

## THE NAME OF THE DEVILS IN THE ROMANIAN TRANSLATION OF THE *DIVINE COMEDY*

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**Abstract:** For George Coșbuc, the translation of the *Divine Comedy* was not only an attempt to achieve a cultural adaptation of an outstanding literary work, but also a proof of literary craftsmanship. The names given to the devils in the Romanian version of the songs XXI and XXII in the *Inferno* testify to the linguistic competence and, at the same time, the absolutely remarkable stylistic intuition of the great Romanian poet and translator.

**Keywords:** Dante Alighieri, George Coșbuc, literary translation, names of the devils.

1. The version given by George Coșbuc to the *Divine Comedy* is, and this fact is still relatively little known, the result of a prolonged and competent activity of studying the Dantesque text, with the well-known poet translating, working and at times returning to the initial Romanian version for a period that is said to have lasted longer than two decades<sup>1</sup>.

The text obtained after such an effort, printed in its entirety posthumously<sup>2</sup>, reveals George Coșbuc's in-depth knowledge of the Italian original, doubled by the Romanian translator's frequently noticeable poetic talent. George Coșbuc wanted and managed to offer a Romanian equivalent that was almost perfect both as regards the content and the form of the original, respecting the ideas of the source and attentively rebuilding its form with the means afforded by the Romanian language.

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<sup>1</sup> George Coșbuc accidentally started the fragmentary translation of Dante's text in 1891, using German sources, and he continued systematically by working on the Romanian version, referring to Italian sources and commentaries, from the winter of 1899 to the year of 1913. (For details, see Chivu, Gh. 1985: 138–147.) Just a few days before the end of his life, an end marked by the tragic and unexpected loss of his only son, George Coșbuc was working on the commentary of the *Divine Comedy*, but, with his well-known correctness, continued to return to the latest version of the translation. This is attested by an annotated calendar file, extant in the paper case of the *Coșbuc Archive*, which can be found at the Library of the Romanian Academy.

<sup>2</sup> The result of this prolonged effort was capitalized on for the first time, almost in its entirety in 1985–1988, by the publication in the series called *Romanian Writers* by the Minerva Publishing House (Coșbuc, George. *Selected Works*, vol. VII and VIII). It was that time that saw the editing, together with the last version of the translation, known from the Ramiro Ortiz edition (Alighieri, Dante. 1925–1932. *Divina Comedie*, I–III. București), of the variants of the last text and the first Romanian version of the *Inferno*, later abandoned by the poet and still unknown. See also Coșbuc, George. 2013. *Works*, III. *Translations*. București: National Foundation for Science and Art.

Thus, the resulting Romanian version is not only a translation in the usual sense of the term, but also a bringing to an adequate level and a remoulding in and through the means of Romanian of the Dantesque text. Moreover, the numerous variants acknowledged and extant in the most diverse stocks of manuscripts (not just those at the Library of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest, the institution to which Elena Coşbuc donated the poet's archive), scattered in the most diverse literary publications that appeared in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, testify to the work undertaken by the great poet and mark the stages of a never-ending process or a process never considered complete by a poet who always sought to attain prosodic perfection.

Emanoil Bucuţa, who was one of the most widely acknowledged commentators of the translation provided by George Coşbuc to the *Divine Comedy*, once noted the following: "His craftsmanship was meant to be like the art of a mosaic maker, one commissioned to replace the stones of a work of art to which the artist would pray as if it were an icon. He did not mean to modify, but solely to substitute, piece by piece, the whole. There may be more brilliant and perhaps more melodious translations than the translation into Romanian done by George Coşbuc, but it would be next to impossible to find one that is more faithful and akin to the native spirit than his own" (1932: 451).

2. The validity of this characterisation is very well emphasized by the analysis of the form given to songs XXI and XXII from the *Inferno*, as these songs contain the Romanian corresponding names of the devils who accompany and guide Virgil and Dante across the passing bridge from the fourth *bolgia* ('ditch') and the "fifth valley".

If we acknowledge the current, common spirit of the process of naming, these names are unconventional, different from the Romanian specificity and characteristics of the act of naming the "un-named", that is, the use of substitutes, under the well-known and carefully respected conditions of "language interdiction", for appellations considered harbingers of evil and calamity simply by being invoked.

