOR OF DANTE'S 'THE DIVINE COMEDY' INTO ROMANIAN

Nicoleta CĂLINA, Assistant Professor, PhD, University of Craiova

Abstract: This paper is concerned with the first Romanian translation of Dante Alighieri's Inferno and Purgatory, published in 1883 and, respectively 1888, at the Samitca Printing House in Craiova - after Ion Heliade Rădulescu and Aron Densuşianu translated only some fragments from this world literature great masterpiece. The translations were made by a woman writer, Maria P. Chiţu, from Craiova, (1846-1930), who was a good expert in Italian language and literature. Also, there is written evidence that she made a translation of the „Paradise", but because of the illness of her daughter, Lucilla, it remained unpublished. When we speak of Maria Chiţu, we have in mind a strong human personality, endowed with a vast culture, an encyclopaedic spirit, a person who had an enormous desire to know the Italian life in all its aspects: political, cultural, social, literary, artistic. Being for years the initiator of important local cultural events, Maria P. Chiţu also organized exhibitions, theater and music evenings. In addition, she was a member of the „Society for the university students' assistance from Dolj", she supported the local literary movement and collaborated to the literary publications of Craiova.

Keywords: Maria Chiţu, Divina Comedie, Dante, translation, Craiova

After Ion Heliade Rădulescu and Aron Densuşianu translated only fragments of "The Divine Comedy", the monumental masterpiece of world literature, the first complete translations of Dante Alighieri's *Inferno* and *Purgatory* into Romanian were published in 1883 and 1888. They belong to the woman writer Maria P. Chiţu (1846-1930), an expert in Italian language and literature – the lawyer Peter Chiţu's wife and mother of the poetess Lucilla Chiţu.

The name of this family is linked to the development of some institutions and forms of culture: the creation of publications, printing houses, schools. Petre Chiţu, Maria P. Chiţu's husband and brother of George Chiţu (former mayor and minister, a leading figure in the city of Craiova in the latter part of the nineteenth century), was himself a great admirer of Italian culture and civilization. He invited the sculptor Ettore Ferrari to Romania, to propose him the execution of a statue of Ovid. As a tribute to the Chiţu family, Ferrari would also sculpt the busts of both spouses.

A whole variety of translators made full use of their skill and talent to accomplish the noble task of translating Dante's text, in order to render this masterpiece of world literature into Romanian; Romanian is one of the languages in which *The Divine Comedy* was represented at its best in terms of translation[1]. Romanian culture was enriched with a series of versions of *The Divine Comedy*, translated by cultural personalities or poets who strove to make their versions as close as possible to the artistry and meaning of the original; this exercise meant a different approach for each literary generation[2]. The merit of the first

[1] Alexandru Laszlo, Ovidiu Pecican, *Dialoguri despre Dante* (*Al doilea dialog)*, în „Acolada", An I, nr. 3, Cluj Napoca, 2007, p.8

[2] Raluca Tomi, *Una traduttrice meno conosciuta di Dante: Maria Chitu e gli echi europei delle sue traduzioni della Divina Commedia*, in „Historical yearbook", Bucarest, vol. VII, 2010, p. 78

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generation is, undoubtedly, the familiarization of the Romanian reader with the Dantesque poetic world.

Referring to the translators from Craiova, we mention the fact that, between 1932 and 1934, there were published Alexandru Marcu's three illustrated volumes of prose translation, followed immediately after the Second World War, by the verse translation of the *Inferno* by Ion A. Ţundrea -a medical doctor in the interwar period- at the *Ramuri* Publishing House. Giuseppe Cifarelli's version appeared at Craiova, too, 35 years after the death of the translator.

When we speak of Maria Chiţu, we have in mind a strong human personality, endowed with a vast culture, an encyclopaedic spirit, a person who had an enormous desire to know the Italian life in all its aspects: political, cultural, social, literary, artistic[3]. Being for years the initiator of important local cultural events, Maria P. Chiţu also organized exhibitions, theater and music evenings. In addition, she was a member of the „Society for the university students' assistance from Dolj" [4], she supported the local literary movement and collaborated to the literary publications of Craiova.

