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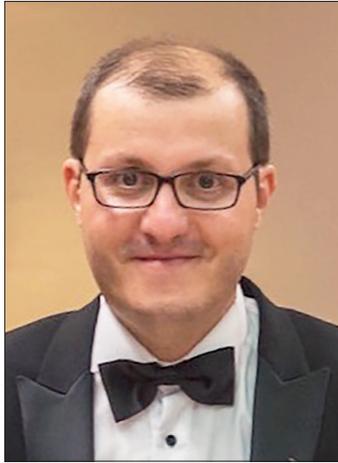
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THE FRENCH ORIGINS AND CULTURAL RECEPTION OF THE ROMANIAN TRANSLATION OF HENRY DAVID THOREAU'S *WALDEN*

Abstract: This paper outlines the impressive circulation of Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) at the beginning of the twentieth century in Europe. In particular, the paper deals with the topic of translation from another translation and analyzes the French, German, Russian, and Bulgarian sources of the Romanian translation of *Walden* in order to offer a better understanding of the circulation of literary texts, of their impact on national literary histories, and of their global influence.

Keywords: American literature, Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, literature in translation.

Introduction

In this project, I plan to investigate the literary and cultural genealogy of the very first translation from French into Romanian of the nineteenth-century American classic *Walden; or Life in the Woods* by Henry D. Thoreau. In particular, I want to analyze the circumstances in which Panait Mușoiu, a socialist and sometimes anarchist activist, takes time off from fringe politics to translate the work of an author whose objectives, at least in *Walden*, situate himself beyond politics. Eventually, with this study, I intend to lay out the ground for a long term project that includes an annotated edition of *Walden* in Panait Mușoiu's translation as well as a new Romanian translation from its original English.

As a scholar of American studies and as a translator, I envision this project to be translingual, transcultural and interdisciplinary: on the one hand, it will allow me to continue my investigation of Thoreauvian

literature, which I began with my doctoral dissertation dedicated to the analysis of land surveying in Thoreau's work; on the other hand, this study will trace back, if not recover, the influence the American author and *Walden* in particular had on world literature in matters ranging from nature writing and environmental studies to nonfiction writing and civil disobedience politics. My project will analyze the personal and cultural biography of Thoreau and Mușoiu, as well as the cultural exchanges that surrounded the publication and subsequent translation of *Walden* from English to French and then from French to Romanian within the larger context of literary history that spans two continents and almost a century of ideas.

The focus on the circulation and translation of literature as well as on reception theory can provide a fresh perspective for the study of American literature and a new understanding of the global flow of texts, people and ideas in literature in the nineteenth- and the twentieth century. In short then, the purpose of this project is to discern what led Mușoiu to undergo the important task of translating *Walden* into Romanian. In order to answer this question, I first wish to examine the overall critical reception of Thoreau's work and of *Walden* in particular within late nineteenth- early twentieth-century Europe (mainly France, Germany, and Romania); then, I will examine the early French reception of *Walden*, with a particular emphasis on Louis Fabulet's 1922 translation; last, but not least, I will focus on the Romanian translation of the French text that Mușoiu undertook between 1928 and 1934.

Thoreau, Mușoiu and literature in translation

While literary translation affects the reading and writing of any original literary texts, translation from another translation complicates not only the critical reception of the translated work but also the cultural context to which it belongs. By exploring the translation and circulation of an American text in French and Romanian, I would like to highlight how texts originating in different contexts have been locally adapted and adopted as texts of world literature. Thus, the significant flow of translations from one language to another and from one culture to another is intricately linked to the development of the discipline of world literature as well as to the international network of translators, publishers, book sellers and reviewers.

For instance, when I first compared Mușoiu's translation against the French one in the special collections section of the Babes-Bolyai University's Library (in Cluj-Napoca, Romania), I was comparing editions that were donated by two important public intellectuals, the celebrated Romanian comparatist Adrian Marino (1921-2005) and the college professor Henri Jacquier (1900-1980), a French expat teaching literature in Romania. Moreover, Marino's copy of Mușoiu's translation had a newspaper clipping of a note advertising the 1967 Gallimard edition of *Walden* that marked the 150th anniversary of Thoreau's birth, whereas Jacquier's copy was that of the original 1922 French translation. The fact that a Romanian scholar and a French professor, both part of the same literary establishment but coming from different cultures, showed interest in the same American author is an example of the importance that his book once had and why I find it imperative to trace back its Romanian translation. I will do this by both analyzing primary sources and secondary sources that deal with reception theory and translation studies.

