Translation studies

A MICRO-CENTRIC NETWORK: POST-COMMUNIST ROMANIAN MAINSTREAM AND INDIE PUBLISHERS OF U.S. AND CANADIAN CONTEMPORARY POETRY IN TRANSLATION

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Abstract: *This essay examines the corpus of contemporary American and Canadian poetry translated into Romanian in stand-alone volumes between 1990 and 2017 and argues that translators had a deciding impact on the selection of authors, as well as on the configuration of the overall translation network. Romanian poet-translators engaged in an outward cultural movement that galvanized both their own writing and the national literature in general. In doing so, they developed various types of agency covering a wide range of translating patters, from no agency at all to full self-reliance, and a poetics of fecundity that testifies to their engagement with global events and with the microcosm of local literature. Engendered by an assumed material precariousness and by an overt desire for permanent change and synchronous alignment with world literature, these practices should be seen from a micro-centric perspective, that is, paramount in establishing positive relationships with U.S. and Canadian poetries and energizing the local literary scene, rather than simply reflective of a 'minor' mode of existence in the global and geopolitical arenas.*
Keywords: poetry translation; literary translation; network analysis; micro-centrism; sociology of translation;

Introduction: Mainstream vs. Indie

There is a fine line between established and indie publishing in Romania. Generally associated with high levels of intermediation and with rigidity in terms of expected financial performance, mainstream publishers are not the typical venue for poetry translation unless the authors are iconic figures in their home literatures. One cannot measure how established a publisher is in terms of published translations by the number of reviews discussing these works either because reviewing translations is not a common practice. Such evaluations are rarely made in literary periodicals and, when they are, what triggers them is rather the stature of the author or the translator

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and the network of the latter's literary acquaintances, not necessarily the publisher or the quality of the translation. This essay is an overview of contemporary American and Canadian poetry translations in stand-alone volumes published in Romania between 1990 and 2017 and an analysis of the network in which the nodes are the publishers and the authors and the edges are the translators. Our research departs from the conjecture that the landscape of such contemporary poetry translations is not homogenous, but rather composite, a disconnected network of micro-programs fueled by translators' connections and literary affinities.

The corpus (hereafter presented bibliographically as footnotes)—only very little researched to this day, traditionally from the point of view of individual authors (e.g. Bîrsanu, 2014), typically in literary journals, and never as a corpus *per se*—shows us that mainstream publishers started to manifest a somewhat constant interest towards contemporary North American poetry in English just before the country joined the European Union on January 1, 2007. It took a little over fifteen years for post-1989 Romanian publishing to go over "western soft-porn and blockbuster crime novels" (Bassnett, 1998: 57) and return to the overt interest in poetry shown during Communist years. However, only Humanitas and Polirom were noticeably interested in translation—the two mainstream publishing houses that dominate the industry, with Polirom more interested in promoting Romanian fiction writers abroad and Humanitas bringing foreign authors to the local market. Their roster was a short but high-profile list of established authors that promised to sell well. It is safe to say that Humanitas included T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound[1] in their publishing plans because they are canonized authors, whose literary value is undeniable and who also align with the requirements of a globalized, capitalist market. The same goes for their choice of Bob Dylan's lyrics or for Polirom's interest in Leonard Cohen, whose international fame was certainly in line with the sales policy of the publisher.

By contrast, indie publishing in the Romanian context is associated with self-publication, disintermediation, and almost complete control over the published product on the part of the translator. However, even this type of publishing is intermediated by presses that cannot be catalogued as fully mainstream or fully indie. Unlike in other contexts, where an author can publish their work under their own auspices, indie publishing in Romania means that an author, or a translator, in our case, uses a private company that has the legal right to operate as a publisher. Private individuals are not allowed to; therefore, they need to collaborate with a publishing house that supplies the much-needed ISBN. While most indie publishers typically issue the ISBN and serve as intermediaries in the printing process, there are independent publishers who also

[1] I have not included this translation (by Radu Vancu) in my corpus because Volume 1, the only one released until the end of 2017, contains only poems published in original between 1908 and 1920.

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get involved in the design and promotion of the book, which typically results in no further financial gains for the translator(s). Royalties in poetry translation are not common and the amounts earned by such publishing houses by selling these books merely allow them to survive.

Since it is very difficult to delineate mainstream from indie publishers and since oftentimes such delineation is based on very subjective criteria or departs from financial assumptions that are irrelevant to poetry translation, we will measure the influence of the nodes by means of graph theory. Graphs (or networks) formalize relationships between entities (nodes) by linking them via edges. For instance, Polirom and Leonard Cohen will be nodes related by the act of translation or by the translator, formalized represented visually as a link, or edge. Such relationships between nodes are scalable, in that we can measure the importance of nodes in the whole network. The three types of centrality indices we use in this paper are: betweenness centrality (bc)—measuring the influence of a node in the flow between any two other nodes—, closeness centrality (cc)—a measure of the nodes that spread the information most effectively in the network—, and the EigenVector—a measure of the overall influence of a node in the network. They are not meant to rank the nodes, but to indicate which of these nodes have been most effective in the publishing flows. This kind of analysis is doubled by a process of close reading that concerns texts and paratexts, as well as any outside material associated with the publication of a translation (interviews, occasional reviews, opinion pieces, etc.).

Publishing Micro-Centers

The precariousness in means displayed by most Romanian publishers has beneficial effects in terms of productivity and the variety of authors translated (Figure 1). Translated poetry publishing in Romania appears as a disconnected graph[2] with 28 author nodes (for 33 books) and 18 publisher nodes—divided in fourteen components (G0 to G13), zero clustering and density close to zero (0.0309). Clustering refers to the level of interconnection in a network, which in our case is non-existent and indicates a highly fragmented publishing program, but one that is divided in fourteen micro-centers—publishers with very varied interests in terms of authors. Density refers to the number of connections a node (publisher or author) has, in our case to the small number of translations in stand-alone volumes that a publisher is associated with.

[2] Translators are the edges that connect the publisher and author nodes; hence they have no role in the economy of this particular graph.