As we stated in the introductory part of our paper, Maria P. Chiţu got the translation of the *Inferno*[5] published in 1883 and that of the *Purgatory*[6] in 1888, by the Samitca Printing House in Craiova[7]. The *Purgatory* will be richer in notes and, at the same time, we can feel a better presence of the dantesque criticism, which is contemporary to Maria Chiţu[8]. The two works will enter the libraries of Vatican[9], where there were accepted only the works of the prominent scholars, and, also, in the following libraries: Biblioteca comunale Luciano Benincasa – Ancona, Biblioteca di Casa Carducci – Bologna, Biblioteca Umanistica - Lettere - Università degli Studi di Firenze, Biblioteca civica Berio – Genova, Biblioteca nazionale Vittorio Emanuele III – Napoli, Biblioteca del Centro interdipartimentale di servizi di Palazzo Maldura dell'Università degli studi di Padova, Biblioteca del Centro dantesco – Ravenna, Biblioteca comunale Classense – Ravenna, Biblioteca romana dell'Archivio storico capitolino – Roma, Biblioteca Angelica – Roma, Biblioteca del Ministero delle infrastrutture e dei trasporti - Settore infrastrutture – Roma, Biblioteca storica del Ministero dell'economia e delle finanze – Roma, Biblioteca Centrale Giuridica – Roma, Biblioteca dell'Accademia delle scienze – Torino.

These early translation versions of the divine poem are related to the specificity of our cultural history[10]. According to Umberto Eco[11], it is difficult or even impossible to establish a hierarchy among the multiple versions of the same literary work, as each version has its own qualities: one is more accurate, another has its own beauty, another one is more earnest or

[3] Despina Teodorescu, *Femei din trecutul Olteniei,* in „Oltenia", Craiova, 1943, p. 367
[4] Ion Pătraşcu, *Divina Comedie în româneşte*, in „Ramuri", Craiova, 1965, nr. 5
[5] Dante Alighieri, *Divina Comedie. [I.] Infernul,* translation by Maria P. Chitiu, Samitca Printing House, Craiova, 1883 (traducere nerimată 'prose translation')
[6] Dante Alighieri, *Divina Comedie. II. Purgatoriul*, translation by Maria P. Chitiu, Samitca Printing House, Craiova, 1888 (traducere nerimată 'prose translation')
[7] Rosa del Conte, *Maria Chiţu*, in *Enciclopedia Dantesca,* Treccani, Roma, 1970, p.396
[8] Raluca Tomi, *op. cit.*, p. 79
[9] Alexandru Firescu, Ion Pătraşcu, *Proeminenţe oltene. Familia Chiţu*, Editura AIUS, Craiova, 2001, p. 106
[10] Alexandru Laszlo, Ovidiu Pecican*, Prin pădurea întunecată. Dialoguri despre Dante. Al doilea dialog*, Editura Vinea, Bucarest, 2011, p.21
[11] Umberto Eco, *A spune cam acelaşi lucru. Experienţe de traducere,* Polirom, Iaşi, 2008

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more necessary at a particular historical moment and so on. A hierarchical assessment cannot be imposed – and, anyway, such a thing would be useless in this field.

Paradoxically, the translation into Romanian of this thext belonging to the great heritage of world literature did not have a notable echo in the Romanian cultural space at the time. The great philologist Bogdan Petriceicu Haşdeu is the one who mentioned the translation for the first time, considering that it was better known and more appreciated in Italy than at home.

