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## **“LITERARISHE REVERANSN”: YIDDISH TRANSLATION AS NEGOTIATION**

by Augusta Costiuc Radosav

**Abstract:** *The title of this essay refers to two different texts: Itsik Manger’s poem, “Zbarzheriade”, in which the lines “Un er makht a reverans/Velvl Zbaržer Ehrenkrantz” (and he curtsies, Velvl Zbaržer Ehrenkrantz) emerge as a refrain at the end of each stanza; and Umberto Eco’s works on translation which he regards as a process of interpretation and negotiation.<sup>1</sup> The title reflects the two translation directions I discuss: my experiences in translation, that is, my attempts at translating Yiddish poetry into Romanian along with its various rhythms, and my experiences with translation, that is, my perception of the worth and efficacy of certain translations from other languages into Romanian or from Romanian into Yiddish. In discussing my experiences in translation, I will focus on some of Itsik Manger’s (1901-1969) poems that I translated into Romanian. In presenting my experiences with translation, I will address Yiddish translations of the Romanian poet George Coșbuc’s opus and Manger’s translation of a Romanian folk song. My essay outlines a strategy of “translation-recreation,” in which the translator balances a sense of fidelity to the source text with the attempt to creatively reproduce its internal mechanism.*

### **From Experiences *with* Translation to Translation Theory**

My experiences *with* translation started when I read the work of the Polish poet Bolesław Leśmian in translation from Polish into Romanian. The first time I had heard his name was in a recorded lecture on the subject of poetic creation, delivered by the Yiddish poet Abraham Sutzkever.<sup>2</sup> In his lecture, Sutzkever called Leśmian one of the greatest poets of the twentieth century. This sparked my interest, so I bought Leśmian’s volume *The Meadow*, translated into Romanian by the poet Passionaria Stoicescu.<sup>3</sup> Upon reading it I gained the impression that Leśmian was a poet of special lyrical strength, and that his poems were among the most beautiful that I had ever read. Though I did not know a single Polish word, I realised that I had been given access to what Umberto Eco calls the “internal mechanism” of the original text, that is, the way that the aesthetic effect is produced in the original language:

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Umberto Eco, *Experiences in Translation* (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 2001); Umberto Eco, *Mouse or Rat. Translation as Negotiation* (London : Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004); Umberto Eco, *Dire quasi la stessa cosa. Esperienze di traduzione* (Milano : Bompiani, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Abraham Sutzkever, “On Poetry and Partisan Life”, *Yiddish Book Center Collection*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kofcyfycOFE>. Accessed 27 September 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Bolesław Leśmian, *Lunca. Antologie* (Timișoara : Excelsior Art, 2013).

Ma se così è non basta riprodurre effetto. Occorre provvedere al lettore della traduzione la stessa opportunità che aveva il lettore del testo originale, quella di “smontare il congegno”, di capire (e godere) i modi in cui l’effetto viene prodotto.<sup>4</sup>

But it is not enough to reproduce the effect. The reader of a translated text must be given the same opportunity as the reader of the original text to “decipher the mechanism”, to understand (and enjoy) the ways in which the effect was produced.<sup>5</sup>

What is this mechanism exactly? How does one gain access to it as a reader and as a translator? One way to begin answering this challenge is to reflect on the act of translation in its most concrete articulation. My experiences *with* translation as a reader of Leśmian’s poetry translated into Romanian thus intertwine with my previous experiences *in* translation as a translator of Abraham Sutzkever’s poems into Romanian. While translating the poems “Ver vet blaybn, vos vet blaybn” and “Vos iz poezye” I unknowingly and intuitively applied some of the principles formulated by Eco in his books on translation. A lifelong translation theorist and semiotician, Eco argues that “translation scholars should have had, at least once in their life, both the experience of translating and that of being translated. [...] Active or passive experience in translation is not irrelevant for the formulation of theoretical reflections on the subject.”<sup>6</sup> Eco posits that his reflections are not made from the stance of a “translation theorist or as a semiotician interested in translation, but as a translated author and as a translator.”<sup>7</sup>

Eco’s theoretical formulae and even my first attempts at translating poetry from Yiddish, namely the two poems by Abraham Sutzkever, are part of a larger discourse on translation that deserves further explication at the outset of this article. My own translation choices come in dialogue with a theoretical framework that presents a variety of opinions, options, and challenges for translating from and into a variety of languages.

Besides Eco, my approach to translation is informed by the work of Inès Oseki-Dépré, Susan Bassnett, Jeremy Munday, Laurence Malingret, and Lawrence Venuti,<sup>8</sup> and many of the theoretical systems they construct are echoed in Anita

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<sup>4</sup> Eco, *Dire quasi*, 252-253. Also discussed in Eco, *Experiences*, 44-45.

<sup>5</sup> All translations from Italian, French, Romanian, and Yiddish, by Augusta Costiuc Radosav, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>6</sup> Eco, *Experiences*, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Eco, *Experiences*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Inès Oseki-Dépré, *Théories et pratiques de la traduction littéraire* (Paris : Armand Colin, 1999); Inès Oseki-Dépré, *De Walter Benjamin à nos jours. Essais de traductologie* (Paris : Honoré Champion, 2007); Susan Bassnett, *Translation* (London : Routledge, 2014); Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (London : Routledge, 2002); Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures. Essays on Literary Translation* (Clevedon : Multilingual Matters, 1998); Jeremy Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies. Theories and Applications*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (London : Routledge, 2016); Laurence Malingret, *Stratégies de traduction : les lettres hispaniques en langue*

Norich's recent intervention in the field of Yiddish translation.<sup>9</sup> These thinkers share certain questions, regardless of the language traditions they focus on: According to what considerations do translators choose which texts to translate? Are translators beholden to arguments about fidelity to a source text, or must they focus on target audiences when they make their choices? Turning to the case of Yiddish, why do translators of Yiddish literature opt to translate certain texts repeatedly, while most of Yiddish literature remains untranslated? What does a comparative study of different versions reveal about the transformations of a culture over time and about translation theory and practice?

In considering these questions and in attempting to arrive at Eco's "internal mechanism," I follow Oseki-Dépré's suggestions in her work *Théories et pratiques de la traduction littéraire* (1999), where she offers a detailed discussion of different strategies and methodologies employed in poetry translation. I see her interventions as a practical guide for my own attempts at translating poetry from Yiddish into Romanian.

The typology of translation theory that Oseki-Dépré advances consists of **prescriptive** (classical), **descriptive** (modern), and **prospective** (artistic) approaches.<sup>10</sup> Theorists and translators of the first category, **prescriptive**, are concerned with setting and expressing rules of translation, according to either a literal (source-oriented) or literary (target-oriented) method.<sup>11</sup> The **descriptive** theories concentrate on the process rather than on the result of translation, privileging a discussion of alternating translation strategies and procedures over any set of fast rules.<sup>12</sup> **Prospective** theories regard translation as a literary and artistic activity in itself, granting the translator a creative role in the life of an aesthetic object. As participants in the text, the translator here employs both prescriptive and descriptive strategies in overlapping ways.<sup>13</sup>

According to Oseki-Dépré, there are several undercurrents within prospective translation theories: **literalism**, **poetic transcreation**, and **translation-recreation**. All of them combine to a certain degree prospective and descriptive features.

The **literalist** theorists view translation as an act of literary creation, while at the same time believing that translators should keep as close as possible to the vocabulary of the source text. One of the examples cited by Oseki-Dépré is Jacqueline Risset's translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, in which Risset gives up the *terza*

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*française* (Arras : Artois Presses Université, 2002); *The Translation Studies Reader*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, ed. Lawrence Venuti (London and New York : Routledge, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Anita Norich, *Writing in Tongues : Translating Yiddish in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle : University of Washington Press, 2013), 16.

<sup>10</sup> Oseki-Dépré, *Théories et pratiques*, 17.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-44.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-95.

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed discussion, see *ibid.*, 75-95.