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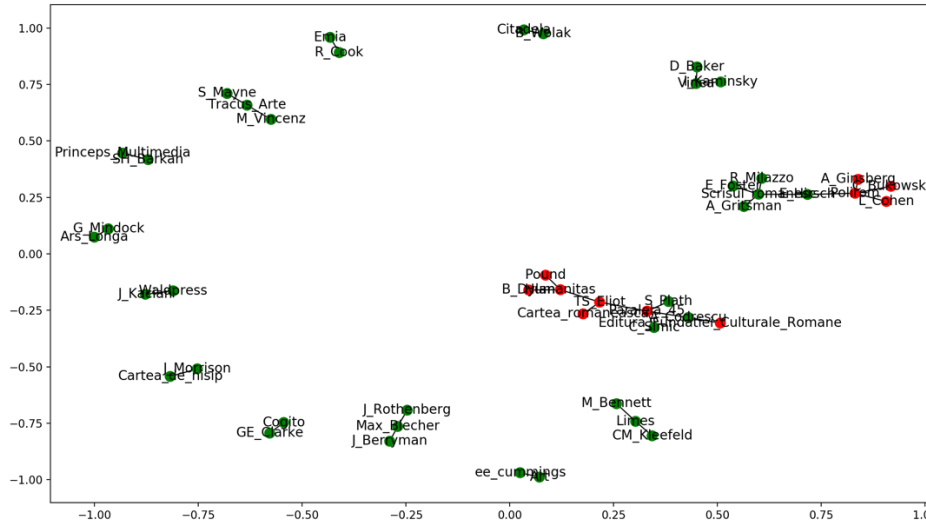


Figure 1. Contemporary English-language U.S. and Canadian poetry collections translated after 1989
Legend: red = mainstream; green = indie.

The fine line between mainstream and indie publishers is given by a third category, such as Paralela 45 (Figure 2), the most central node in the network because of the number of authors published and the association with three more presses that published other books by the same authors (Cartea Românească, Humanitas, and Editura Fundației Culturale Române).

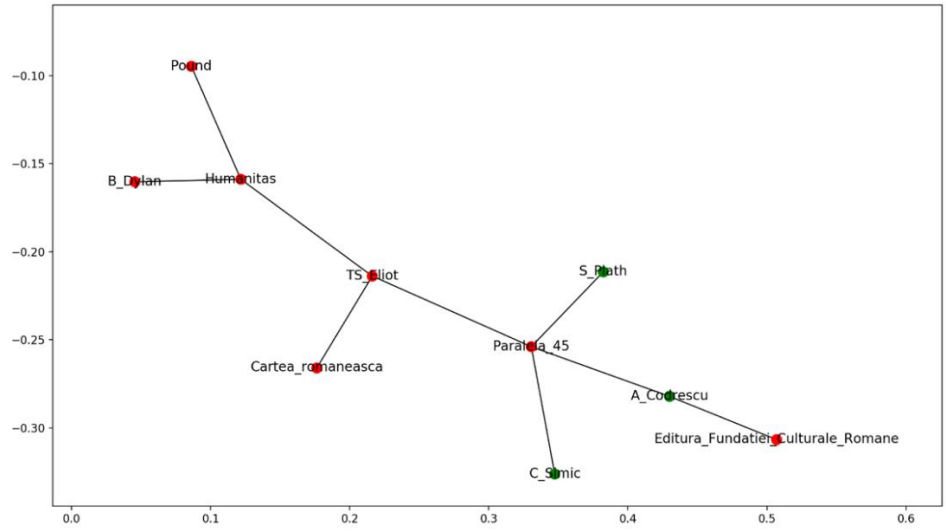


Figure 2. Main component (G0) - translation projects associated with mainstream Paralela 45, Humanitas, Cartea românească, and Editura fundației culturale române
(Legend: red = mainstream; green = indie)

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Their market presence and history point to a mainstream status, but the type of poetry titles they have hosted after the revolution actually show an openness to books that appear to be their translators' projects. I would contend that this openness has been the result of the network of people around the late Gheorghe Crăciun (editorial consultant and then editor-in-chief), a poetry theorist who built his most reputed book, *The Iceberg of Modern Poetry* (Crăciun, 2009), on the works of poets like Walt Whitman or Frank O'Hara. This press ranks first in all types of centrality in G (bc = 0.0212; cc = 0.1094; EigenVector = 0.6005) and is best placed and most influential in G0 (the main component), followed in betweenness and closeness centrality not by a mainstream publisher, but by an independent one, Scrisul Românesc—the press which built its portfolio due to transatlantic connections.

Paralela 45 starts its series of translations from U.S. contemporary poetry with a bilingual volume of selected poems by Andrei Codrescu[3], an established Romanian-born American author translated by Ioana Ieronim. The translator confesses in her foreword that in 2000 she actually resumed her translations of Codrescu's poetry, one that had started five years before (Ieronim, 2000: 18-19), and that Paralela 45 decided to make Codrescu even more popular in Romania after his first volume[4] of translated poems, *Candoare străină*, published only three years before by another press, sold out. The first volume was translated by the same Ieronim and published by a different press, so we may assume both translations from Codrescu's poetic work were Ieronim's projects. The situation is actually not very different from the publication of his translated novels. All eleven novels and non-fiction books were translated by the same Ioana Avădani. Avădani is not simply a translator appointed by the publisher to work on Codrescu's texts. Her relationship with the Romanian-born writer dates back to the late 1990s, when she started to translate his work with the novel *Mesi@*[5] and the articles published by Codrescu in reputed cultural journal *Dilema Veche* under the moniker *Scrisori din New Orleans* (Letters from New Orleans). Translation is simply a pastime for Avădani—as she confesses in many interviews and bio notes—and a reflection of her long-time friendship and literary affinity with Codrescu: "I am not a professional translator, I don't earn a living by doing this, so I can afford my own rhythm and *choose what I want to translate*. I

[3] Codrescu, Andrei. 2000. *Selected Poetry. Poezii alese* (Ioana Ieronim, Trans.). Pitești: Editura Paralela 45.

[4] Codrescu, Andrei. 1997. *Candoare străină: Poeme alese, 1970-1996/ Alien Candor: Selected Poems, 1970-1996* (Ioana Ieronim, Trans.). Editura Fundației Culturale Române.

[5] Codrescu, Andrei. 2000. *Mesi@ (Ioana Avădani, Trans.). Cluj:* Editura Fundației Culturale Române.

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revel in word hunting." (Vasilescu, 2011 , emphasis mine)[6]. She is otherwise known as the director of the Centre for Independent Journalism and has been for years a prominent figure in Romanian media, a position which may have allowed her to successfully propose translation projects to visible publishers. Her first translation, *Mesi@*, was published by Editura Fundației Culturale Române, founded by the Romanian Writers' Union, where Ieronim published her first poetry translation. When the press was shut down, the two translators took their projects to other publishers: Ieronim to Paralela 45, and Avădani to Polirom, who published six of Codrescu's titles[7]. But the rhythm in which the prolific translator worked on her friend's books required a second publisher, this time Curtea Veche Publishing, and a dedicated series bearing the name of the author[8]. While his prose was the result of his sole translator's effort, the translation of his poetry is tributary to a second translator-poet, Carmen Firan, who took Codrescu's first and only book written in his native Romanian, *Intrumentul negru*[9], and published it in 2005 at Scrisul Românesc press. My former research (Tanasescu, 2018) revealed that Firan also translated selections of Codrescu's poems and published them in the literary journal affiliated with the press. All these collaborations are part of a process of poetic reinstatement carried out by a network of various Romanian writer-translators that met Codrescu in the United States.