Rosa del Conte also praises Maria Chiţu's translation. She refers to the fact that Maria Chiţu published an elegant edition, ennobled with ornaments and vignettes, containing the complete prose translation with notes of the first *cantica* of *The Divine Comedy (Infernulŭ*, Craiova, 1883), which was followed, five years later, by the *Purgatory (Purgatoriulŭ,* Craiova, 1888). Her Romanian version of the *Paradise*, although announced, was never published, because of the health problems of Maria Chiţu's daughter, Lucilla. „A temerarious action, ventured by this woman with strong intellect, from the intellectual bourgeoisie of a provincial town. Due to her, a unified vision of the poem – only fragments of which were known in Romania at the time - became possible"[12]. Those are Rosa del Conte's words. She also points out the advantage of this edition that also included the original Italian text at the bottom of the page, so that the poet addressed the reader directly by means of its authenticity, allowing the comparison with the prose version. „This prose" she said, „which releases the lyrical tension that supports Dante 's verse has the merit of a highly accurate comprehension of the text, both in terms of syntactic and of lexical structure: from the faithful appproach of the text by using neologisms, to the adoption of some authentic Italian forms that Romanian had refused to assimilate."[13]

This translation, Rosa del Conte observes, has provided the vital supply with the dantesque ideals of the young generations. It served as a stimulus for other translators, who sometimes adopted - and certainly improved – the implicit interpretative proposals of this version[14]. Although Maria Chiţu also translated *The Paradise*, she didn't publish it, because in the meantime the poet's daughter, Lucilla, died.

Some critics, such as Mihail Strajan[15], consider Maria Chiţu's translation as being influenced by I. H. Rădulescu, since she allegedly had an intermediary translation, apparently a French one, that of F. R. De Lamennais. The notes were believed to have had as main source of information Iacopo Ferrazi's *Manuale Dantesco,* to whom the translation is dedicated. Following the example of some foreign editions, each *canto* was preceded by a brief summary.

„Carpaţii", a newspaper from the Craiova of that time, considered this beautiful interpretation of the verse of Dante as „a uniqueness"[16]. Anghel Demetrescu [17] in „Voinţa

[12] R. del Conte, *Dante in Romania*, in *Dante nel mondo*, Firenze, 1965, p. 373
[13] R. del Conte, *op. cit.*, p.374
[14] idem, p. 375
[15] Mihail Strajan, *Despre Dante*, in „Convorbiri literare", XXIV (1890), iulie, p.29
[16] Florea Firan, *De la Macedonski la Arghezi*, Editura Scrisul Românesc, 1975, p.114
[17] Anghel Demetrescu, *La Divina Commedia. Inferno, traducerea de doamna Maria P. Chiţu*, in „Voinţa Naţională": „ne simţim fericiţi a ceti *Divina Comedie* în traducerea doamnei Maria P. Chiţu. (…) Prin forma traducerii, a tălmăcirii, Maria P. Chiţu depăşeşte alte lucrări de acelaşi gen apărute la noi sau chiar în străinătate".

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naţională", a publication from Craiova, noted, „we are happy to read *The Divine Comedy* translated by Mrs. Maria P. Chiţu. (...) The form of the translation, that of the interpretation make Maria P. Chiţu surpass other works of the same kind published here or abroad."[18]

The less flattering remarks of Titus Pârvulescu and Dumitru D. Panaitescu did not miss. They minimized the pioneering merit and the other qualities of the translated text, especially its didactical dimension (about which, in fact, the translator herself spoke). Maria Chiţu's integral translation of the two *cantiche* introduced the Romanian reader into the world of the 14-th century culture of the Peninsula and into the world of Dante's wonderful masterpieces, more than half a millennium after they had been written. In Titus Pârvulescu and Dumitru D. Panaitescu's view, 'Maria Chiţu was not a poet and her translation, though surprisingly accurate, was far from rendering the magic of Dante's poetry'[19].

Nevertheless, the translator herself mentions: „With this concern, more didactical than literary, I translated the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, for whose printing the Samitca Publishing House showed an extraordinary solicitude and preoccupation." [20] Due to the bilingual text, *The Divine Comedy* translated by Maria Chiţu would be introduced in the school curricula. [21] It has the undeniable merit of facilitating the first echoes of the Italian poetry in the Romanian consciousness. It isn't a simple translation, it is accompanied by an impressive metatext, complemented by „notes and adnotations of various commentators", as we can notice on the first page of the volume from a very useful preface written by the translator and entitled „Notes upon Dante". At the bottom of each page the reader can find Dante's *terzinas*, so that he can have information about the source text. Each *canto* is accompanied by a summary and by detailed, extensive notes.