*rima*, but maintains the poetic metre (decasyllables) and many other figures of speech (such as assonances) of the source text.<sup>14</sup>

The translator who advocates **poetic transcreation** envisages translation as an act of literary creation of a more radical type. Engaging in poetic transcreation means that the translator slips into the author's shoes and feels the freedom to rewrite the text in the same way the author would have written it should they have written it directly in the target language. One of the examples discussed is the poet Haroldo de Campos's prospective and descriptive translation strategy. The act of translating is, in de Campos's view, an act of respect shown by translators, as free agents, to the original. In his published works on translation, de Campos invented new terms for his translations of particular texts: "translumination" and "transparadisation" for Dante, "transluciferation" for Goethe's Faust, "transhelenisation" for Homer. These terms describe his view of translation as an act of (sometimes brutal) reinvention of the original text. In de Campos' perspective, translation could be regarded "as blood transfusion, as an act of patricide, as reinvention, as disremembering, as vampirism, as transcreation."<sup>15</sup> As Oseki-Dépré notes, there are several dangers posed by poetic transcreation, the first and foremost being the separation of the work from its creative context.<sup>16</sup>

The translators that Oseki-Dépré groups in the undercurrent of **translation-recreation** had the closest theoretical approaches to the strategies of translation I intuitively applied when translating Yiddish poetry into Romanian. **Translation-recreation** is a process that implies loss to the source texts, adjustments and additions to the target texts, but also a lingering sense of fidelity to what is imagined to be necessary to the source text. Three such proponents of **translation-recreation** as outlined by Oseki-Dépré are worth extended attention due to the combination of their prospective poetics with a detailed descriptive approach to various translation strategies: Efim Etkind, André Lefevere, and Octavio Paz.

Among various typologies, Etkind identifies and recommends a strategy in which translators both recreate and preserve the structure of the original in its entirety:

La T-R [traduction-recréation] n'est pas possible sans sacrifices, sans transformations, sans additions; mais tout l'art du traducteur consiste précisément à ne pas faire de sacrifice au-delà du nécessaire, à ne tolérer les transformations que si elles demeurent dans le cadre précis et restreint du

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<sup>14</sup> Dante, *La Divine Comédie*, trad. Jacqueline Risset (Paris : GF-Flammarion, 1985-1992). Discussed in Oseki-Dépré, *Théories et pratiques*, 107-109.

<sup>15</sup> Else Ribeiro Pires Vieira, "Liberating Calibans. Readings of Antropofagia and Haroldo de Campos's Poetics of Transcreation", in *Postcolonial Translation. Theory and Practice*, eds. Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (London and New York : Routledge, 1999), 95-113. Quoted in Bassnett, *Translation*, 53-54.

<sup>16</sup> Oseki-Dépré, *Théories et pratiques*, 116-121.

ystème artistique en question, à ne faire des additions que si elles ne franchissent pas les bornes du monde esthétique du poète.<sup>17</sup>

The T-R [translation-recreation] is not possible without sacrifices, without transformations, without additions; the translator's art however consists precisely in not making a sacrifice beyond the necessary, in tolerating the transformations only if they remain within the precise and restricted framework of the artistic system in question, in making additions only if they do not go beyond the boundaries of the poet's aesthetic world.

Etkind contends that translation is a work of art in itself and not merely by relation to the original text. Therefore, poetry in translation should have its own distinctive position on a declared scale of aesthetic values. Etkind posits that this subjective component of translation does not diminish the aesthetic value of the translated text. On the contrary, it enhances it by conferring it a voice of its own. However, Etkind believes translated texts are only valuable as distinctive works of art if translators adhere to the text's "artistic system" by recreating in some way the sonority and prosody of the original. Only by preserving the meaning and mental images (*signifié*) of the original, Etkind argues, can a translation be conferred aesthetic value.<sup>18</sup> When this boundary is crossed the resulting work becomes, for Etkind, a **translation-imitation** (*traduction-imitation*) in which the translator's own artistic voice comes to the forefront of the translated text. Translation-imitation replaces the *signifié* of the original with a new set of images and gives the translated text a new structure, the result being a newly created text and not a translation.<sup>19</sup>

In one of his early works titled *Translating Poetry: Seven Strategies and a Blueprint*, André Lefevere mirrors this distinction in describing translation as a form of interpretation that can produce two different articulations: a new **version** of a text or its **imitation**. In a new **version**, the translation retains the substance of the source-language text while the form is modified; in an **imitation** a translator creates a poem of their own which has "only title and point of departure, if those, in common with the source text."<sup>20</sup>

The Mexican poet Octavio Paz further highlights the tensions between **version** and **imitation** by seeing translation as a creative act that aims to overcome the boundaries between languages, yet paradoxically succeeds only in highlighting their difference.<sup>21</sup> Paz defines the task of the translator as the opposite of the poet's:

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<sup>17</sup> Efim Etkind, *Un art en crise, Essai de poétique de la traduction poétique* (Lausanne : L'Age d'Homme, 1982), 22.

<sup>18</sup> Oseki-Dépré, *Théories et pratiques*, 87.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>20</sup> André Lefevere, *Translating Poetry : Seven Strategies and a Blueprint* (Amsterdam : Van Gorcum, 1975), quoted in Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 86-88.

<sup>21</sup> Octavio Paz, "Translation, Literature and Letters", trans. Irene del Corral, in *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*, eds. Rainer Schulte, John Biguenet (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1992), 152-62; Bassnett, *Translation*, 51-52. Also discussed in Oseki-Dépré, *Théories et pratiques*, 112-115.

while the latter begins by taking the movable signs of language and fixing them into the ideal form of the poem, the former starts by “dismantling the elements of the text, freeing the signs into circulation, then returning them to language.”<sup>22</sup> The translation and creation of poems are thus parallel yet reversed processes: the poet finds the words he wishes to use and creates the poem, while the translator reads the words, re-examines the poem, and writes it anew. The translator is no less of a creator, Paz claims, whose task it is to liberate the fixed signs of the original poem and to put them into circulation in another language.

The theoretical underpinnings of my own translation practices are undoubtedly prospective. To be sure, Haroldo de Campos’s radical poetic transcreation method by which the translator gains more weight as a literary creator than the author of the original text itself seems to me beyond the necessary adherence to a text’s “artistic system” as Etkind articulates it. Thus, in translating Yiddish poetry I follow a model that is interested in both recreation and artistic freedom, retaining the productive, even deconstructive tension between the two as described by Etkind, Lefevere, and Paz. This renders the resulting translation simultaneously foreign and domestic, in Venuti’s terms.

My overall intention was to render the Yiddish texts into Romanian in an artistic, aesthetic way that would, indeed, make the reader become interested in the author/authors of the original texts. Intellectual curiosity regarding an author is not necessarily aroused, as Venuti claims, by making it obvious to the readers of the target text that they are reading a translation. On the contrary, this might have (or at least in my case) sometimes quite the opposite effect, of making me lose interest in the author and eventually giving up on reading his/her works.

### **Experiences *in* Translation: Yiddish Translation as Negotiation**

My choice to translate Manger was motivated both by personal preference—I particularly appreciate his ballads—and by the disappointment I experienced when reading a volume of his “selected works” translated into Romanian by the poet and writer Nina Cassian.<sup>23</sup>

Nina Cassian’s version was a literal translation that rendered the exact sequence of words in the source text but lacked the aesthetic effect of the Yiddish original. If the translator had preserved or reconfigured the rhyme scheme of the original, she would have delivered a more artistic, though less literal, translation of Manger.<sup>24</sup> In my view, one of the things that contributes most to recreating the aesthetic effect in the translation of a poetic text is rhythm. The same observation can be found in the first modern treatise on translation theory, *De interpretatione recta*, written by the Italian humanist Leonardo Bruni in 1420: “The translator should also rely on the judgment of hearing in order not to ruin and turn upside down what is said in a text with elegance and with a sense of rhythm.”<sup>25</sup> Bruni’s statement inspired

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<sup>22</sup> Paz, “Translation, Literature and Letters”, 159.

<sup>23</sup> Itsik Manger, *Balada evreului care a ajuns de la cenușiu la albastru. Balade funem yid vos iz dergangen fun gro biz blo* (București : Kriterion, 1983).

<sup>24</sup> See above footnote 14 on Jacqueline Risset’s translation of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Eco, *Dire quasi*, 57.