The next volume of American contemporary poetry published at Paralela 45 is the translation of Charles Simic's *The Book of Gods and Demons*[10] in 2002. There is no clear indication that this was a translator initiative; however, the volume differs in terms of design and is not bilingual, unlike Codrescu's *Selected* in the Gemini series. Cărtărescu's translation is preceded by a translator's note, in which he places the volume in the wider context of Simic's poetry and where the presence of the translator is only visible in a comment related to his favorite poem in the volume, which also appears on the back cover. If we take into account the rhythm in which Cărtărescu translates, the fact that the following American poetry books with

[6] All translations from Romanian into English are mine, unless stated otherwise.

[7] *Contesa sângeroasă/ The Bloody Countess* (2010), *Noi n-avem bun-gust, noi sîntem artiști*/ We Don't Have Good Taste, We Are Artists (2008), *Wakefield* (2006), *Mesi@* (2006), *Scrisori din New Orleans*/ *Letters from New Orleans* (2006), *Casanova în Boemia*/ *Casanova in Bohemia* (2005).

[8] *Prof pe drum*/ *Prof on the Road* (2008), *Gaura din steag/ The Hole in the Flag* (2008), *Ghid dada pentru postumani - Tzara şi Lenin joacă şah*/ *A Dada Guide for Post-Humans—Tzara and Lenin Playing Chess* (2009), *Ay, Cuba! O călătorie socio-erotică/ Ay, Cuba! Socio-Erotic Travel* (2012), *Lecția de poezie*/ *The Poetry lesson* (2014).

[9] Codrescu, Andrei. 2005. *Instrumentul negru. Poezii, 1965-1968/ The Black Tool. Poems, 1965-1968.* Craiova: Scrisul românesc.

[10] Charles Simic. 2002. *Cartea zeilor şi a demonilor*/ *Books of Gods and Demons* (Mircea Cărtărescu, Trans.). Pitești: Paralela 45.

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the same publisher appear in the Gemini series and in bilingual format, whereas Cărtărescu never publishes translations alongside the originals, one may be right to assume this was the translator's project. At Paralela 45 the translation of Simic was followed by that of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*[11] in 2004 by young translator Alex Moldovan—"[a] free-lance translator and a self-declared agnostic, [who] included on his list of translated works titles from philosophy, theology, as well as some poetry signed by authors such as Charles Taylor, Joseph Ratzinger or William Blake." (Bîrsanu, 2014: 246). As noted by Bîrsanu, "the publication of this version registered no echo whatsoever on the Romanian literary scene," (247) probably because of the personal nature of a project by a young translator that was not a published author at the time. Finally, the last poetry book with Paralela 45 in our corpus is Sylvia Plath's *Selected Poems*[12] translated and introduced by Elena Ciobanu in 2012. Plath's rendition and publication into Romanian appear to be Ciobanu's own endeavor, a classic example of collaboration with an established publisher that sits on the boundary between mainstream and indie publishing. The translator had defended her Ph.D. thesis on Plath's poetry in 2008 and the influence of her scholarly interest reflects heavily on the book. The poems are preceded by a lengthy academic preface both in English and Romanian, in which no reference is made to the translation process and which is followed by a list of works cited, a detailed bibliography, a short bio note, and a list of Plath's published books. Ciobanu's bio mentions her interest in the Anglophone world and her role as a curator of a rubric dedicated to Anglophone literatures in the literary magazine *Ateneu*, things that all suggest a personal project.

Alex Moldovan's ignored rendition of Eliot's *The Waste Land* might have been a direct competitor of the republication[13] by mainstream Cartea Românească, run by the Romanian Writers' Union. This bilingual book, coordinated by reputed British literature professor Lidia Vianu, contains two versions previously offered by Ion Pillat (1930) and Aurel Covaci (1973), and appears to observe the guidelines of mainstream publishing: established authors, established translators, and established endorsers. The same guidelines are observed by Humanitas in their volume of T.S. Eliot's *Selected Poems*[14] published in 2011. Humanitas collaborates with Ștefan Stoenescu—a reputed Anglophone literature specialist—for the preface and with

[11] Eliot, T.S. 2004. *The Waste Land* (Alex Moldovan, Trans.). Pitești: Paralela 45.
[12] Plath, Sylvia. 2012. *Poeme alese*/ *Selected Poems*. (Elena Ciobanu, Trans.) Pitești: Paralela 45.
[13] T.S. Eliot. 2000. *The Waste Land/ Țara pustie* (Ion Pillat, Aurel Covaci, Trans.). București: Editura Cartea Românească.
[14] Eliot, T. S. 2011. *Opere poetice. 1909-1962/ Selected Poems (1909-1962)* (Mircea Ivănescu et. al., Trans.). București: Humanitas Fiction.

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Professor Ioana Zirra for the chronology. This volume reunites old versions by Mircea Ivănescu and new translations by Sorin Mărculescu—translator of Cervantes—, Șerban Foarță—also seasoned translator of French poetry—, and Adriana Carmen Racoviță—a lecturer of English and experienced translator herself—, all qualified as excellent by the numerous reviews after publications (Grigore, 2012a, Grigore, 2012b, Dima 2012). The interest of all these presses in T.S. Eliot ranks him first in node centrality in G and G0 and places Humanitas second after Paralela 45 in Eigen centrality, thus second in the general network in terms of influence.

In our analysis, Humanitas does not owe its position to a large portfolio, but to their strategic rendition of Eliot, an author translated by other important nodes. In the absence of such translation, Humanitas would have been one of the many small players that make up translated poetry publishing in Romania. Unlike the Eliot translation, not much endorsement except for the translator's name was needed for Bob Dylan's *Blowing in the Wind*[15], published by Humanitas in 2012. Praised by a single reviewer before Dylan was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, as we have seen in the previous subchapter, Cărtărescu's translation is not an exquisite rendition, but probably helped boost sales figures for a series that reportedly undersells (Dinițoiu, 2017). Although the policy underlining the poetry series at Humanitas Fiction is for the Romanian renditions to be done by "important poet-translators," (Dinițoiu, 2017) no other book has the name of the translator in the very title ("100 poems translated by Mircea Cărtărescu", cf. note 15). The project most likely stemmed both from the translator's interest in Dylan's poetry and from Comănescu's affinity for the American artist's music, one of the many she was introduced to by Cornel Chiriac's acclaimed radio show in the early 1970s. Asked in a recent interview about the books and music that shaped her destiny, Comănescu admits to having been ostensibly influenced by American hippie counterculture:

> "We used to like all important Anglo-American artists. Especially those dubbed the flower-power generation. When I was in high-school and Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin died, we wore mourning lapel bands. Profs would ask us what happened and we would answer that a relative of ours had died. We were in mourning for a month after Jimi and Janis died. Even the American poetry we read towards the end of the highschool years was influenced by their music". (Mincan, 2014)

[15] Dylan, Bob. 2012. *Suflare în vânt. 100 de poeme traduse de Mircea Cărtărescu/ Blowing in the Wind. 100 Poems Translated by Mircea Cărtărescu*) (Mircea Cărtărescu, Trad.). București: Humanitas Fiction.