Generally speaking, the version of the translator from Craiova received favorable reviews from the contemporaries and not only from them. Critics have pointed out that no prose translation could render exactly the delicacy, the genius, the charm and the savour of the Florentine poet, but at the same time, it was appreciated for its accuracy, for its faithfulness to the original text[22]. It is true that its language is full of Italianisms, but this does not diminish the value of its presence in our culture. From our point of view, the greatest qualities of Mrs. Maria Chiţu's translation are its faithfulness to the text, and especially its huge necessary contribution to the progress of the cultural and didactical dimensions of the Romanian education system.

On the other hand, we cannot say that the translation meets the requirements observed by translators such as George Coşbuc[23] and Eta Boeriu – they preserved the hendecasyllabic *terza rima* in their translation: this means complying with the original metre and structure, requirements that might discourage any translator in the field of poetry, who is supposed to

[18] Cristinela Lavinia Cîmpeanu, *Maria P. Chiţu*, in „Curierul Primăriei Municipiului Craiova, An 3, 134 (10 iulie 2000), p.2
[19] Titus Pârvulescu, Dumitru D. Panaitescu, *Dante în România*, in „Studii despre Dante", E.P.L.U., Bucureşti, 1965, p. 365
[20] C.S. Făgeţel, *Figuri discrete din viaţa culturală a Craiovei*, in „Ramuri", XXXI, Craiova, 1939, nr.3-4, p. 57: „Cu această preocupare, mai mult didactică decât literară, am tradus *Infernul* şi *Purgatoriul*, în a căror tipărire tipografia Samitca a pus o grijă şi un ţel fără pereche".
[21] Raluca Tomi, *op. cit.*, p. 81
[22] idem, p. 89
[23] Raluca Tomi, *op. cit.*, p. 84

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have literary talent. In 1895, in Craiova, George Coşbuc would see Maria's Chiţu translation and that text would help him when working on his own translation.

As for the partial translations preceding Maria Chiţu's, Coşbuc[24] wrote: „In a report on the first edition of this work ("Viaţa Nouă", December 1924), Mr. Ovid Densuşianu states that Dante cannot be integrally translated and an edition limited to the most popular *cantos*, connected among them by the summary of the poem, would have been proper and had, moreover, the advantage to ease my burden. Allow me to have a different opinion from that of my illustrious colleague. No! The Romanian public deserves to be given Dante's work entirely, Dante, which cannot be reduced to a few *cantos*, as Bettinelli and, generally, the eighteenth century literary critics thought; his greatness comes out entirely only from the whole content of this immortal poem"[25].

The translation of Dante's poem into Romanian had an ample echo in Europe. The text of the translation was primarily appreciated in the Italian cultural environment, one of the supporters of this translation being the Dantologist G. A. Scartazzini. Iacopo Ferrazzi was another scholar who would eulogize its appearance. We will discussed on the latter below.

From the letters kept at the „Manuscripts" section of the Romanian Academy, namely the correspondence of Mrs. Maria P. Chiţu with the Italian cultural personalities of the world and not only, one can see that the she had known great cultural and political Italian personalities: the sculptor Ettore Ferrari, G. A. Scartazzini. Iacopo Ferrazzi, Mario Mandalari, with whom she will write the paper „Il concetto dell'unità politica in Dante Alighieri" published in 1895 in „Giornale Dantesco" and many others, which will be further mentioned.