Eco to argue that very often, in order to preserve the rhythm of the original text, the translator of lyrical texts is allowed to give up the literal sequence of words from the original:

The aim of a translation, more than producing any literal 'equivalence', is to create the same effect in the mind of the reader (obviously according to the translator's interpretation) as the original text wanted to create. Instead of speaking of equivalence of meaning, we can speak of functional equivalence: a good translation must generate the same effect aimed at by the original.<sup>26</sup>

Eco maintains that the translation of poetry is the most difficult type of literary translation, due to stylistic and formal constraints (rhyme, rhythm, figures of speech). Despite such constraints, the translator of poetry is allowed to reformulate, in order to preserve the sense of the original text "and to render it understandable within the framework of the receiving cultures"; translators are thus "entitled not only to make radical changes to the literal meaning of the original text, but also to its reference. [...] Only by this manoeuvre can the translator suggest what seems to be the 'deep' sense of the story."<sup>27</sup> Therefore, in order to obtain the same aesthetic effect, the translator "often aims at rewriting, as if accepting the challenge of the original text so as to recreate it in another form and another substance (trying to keep faith not with the letter, but with the 'guiding spirit' of the text, whose identification obviously depends on the translator's critical interpretation)."<sup>28</sup>

To my surprise, a similar view of translation was expressed by Itsik Manger in the preface to his volume *Felker zingen*, an anthology of European folk songs. Manger's intention was to draw the young Yiddish poets' attention to the inherent beauty of folk songs from various literatures (among them Serbian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Roma, German). His main focus was on ballads of world literature, and his Yiddish rendition of those ballads included rephrasing them, introducing new words or even lines, choosing different word sequences, and other stylistic means by which he illustrated his aesthetic creed, in order to recreate the same aesthetic effect aimed at by the original:

מיין צוגאַנג צו די „פעלקער זינגען“ איז נישט געווען קיין פֿאַלקלאַריסטישער, נאָר אַן  
עסטעטישער. דערפֿאַר האָב איך מיר דערלויבט אַ סך פֿרײַקײטן; נישט איבערזעצט, נאָר  
איבערגעפֿאַרעמט, איבערגעדיכטעט. [...] דאָס דאָזיקע בוך ווידמע איך די יונגע ייִדישע  
פֿאַעטן. מיין כּוונה דערביי איז, אַז די שיינקייט פֿון די פֿרעמדע פֿאַלקסלידער זאָלן גורם זײַן  
פֿאַר זײ די אַנטפֿלעקונג פֿון די שיינקייטן אין אונדזער ייִדישן פֿאַלקסליד.<sup>29</sup>

My approach to *Felker zingen* was not a folkloristic, but rather an aesthetic one. Therefore I allowed myself a lot of freedom; I did not translate, I

<sup>26</sup> Eco, *Mouse or Rat*, 55-56. Also discussed in Eco, *Experiences*, 45.

<sup>27</sup> Eco, *Experiences*, 16.

<sup>28</sup> Eco, *Experiences*, 94.

<sup>29</sup> Itsik Manger, *Felker zingen* (Warsaw : Ch. Brzoza, 1936), 6.

rephrased and re-versified. [...] I dedicate this book to the young Yiddish poets. My intention in this context is to make them realize the beauty of our Yiddish folk songs.

Itzik Manger's succinct statements echo Umberto Eco's considerations on the importance of recreating the aesthetic effect of the original text in the translated one, especially as a model for - literary exploration. Manger sees the act of translation as a recreation that should inspire further artistic creation.

Eco believes that the task of the translator is not only to understand the literal meaning of the source text, but also to grasp the intrinsic atmosphere and significance of the culture in which the original text was created, in order to render it into the target language. Engaging in the act of translation and trying to recreate the cultural background of the original text often requires the translator to give up lexical, morphological, and syntactic structures from the source language, and to rewrite, at times with considerable changes, the text in the target language. This process of "translation as negotiation," Eco argues, has to preserve in the target language the aesthetic effect that best reflects the cultural significance of the source language.

In the Italian edition of his book *Experiences in Translation*, titled *Dire quasi la stessa cosa. Esperienze di traduzione*, Eco mentions that upon translating, one never says exactly "the same thing" but "somehow the same thing." The main goal of the translator should be, according to Eco, to determine how flexible that "somehow" is. The task of the translator should be to negotiate in advance the flexibility and extension of the word "somehow." In the process of translation as negotiation, Eco concludes, the translator negotiates the extent of that "somehow" with himself and with the text:

[...] come, pur sapendo che non si dice mai la stessa cosa, si possa dire quasi la stessa cosa. A questo punto ciò che fa problema non è più tanto l'idea della stessa cosa, né quella della stessa cosa, bensì l'idea di quel quasi. Quanto deve essere elastico quel quasi? Stabilire la flessibilità, l'estensione del quasi dipende da alcuni criteri che vanno negoziati preliminarmente. Dire quasi la stessa cosa è un procedimento che si pone, come vedremo, all'insegna della negoziazione.<sup>30</sup>

[...] how, though knowing that one never says the same thing, one can say somehow the same thing. At this point what causes the problem is no longer the idea of the same thing, nor the same thing, but the idea of that somehow. How flexible should that somehow be? To establish the flexibility, the range of that somehow depends on some criteria that need to be negotiated in advance. To say the same thing is a process that, as we shall see, is subject to negotiation.

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<sup>30</sup> Eco, *Dire quasi*, 6.

Bearing in mind Eco's approach, I began to translate some of Manger's poems, while trying to give the Romanian reader access to the "internal mechanism" that created the aesthetic effect in the source language. As I immediately realized, the task was not an easy one, because the process of "negotiation" meant to preserve the lexical and syntactic structures of the Yiddish original text as much as possible, and at the same time, to find a melodic prosody that would appeal to the Romanian reader. In other words, I imagined my task as one that would open the gates of the "possible world"<sup>31</sup> of the Yiddish original to the Romanian reader.

At times I had to ponder for quite some time the best way to translate a line or a stanza, while preserving the grace and sonority of the original. For instance, I needed to "negotiate" quite a lot to get to an elegant translation of the refrain of Manger's poem "Zbarzheriade":

און ער מאַכט אַ רעוועראַנס,  
וועלול זבאַרזשער ערנקראַנץ.<sup>32</sup>

[A literary English translation:  
And he curtsies,  
Velvl Zbaržer Ehrenkrantz.]

First of all, there is a morphological barrier—in Romanian there are only very few words that end with the consonants "ns" (as in the first line of the refrain) or "nts" (as in the second). In fact there are almost no such words. Therefore, I "negotiated" with the text and suggested the verb "a se apleca" ("to bow"), to which I added the words "pas" ("pace") and "dans" ("dance"), so that it would have the same sonority as in Yiddish. Thus I was able to preserve Manger's original rhyme while still approximating the sense of the refrain:

Și se-apleacă-n pas de dans,  
Velvl Zbaržer Ehrenkrantz.

[A literal English translation:  
And he bows in pace of dance,  
Velvl Zbaržer Ehrenkrantz.]

It also took me quite a while to "negotiate" the translation of the poem "Sankt Besht." When translating this text I created several versions and kept changing the Romanian lines until I thought I had found a harmonic rhythm and rhyme that would appeal to the reader, while bearing in mind what Eco implored while translating Gérard de Nerval's *Sylvie*: "the verses should seduce the ear in a subliminal way without being immediately detectable":<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Eco, *Mouse or Rat*, 20.

<sup>32</sup> Itzik Manger, "Zbarzheriade", in *Shtern oyfn dakh* (București : Sholem Aleichem, 1929), 51.

<sup>33</sup> Eco, *Mouse or Rat*, 149.

זיצט דער בעל-שם קעגן מיטן-נאכט  
אין זיין חדר מיוחד און ער טראכט:  
„די נאכט איז הייליק, טיף און שיין,  
אז אפילו דער מענטש, וואָס גייט אַליין  
באַרוועס איבער אַ פֿרעמדן לאַנד,  
פֿילט איבער זיך גאָטס בלאַע האַנט“.<sup>34</sup>

[A literal English translation:  
The Baal Shem sits facing the middle of the night  
in his solitary room and thinks:  
“The night is so holy, deep and beautiful,  
that even a man who goes alone  
and barefoot across a strange land,  
feels God’s blue hand over him.]