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This hypothesis is not far-fetched, as further translations[16] from Dylan's work and biography have been published to date in the very series that bears her own first name, "Raftul Denisei" (Denisa's bookshelf), even if Dylan's *Selected* reportedly didn't sell as expected (Dinițoiu, 2017). Still, four years after publication, Humanitas was still looking for ways to promote the book and commissioned *Adevărul*, one of the best-selling daily journals, to feature a presentation of the volume, accompanied by two translated poems and videos of Bob Dylan's songs on the occasion of Dylan's being awarded the Nobel for literature. The feature reveals that it has been Cărtărescu who had picked the one hundred poems for the anthology (Ghioca, 2016). Another article in 2016, this time an opinion piece by Mihaela Ursa, sees the Humanitas translation as an ideological repossession: "The ideological confiscation of Bob Dylan by the Communist dogma through Adrian Păunescu and his 'Flacăra' literary circle has only been rectified with Cărtărescu's version." (Ursa, 2016). In her view, although these versions cannot be put to music, they are an excellent poetic rewriting and where "Păunescu used Dylan as a songwriter Cărtărescu reinvented a poet." (Ursa, 2016). The critical bias thus becomes obvious, as Dylan is both a songwriter and a poet, one that needs not be reinvented the way I have described in previous research (Tanasescu, 2019).

Cărtărescu's preference for the translation of lyrics has been manifest since 2005, when he translated thirty-two poems for the monograph[17] dedicated to Leonard Cohen by Romanian literary critic and academic Mircea Mihăieș, a long-time self-declared fan of the Canadian poet and singer. The translation rights for the poems in *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (1956) and *The Spice-Box of Earth* (1961) had been granted by the late poet himself, whom Mihăieș personally had met at a certain point. The Romanian version of the poems, published by Polirom (Figure 3), produce a mixed reaction:

> "Mircea Cărtărescu's translation of Leonard Cohen's poems is accurate and is an event in itself. Cărtărescu is one of the most important Romanian poets, one of the reasons why this translation cannot go unnoticed. But we have to say that it does not produce a big revelation about the quality of Cohen as a poet. Those who are familiar with Cohen's interpretation of songs like "The Future" or "Everybody Knows" will certainly find it strange to read only the lyrics, let alone the lyrics Romanian. In the absence of music and of

[16] Dylan, Bob. 2015. *Cronica vieții mele/ The Chronicle of My Life* (vol. I, Dan Silviu Boerescu, Trans.). Bucharest: Humanitas Fiction; Dylan, Bob. 2016. *Tarantula* (Sorin Gherguț, Trans.). Bucharest: Humanitas Fiction.

[17] Mihăieș, Mircea. 2005/ 2016. *Viața, patimile și cântecele lui Leonard Cohen. Cu 32 de poeme traduse de Mircea Cărtărescu/ The Life, Passions, and Songs of Leonard Cohen. With 32 Poems Translated by Mircea Cărtărescu.* Iași: Polirom.

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> the sound of the English, these lyrics sound strange, although Mircea Cărtărescu renders the original accurately". (Urian, 2006: 5)

The association between Cărtărescu and Mihăieș was fed by their common interest in Cohen and is a clear indication of a deeply personal project. Another indication is the fact that the only translation selection ever published by Cărtărescu in a periodical is one of Cohen's poems in 2003[18], two years before they were featured in a larger selection in Mihăieș's book, and under a similar title formula to his translation of Dylan with Humanitas—[...] *în traducerea lui Mircea Cărtărescu*—an acknowledgment of the translator's prominent literary persona.

Polirom had been the first to translate Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* and *The Favorite Game* in 2003 and their continued interest in Cohen resulted in 2006 in a translation of his poetry volume *Book of Longing*[19]. This time, Polirom commissioned Șerban Foarță and Cristina Chevereșan. Foarță, considered by many a language genius and untranslatable as a poet, offers an excellent version that focuses on the musical quality of the originals and observes the prosody.

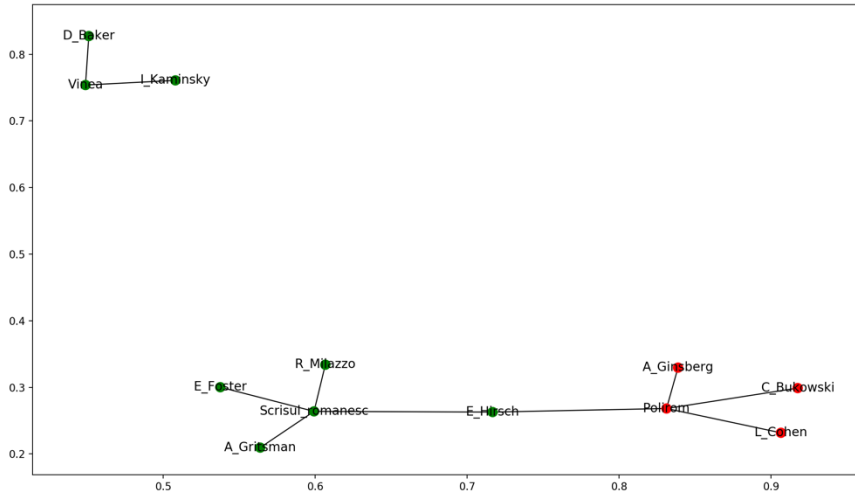


Figure 3. Translation projects associated with mainstream Polirom and indie Scrisul românesc. Legend: red = mainstream; green = indie.

The Cohen translation was the first in a Polirom series which continued in 2007 with Bukowski's *Love is A Dog from Hell. 61 Erotic Poems*[20],

[18] Cohen, Leonard. 2003. "Leonard Cohen în traducerea lui Mircea Cărtărescu/ Leonard Cohen translated by Mircea Cărtărescu." In *România literară* 28.

[19] Cohen, Leonard. 2006. *Cartea aleanului/ Book of Longing* (Cristina Chevereșan and Șerban Foarță, Trad.). Iași: Polirom.

[20] Bukowski, Charles. 2007. *Dragostea e un cîine venit din iad. 61 de poeme erotice/ Love is A Dog from Hell. 61 Erotic Poems* (Dan Sociu, Trad.; Gorzo, Il.). Iași: Polirom.