Her correspondence includes the exchange of letters with the publisher Bruto Amante, who wrote Maria Chiţu after learning from Bogdan Petriceicu Haşdeu of the Romanian translation of the first part of the Italian masterpiece, and who asked her a volume. He expressed his desire to visit Craiova and to meet her personally. The same publisher invited her to a conference in Rome, expressing his interest regarding the publishing of the translation of the third part of the *Divine Comedy*, *the Paradise*[26]. Through him, she will get in touch with Giuseppe Jacopo Ferrazzi, a well-known critic who writes to her in eulogistic terms, calling her „my daughter in Dante".[27]

Since during the translation process Maria Chiţu had been guided by Ferrazzi, especially in terms of bibliographical indications, she dedicated the translation of the *Purgatory* to him: „The translator dedicates this work to the memory of my illustrious and

[24] "Într-o dare de seamă asupra primei ediţii a acestei opere, domnul Ovid Densuşianu afirmă ("Viaţa Nouă", dec. 1924) că Dante nu poate fi tradus în întregime şi că o ediţie limitată la cânturile mai cunoscute, legate între ele printr-un rezumat al poemului, ar fi fost mai nimerită şi ar fi avut, pe deasupra, avantajul de a-mi uşura sarcina. Să-mi fie îngăduit a nu fi de părerea ilustrului meu coleg. Nu! Publicul român merita să i se dea Dante în întregime, Dante, care nu se poate reduce la câteva cânturi, cum socotea Bettinelli şi în genere critica secolului al XVIII-lea, dar care iese în întregime în măreţia lui, numai din întregul conţinut al poemului nemuritor."

[25] George Coşbuc, *Dante şi epoca sa*, apud Dante Alighieri, *Divina Comedie*, in traducerea lui George Coşbuc, Polirom, Iaşi, 2000, p. 60

[26] Raluca Tomi, *op. cit.*, p. 90

[27] idem, p. 91

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good friend Abbot G. Jacopo Ferrazzi, the author of the Dantesque textbook as a sign of profound admiration"[28].

Later the same Ferrazzi would write to Professor Gaetano Valenziano Vidal from the University of Barcelona, mentioning the name of the Romanian translator, and to Adolfo Mussafia, professor at the University of Vienna. On receiving the books, Professor Mussafia thanked Maria Chiţu, admiring the beauty and the faithfulness of the verses and mentioning that both nations owe thanks to her[29]. The news of Dante's verses translation into Romanian brings her another great honor from Italy: to be included in 1905 in „Dictionnaire international des écrivains du monde latin" by Angelo de Gubernatis.

Another personality of the Italian literary world, with whom Maria Chiţu collaborated on an article on Dante's political ideas, is Mario Mandalari, Professor at the University of Catania. She knew him from Bruto Amante. Mario Mandalari had sent the translation of the *Purgatory* - made by the Romanian translator - to one of the best scholars and commentators of Dante, the author of the Dantesque Encyclopedia, Giovanni Andrea Scartazzini. The same Mandalari would send a copy of Maria Chiţu's translation to Paolo Boselli, the Italian Minister of Education at the end of the nineteenth century. He expressed his excitement over the appearance of the translation: "Professor Mandalari has mailed me your translations from Dante. As Minister of Education and as an Italian I applaud your work."[30]

Other proofs of Maria Chiţu's activity can be found out from Pasquale Buonincontro[31], from Francesco Macry Correale, director of „Rivista Contemporanea", from the famous Leo S. Olschki, the owner of the prestigious Florentine publishing house and from the Sicilian poet Tomasso Canizzaro.

Guido Mazzoni, Professor at the University of Padova, wrote to her, too, confessing that he is pleased with the book[32]. Pio Rajna, professor in Florence and Dantologist, was also overwhelmed by a translation into another language of Latin origin and thanked the translator for the volume sent to him.

Giuseppe Lando Passerini, an important Dantologist of the previous century asked Maria Chiţu information on her literary work, so that her name could be included both in the volume he coordinated and edited with other collaborators and which was entitled *Dantisti e dantofili dei secoli XVIII e XIX*[33] and in the work *Un decennio di bibliografia dantesca*[34].