Șede Baal Șem în miez de noapte,  
În odaia-i – și chibzuie pierdut în soapte:  
„Ce sfântă-i noaptea, ce abis senin,  
Încât chiar bietul peregrin,  
Desculț peste pământ străin, simțește –  
Cum mâna-albastră-a Domnului îl ocrotește.”<sup>35</sup>

[A literal translation of the Romanian:  
The Baal Shem sits at midnight,  
In his room – and thinks while lost in whispers:  
“How holy is the night, what a clear abyss,  
That even the wretched wanderer,  
Barefoot in a foreign land, feels –  
How God’s blue hand protects him.]

ווער וויינט בײַ נאכט, ווער וויינט אַצינד,  
ווען ס׳שלאָפֿט דער פֿויגל און ס׳שלאָפֿט דער ווינט,  
ווען ס׳שלאָפֿט די כאַטע און ס׳שלאָפֿט דער וואַלד?  
ווער טרײַבט פֿון זײַן חלום אַוועק דאָס גאַלד?  
„הער – זאָגט ער צום פֿרעמדן געוויין געווענדט –  
קום און ווער אַנטשלאָפֿן אויף מײַנע הענט“.<sup>36</sup>

[A literal English translation:  
Who cries at night, who cries now,  
when the bird sleeps and when the wind sleeps,  
when the hut sleeps and the forest sleeps?  
Who drives the gold out of his dream?

<sup>34</sup> Itsik Manger, “Sankt Besht,” in *Lamtern in vint* (Warsaw : Turem, 1933), 105.

<sup>35</sup> See both source text and translations in Appendix 1.

<sup>36</sup> Manger, “Sankt Besht”, 105.

“Listen!” he says turning to a foreign cry,  
“Come and fall asleep in my hands.]

Cine plânge în noapte, cine-și tânguie cântul  
Când doarme și pasărea, când doarme și vântul,  
Când doarme coliba și doarme pădurea, în vise plutește?  
Cine al visului sufiu de aur îl izgonește?  
– Ascultă! îi spune el plânsului celui străin,  
– Vino să dormi în brațele-mi, al tău dor eu să ți-l alin.

[A literal translation of the Romanian:  
Who cries in the night, who laments in his song?  
When the bird sleeps and the wind sleeps,  
When the hut sleeps and the forest sleeps, in dreams they float?  
Who chases away the golden breath of the dream?  
Listen! He tells the foreign weep,  
Come sleep in my hands, I will heal your longing.]

The phrases underlined in the Romanian above indicate where I added text that was not originally in the Yiddish. In the first stanza, I added to the second line “pierdut-în șoapte” (“lost in whispers”) in order to make it rhyme with the first line “noapte” (“night”). I then replaced the “deep and beautiful” (“טיף און שיין”) night with “clear abyss” (“abis senin”), based on the referential correspondence (the depth of the abyss and of the night), but also in order to make it rhyme with the next line “peregrin,” (“wanderer”). In the following line I added the word “feels” (“simțeste”), in order to make it rhyme with the last line of the stanza. I replaced the verb “feels” (“פילט”) with “protects” (“ocrotește”) in the last line of the stanza, which depicts God’s protective hand laid over the traveller, in order to make it rhyme with the previous line.

In the following stanza, I replaced the word “אַציד” with “cânt” (“song”) because it rhymed with the Romanian word “vânt” (“wind”). Then, I “negotiated” to add at the end of the third line of the Romanian refrain the words “în vise plutește” (“they float in dreams”), because only by doing so would the line rhyme with the next one. The last change that I made was in the fourth line of the refrain, where I “negotiated” that the dream should have a “golden breath” in order to get to an adequate result in terms of rhythm and melodic structure.

The rhythm and rhyme of the Romanian lines are uniform and therefore they are perceived as harmonic by the reader. I wanted my version to sing in a similar way to Manger’s. My translation would be an example of what Eco calls the method of “partial rewriting.”<sup>37</sup> He recommends such a method and sometimes even “radical rewriting” in order to produce the original’s aesthetic effect by means of melody and rhythm.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Eco, *Mouse or Rat*, 56.

<sup>38</sup> Eco, *Mouse or Rat*, 73.

Tradurre significa sempre “limare via” alcune delle conseguenze che il termine originale implicava. In questo senso, traducendo, non si dice mai la stessa cosa. L’interpretazione che precede ogni traduzione deve stabilire quante e quali delle possibili conseguenze illative che il termine suggerisce possano essere limate via. Senza mai essere del tutto certi di non aver perduto un riverbero ultravioletto, un’allusione infrarossa.<sup>39</sup>

Translating always means to remove by polishing some of the consequences that the original term had implied. In this respect, translating never means to say the same thing. The interpretation that precedes any translation should decide clearly how many and which possible consequences that the term suggests can be removed by polishing. We may though never be quite certain that we had not lost an ultraviolet reverberation, an infrared allusion.

After translating several of Manger’s poems using this strategy, I found that, in comparison with Nina Cassian’s version, my translation focused on the lyrical strength of the lines. This shift in strategy allowed for a surprising but important intertext to be revealed: when transferred into Romanian prosody, some of his ballads resemble very much the ballads and “pastel” poems written by a Romanian poet of the same period, George Coșbuc (1866-1918).<sup>40</sup> Being one of the nineteenth-century Romanian classics, Coșbuc incorporated a variety of motifs from Romanian and world folklore in his poems. He was also a polyglot and a tireless translator who translated Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Schiller into Romanian. In a similar manner to Manger, Coșbuc expressed his admiration for folk poetry, frequently saying that folk ballads were one of his main sources of inspiration. Curious as to whether there might be some connection between the two poets, I searched and found a series of articles written by Manger for *Literarische Bleter*, in which he claims that Coșbuc was one of the very few Romanian poets who drew his inspiration from folk ballads:

איינזאַם און פאַרלאַזן ליגט דאָס רומענישע פּאַלקס-ליד. די רומענישע קונסט-ליריק  
שעפט אינספּיראַציע און השפּעה פֿון פֿרעמדע דרויסנדיקע קוואַלן. דער אייביקער טעות  
פֿון אַלע יונגע ליטעראַטורן, וואָס פֿאַרגעסן, אַז די גרעסטע לירישע מייסטערס האָבן  
געטרונקען פֿון פּאַלקס-קוואַל. [...] אמת איז, אַ פֿאַר געציילטע רומענישע ליריקער האָבן  
זיך פֿאַרמאָסטן דערויף – ווי געאַרגע קאַשבּוך, אַקטאַוויאַן גאַגאַ אא"וו.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Eco, *Dire quasi*, 79.

<sup>40</sup> Starting with the mid-nineteenth century, a series of Romanian poets wrote descriptive poems about nature, that were later called “pastel” poems due to their resemblance in composition to pastel paintings. See George Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române. De la origini până în prezent* (București : Minerva, 1982), 300.

<sup>41</sup> Itsik Manger, “Dos rumenische folkslid”, in *Literarische bleter* (Warsaw), 2 February 1929, 7. See also Itsik Manger, “Dos rumenische folkslid,” in *Shriftn in prose* (Tel Aviv : Farlag Y. L. Perets, 1980), 292-93.

Lonely and forsaken lies the Romanian folk song. The Romanian cultivated poetry [*kunst-lirik*] draws its inspiration and influence from foreign, external sources. The eternal mistake of all young literatures, which forget, that the greatest lyrical masters drank from popular sources. [...] The truth is that few and numbered Romanian poets have set such a goal – among them George Coșbuc, Octavian Goga, and others.

The explicit reference to George Coșbuc made me assume that Manger was to some extent acquainted with contemporary Romanian modernist poetry and especially to those authors who drew their inspiration from folk ballads. Manger's list of readings, according to Efrat Gal-Ed, bore no specific reference to Romanian literature, but mostly reflected his interest in German speaking authors or in writers of world literature translated into German.<sup>42</sup> However, there are some scattered references to Romanian literature in Manger's lectures held in Cernăuți (Czernowitz), as recorded in the Yiddish periodicals of the time.<sup>43</sup>

What I perceived as a possible link between the two poets was primarily their similar choice of rhythmic structures and musicality. Other possible elements that connect them might be the *topoi* (the *shtetl* for Manger and the countryside for Coșbuc), the folk song, and the Romanian landscape. My translation, knowingly or unknowingly, partially restores this intertext not through any particular allusion but through structural fidelity *and* partial rewriting. The affinity that I found between them as suggested by the above-mentioned elements motivates my focus in the following section of this essay on a Yiddish translation of one of Coșbuc's poems, which reflects the slight changes that its translator, Salomon Segall, "negotiated" with the text, while preserving the musicality of the original Romanian verses.