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translated by young poet Dan Sociu. The volume was met with contradictory reviews: while Iulia Popovici praised Sociu for transferring the sound and direct language of his own poetry in his version of Bukowski and saw this as a rare advantage in poetry translation into Romanian (Popovici, 2007), Paul Gabriel Sandu equated Sociu's treatment of the original poems with a bull in a china shop (Sandu, 2012). Two years after the translation of Bukowski poems Polirom published Sociu's translation of Irish poet Seamus Heaney, an anthology put together by the poet-translator himself. However, the publishing house might not have been interested in e. e. cummings, as in 2011 the translator takes this new translation project[21] to a different publisher, Art Press. The hypothesis according to which the translator's tastes and decision to translate cummings played a significant role in the publication of the book is also grounded in the fact that cummings's volume is the only foreign poetry title in the publisher's catalogue before 2018. Moreover, unlike the more substantial translations published with Polirom, this published version of cummings has only 80 pages, including illustrations. As far as the illustrations are concerned, they bind all three translations by Sociu like a red thread, irrespective of the publisher, which may be indicative of a certain vision on the translator's part.

Polirom expanded their series of translations from U.S. contemporary poetry with Allen Ginsberg[22] in 2010 and Edward Hirsch[23] in 2017. The format and design of these two new books differ considerably from the volumes translated by Sociu, and they are not accompanied by any illustrations or paratexts, except for brief author biographies on the inside covers and blurbs by established American authors or literary publications on the back covers. Although awarded a translation prize, the only extensive review of it to date does not address the Romanian version in any way and only comments on Ginsberg's literary magnitude (Pîrvan-Jenaru, 2011). The "elegant and precise" (Iovănel, 2017) translation of Hirsch's poems was published alongside a translation of his acclaimed *How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry* appropriately curated by Alexandru Ioan Cuza University Press in the same city. It was Hirsch's translator, Bogdan Alexandru Stănescu, the coordinator of Polirom's world literature series, who said that in poetry translation the competition is fierce and everything boils down to money. In this context, the association of the two titles in a

[21] e. e. cummings. 2011. *Poeme erotice*/ *Erotic Poems* (Dan Sociu, Trans.; Tudor Jebeleanu, Il.): București: Editura Art.
[22] Ginsberg, Allen. 2010. *Howl și alte poeme*/ *Howl and Other Poems* (Domnica Drumea and Petru Ilieșu, Trans.). Iași: Polirom.
[23] Hirsch, Edward. 2017. *Focul viu. Poeme vechi și noi. 1975-2010*/ *The Living Fire: New And Selected Poems* (Al. B. Stănescu, Trans.). Iași: Polirom.

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simultaneous launch appears as a combo meant to work against poetry's hard sell.

Polirom appears in the main component (G0) of the graph due to an infusion of nodes brought along by Scrisul românesc, otherwise each of these publishers would have belonged in different smaller components and would not have been so visible in the network. It was this small press in Craiova that published Hirsch for the first time, via Carmen Firan's transnational network, in a bilingual volume,[24] three years before Polirom did; and it was due to this network that Hirsch visited Romania and took part in the Literature and Translation International Festival in Iași in 2014, where Stănescu, Bădulescu and Andriescu, his future translators, met him. Besides his participation in this festival, the small press facilitated a book launch in the popular Bastilia bookstore in Bucharest and organized a round table together with the prestigious literary journal *Observatorul cultural*, thus checking all the promotion boxes normally associated with mainstream publishing.

Both small presses and individual translators appear to follow the same strategies to promote a book, sometimes with more success than mainstream publishers; for example, the 2014 translation[25] of John Berryman's *Dream Songs* by Radu Vancu, published with independent Max Blecher Press. This volume has benefited from the largest number of reviews of all contemporary U.S. poetry translations. While some of them insist on the differences between his version and the version published by Mircea Ivănescu in his 1986 anthology (Nedelea, 2014; Chivu, 2014), most of them are praising and salute the critical apparatus that accompanies the translation and situates Berryman in a literary context meant to guide the readers that are not familiar with his poetry (Coande, 2014; Dinițoiu, 2014). Although numerous and generally positive, the reviews never truly address the quality of translations and mostly analyze Berryman's motifs and the similarity between his work and the work of Romanian Mircea Ivănescu, his first poet-translator and Vancu's own mentor. Even if the translator is well aware of Berryman's sophistication in terms of poetic technique and even explains in detail in his postface the prosodic structure of the 50 poems he chose, he does not seem to render the structure in Romanian and focuses instead on rendering Berryman's "verbal jungle"—the colloquial vocabulary and intentional language mistakes. However, more of a publishing event than a felicitous translation, Berryman's *Dream Songs* remain their translator's project and the translator's gift to Romanian literature. Vancu entrusts the book to long-time friend Claudiu Komartin and his Max Blecher Press, but the back cover

[24] Hirsch, Edward. 2014. *Foc nocturn/ Nocturnal Fire* (Răzvan Hotăranu, Trans.). Craiova: Scrisul românesc.

[25] Berryman, John. 2013. *Cântece vis*/ *Dream Songs* (Radu Vancu, Trans.). Bistrița: Casa de editură Max Blecher.

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features a second publisher, Armanis, based in Vancu's hometown Sibiu. This is perhaps an indication that the translation might have been possible due to the financial support of the latter press, as this is the only title in Max Blecher's portfolio that has ever been co-published.

That year Max Blecher Press published another poetry volume, this time by Jerome Rothenberg[26], co-translated by Raluca and Chris Tanasescu. To our knowledge, only one review has been published to date, one that praises both the selection and the translation:

> "Varied and surprisingly representative for the work of a poet of such caliber, the anthology put together by Raluca & Chris Tanasescu—which is not to quote selectively, but looked at, read and uttered in a loud voice—is a *tour de force* for which the two translators cannot be complimented enough". (Chivu, 2014).

However ignored by reviewers, like many other translations, the launch was actually a series of events meant to have Rothenberg meet in person as many Romanian writers and poetry readers as possible: besides taking care of the translation, the translators applied for funding with the United States Embassy in Bucharest so that Rothenberg could attend the book launch in Bucharest and receive a fee; they also received the support of the local Jewish Community to cover daily incidentals; they copy-edited the manuscript and organized three book launches—at the book fair, in a posh literary lounge, as well as at the Jewish Theatre, and took the poet and his spouse on a flash-trip to the Romanian mountains. The press took care of the professional design and printing of the book. In addition, Claudiu Komartin and graphic designer Ana Toma, the two founders of the press, took part actively in most of the events organized and hosted the poet and the translators during one of their poetry reading circles, Institutul Blecher[27].

The same modus operandi was observed four years before, when C. Tanasescu successfully applied for funding with the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest to bring poet David Baker to Romania for the launch of his translated book—*The Alchemical Man*[28]. The book was presented to Romanian audiences in a series of various happenings, from book launches at that year's book fair in Bucharest to readings at the U.S. Embassy and a lecture at the University of Bucharest's Department of American Studies.

[26] Rothenberg, Jerome. 2013. *Mistici, hoți și nebuni/ Mystics, Thieves, and Madmen* (Raluca & Chris Tanasescu (MARGENTO), Trans.). Bistrița: Casa de editură Max Blecher.