It was only natural for the translation to be best known in Italy, but the news about it spread in Austria and Portugal, too. The letters from various scholars from these countries testify it. In Austria, the translation is known thanks to Antonio Lubin, Professor at the

[28] Dante Alighieri, *Divina Comedie. II. Purgatoriul*, traductiune de Maria P. Chitiu, Samitca, Craiova, 1888: "Memoriei bunului şi illustrului seu amic abatelui G. Jacopo Ferrazzi, autorulu manualelui dantescu în semnu de veneraţiune traducătorea dedică acésta lucrare".
[29] Raluca Tomi, *op. cit.*, p. 86
[30] Raluca Tomi, *op. cit.*, p. 87: "Il professor Mandalari mi ha inviato le vostre traduzioni da Dante. Come ministro della Pubblica Istruzione e come italiano applaudo la vostra opera."
[31] Pasquale Buonincontro, *Beatrice in Romania*, I.U.O., Napoli, pp. 451-461
[32] Raluca Tomi, *op. cit.*, p. 90
[33] Giuseppe Lando Passerini, *Dantisti e dantofili dei secoli XVIII e XIX. Contribuzione alla storia della fortuna di Dante*, Firenze, presso la Direzione del «Giornale dantesco», Città di Castello, stab. tipo-lito-grafico di S. Lapi, 1901-1902
[34] G. L. Passerini, C. Mazzi, *Un decennio di bibliografia dantesca (1891-1900)*, Ulrico Hoepli Editore, Milano, 1905

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University of Graz, connoisseur and critic of the work of the great Florentine. Lubin expressed his enthusiasm for the erudition found in both volumes. In Portugal, Maria Chiţu was appreciated by Joaquin Arango, to whom she sends the two-volume translation.

Within the French cultural space, Elena Văcărescu expresses her sincere admiration for the work of the translator from Craiova. From the same cultural space would emerge the expression of the sincere admiration from Lecomte de Nouy, Eugene Boisel and Charles Henry[35]. Anna Barbieri was referring both to the historical value of the translation, as a starting point for the followings, and to its literary value worth mentioning[36].

All this correspondence is the testimony of the professionalism and responsability proven by Maria Chiţu in the process of translating the wonderful text into Romanian. These letters reflect her interest in the opinions of the experts in Dantesque literary critique.

The translation of Dante's text was a good opportunity for Maria Chiţu to collaborate in other directions, too. Pietro Bonettio had expressed his intention to publish Romanian poems translated into Italian or studies on Romanian modern poetry.

We end with the extremely warm presentation made by Traian Demetrescu, a personality from Craiova, who describes her evolution as a translator with admiration and subtlety:

„At large intervals, Mrs. Maria P. Chiţu published two parts of the „Divine Comedy": the Inferno and the Purgatory. – Her friends, and those who have observed with interest her elaborate efforts, are now waiting: [they are waiting] for the Paradise. The publishing of the above mentioned volumes could be fully considered a literary event, free of noise and advertisements, not accompanied by the critical fanfares - but quiet, almost modest, but that modesty had its greatness. Needless to mention the admiration that the translator aroused in Italy, among Dante's fanatics, the gratitude shown or the honors expressed in relation to her - as her name, not very known here, was already illustrious there!

But of course, it was not glory - always independent of our will – that had enticed Mrs. Chiţu to use her talent and work for such a long and difficult enterprise.

And then, to dream about glory in a country where Bolintineanu and Eminescu died in hospitals, it's a bitterly crazy thing – that would make a wise woman smile sadly.

But the patience and passion shown by Mrs. Chiţu for years for Dante's immortal epic have a delicate and profound psychological expression. Mrs. Chiţu has an infinite admiration for the great poet, which seems to take the form of an intellectual cult.

In literature and art, admiration has various and complicated forms of manifestation. Generally, it is the expression of a deep amazement of the soul that a book, a painting, a statue, a piece of music, etc might produce. In some cases, however, it does not have the character of a mere sensation; then, admiration becomes a deep feeling, a passion. The artist admired to such an extent becomes an almost divine being, and your soul becomes its altar; and his work is a world in which you live with its creator in adoration and sharing an intimate understanding and it seems surrounded by a strange voluptuous mysticism. (...)