In biographical terms, however, Thoreau and Mușoiu could not have been further apart as evidenced by the following short biographical sketches, and yet one's original work and the other's translation brought them together. Next to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) is considered one of the major figures of the American Renaissance, the mid nineteenth-century period associated with the birth of American literature. The author of an impressive journal that he kept for most of his adult life, as well as of two books, many essays and some poetry, Thoreau is mainly remembered thanks to his masterpiece *Walden; or Life in the Woods* (1854) and his essay "Resistance to Civil Government" / "Civil Disobedience" (1849) that later influenced non-violent liberation movements such as Mahatma Gandhi's Indian independence movement in the first half of the twentieth century as well as Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Civil Rights Movement in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s.

Panait Mușoiu (1864-1944) is a Romanian journalist, translator, and editor of popular and philosophical treatises ranging from Plato to John Stuart Mill. Before or during a brief stint as a college student at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (1892-1893), Mușoiu translates for the first time from French to Romanian "The Communist Manifesto" by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, published in 1892 in Iași. In 1889, Mușoiu founds a libertarian publishing house, "Biblioteca Revista Ideei," where he edits and translates anarchist classics, revolutionary literature, and various

educational pamphlets. At the turn of the century, in 1900, Mușoiu begins publishing "Revista Ideei," the magazine he used as a front for the afore-mentioned publishing house. By and large, throughout his life, he finds himself if not at the center then really close to the Romanian intellectual movements that, starting with the 1880s, adopted Western revolutionary trends such as socialism, workers' and women's movements, and anarchism.

Theoretical framework and research methods

If Mușoiu's translation is an onion, then Thoreau's *Walden* is its core, the *Urtext*, and peeling off the multiple layers is similar to analyzing the primary sources of my project. To do so, I will present the three versions of *Walden*: Thoreau's original from 1854, Louis Fabulet's French translation from 1922, and Mușoiu's Romanian translation published in 1936. Next, I will analyze the three texts about the author and his work that accompany the Romanian translation: Maurice Muret's introduction to a previous incomplete French translation by Winnaretta Singer and published in the short lived magazine "La Renaissance Latine" (1903-4); a critical study of Thoreau's work by Karl Federn (1899) that Mușoiu published in his own magazine "Revista Ideei" (1908); and, Ralph Waldo Emerson's epitaph of Thoreau.

It is worth mentioning here that, even though the manuscript seems to be lost, it appears that Mușoiu may have started translating *Walden* or at least began being interested in it as early as 1904, soon after the Swiss critic Muret prefaced the American socialite Singer's translation published in two consecutive issues of the French *revue* "La Renaissance Latine." Also, similarly important, it is worth pointing out that Federn's text had been translated from German to Romanian by Grigore Goilav following a reprint in the New York based German language magazine *Freiheit*, edited by the German-American politician and journalist Johann (John) Most. Moreover, Stanciu Ștefanof following the Russian and Bulgarian editions of *Walden* translates Emerson's epitaph, which does not accompany the French edition. This, again, is another example of the impressive circulation and impact that Thoreau's work had on world literature at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Within this broader historical context, Mușoiu's interest in Thoreau's work and particularly in *Walden* does not appear to stem from an informed

understanding of Thoreau's radical politics (dealing mostly with resisting a state that supports slavery) but rather from the influence that Thoreau's work had on European intellectuals that Mușoiu wanted to emulate. Another possible explanation of Mușoiu's interest in *Walden* is related to Thoreau's growing fame throughout Europe. For instance, in a review of Fabulet's translation published in 1922, Valery Larbaud, a French writer, literary critic, and translator, mentions the much earlier German and Dutch translations and ponders as to why the French version took so long into making.¹ Without mentioning the unfinished translation of Winnaretta Singer, dating back to 1903, Larbaud welcomes Fabulet's translation almost like a recovery enterprise and points out that Thoreau's work had been well known in the French literary circles in its original English. Larbaud's review, thus, raises two seemingly disparate points that also inform my own project. On the one hand, a work of literature needs to be able to exist by itself in the world in its original language and those interested in reading it need to be able to read the original; on the other hand, any translation needs to be timely or, at least, be made at the right moment.