The "woeful claws", a corresponding name found by George Coşbuc for Italian *Malebranche*, a generic name for the devils appointed as guards in the Malebolge, are led by Codârloi (called *Coadă-Încârligată* 'hooked tail' in the first variant of the *Inferno*) and have names that can be found listed in tercets 40 and 41 of song XXI<sup>3</sup>:

*Hei, Zbate-Aripi, în front, cu Farfarel,  
şi Bot-de-Ogar cu voi, şi Viţa-i-Sece!  
Haid', Fund-de-Iad, şi tu, şi Parpanghel,*

*Step forward, Alichino and Calcabrina,  
he then began to say, thou, too, Cagnazzo;  
and let old Barbariccia guide the ten.*

*nebulul Cap-de-Câne, să mai plece  
colţatul Rât-de-Porc şi Forforoată!  
Bărboi-Zbârlit vătaf acestor zece!*

*Have Libicocco go, and Draghignazzo;  
tusked Ciriatto, too, and Graffiaccane,  
with Farfarello and crazy Rubicante.*

<sup>3</sup> The quotations and the examples are reproduced from the edition that I published in Coşbuc, George. 1985. *Selected Works*, vol. VII. Bucureşti: Minerva Publishing House.

In the first variant of the *Inferno*, later abandoned by George Coşbuc, the two tercets had the following form:

<p><i>Hei, Zbate-Aripi și Vânt-Turbat, te scoală!</i>  <i>Tu, Bot-de-Câne, haid'! Curând să plece</i>  <i>și Fund-de-Iad, și Foc-Aprins, și Vără-n-Boală,</i></p> <p><i>și Rât-de-Porc, și Vița-i-Sece,</i>  <i>și Gheară-de-Ogar, iar tu nainte,</i>  <i>Zbârlitâ-Barbă, -n cârdul cel de zece!</i></p>	<p><i>Step forward, Alichino and Calcabrina;</i>  <i>Though too, Cagnazzo; and let old</i>  <i>Barbariccia guide the ten.</i></p> <p><i>Have Libicocco go, and Dragnignazzo;</i>  <i>tusked Ciriatto too, and Graffiacane</i>  <i>With Farfarello and crazy Rubicante.<sup>4</sup></i></p>
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A simple comparison of the two variants of translation emphasizes not solely the mitigation of the artistic “nerve” in the form considered the final version of the *Inferno*, but also a number of differences of naming devils, with the differences amplified by the variants comprised in the two already mentioned songs of the first book from the *Divine Comedy*, variants that cannot always be considered mere onomastic synonyms even if, apparently, they point to one and the same referent. This brings to mind *Farfarel* (*Farfarello*) compared to *Vânt-Turbat* (‘maddening wind’), *Bot-de-Ogar* (*Graffiacane*) compared to *Bot-de-Câne* (‘dog-mutt’), but especially *Parpanghel* compared to *Foc-Aprins* (*Rubicante*), *Forforoată* (‘slimey round’) compared to *Gheară-de-Ogar* (‘greyhound claw’), or *Vița-i-Sece* (‘damn his den’) compared to *Vără-n-Boală* (‘ill-will’), instances in which the names are based on a different manner of creation and, something that is easily noticeable, they do not emphasize the same idea.

A parallel with Dante’s text emphasizes the fact that the correspondences between the Italian and the Romanian form of the two tercets in song XXI (the correspondences between the name of a devil given by Dante and the Romanian name given by George Coşbuc, which is regularly done with approximation) must be established by other means than the position in the verse. This position determined the Romanian translator more than once to opt for another form or even for another structure of the name chosen for a certain devil, motivated by reasons that were obviously prosodic:

<p><i>Tra'ti avante, Alichino e Calabrina,</i>  <i>Cominciò elli a dire, e tu, Cagnazzo;</i>  <i>Barbariccia, guidi la decina.</i></p> <p><i>Libicocco vegn'oltre e Draghignazzo,</i>  <i>Ciriatto, sannuto, e Graffiacane,</i>  <i>E Farfarello, e Rubicante pazzo.</i></p>	<p><i>Step forward, Alichino, and Calcabrina,</i>  <i>he then began to say, thou, too, Cagnazzo;</i>  <i>and let old Barbariccia guide the ten.</i></p> <p><i>Have Libicocco go, and Draghignazzo;</i>  <i>tusked Ciriatto, too, and Graffiacane,</i>  <i>with Farfarello and crazy Rubicante.</i></p>
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Thus, Codârloi, who is called in the first variant of the *Inferno* *Coadă-Cârligată* (‘crooked tail’, the equivalent chosen by George Coşbuc for *Malacoda*), has under his “command” *Bârboi-Zbârlit* (‘burly beard’, previously known as *Zbârlitâ-Barbă* ‘bearded burly’ and *Bârboi* ‘burly-like’; equivalents for *Barbariccia*, the chieftain of the