[27] The Blecher poetry workshops (*Institutul Blecher*) have been organized by Komartin for the past 9 years (168 editions as of March 3, 2018) without any financial support (Crăciun 2017).

[28] Baker, David. 2009. *Omul alchemic/ Alchemical Man. Selected Poems*. (Chris Tanasescu, Trans.). București: Editura Vinea.

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The first and last translated books related to the two Tanasescus were handled differently. In 2007, C. Tanasescu entrusted Vinea Press, run by poet Nicolae Tzone and focused exclusively on poetry and avantgarde literature, with the production and printing of Ilya Kaminsky's *Dancing in Odessa*[29], for which he paid a certain amount. The publisher presented the book at the 2007 Gaudeamus bookfair and distributed it in several bookstores, as well as through direct orders he personally mailed. However precarious the financial state of Vinea[30], Tzone is the only Romanian independent publisher that regularly presents his titles at the *Salon du livre* in Paris in spectacular formats and on luxury paper (Andrei, 2017). Relying heavily on his network of friends[31] and on his own creative stubbornness, as well as on a totally flexible in-home printing scheme, Tzone manages to offer every year fresh copies of all the books he has published since 1990 and will probably never say that a certain title sold out.

A somewhat different type of collaboration was established with Tracus Arte regarding the translation of Canadian Seymour Mayne's word sonnets[32]: the two co-translators submitted the title for consideration with the publisher and upon acceptance delivered the text of the translation and provided the book designer with a series of corrections and edits, thus fully taking care of the text editing and proofreading process. The total printing cost was supported by the publisher and the translators received approximately a fifth of the print run. The same process was probably followed by translator Marius Surleac for his translation of Marc Vincenz's *Propaganda Factory*[33] in 2015 with the same publisher. However financially supportive the latter, the two translations hosted by Tracus Arte completely lack reviews and promotion events. It is worth mentioning at this point that Seymour Mayne's participation in the book launch in Bucharest in 2014 was self-funded and the only support received by the two translators from the local Embassy of

[29] Kaminsky, Ilya. 2007. *Dansând în Odessa*/ *Dancing in Odessa*. (Chris Tanasescu, Trans.). București: Editura Vinea.

[30] Although in very evasive terms, Tzone does admit to the financial instability of his press: "Somehow hazard helps too… I have never been able to work with planned budgets, at least not in Romania. First, I would make the books then I would manage to cover the expenses from sales or *from other sources*. There's a whole apparatus behind this." (Andrei 2017 , emphasis mine)

[31] Asked how he managed to have Romanian authors translated into French and presented at the *Salon du livre,* Nicolae Tzone replies: "It's very difficult, but I have very good friends, genuine professionals, that help me. I set up a kind of branch office in Paris for Vinea together with Miron Kiropol, Claudiu Soare... We are five or six people, collaborators included." (Andrei *ibid.*)

[32] Mayne, Seymour. 2014. *Caligrafomanție/ Augural Calligraphies*. (Raluca & Chris Tanasescu (MARGENTO), Trans.). București: Tracus Arte.

[33] Vincenz, Marc. 2015. *Fabrica de propagandă sau apropo de copaci*/ *Propaganda Factory or Speaking about Trees* (Marius Surleac, Trans.). București: Tracus Arte.

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Canada was the hosting of a poetry reading and cocktail at the embassy's headquarters. Finally, Mayne's reading and lecture at the University of Bucharest's Department of Canadian Studies was made possible because of translator C. Tanasescu's long-time network in the institution.

Private initiative has also been salient in projects like Cosma's translation of George Elliott Clarke and Gloria Mindock. Now a Canadian citizen based in Toronto and a patron of the arts running a literary residence in Val David (Quebec), Cosma translated acclaimed Parliamentary Poet Laureate George Elliott Clarke's *Selected Poems*[34] in 2006, followed by selections from the work of Gloria Mindock[35] (Poet Laureate of Sommerville, Massachusetts), Dae-Tong Huh (Korea-born Canadian poet)[36], and Jim Heavily (poet and poetry editor of Los Angeles-based online literary journal www.hinchasdepoesia.com)[37]. It might be that these eclectic projects were fueled both by her personal literary taste and by her various collaborations with the poets she translates: Mindock is, for instance, the founding editor of Cervena Barva, the press that published two of Cosma's poetry volumes[38] and for which Cosma is, according to her own website, an international editor; Jim Heavily turns out to be the editor who published one of Cosma's poems[39] in the Romanian original and in Spanish translation the very year when a selection of his own poems appear in Romania); finally, her literary barter with poet Dae-Tong Huh becomes apparent in the publication of one of her books of children's literature[40] with Korean-Canadian Literary Forum-21 Press. Even her translation of Clarke's work—which marked her debut as a translator—appears to be, according to one of the very few reviews done in Romania, the result of literary gratitude that adds to a not so apparent, yet plausible, degree of literary kinship:

> "This [translation] cannot be only an elegant gesture out of her gratitude for the enthusiastic forewords he wrote to her own poetry

[34] Clarke, George Elliott. 2006. *Poeme incendiare/ Illuminated Poems* (Flavia Cosma, Trans.). Oradea: Cogito.
[35] Mindock, Gloria. 2010. *La portile raiului/ At Heaven's Gates* (Flavia Cosma, Trans.). Iași: Ars Longa Press.
[36] Cosma, Flavia. 2007. "Murmurs of Voices/ Murmure des voix/ Murmurul Vocilor." (Flavia Cosma, Trans.) Oradea: Cogito.
[37] Heavily, Jim. 2012. "Au trecut cinci ani deja...; El Pais (Ţara); Strada morţilor; etc./ It's been five years already… The Country; Dead men's street" (Flavia Cosma, Trans.). In *Vatra veche* 4 (6): 69.
[38] Cosma, Flavia. 2008. *The Season of Love*. Somerville, MA: Cervena Barva Press, 89 pages; Cosma Flavia. 2007. *Gothic Calligraphy*. Somerville, MA: Cervena Barva Press.
[39] Cosma, Flavia. 2012. "Man's Iron Hand; La mano de hierro del hombre." (Luis Raúl Calvo, Trans.) In *Hinchas de Poesia* 7/ 2012. Web: http:// bit.ly/ 2A9LsUM.
[40] Cosma, Flavia. 2007. *The Adventures of Tommy Teddy Bear and Alex Little Bunny*. Toronto: Korean-Canadian Literary Forum-21 Press.

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> books. I would feel inclined to think this is a reading experience that touched the poet's receptiveness, hardened by her harsh destiny and her own sense of displacement. This is the source of her openness to acute existential problems, her understanding and compassion. We get a glimpse [in this translation] of a Flavia Cosma that speaks about Human Rights to Canadian students, the TV producer that documented homelessness in Toronto or the orphans in her home country [...]. In all these, she resonates with George Elliott's Clarke's militant social activism". (Oloș, 2007).