### **"Experiences with Translation": Romanian Poetry in Yiddish**

In this final section, I return to my experiences *with* translation, by discussing two Romanian poems translated into Yiddish in the interwar period, one belonging to the category of modernist poetry (a "pastel" poem by George Coșbuc) and the other one to popular, folk poetry (a Romanian folk song translated by Itsik Manger). The two cases mirror the tensions I discovered in my own translation practice and in the theoretical discussion outlined above: between translational fidelity and translational creativity. My motivation for considering these poems—beyond the possible connections between Manger, Coșbuc, and Romanian folk poetry—stems from how the Yiddish translations practice, alternately, literalism and translation-recreation, while still giving the reader access to the "internal mechanism" that created the aesthetic effect in the source language.

George Coșbuc's "pastel" poem "Noapte de vară" ("Summer Night")<sup>44</sup> was translated into Yiddish by Salomon Segall as "Zumernakht" and published in 1922 in the volume *Antologia Segall: Poeti români traduși în jdiș* (*Segall Anthology*:

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<sup>42</sup> Efrat Gal-Ed, *Niemandssprache : Itzik Manger – ein europäischer Dichter* (Berlin : Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp-, 2016), 102-105.

<sup>43</sup> Itsik Manger, "Literatur mit, tsi on a tendents," in *Czernowitzer Bleter*, 23 May 1934, 2.

<sup>44</sup> See both source text and translations in Appendix 2.

*Romanian Poets Translated into Yiddish*). The translation reflects a literalist practice, meaning that the translator's creative voice is distinct, while his choice of words remains as close as possible to the vocabulary of the source text.

From the first to the last stanzas, Segall manages to follow Coşbuc's poem very closely, finding a Yiddish equivalent for nearly every word in the text. In the following I discuss a few exemplary stanzas in order to point out how Segall manages to stay close to the vocabulary of the source text and to transpose the idyllic atmosphere of the Romanian poem in his Yiddish translation.

There are of course a few minor changes that Segall introduces. In the third line of the first stanza Segall replaces the Romanian "tufiş" ("thicket") with "ביימער" ("trees") and also adds to it the word "האַרט" ("close to"). He also replaces the Romanian "pe furiş" ("on the sly") in the last line with "אָן אַ וואָרט" ("without a word"), so that it would rhyme with the last word of the second line "דאָרט" ("there"). The changes he introduces enable him to preserve in his Yiddish rendition the same rhyme as that of the Romanian original: A-B-B-A-B. In addition to the above changes, Segall also uses the metaphor "ליכטיקייטן" ("lightnesses") for the original Romanian "zările" ("the sky") and the half-transliterated yet relexified into a Yiddish noun form "מיערלעך" ("mierle" in Romanian) for "blackbirds":

Zările, de farmec pline,  
Strălucesc în luminiş;  
Zboară mierlele-n tufiş  
Şi din codri noaptea vine  
Pe furiş.<sup>45</sup>

פֿול מיט כּשוף לעכטיגקייטען,  
גלענצען אין דעם וועלדיל דאָרט  
פֿליהט די מיערלעך ביימעהרהאָרט  
וועלדער טון די נאַכט פֿאַרשפּרייטען  
אָן אַ וואָרט<sup>46</sup>

[A literal English translation:  
The enchanted skies,  
Glow in the glade;  
Blackbirds fly in the thicket  
And from forests the night is coming  
On the sly.]

Small changes are also noticeable in the seventh stanza, where Segall describes the moon in the first line as coming "from the mountain spheres" ("פֿון בערגער ספֿערן") while in the source text Coşbuc had written only "dinspre munte" ("from the

<sup>45</sup> George Coşbuc, "Noapte de vară," in *Fire de tort* (Chişinău : Litera, 1996), 25.

<sup>46</sup> George Coşbuc, "Zumernakht", trans. Salomon Segall, in *Antologia Segall. Poeti români traduşi în jdiş* (Vienna : Union, 1922), 84. The spelling here maintains Segall's original version.

mountains”). In order to preserve the rhythm of his Yiddish version, Segall gives up the additional word “plină” (“full”) when referring to the moon’s ascent. Another minor change that Segall inserts in the following line is the more general וואַלדעט (“woods”), while Coșbuc used “brădet” (“fir forest”). In the third line of the same stanza, Segall inserts the word “הימלבעט” (“sky’s bed”) to describe the moon’s ascent and in the following line he adds that the poet’s brow is “deeply” (“טיף”) absorbed in his thoughts.

In the eighth stanza, Segall opts for the Germanized “טענענוואַלד” (“fir forest”) to which he adds “in luck” (“אײם גליק”) to characterise the sound made by the forest. In order to make the second and third line rhyme, he also adds at the end of the latter the term “צוריק” (“back”). A very subtle change is noticeable in the following line, where the Romanian “se zbate” (“flounders”) is translated by the less dramatic “רוישט” (“swooshes”). However, a dramatic nuance is added at the end of the same line by the introduction of “דערשראַקען” (“frightened”), which suggests just as in the Romanian original text that the water is somehow captive and struggling to escape its imprisonment in the ford (“vad”) (“ווייעג”) :

Iat-o! Plină, despre munte  
Iese luna din brădet  
Și se nalță,-ncet-încet,  
Gânditoare ca o frunte  
De poet.

Ca un glas domol de clopot  
Sună codrii mari de brad;  
Ritmice valurile cad,  
Cum se zbate-n dulce ropot  
Apa-n vad.<sup>47</sup>

קוק זי אָן! פֿון בערגער ספֿעהרן,  
קומט לבנה – אויס דעם וואַלדעט,  
שטייגט אלץ הויך אים הימעלבעט,  
טיעף פֿאַרטראַכט פֿונקט ווי דער שטערן  
פֿון פֿאיעט.

גלייך דעם ווייכען קול פֿון גלאַקען  
(קלינגט דער טענענוואַלד (אײם גליק  
ריטמיש כּוואַליעס פֿאַלן צריק  
פֿונקט ווי וואַסער רוישט דערשראַקען  
אין זײן ווייעג.<sup>48</sup>

[A literal English translation:

<sup>47</sup> Coșbuc, “Noapte de vară”, 26.

<sup>48</sup> Coșbuc, “Zumernakht”, 86.

Look! The full moon from the mountain  
Comes out of the fir forest,  
And it rises slowly, slowly,  
And seems thoughtful as the brow  
Of a poet.

Like the mild voice of a bell,  
The big fir forests ring;  
The waves fall rhythmically  
Just as the water flounders in a sweet patter,  
In the ford.]

The very slight variations that Segall introduces in the last stanza also account for his mastery in translating the original Romanian. While in the original text Coşbuc writes that the longing “is still wandering” (“mai colindă”), Segall chooses to say that the longing “does not want to think of resting” (“ווייל ריה ניט דענקען”). If the two lovebirds meet on the “threshold” (“prag”) in Coşbuc’s version, they see each other “in the house” (“אין שטיב”) in Segall’s Yiddish rendition:

Numai dorul mai colindă,  
Dorul tânăr și pribeag.  
Tainic se-ntâlneşte-n prag,  
Dor cu dor să se cuprindă,  
Drag cu drag.<sup>49</sup>

ביינקען נאָר, וויל ריה ניט דענקען  
יונגעס ביינקען בלאַנזעט טריב;  
טרעפֿען זיך בסוד אין שטיב,  
ביינקען זאָל רימעמען ביינקען  
ליב מיט ליב.<sup>50</sup>

[A literal English translation:  
Only the longing is still wandering,  
The young and vagrant longing.  
They meet secretly on the threshold  
Longing with longing, they embrace one another  
Darling with darling.]

Besides preserving in most cases the same words as in the original text, Segall succeeds in recreating the same type of rhyme (A-B-B-A-B) and metric scheme

<sup>49</sup> Coşbuc, “Noapte de vară”, 26.

<sup>50</sup> Coşbuc, “Zumernakht”, 86.