<sup>4</sup> Translation by Cortney Langdon, Cambridge University Press, 1918.

gang of devils); Bot-de-Ogar ('greyhound mutt', previously called *Bot-de-Câne* 'dog mutt' and *Gheară-de-Ogar* 'greyhound claw'; equivalents for *Graffiacane*); Cap-de-Câne ('dog head') or Cap-de-Ogar ('greyhound mutt', called in the first variant of the *Inferno Gheară-de-Ogar* 'greyhound claw'; equivalents for *Cagnazzo*); Farfarel, called in the first variant translation *Vânt-Turbat* ('maddening wind'; equivalents for *Farfarello*); Foc-Nestins ('never-ending fire'), called in the first and later abandoned version of the *Inferno Foc-Aprins* ('raging fire'; equivalents for *Rubicante*); Fund-de-Iad ('hell-pit'; equivalent for *Draghignazzo*); Rât-de-Porc ('pig-mutt', 'who had two fangs'; equivalent for *Ciriatto*), Parpanghel (probably an equivalent of *Calcabrina*), Zbate-Aripi ('winged flutterer'), also called *Forforoată* (probably as equivalents for *Alichino*) and *Vița-i-Sece* ('damned den'), called in the first variant of translation of the *Inferno Vără-n-Boală* ('ill-will') and *Tăiat-din-Furci* ('pitch-fork-bit' – probably as corresponding forms for *Scarmiglione*).

There are certain cases in which we may point out interesting modifications of "perspective". Insofar as the name of Malacoda is concerned, what matters most in the vision of the Romanian translator is the aspect, Codârloi serving as a reference not only for the evil nature of the devils' chieftain (suggested by Malacoda), like in the Italian original, but, by means of the augmentative derivative word, for the special length of its tail<sup>5</sup>. Likewise, *Vânt-Turbat* ('maddening wind') may be considered an augmentative for *Farfarello* (provided the Italian name is derived from *farfalla* 'butterfly' and not from *farfara* 'chatterbox'), *Zbate-Aripi* ('winged flutterer') and *Forforoată*, with the latter name being equally suggestive of the manner of action of the devil – *a forfoti* 'to fuss around' – and for the space it covers during the frequent raids it makes with a *round* trajectory, meaning around the 'fifth trench', compared to *Alichino* (if we associate the aforementioned Italian name to *ala* 'wing', not to *Hellequin*, a name given to the devil in the medieval tradition); and for *Rubicante*, the 'red' devil, perhaps because of its insanity, George Coșbuc proposes the phrase *Foc-Nestins* ('raging fire'), possibly as a reference to the 'fire of hell', the never-ending fire, the same way as *Fund-de-Iad* ('hell-pit') is preferred to *Draghignazzo*, possibly an augmentative derivative word in old Italian from *dragone* 'devil', which we think may be an indirect reference to the Romanian noun phrase *Talpa-Iadului*.<sup>6</sup>

These are adaptations obtained by means of translation of the names given to devils in Dante's original text. Sometimes, these names are loan translations, though most often they are personal creations, which testify not to a lack of imagination, as it has sometimes been stated (Jordan 1942: 1–2), nor do they prove an artistic incapacity of adaptation to the source, but the perfect understanding of the spirit of the *Divine Comedy*, within which the "terrifying claws" that supervised the "fifth trench" in the

<sup>5</sup> Iorgu Jordan derives the name Codârloi from *codârla*, which has the sense of 'the mobile and hind part of a cart or chariot, but the proximity and especially the sense it suggests ('large rear part, ending') are not in keeping with the significance of the Dantesque text (Jordan 1942: 1–12).

<sup>6</sup> For the analysis of these names, see also the study of Istrate (2012: 43–50).

Inferno were individualised as regards their aspect, attitudes and manners of action transposed in names similar to nicknames. These names or nicknames are possible or even necessary to modify through translation, namely in distinct circumstances of communication or in cases in which there was the issue of prosodic requirements that were mandatory in creations with a fixed structure, such as the *Divine Comedy*.