Just like the poets she translates (with the notable exception of Clarke), her translation projects stay very regional: the books are published with very small, provincial presses, either in her home town, Oradea, or in Iași, and the poetry selections generally appear in literary journals that are very regional (e.g., *Vatra Veche* from Târgu Mureș, *Citadela* from Satu Mare, both cities in north-western Romania).

What seems to connect these publishers and journals, though, is the "Lucian Blaga" International Festival in Sebeș, another small city in Transylvania, where Cosma was awarded in 2009 the "Title of Excellence for Outstanding Contribution to the Promotion and Enrichment of the Romanian Culture within the European Region and throughout the World.". From one of the two reviews of her translation of Clarke to date it is clear that the Canadian poet had visited Romania prior to the launch of his 2006 book, on the occasion of another literary happening in Satu Mare, *Zilele Poesis* (Pop, 2007). After his return in 2006 for the launch of his translated poem collection, various further selections by other translators appear in a number of literary magazines: two translations by Canadian Studies specialist Ana Oloș[41], who also favorably reviewed Cosma's rendition and dedicated a more in-depth academic study to Clarke's work (Oloș, 2012). While Oloș's 2008 translation followed Clarke's 2006 lecture at the Nord University, her home institution, and an award he received from the local literary journal, *Poesis*, her 2013 translation the very same year may be a reflection of Clarke's appointment as the Toronto Poet Laureate at the beginning of 2012. It may also be a natural development of a series of encounters between Cosma and Clarke. This small network also prompts a substantial interview in the *Transilvania* literary journal (Oloș, 2012) by Oloș and Crina Bud, lecturer at the Romanian Lectorate with York University, in Toronto.

[41] Clarke, George Elliott. 2008. "Biserica baptistă africană din Cherrzbrook; Ecleziastul; Sonet alb: etc./ The African Baptist Church in Cherrzbrook; The Ecclesiast; White Sonnet; etc." (Ana Olos, Trans.) In *Poesis* 3-5: 98; Clarke, George Elliott. 2013. "Către guvernul din Nova Scoția; Viață de albină; etc./ To the Nova Scotia Government; A Bee's Life; etc." (Ana Oloș, Trans.) In *Nord literar* 7-8: 122-123.

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Private initiative also appears to have prompted most of Olimpia Iacob's author-volumes and anthologies. Iacob, the most prolific translator of U.S. and Canadian poetry selections in print periodicals, appears in this network in G2, thus immediately after big players like Humanitas Fiction or Paralela 45. She has been publishing stand-alone collections for some of the authors in her network (such Carolyn M. Kleefeld[42]), but most of her translated books are either duos[43] by English-language poets coming from different cultures (such as the poetic dialogue[44] between American Vince Clemente and Welsh writer Peter Tabith-Jones), or duos by a Romanian and an American writer[45], or anthologies in which she pairs Romanian and English-language writers[46]. Her work increases significantly the number of anthologies published after 1989. The first such work was George Ciorănescu's *Spicuiri din lirica americană contemporană*,[47] published in 1993, followed three years later by Vasile Nicolescu's *Lirică universală*

[42] Kleefeld. Carolyn Mary. 2013. *Zori hoinari/ Vagabond Dawns* (Al. Zotta, Foreword; Olimpia Iacob, Trans.). Cluj: Editura Limes; Kleefeld. Carolyn Mary. 2014. *Sărut divin/ The Divine Kiss*. Nistor, Ioan. *În flăcările păpădiilor/ In the Flames of Dandelions* (Olimpia Iacob, Trans.). Cluj: Editura Limes, 2014.

[43] Although the translator refers to such books featuring a Romanian poet and an American poet as anthologies, I consider them author-collections.

[44] Clemente Vince and Jones, Peter Thabit.2008. *Şoapte ale sufletului/ Whispers of the Soul* (Olimpia Iacob, Trans.) Iași: Editura Fundației Culturale Poezia.

[45] Wolak, Bill. 2015. *Răsăriturile nopții/ Deep into the Erasures of Night* (Olimpia Iacob, Trans.). Oyster Bay, NY: The Feral Press; Nistor, Ioan and Wolak, Bill. 2016. *Seminţe căutătoare de vânt/ Wind-Seeking Seeds* (Olimpia Iacob, Trans. from the English; Olimpia Iacob & Bill Wolak, Trans. from the Romanian). Satu-Mare: Editura Citadela;

[46] Novăcescu, Constantin and Kacian, Jim. 2016. *O liniște stranie/ Strange silence* (Olimpia Iacob & Jim Kacian, Trans.) Timișoara: Waldpress; Kacian, Jim and Petean, Mircea. 2016. *Haiku & Monoku* (Jim Kacian); *Haiku şi poeme taoiste/ Haiku & Taoist Poems* (Mircea Petean) (Olimpia Iacob and Jim Kacian, Trans.) Cluj: Editura Limes, 2016; Kacian, Jim, Popin, Eugen D. 2017. *Prins/ No Way Out* (Jim Kacian); *Trupul țărânei/ The Body of Dust* (Eugen D. Popin). (Olimpia Iacob and Jim Kacian, Trans.) Timişoara: David Press Print; Cicio, Ana and Joussen, Frank. 2013. *Feţele iubirii/ The Faces of Love* (Ana Cicio); *Nuanţele iubirii/ Shades of Love* (Frank Joussen). (Olimpia Iacob and Jim Kacian, Trans.) Cluj: Editura Limes; ***. 2013. Stare la Ora Amiezii/ Mood at Noon (Lidia Charelli. Maria Bennett. Rebecca Cook. Mia Barkan Clarke. Cassian Maria Spiridon.) (Olimpia Iacob and Jim Kacian, Trans.) Iași: Editura Timpul; Christi, Aura and Jones, Peter Thabit. 2014. *Lăsați fluturii să zboare/ Let the Butterflies Go* (Olimpia Iacob and Jim Kacian, Trans.). Iași: Editura Timpul, ***. 2014. *Lumina care cântă/ The Light Singing* (Olimpia Iacob and Jim Kacian, Trans.). Deva: Editura Emia; Barkan, Stanley H. and Corbu, Daniel. *Maşina de inventat idealuri*/ *The Machine for Inventing Ideal*s (Olimpia Iacob and Jim Kacian, Trans.) Iași: Editura Princeps Multimedia.

[47] I was unable to consult the table of contents of this anthology. However, one of the very few reviews of the anthologist's works mentions the following contemporary poets: e. e. cummings, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, A. Ginsberg.