(trochees) as Coşbuc, allowing the readers of his translation to grasp the sonority and musicality of the original poem. Segall's mastery pertains not only to matters of form, but also to matters of content, as he artfully transposes the atmosphere of the Romanian poem into his translation. Coşbuc's poem depicts in idyllic images how night slowly encompasses a village and its surroundings, starting from afar (the neighbouring fields) and gradually approaching its inhabitants who return from work and go to rest. From their slumbered and quieted homes, Coşbuc returns once more to nature, this time on a vertical scale: he describes the moon and its ascent in the skies and the magic encounter between two unnamed lovers, who meet under the moonlight. With just very slight changes, Segall successfully renders all these picturesque elements into his translation, giving the Yiddish reader access to the "internal mechanism" that created the aesthetic effect in the source language.

The other example that I wish to present is a popular Romanian poem called "Cântă puiu cucului"<sup>51</sup> ("The cuckoo's chick sings"), translated and published in 1936 by Manger in his volume *Felker zingen*.<sup>52</sup> Manger's rendition can be classified as translation-recreation because, as he notes in the preface, he allows himself the freedom to rephrase and re-versify the lines of the Romanian original by adding, omitting, and replacing words or entire lines.<sup>53</sup> His own poetic ideology, based in an aesthetic approach to the text, mirrors Eco's guiding principles for translators, namely that they should try to preserve not the literal sequence of words in a text, but its "guiding spirit."

The main focus of the Romanian poem "Cântă puiu cucului" ("The cuckoo's chick sings") is the voice of a departed child, whose absence causes deep grief to the loved ones. The forsaken mother and sisters are presented as birds who lament at the top of the nut tree, accompanied by the cuckoo. The voice of the absent child might be associated with the song of the cuckoo at the beginning of the poem, since in Romanian folklore this bird and its singing quite often suggest loneliness, departure, longing, abandonment, and suffering.<sup>54</sup>

Manger begins his changes by reversing the first and second lines of the poem: while the Romanian starts with the singing cuckoo chick ("Cântă puiu cucului"), his Yiddish version begins with "on a green nut tree" ("אויף אַ גרינעם ניסנבוים"), which is the second line in the Romanian text. This change also results in a reverted title, since the first line of the poem also stands for its title.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, he also modifies that same line by omitting the "top of the little nut tree" ("vârful nucuțului"), and by adding the detail of its green color. An addition he subsequently makes is that

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<sup>51</sup> "Cântă puiu cucului", audită de N. I. Apostolescu de la Ion Binig. Culésă din Şona, comitatul Târnava-Mare - Transilvania. In *Materialuri folkloristice. Poesia poporană*, vol. 1, partea 2, culese și publicate sub auspiciile Ministerului Cultelor și Învățământului Public, prin îngrijirea lui Gr. G. Tocilescu (București : Tipografia "Corpului Didactic" C. Ispășescu & G. Brătănescu, 1900), 1081. See both source text and translations in Appendix 3.

<sup>52</sup> Itsik Manger, "Oyf a grinem nisnboym", in *Felker zingen*, 37.

<sup>53</sup> See note 29.

<sup>54</sup> Romulus Antonescu, *Dicționar de simboluri și credințe tradiționale românești*, (București : Cimec, 1995), 191-193.

<sup>55</sup> Because of the reverted title it was also rather difficult to find the source text in Romanian, since I was searching for a poem that would bear the title "On a green nut tree."

of the word “quietly” (“שטיל”) in order to describe the song of both the cuckoo and the two birds (“זינגט אַ יונגער קוקו שטיל”) (“זינגט אַ יונגער קוקו שטיל צוויי פייגעלעך”). A change in reference is to be noticed in Manger’s translation of the line “De stau apele pe vale” (“That the waters stand still in the valley”), which he renders as (“פליען בלעטעלעך אין”) (“פליען בלעטעלעך אין”) (“Leaves float in the wind”). Further changes that Manger makes include the omission of the word “beloved” (“dragi”) from the description of the two sisters, the replacement of the word “root” (“rădăcină”) with a little branch (“צווייגל”), and the addition of the word “bătrână” (“old”) to describe to turtle dove:

Cântă puiu cucului,  
În vârful nucuțului.  
Mai în jos pe rămurele,  
Cântă două păsărele,  
D’ășa cântă de cu jale,  
De stau apele pe vale.  
Da’ nu-s două păsărele,  
Că-s dragi surorile mele.

Mai în jos la rădăcină,  
Cântă-o turturea bătrână.  
Da’ nu-i turturea bătrână,  
Că-i maică-mea ha streină.<sup>56</sup>

אויף אַ גרינעם ניסנבוים  
זינגט אַ יונגער קוקו שטיל,  
אונטן אויף צוויי צווייגעלעך  
זינגט אַ יונגער קוקו שטיל צוויי פייגעלעך.  
אַזוי טרויעריק קלינגט דאָס ליד,  
פליען בלעטעלעך אין ווינט –  
ס’זענען נישט קיין פייגעלעך,  
ס’זענען מינע שווערסטערלעך.

אויף אַ צווייגל נידעריקער  
זינגט אַ גראַע טויב אַן אַלטע.  
אַזוי טרויעריק קלינגט דאָס ליד,  
פליען בלעטעלעך אין ווינט –  
ס’איז דאָך נישט קיין טויב קיין אַלטע,  
ס’איז מיין מעמעשי די אַלטע.<sup>57</sup>

[A literal English translation:  
The cuckoo’s chick sings  
At the top of the little nut tree.

<sup>56</sup> “Cântă puiu cucului”, 1081.

<sup>57</sup> Itsik Manger, “Oyf a grinem nisnboym”, 37.

Downward on the little branches,  
Two birdies sing.  
Yet they sing with such sorrow,  
That the waters stand still in the valley.  
But they are not two birdies,  
They are my beloved sisters.

Downward to the root,  
An old turtle dove sings.  
It is not a turtle dove,  
It is my estranged mother.]

Another change that Manger introduces is his replacement of an entire line with one that bears no referential connection to the original: the Romanian “Vărsat-ați lacrimi pe flori?” (“Did you shed tears on the flowers?”) is replaced with the line ( “טרויערט נישט בי טאָג, בי נאַכט”) (“Do not grieve all day and all night”). He then chooses to add to his translation an entire line that the Romanian original does not have: “וואָס איך בלאַנדזשע אין דער פֿרעמד” (“That I wander in foreign lands”). Manger concludes his translation by replacing the advice to his mother and sisters to embitter not their days (“amăriți zilele”), but their years (“פֿאַרטרויערט נישט די יאָרן איך”).

- Dulce maică, dragi surori,  
Vărsat-ați lacrimi pe flori?  
Ștergeți voi lacrimile,  
Că-ñi amăriți zilele.<sup>58</sup>

מאַמע, ליבע שוועסטערלעך,  
טרויערט נישט בי טאָג, בי נאַכט,  
וואָס איך בלאַנדזשע אין דער פֿרעמד.  
ווישט שוין אָפּ די טרערן איך,  
פֿאַרטרויערט נישט די יאָרן איך.<sup>59</sup>

[A literal English translation:  
Sweet mother, dear sisters,  
Did you shed tears on the flowers?  
Wipe up the tears,  
Because you embitter our days.]

Manger’s changes are not radical but still quite noticeable: he inserts several new lines in his Yiddish translation-recreation and, at times, changes the reference entirely. In addition, he also begins each stanza by two to three lines that do not rhyme, diverging from the popular rhyme scheme (A-A, B-B, C-C) that can be found

<sup>58</sup> “Cântă puiu cucului”, 1081.

<sup>59</sup> Itsik Manger, “Oyf a grinem nisnboym”, 37.

throughout the source text. Despite those changes, Manger preserves the meter of the source text and succeeded in recreating its cadence in his translation. Moreover, he manages to suggest very vividly in his Yiddish translation the deep sorrow of his mother portrayed as a turtle dove and the loneliness of the departed child, also identifiable with the cuckoo at the top of the green nut tree. The line that distinguishes most the Yiddish version from the Romanian source text is “וואָס איך בלאַנדזשע אין דער פֿרעמד” (“That I wander in foreign lands”), which stresses the voice of the departed child and gives it more strength in Yiddish than in the Romanian source text. Whereas in the Romanian original text the sorrow of the mother and sisters make up the core image of the poem, in the Yiddish translation both the ones left behind and the voice of the estranged child gain equal force in the framework of the poem. Though Manger chooses to confer equal lyrical strength to the suffering relatives and to the voice of the departed child, his alterations are not overly drastic, thereby granting the Yiddish reader access to the “internal mechanism” that created the aesthetic effect in the Romanian popular poem originally.