Mrs. Chiţu embodied her admiration for Dante in a literary form: translating his work. Her translation is not just a beautiful product of her talent. Her particular form of admiration as mentioned above has its charm. There are various ways of enjoying literary works: the translation, - when the author is foreign - is one of those ways. From this point of view, a translation is a delicate

[35] Raluca Tomi, *op. cit.*, p. 91
[36] idem, p. 85

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pleasure, a long series of emotions experienced sitting at one's writing desk, in an intimate and lonely chamber, protected by the friendly calmness of the night hours.

It is by means of such intellectual voluptuousness that we often sweeten and ennoble our life dream.

It protect us from many of the trivialities and vanities of our existence."[37]

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[37] Traian Demetrescu, *Maria P. Chiţu*, în "Profile literare", Editura Tipografiei D. I. Benvenisti, Craiova, 1891, pp. 143-147: *„La intervale depărtate, D-na Maria P. Chiţu a publicat două părţi din „Divina Comedie": Infernul şi Purgatoriul. - Amicii, cât şi cei cari au urmărit cu interes aceste lucrări îndelungi, aşteaptă acum: Paradisul. Apariţia volumelor sus numite au avut caracterul deplin al unor evenimente literare, lipsite de zgomot şi reclame, neîntâmpinate de fanfarele critice, - ci liniştite, aproape modeste, dar de o modestie ce'şi avea măreţia ei. Este de prisos să mai amintesc ce admiraţii a deşteptat, traducătoarea în Italia, printre fanaticii lui Dante, şi câte omagii, câte onoruri i s'au adus, - încât numele său, puţin cunoscut aici, se ilustrase deja acolo! Dar desigur, nu gloria, - independentă tot d'auna de voinţa noastră, - a ispitit talentul şi munca D-nei Chiţu pentru aşa de îndelungă şi grea lucrare. Şi apoi, a visa gloria într'o ţară unde Bolintineanu şi Eminescu au murit în spitale, e o nebunie amară - în faţa căreia o femeie înţeleaptă ar zîmbi trist. Răbdarea şi pasiunea însă cu cari D-na Chiţu urmăreşte de ani întregi nemuritoarea epopeie a lui Dante, au o delicată şi profundă expresie psihologică. D-na Chiţu are pentru marele poet o nesfîrşită admiraţie, ce pare a se concretiza în forma unui cult intelectual. Admiraţia, în literatură şi artă, are felurite şi complicate manifestări. Ea este în general expresiunea unei adânci uimiri sufleteşti, pe care ţi-o produce o carte, un tablou, o statuie, o bucată muzicală etc. În unele cazuri însă, ea nu are numai caracterul unei simple senzaţii; atunci admiraţia devine un sentiment profund, o pasiune. Artistul pe care îl admiri în acest fel ia aspectul unei fiinţe aproape divină, şi din sufletul tău îi faci un altar; iar opera lui e o lume în care tu trăieşti cu creatorul ei într'o adoraţiune şi înţelegere intimă, şi par'că învăluită de nu ştiu ce misticism voluptos. (...) D-na Chiţu a întrupat admiraţiunea sa pentru Dante într'o formă literară: traducându'l. Traducerea d-sale nu se mărgineşte a se arăta ca o frumoasă lucrare de talent. Felul de-a admira dupe cum am arătat mai sus îşi are farmecul său. Sunt diferite maniere de-a gusta operile literare: traducerea, - când autorul este străin, - este una din acele manieri. Din acest punct de vedere judecat, traducerea este o plăcere delicată, un lung şir de emoţiuni simţite, lângă o masă de lucru, într'un cabinet intim şi singuratic, sub liniştea prietenoasă a orelor de noapte. Prin aceste voluptăţi intelectuale, adeseori, ne îndulcim si ne facem mai aristocratic visul vieţei. Ele ne feresc de multe din trivialităţile şi deşertăciunile egzistenţei.*"

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