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(Universal Poetry)[48], only partially dwelling on contemporary American poets—such as Sylvia Plath or W.H. Auden. The next anthology dedicated to contemporary American poetry[49] was published ten years later, in 2006, by Cartea românească. *Locul nimănui* is the editors' manifest against poetry taught in U.S. academia rather than a selection to reflect local taste or topics and writing techniques that could have interested a Romanian audience. In 2012, the 'jam session book', *Nomadosophia*, similar to Marin Sorescu's *Inspiration Treatise*, only without the interviews and blending translations[50] with original works, brings together contemporary poets that were popular in anthologies before 1989, such as Elizabeth Bishop and Gwendolyn Brooks, with authors whose work had never been translated into Romanian before, like Rae Armantrout or Frank Zappa. Finally, the anthology put together by the Zona Nouă poets, *Everything in its Right Place*, gathered the work of fourteen young American writers[51] and emphasized the fact that these writers were being translated into Romanian for the first time.

Going back full-circle to publishing projects related by famous musicians, one needs to mention the first translation of rock lyrics in book form in post-communist Romania: Jim Morrison's *An American Prayer and Other Writings*[52]. The book was the project of rock music enthusiast Dănuț Ivănescu, editor of the Romanian *Heavy Metal Magazin*. The first bilingual edition was published in 1995 at Quo Vadis? Press in Chișinău. Printing books with presses and printing houses in the Republic of Moldova was a common practice during those years, as prices were lower than in Romania and local publishers welcomed the idea of facilitating projects in Romanian. The first print run probably sold out very quickly, as two more editions were published in 1997, this time with Romanian publishers—Cartea de nisip and

[48] ***. 1996. *Lirică universală/ Universal Poetry* (Vasile Nicolescu, Trans.). București: Eminescu.

[49] (in alphabetical order) Will Alexander, Anselm Berrigan, Ted Berrigan, Jim Carroll, Andrei Codrescu, Clark Coolidge, Joseph Donahue, Edward Foster, Jorie Graham, Fanny Howe, Lisa Jarnot, Ronald Johnson, Robert Kelly, Laura Moriarty, Nathaniel Mackey, Harry Mathews, Eileen Myles, Murat Nemet-Nejat, Alice Notley, Geoffrey O'Brien, Michael Palmer, Simon Pettet, Ed Roberson, Leslie Scalapino, Leonard Schwartz, David Shapiro, Aaron Shurin, Eleni Sikelianos, Arthur Sze, John Taggart, Nathaniel Tarn, Tod Thilleman.

[50] (in alphabetical order) Rae Armantrout, David Baker, Elizabeth Bishop, Gwendolyn Brooks, Albert Goldbarth, Fady Joudah, Philip Levine, Cate Marvin, Seymour Mayne, J.D. McClutchy, Ken McCullough, Robert Pinsky, Jerome Rothenberg, Charles Simic, Charles Wright, Frank Zappa.

[51] Daniel Bailey, Gabby Bess, Mike Bushnell, Ana Carrete, Noah Cicero, Juliet Escoria, Mira Gonzalez, Sarah Jean Alexander, Tao Lin, Scott McClanahan, Ashley Opheim, Sam Pink, Michael J. Seidlinger, and Lucy K. Shaw.

[52] Morrison, Jim. 1995/ 1997. *O rugă americană și alte scrieri/ An American Prayer and Other Writings* (Virgilia and Mara Popa, Trad.). Chișinău: Quo Vadis? Press/ Cartea de nisip/ Karmat Press.

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Karmat Press. The books produced by these publishers reveal a very eclectic selection—a hodgepodge of cheap literature, poetry, translations, memoirs, most of them being rather reflections of their authors' personal agendas than a coherent publication portfolio. The translation of Morrison's poems and lyrics is the perfect example of such projects born from someone's passion for a certain kind of music. Its publication was an act of open admiration towards the poet and musician, as all paratexts and subsequent reviews of the translation to Morrison's life and music only. There are no translation excerpts online, nor are there any in other media.

The only reference to the two translators appears on a blog run by the artist who designed the cover of the book, Ionuț Bănuță[53]. This is how we find out that Virgilia and Mara Popa are siblings. Ana Virgilia Popa is in fact a researcher in veterinary medicine, whose other translations to date have nothing to do with poetry, but with science fiction and with specialized texts pertaining to the field of biology. Such an eclectic profile is an indication of how Virgilia Popa came to translate this poetry collection: most probably because she was personally acquainted with the publisher. Details from Ana Virgilia Popa's online CV confirm the fact that the first edition was published in 1995 at Quo vadis? Press (in Chișinău, Republic of Moldova), while the other three were published between 1996 and 1998 by Karmat Press and Cartea de Nisip Publishers (which all had the same owner, Dănuț Ivănescu). The translation was popular among Morrison's fans (e.g., one of the poems in translation, *Cine te-a speriat* (Who Scared You)), was included on the Romanian band Blue Spirit's 1999 album titled *Cei mai frumoși ani!* (The Most Beautiful Years!), but was always sung alongside the original. The 51-poem selection follows an ample foreword from the publisher, Dănuț Ivănescu, titled "'Cel frumos și blestemat' sau 'La porțile percepției'" (The Handsome and Cursed or At the Doors of Perception), which addresses the rock star's troubled biography. The Romanian versions follow the original quite accurately and sometimes manage to preserve the rhyme, but the prosody is not a concern for the two translators. A similar preoccupation for the meaning of Morrison's lyrics appears in Tudor Crețu's essays on narcopoetics, a series of three pieces published in *Observatorul cultural* in 2016 on his drug addiction as part of the artistic process[54].

Conclusion

The analyzed corpus is undergirded by a focus on novelty, passion, and dialogue with contemporary Romanian writing rather than on established

[53] The cover designer reveals that he designed the cover out of his "deep admiration" for Morrison's band, *The Doors*. http:// bit.ly/ MorrisonBanuta.

[54] Crețu, Tudor. 2012. "Jim Morrison, narcopoetica (1-3)/ Jim Morisson, the narcopoetics (1-3)." In *Observator cultural* 811, 812, 814. Web: http:// bit.ly/ narcopoetica.

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American writing dictating the rules of the game. It also emphasizes a translating agenda fashioned by the translators' networks and by a sort of resistance to the mainstream. The poetry translators' wish to mirror the ever-morphing contemporary world literature in its diversity, not only the "peaks" that have populated the national literature-building program of translations before 1989 (Ursa, 2018), resulted in author-translator networks being built and, if such networks existed, in interpersonal relationships being fruitfully exploited. The 14 components—ranging from established publishers to re-publications of one single title—, corresponding to a range of 14 micro-programs, as Ursa calls them, reflect the self-regulation of a literary translation structure with profound ramifications in the larger literary system and justify the use of a network model that emphasizes heterogeneity. The self-regulation of such a structure has been the direct expression of a permanent interaction with other cultures and agents, as well as of the mission many of the poet-translators embarked on in order to synchronize Romanian literature with the rest of the world and overcome the European bias. I will conclude this essay by saying that the transnational logic of the post-Cold War era meant not only an economic reconfiguration of the book market, but a refashioning of poetry translators' agency, who took upon themselves more than ever before the task of refreshing literary practices and their own writing through translation.

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