### **Conclusion**

Poetry translation is no easy task, as the vast amount of both theoretical and applied works on the topic indicate. From the dual position of both reader and translator of poetry, I argue that translations should be primarily oriented toward the reader. In Etkind’s words, the translator recreates the text as long as he does not cross the boundaries of poetic recreation by bringing his own voice to the forefront. The translator is, as Eco points out, negotiating—with himself and with the source text—the extent of the changes he wishes to introduce in the text he recreates. That negotiation is, after all, a process whose outcome is influenced by the subjectivity of the translator, as the case studies that I have discussed illustrate.

APPENDIX 1

**Sfântul Besht**

Şede Baal Şem în miez de noapte,  
În odaia-i – şi chibzuie pierdut în şoapte:  
”Ce sfântă-i noaptea, ce abis senin,  
Încât chiar bietul peregrin,  
Desculţ peste pământ străin, simţeşte –  
Cum mâna-albastră-a Domnului îl ocroteşte.”  
În sus s-avântă dânsul şi se strecoară cătinel:  
Sub geam răsun-un plânsset firav, mititel.  
”Cine plânge în noapte, cine-şi tânguie cântul,  
Când doarme şi pasărea, când doarme şi vântul  
Când doarme coliba şi doarme pădurea – în vise pluteşte,  
Cine, al visului suflu de aur îl izgoneşte?  
- Ascultă! îi spune el plânsului celui străin,  
- Vino să dormi în braţele-mi, al tău dor eu să ți-l alin.”

Dar plânsul tot viersuie cu glas de vioară subţire,  
Ca firul ţesut de păianjen mereu, în neştire,  
Ca ultimul vaier rostit de pruncul răpus,  
Ce capul şi-l pleacă sub pala de vânt din apus.

Baal Şem deschide-a sa poartă – prin dânsa păşeşte,  
Să-l afle pe-acel ce extazul îl adumbreşte,  
Extazul şi visul întregii suflări.  
Iată cum somnul s-aşterne în zare,  
Cuprinde oraşul şi râul, câmpia-o cufundă-n visare.

”Cine plânge acum, cine-și tânguie cântul,  
Când doarme și pasărea, când doarme și vântul  
Când doarme coliba și doarme pădurea – în vise plutește,  
Cine, al visului suflu de aur îl izgonește?  
- Ascultă! îi spune el plânsului celui străin,  
- Vino să dormi în brațele-mi, al tău dor eu să ți-l alin.”  
Dar plânsul tot viersuie cu glas de vioară subțire,

Ca firul țesut de păianjen mereu, în neștire,  
Ca ultimul vaier rostit de pruncul răpus,  
Ce capul și-l pleacă sub pala de vânt din apus.

Literary translation from Yiddish by Augusta Costiuc Radosav

### **Saint Besht**

Almost midnight. The Baal Shem sits  
In his quiet alcove, lost in thought.  
The night is holy, lovely, deep.  
Even a man with barefoot step  
Moving alone through a foreign land  
Can feel himself in God’s blue hand.

The Baal Shem rises; then suddenly  
There sounds at the window a tremulous cry.  
“Who grieves at night; who is it weeps  
When the bird, the wind, and the hut all sleep,  
And the forest sleeps along with them?”

Who drives the gold away from his dream?  
Listen," the Baal Shem says, and turns  
To the exiled grief, "Come sleep in my hands."

But the cry at the window is tremulous, fine  
As a spider's web or a violin  
Or the gasp of a dying child, turned thin  
While the child's head writhes against the wind.

The Baal Shem opens the door and tries  
To discover what creature disturbs the joys  
The joys and dreams of all the world.  
The river dozes and there the town  
Is dozing and the field as well.

Who's weeping now  
When the bird, the wind, and the hut all sleep  
And the forest sleeps along with them?  
Who drives the gold away from his dream?  
"Listen," the Baal Shem says, and turns  
To the exiled grief, "Come sleep in my hands."

But the cry at the window is tremulous, fine  
As a spider's web or a violin  
Or the gasp of a dying child, turned thin  
While the child's head writhes against the wind.

Itzik Manger, "Sankt Besht", in *The World According to Itzik. Selected Poetry and Prose of Itzik Manger*, transl. and ed. Leonard Wolf (New Haven : Yale University Press, 2002), 94-95.

### סאַנקט בעש"ט

זיצט דער בעל-שם קעגן מיטן-נאַכט  
אין זײַן חדר מיוחד און ער טראַכט:  
„די נאַכט איז הייליק, טיף און שיין,  
אַז אפילו דער מענטש, וואָס גייט אַליין  
באַרוועס איבער אַ פֿרעמדן לאַנד,  
פֿילט איבער זיך גאַטס בלאַע האַנט“.

ער הייבט זיך אויף און בלייבט פלוצעם שטיין:  
אין פֿענסטער ציטערט אַ דין געוויין.  
„ווער וויינט בײַ נאַכט, ווער וויינט אַצינד  
ווען ס'שלאָפֿט דער פֿויגל און ס'שלאָפֿט דער ווינט,  
ווען ס'שלאָפֿט די כאַטע און ס'שלאָפֿט דער וואַלד?

ווער טרײַבט פֿון זײַן חלום אַוועק דאָס גאַלד?  
„הער – זאָגט ער צום פֿרעמדן געוויין געווענדט –  
קום און ווער אַנטשלאָפֿן אויף מײַנע הענט“.

נאָר ס'ציטערט דאָס געוויין ווי אַ פֿידל דין,  
דין ווי דאָס שפינגעוועב פֿון אַ שפּין,  
דין ווי די גסיסה פֿון אַ קינד,  
וואָס פֿאַרוואַרפֿט דאָס קעפל אויפֿן ווינט.

עפֿנט דער בעל שם די טיר און גייט

געוויר צו ווערן, ווער ס'שטערט די פרייד,  
די פרייד און דעם חלום פון אַ וועלט.  
אַט דרימלט די שטאַט, אַט דרימלט דער טייך.  
אַט דרימלט דאָס פֿעלד.

ווער־זשע וויינט אַצינד,  
ווען ס'שלאַפֿט דער פֿויגל און ס'שלאַפֿט דער ווינט,  
ווען ס'שלאַפֿט די כאַטע און ס'שלאַפֿט דער וואַלד?

ווער טרייבט פֿון זיין חלום אַוועק דאָס גאַלד?  
„הער – זאַגט ער צום פרעמדן געוויין געווענדט –  
קום און ווער אַנטשלאַפֿן אויף מיינע הענט“.

נאָר ס'ציטערט דאָס געוויין ווי אַ פֿידל דין,  
דין ווי דאָס שפינגעוועב פֿון אַ שפּין,  
דין ווי די גסיסה פֿון אַ קינד,  
וואָס פֿאַרוואַרפֿט דאָס קעפל אויפֿן ווינט.

Itsik Manger, “Sankt Besht”, in *Lamtern in vint* (Warsaw : Turem, 1933), 105-107.

## APPENDIX 2

### זומערנאכט

פֿול מיט כּשׁוּף לעכטיגקייטען,  
גלענצען אין דעם וועלדיל דאָרט  
פּליהט די מיערלען ביימעהאַרט  
וועלדער טון די נאַכט פֿאַרשפּרייטען  
אַן אַ וואָרט.

וועגען, משאה אויפֿגענומען,  
פֿאַהרען שווער און סקריפינדיג;  
טשער'דיס געהן מ'ריקענדיג,  
פֿון דער לאַנק' בחורים קומען  
הילענדיג.

גאַר אַן אַאַל'ן מיט די קענדלעך  
קומען וואָבער פֿון דעם טאַך;  
מעדלעך, זינגענדיג א סאַך  
פּאלעס אין די גארטעל-בענדליך  
פֿי'ם ווייץ גלאַך.

פֿון דעם וואסער קומען קינדער,  
רוישענדיג אַ גרויסע צאָהל:  
שיינט דאָס דארף פֿון רוש א מאול;  
געהט פֿים קוימען רויך, אַ ווינדער  
לאַנגזאַם פּאול.

וואָס אַ מאַל ווערד דאך אלץ שטילע  
אין דארף, ניט מעהר ראושען וואַכ'ט;  
ארביטסלאַט צו בעט געבראַכט

רוהיג איז: ס'איז שוין אפילו  
ג'ווארען נאָכט.