3. Was the manner chosen by George Coşbuc to transpose in Romanian the names of the devils used by Dante Alighieri in songs XXI and XXII of the *Inferno* a shallow artistic experiment?

The considerations formulated in the previous pages obviously nullify the possibility of an affirmative answer to this question.

On the other hand, shallowness was the name of the game played by the contemporaries of the Transylvanian poet.

Maria Chiţu, for example, the author of a well-appreciated translation in prose of the *Divine Comedy*<sup>7</sup> that George Coşbuc constantly used as a control text for his translation, generally kept the names of the devils from Dante's text unchanged and only resorted to translating a few determinatives or, rarely, to using explanatory equivalents. In this sense, we refer to "Ciriatto with the wild-boar fangs", "Rubicante the insane" or Farfarello, who is referred to in a single context as "evil bird", most probably in correlation with *Malebranche*.

At the same time, Nicu Gane, who was publishing a translation of the *Inferno*<sup>8</sup> at the time when George Coşbuc was already working on the second Romanian variant of the text (therefore, Gane's translation had been accessible to the Transylvanian translator), used loan translations as a rule. The Romanian names designed by Gane were *Coadă-rea* ('evil-tail') for *Malacoda*, *Rău-Scărmănatul* ('evil-pommelled') for *Scarmiglione*, *Aripă-joasă* ('low-flying wing') for *Alichino*, *Frământă-gheaţă* ('ice-mould'), not *Frământă-brumă* ('hoar-frost mould'), for *Calcabrina*, *Faţă de câne* ('dog-mutt') for *Cagnazzo*, *Barbă-roşă* ('red-beard') for *Barbariccia*, *Libianul* ('the Libyan') for *Libicocco*, *Slutul-Zmău* ('hideous-dragon') for *Draghignazzo*, *Porcul* ('the pig', with the preceding epithet 'tooth-gapped', corresponding to Italian *sannuto*) for *Ciriatto*, *Farfadeu* for *Farfarello*, *Labă-de-câne* ('dog-paw') for *Graffiaccane*, and *Roşcatul* ('the russet-haired', followed by the determinative 'brain-scant', corresponding to Italian *pazzo*) for *Rubicante*.

As regards our contemporaries, who were able to benefit and even did benefit from the result of George Coşbuc's painstaking work, the results are similar to those obtained by the great poet.

We illustrate our statement with the names used by Eta Boieriu in the well-appreciated Romanian version of the *Divine Comedy* published in the year 1965. In this version, *răii* ('the malevolent spirits') summoned by Codârloi and led by Barbă-Creaţă ('burly-beard') are called, in both songs (XXI and XXII) of the *Inferno*, *Zbate-Aripi*

<sup>7</sup> Alighieri, Dante. 1888 (1883). *Divina Comedie*, I–II. Maria Chiţu (trans.). Craiova.

<sup>8</sup> Alighieri, Dante. 1906. *Divina Comedie, Inferno*. N. Gane (trans.). Iaşi.

(‘winged-flutterer’), *Farfarel*, *Cățoi*, *Libicon*, *Forforoată*, *Rât-de-Porc* (‘pig-mutt’), *Drăcilă*, *Gheare-ntinde* (‘claw-stretch’) and *Roșcatul* (‘russet-haired’).

In the afore-quoted series, it is not difficult to identify onomastic solutions undeniably owed to George Coșbuc. (We refer here to certain names that are unmistakable: *Codârloi*, *Forforoată*, *Rât-de-Porc*, *Zbate-Aripi* and *Farfarel*.) One can equally recognize the use, a moderate one at that, of certain names given to devils in the Romanian folklore. Eta Boieriu calls the guards of the fifth *bolgia* “the malevolent”; they have a “bailiff”, also called *Lucifer*, while the name of one of the devils is, contextually and serially integrative, *Ucigă-l toaca* (approximately meaning ‘vesper-bell victim’), while *Draghignazzo* from the Italian original is replaced with *Drăcilă* (‘great devil’), a common derivative name in Romanian, a sort of Great Devil.

4. Why did Coșbuc not refer, like other translators of the *Divine Comedy*, to the Romanian names of the devil, which we know are so numerous and always very evocative?