With this in mind, my effort here is to consider what it means when a translation is both late and made after another translation; to understand the significance and importance of translations within the culture at large; and, to suggest that translations reflect cultural curiosity and selfless appreciation of great literary works and that second-hand translations are better than no translations at all. In the end, this paper is an investigation of genealogy and cultural influence, a comparativist study of translations and cultural archives that span different geographic areas and historical periods.

Translation Studies, Walter Benjamin and Henry D. Thoreau

The growth of translation studies as an academic discipline is a success story of the last decades of the twentieth century. As various literary critics and theorists argue, the discipline brings together work in a wide variety of fields, including linguistics, literary study, history, anthropology, psychology, international relations, and economics.² In the wake of poststructuralism and postcolonial studies, translation theory gave new insight and new life not only to the almost dying field of comparative

literature but also to the renewed field of world literature. As Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere write:

Translation is ... a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. Rewritings can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices, and the history of translation is the history also of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another. But rewriting can also repress innovation, distort and contain, and in an age of ever increasing manipulation of all kinds, the study of the manipulative processes of literature as exemplified by translation can help us toward a greater awareness of the world in which we live.³

As editors of the prestigious series of Translation Studies published by Routledge, Bassnett and Lefevere know that translation is the history of literary innovation. Literature in translation, thus, promotes new concepts, genres, and devices. At the same time, the history of translation overlaps and most of the time replaces history itself in that it appropriates, albeit selectively, the discursive practices (literary, cultural, economic, political, religious, or otherwise) through which we analyze the world in which we live.

In broad terms, then, the whole Western civilization can be reduced to an uninterrupted series of translations and appropriations from the Greeks to the Romans and from the Ancient Greek and Latin to national languages. The fact that we can almost tell the story of Europe through the lenses of a handful of Bible translations, from Hebrew to Greek and then to Latin and to other languages, is a testament to the importance of translation in laying out the ground for national literatures and cultures.⁴ Moreover, a certain type of translation can also manipulate and, when prohibited, insidiously negate the self-determination of *the other*, as Edward Said's concept of *orientalism* seems to suggest. A dominant culture and ideology could completely erase another culture through the means of a foreign colonial language.

Continuing the parallel between translation and history, the history of translation records Walter Benjamin's seminal essay from 1923 "The Task of the Translator" wherein he argues that translation is not only like history but also like literary criticism. In fact, the historicity of this essay

is twofold. On the one hand, Benjamin wrote it as an introduction to his own translation from French into German of “Tableaux parisiens” from Charles Baudelaire’s groundbreaking *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857); on the other, as Paul de Man suggests, “in the profession you are nobody unless you have said something about this text.”⁵ Indeed, famous literary critics and philosophers, such as de Man himself, Jacques Derrida, Maurice Blanchot, Barbara Johnson, to name but a few, have had a lot to say about Benjamin’s essay, so much so that, suffice it to say, for the purposes of this essay, Benjamin’s ideas will help me get closer to both justify the ends of my project and to argue that Thoreau and the German philosopher hold similar views of translation.⁶

As a translator from Greek and Latin, Thoreau himself was sensible to the Transcendentalist theories of translation according to which ancient or primitive languages are the true repositories of human knowledge.⁷ The original is always more important than its translation, and, therefore, any students should try their best to learn Greek and Latin so they can appreciate a work of art and literature in its original language; however, if direct knowledge of an ancient language is not possible, then learning even a few words, like farmers do is preferable; finally, if that is not an option either, then translators should try their best to copy the source as closely and as literally as possible:

The heroic books, even if printed in the character of our mother tongue, will always be in a language dead to degenerate times; and we must laboriously seek the meaning of each word and line, conjecturing a larger sense than common use permits out of what wisdom and valor and generosity we have. The modern cheap and fertile press, with all its translations, has done little to bring us nearer to the heroic writers of antiquity. They seem as solitary, and the letter in which they are printed as rare and curious, as ever. It is worth the expense of youthful days and costly hours, if you learn only some words of an ancient language, which are raised out of the trivialness of the street, to be perpetual suggestions and provocations. It is not in vain that the farmer remembers and repeats the few Latin words which he has heard.⁸

In this respect, Thoreau’s ideas are concordant with Benjamin’s view that the original work of art is almost always more important than its copy, or, its translation, so to speak. However, if we consider a copy and/or a translation as part of the after-life of a work of art, then the work of a translator is worth the while and the translation itself becomes important

once we consider it in-and-of-itself, almost separated and independent from the original. Echoing Thoreau's ideas about the purity of original language which is dead to degenerate times, Benjamin writes that a work of art is translatable insofar as it is close or closer to truth or dogma:

Where a text is identical with truth or dogma, where it is supposed to be "the true language" in all its literalness and without the mediation of meaning, the text is unconditionally translatable. In such case translations are called for because of the plurality of languages. Just as, in the original, language and revelation are one without tension, so the translation must be one with the original in the form of the interlinear version, in which literalness and freedom are united.⁹

With my project then I plan to investigate the extent to which Thoreau's *Walden* is translatable. I also want to find out how close, that is, how true to the original both a translation and a second-hand translation can be. Benjamin's work offers the theoretical framework necessary to analyze this filiation as it originates from Thoreau's work through Fabulet's French translation to Mușoiu's translation. More specifically, if Thoreau's *Walden* is here the "interlinear version," I intend to explore the tension between the French and Romanian versions.

Walden

By the time it was published in 1854, *Walden* had already gone through several revisions and thus Thoreau's experience of living for two years (1845-1847) alone in the woods is no longer considered an experiment about nature but rather seen as meditation and even a pamphlet about the nature of things. During his stay there, Thoreau planted some crops, drafted his first book, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, entertained guests, measured and sounded the pond, spent a night in jail, a experience he would later allude to in his essay "Resistance to Civil Government/Civil Disobedience" and took a trip to Mount Katahdin in Maine. In direct contradiction with his later portrayal by nature lovers and superficial critics as a transcendental hermit, Thoreau was in fact perfecting the craft of an ever-curious scientific writer and social critic. As Laura Walls writes in her book *Seeing New Worlds, Henry David Thoreau and Nineteenth-Century Natural Science*, by the time he had moved to

Walden Pond in 1845, Thoreau was already dissatisfied “with nature as a mere veil, to be pierced en route to a reality beyond.”¹⁰ If the scientific writer was only more recently rediscovered, the social critic appealed to readers from the very beginning, and that is why his message was largely embraced in anarchist, socialist, and workers’ circles such as the ones in Europe at the turn of the twentieth-century which possibly introduced Thoreau to his future Romanian translator.

In “Economy,” for instance, Thoreau sharply criticizes the socio-political system of his time freshly recovered from the so-called Panic of 1837. Moreover, explaining that it is “particularly addressed to poor students,” the author envisions the book as a self-help manual and as an inventory of what it means to be a young individual, freshly out of college trying to make a living in Antebellum America, an experience young Mușoiu must have know too well in a different country on a different continent. Faced himself with the dilemma of choosing between having a profession (teacher, pencil maker, land surveyor, etc.) and tending to his writerly vocation, Thoreau is trying to find answers to some of these questions: Should he live a practical or a principled life? Would being a land surveyor satisfy his love for the outdoors or keep him busy measuring land and thus overlook the beauty of the natural environment? Should he be more than the leader of a huckleberry party, as Emerson dismissively called him in his eulogy? As a surveyor, should he work for the government or challenge its westward expansion by reinscribing the West as the Wild? Based on the practical merits of his surveying and scientific expertise, should he write like a transcendentalist or like a naturalist? These inquiries and his critique of incipient capitalist society together with his experiment of living alone and being self-sustained may have recommended Thoreau to certain libertarian and anarchist circles that adopted him as their hero. Therefore, I believe, that this emphasis on liberation from the constraints of capitalist civilization rather than his writing about nature made Thoreau so appealing to his Romanian translator.