אויף דעם פריפטשעק שלאָפֿט דאָס פֿייער  
ס'איז פֿים קאַניץ טויד דאָס לעכט,  
אין דעם דאָרף אַנשלאָפֿען רעכט  
האַווקעט נאָך אַ הונד אַ שרייער  
הייזריג, שלעכט.

קוק זי אָן! פֿון בערגער ספֿעהרן  
קומט לבנה – אויס דעם וואַלדעט  
שטייגט אלץ הויך אים הימעלבעט  
טיעף פֿאַרטראַכט פֿונקט ווי דער שטערן  
פֿון פאיעט.

גלייך דעם ווייכען קול פֿון גלאקען  
קלינגט דער טענענוואַלד (אים גליק)  
ריטמיש כוואַליעס פֿאַלן צריק  
פֿונקט ווי וואַסער רוישט דערשראַקען  
אין זיין וויעג.

שוואַגט דער ווינד שוין אויך באַצייטען,  
שלאָפֿט דאָס דארף ווין קבר (הערט!)  
אלסדינג הייל'גער גייסט פֿאַרמעהרט:  
פֿרידען, ריה אין לופֿטענווייטען  
אויף דער ערד.

ביינקען נאָר, וויל ריה ניט דענקען  
;יונגעס ביינקען בלאַנזעט טריב

טרעפֿען זיך בסוד אין שטיב,  
ביינקען זאָל רימנעמען ביינקען  
ליב מיט ליב.

George Coşbuc, "Zumernakht", trans. Salomon Segall, in *Antologia Segall. Poeti români traduşi în jdiş* (Vienna : Union, 1922), 84-86.

### **Summer Night**

Lagging yet over the clearing  
Purple glows the western sky;  
In the thicket blackbirds fly  
And from woods the night is nearing  
    On the sly.

Creaking carts with labour's load  
Homeward make their way so slow,  
Cattle in the distance low;  
Leaving meadows for the road  
    Lads halloa.

From the river wives are coming  
Leisurely, with wooden pails,  
And, in skirts with tucked-up tails,  
Harvest girls singing and humming  
    Along vales.

In thick groups the children, bringers

Of the brook's uproar and joke,  
The whole village have awoke,  
While above the chimneys lingers  
    The white smoke.

Night sets in and from the village  
Every noise has been outcast;  
All the labourers at last  
Have forgotten crop and tillage  
    And sleep fast.

Hearth and oven are now dark  
And the rush-lamp no light throws;  
While the stillness grows and grows  
Now and then some hoarse dog bark  
    In their doze.

The full moon's uphill! Look how  
She evades the fir-trees' guard,  
How she rises, swimming hard,  
And seems thoughtful as the brow  
    Of a bard.

Like a distant muffled bell  
The immense fir-forests ring;  
The waves rhythmically swing  
While the waters fall and swell  
    Chafe and sing.

Hark, even the wind does cease;  
Dead asleep are toil and mirth,  
Sure the Holy Ghost is forth:  
Silence in the air and peace,  
    On the earth.

The sole wanderer is love,  
Love with youthful wings and feet;  
At the gates longing hearts meet,  
Turtle-dove with turtle-dove,  
    Sweet with sweet.

George Coșbuc, "Summer Night", in *Poezii=Poems*, transl. Leon Levițchi (Bucharest :  
Minerva, 1980), 50-52.

### **Noapte de vară**

Zărilor, de farmec pline,  
Strălucesc în luminiș;  
Zboară mierlele-n tufiș  
Și din codri noaptea vine  
    Pe furiș.

Care cu poveri de muncă  
Vin încet și scârțâind;  
Turmele s-aud mugind,  
Și flăcării vin pe luncă  
    Hăulind.

Cu cofița, pe-ndelete,  
Vin neveste de la râu;  
Și, cu poala prinsă-n brâu,  
Vin cântând în stoluri fete  
De la grâu.

De la gărlă-n pâlcuri dese  
Zgomotoși copiii vin;  
Satul e de vuiet plin;  
Fumul alb alene iese  
Din cămin.

Dar din ce în ce s-alină  
Toate zgomotele-n sat,  
Muncitorii s-au culcat.  
Liniștea-i acum deplină  
Și-a-nnotat.

Focul e-nvelit pe vatră,  
Iar opaițele-au murit,  
Și prin satul adormit  
Doar vrun câine-n somn mai latră  
Răgușit.

Iat-o! Plină, despre munte  
Iese luna din brădet  
Și se naltă,-ncet-încet,  
Gânditoare ca o frunte  
De poet.

Ca un glas domol de clopot  
Sună codrii mari de brad;  
Ritmic valurile cad,  
Cum se zbate-n dulce ropot  
Apa-n vad.

Dintr-un timp și vântul tace;  
Satul doarme ca-n mormânt  
Totu-i plin de duhul sfânt:  
Liniște-n văzduh și pace  
Pe pământ.

Numai dorul mai colindă,  
Dorul tânăr și pribeag.  
Tainic se-ntâlnește-n prag,  
Dor cu dor să se cuprindă,  
Drag cu drag.

George Coșbuc, "Noapte de vară", in *Fire de tort* (Chișinău : Litera, 1996), 25-26.

APPENDIX 3

**אויף אַ גרינעם ניסנבוים**

(רומעניש)

אויף אַ גרינעם ניסנבוים  
זינגט אַ יונגער קוקו שטיל,  
אונטן אויף צוויי צווייגלעך  
זינגען שטיל צוויי פייגעלעך.  
אַזוי טרויעריק קלינגט דאָס ליד,  
פֿלײַען בלעטעלעך אין ווינט –  
ס'זענען נישט קיין פייגעלעך,  
ס'זענען מײַנע שווערסטערלעך.

אויף אַ צווייגל נידעריקער  
זינגט אַ גראָע טויב אַן אַלטע.  
אַזוי טרויעריק קלינגט דאָס ליד,  
פֿלײַען בלעטעלעך אין ווינט –  
ס'איז דאָך נישט קיין טויב קיין אַלטע,  
ס'איז מײַן מעמעשי די אַלטע.

מאַמע, ליבע שוועסטערלעך,  
טרויערט נישט בײַ טאָג, בײַ נאַכט,  
וואָס איך בלאַנדזשע אין דער פֿרעמד.  
ווישט שוין אָפּ די טרערן אײַך,  
פֿאַרטרויערט נישט די יאַרן אײַך.

Itsik Manger, "Oyf a grinem nisnboym", in *Felker zingen* (Warsaw : Ch. Brzoza, 1936), 37.

### **Cântă puiu cucului**

Cântă puiu cucului,  
În vârful nucuțului.  
Mai în jos pe rămurele,  
Cântă două păsărele,  
D'așa cântă de cu jale,  
De stau apele pe vale.  
Da' nu-s două păsărele,  
Că-s dragi surorile mele.

Mai în jos la rădăcină,  
Cântă-o turturea bătrână.  
Da' nu-i turturea bătrână,  
Că-i maică-mea ha streină.

- Dulce maică, dragi surori,  
Vărsat-ați lacrimi pe flori?  
Ștergeți voi lacrimile,  
Că-ți amărâți țilele.

Auđită de N. I. Apostolescu de la Ion Binig. Culésă din Șona, comitatul Târnava-mare, - Transilvania. In *Materialuri folkloristice. Poesia poporană*, vol. 1, partea 2, culese și publicate sub auspiciile Ministerului Cultelor și Învățământului Public, prin îngrijirea lui Gr. G. Tocilescu (București : Tipografia "Corpului Didactic" C. Ispășescu & G. Brătănescu, 1900), 1081.

**The cuckoo's chick sings**

The cuckoo's chick sings  
At the top of the little nut tree.  
Downward on the little branches,  
Two birdies sing.  
Yet they sing with such sorrow,  
That the waters stand still in the valley.  
But they are not two birdies,  
They are my beloved sisters.

Downward to the root,  
An old turtle dove sings.  
It is not a turtle dove,  
It is my estranged mother.

“Sweet mother, dear sisters,  
Did you shed tears on the flowers?  
Wipe up the tears,  
Because you embitter our days.”

Literal translation from Romanian by Augusta Costiuc Radosav.