George Coșbuc was a great expert in folklore, as is shown clearly not only by his poetic creation, which is a true encyclopaedia in verse of the Transylvanian village and the countless customs of its inhabitants, but also by his numerous studies and conferences<sup>9</sup>. Thus, the poet was surely cognizant of the very impressive series of names whose use was meant to avoid, not only in everyday speech, the employment of words such as *drac* (‘evil’), *diavol* (‘devil’) or, more recently, *demon* (‘demon’).

He was obviously very aware of the meaning of words such as *aghiuță*, *pârlea*, *sarsailă* or *faraon*; *naiba*, *nevoia* or *păcatul*; *necuratul*, *împelițatul*, *nefârtatul* or *pârdalnicul*; *procletul*, *vicleanul*, *șeitan* or *benga*; *mutul* or *pustiul*; *cel-de-pe-comoară*, *cel-din-baltă*, *ducă-se-pe-pustii*, *ucigă-l-toaca* or *ucigă-l-crucea* and the list may go on forever. (Some statistics say that, in Romanian space, there are about 100 more or less popular names for the devil.)

George Coșbuc had, of course, read the remarkable literary texts of the kind that Ion Creangă wrote, in which the devil was called not only *michiduță*, *mititelul*, *nichi-percea* or *cornoratul*, but also *Cioprea* (or *Cioplea*), *săgeată de noapte* (‘night arrow’) or *căpitănie* (‘commander’s office’, the commander of devils, of course), as substitutes for *Scaraoschi*.

However, as a fine analyst of folklore, a well-versed expert of the linguistic relationships that generated such lexical or phraseological substitutes as *drac* (‘evil’), *diavol* (‘devil’) or *demon* (‘demon’), George Coșbuc could not ignore the standardising and integrating character of this sort of names. They did not individualise or provide a distinctive appellation to a certain inhabitant of Hell, on the basis of a specific type of behaviour or a differentiating rank, but only created better stylistically marked onomastic variants.

We refer to certain antonymic creations, for instance the word *aghiuță*, derived

<sup>9</sup> For these see Coșbuc, George. 2007. *Selected Works, Prose*. București: National Foundation for Science and Art.

only apparently from a diminutive base of *aghios* 'holy', and metaphors such as *pârlea*, *pustiul*, *nefărtatul* and *impelițatul* (in old Romanian, *pețiță* 'thin skin' meant 'body') or several other constructions, which also had a metaphoric character, like *cel-de-pe-comoară* and *ucigă-l-toaca*.

Nevertheless, the individualisation that existed within these names functioned solely for *tartor* ('the chief devil'), *mama-dracului* ('the devil's mother'), *Talpa-Iadului* ('the bottom of hell') or *Știrba-Baba-Cloanța*. Along with these, we mention *satana* ('Satan'), *scaraoțchi* and *belzebut* ('Beelzebub'), worship-inspired designations that also functioned as proper names.

Such names, however evocative they might have been, could not have been taken into consideration in the process of translating a work with the magnitude of the *Divine Comedy*.

A worship-inspired creation in which the devils that supervised the 'fifth trench' of the *Inferno* were individualised according to their aspect, attitude and behaviour, the well-known Dantesque song required either the copying of the model or the creation of forms that corresponded to it or had the capacity to suggest the basic idea of the original form. In this original form, we emphasise, the devils were individualised through names similar to nicknames, which ensured, independently from folklore and, as a consequence, independently from everyday speech, a link with the aspect, attitudes and distinct manners of action.

Translating the text of the *Divine Comedy*, George Coșbuc understood very well the naming mechanism used by Dante Alighieri and acted in consequence. Naturally, he started from the names of the devils that existed in the Italian text, but he also allowed himself certain deviations, imposed by artistic requirements (some of them merely related to prosody), sometimes going as far as using several names for one and the same devil, thus reaching ... onomastic synonymy. This fact is supported and therefore strengthened by the different distribution of the names analysed in the Italian and Romanian versions of the two songs.

5. We believe the analysis in the previous pages shows sufficiently persuasively that the translation of the *Divine Comedy* was for George Coșbuc not only an attempt to culturally adapt an exceptional literary work, but also a proof of literary craftsmanship. The names given to the devils in the Romanian version of songs XXI and XXII from the *Inferno* are arguments that simultaneously testify to the linguistic competence and the outstanding stylistic intuition of the great Romanian poet and translator.

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