In *A Centennial Check-list of the Editions of Henry David Thoreau's Walden* published in 1954, Walter Harding records about 25 translations of *Walden* out of the 132 editions he inventories. Of all the translations, there is a tie when it comes to the number of the most numerous translated editions in any given language: thus, there are seven translations in German (published in 1897, 1902, 1922, 1945, 1947, 1949, 1950) and seven in Japanese (published in 1922, 1925, 1933, 2x1948, 1950, 1951); three translations are in Czechoslovakian (published in 1924,

1933, 1950) and two are transcribed into Braille (one published in 1932, with no exact year mentioned for the second or perhaps first one); finally, Harding also mentions other seven translations of *Walden* in national languages: in Dutch (published in 1902), in Russian (published in 1910), in French (published in 1922), in Italian (published in 1928), in Swedish (published in 1947) and in Danish and Spanish (both published in 1949).

At a first glance, here are a few interesting notes regarding Harding's list of various editions and translations of *Walden* during its first century of existence. Both the Russian edition and the first two Czechoslovakian editions are accompanied by Emerson's "Thoreau," the famous eulogy which set the tone for how Thoreau's biography was going to be written (the translation of Emerson's text also prefaces the Bulgarian and Romanian editions, and perhaps other editions). The 1950 Czechoslovakian edition was impounded by the Soviets pending ideological investigations. The Spanish edition is published in Argentina while some of the Japanese editions are abridged versions, as is one of the Braille editions. Two of the German editions are published one in Austria and one in Switzerland. Finally, Harding does not mention the Romanian edition, published in 1936, nor does he mention two incomplete Bulgarian translations from 1909 (reprint 1918) and 1925, which I am happy to mention here and add to this provisional list courtesy of Professor Albena Bakratcheva, author of a new complete Bulgarian translation of *Walden* published in 1993.

While dated and most likely already incomplete at the time of its printing, *A Centennial Check-list of the Editions of Henry David Thoreau's Walden* clearly documents the proliferation of translations of *Walden*. The book not only never went out of print in English but also began being translated in various languages, often times with different editions in the same language and regular updates. Thus, according to Harding, the first English edition took eight years to sell, with a second impression coming out immediately after Thoreau's death and the 123 editions of *Walden*, including translations, reflect both the importance of the book being "more frequently reprinted than any other book-length work in American literature written before the Civil War" as well as the widening foreign interest in Thoreau.¹¹

Walden in the world

In 1971, almost two decades after the check-list was published, in the foreword to *Thoreau Abroad, Twelve Bibliographical Essays*, Harding contextualizes Thoreau's literary posterity and world outreach. Noting that "the growth of Henry David Thoreau's reputation in the century since his death is one of the most startling phenomena of American literature," the critic and biographer chronicles the widespread interest in Thoreau's work.¹² Thus, the first wave of international interest in the work of the American writer begins in the 1890s when editions, translations, critical studies and biographies appear both in the US and in England, Ireland, Holland and Germany. While Harding credits this fact on the work of British critic Henry Stephens Salt, who also helped rediscover Herman Melville's novels, he also argues that Thoreau's readership was mainly enjoying his writings about nature. That changed, however, a few decades later, after World War II, together with the expansion of American imperialism, when *Walden*, for instance, became a symbol for both liberty, self-reliance, and independence in the newly liberated countries from fascist and Nazi invasions as well as a symbol for Americans' resistance to their own government's involvement in the wars in Korea and Vietnam.

The first translation of *Walden* into a foreign language appeared in Germany in 1897, following the demand of the public after "nearly a dozen articles of scholarly nature, two of which were of some importance, apparently created sufficient interest" in Thoreau's work.¹³ In Russia, Thoreau had drawn the interest of important writers such as Anton Chekhov and Leo Tolstoy. For instance, as soon as 1887, Chekhov reads an excerpt published in the leading daily newspaper "Novoe Vremya" ("New Times") from an incomplete translation of *Walden*. He is impressed more by the topic than by the style, so he decides to clip off the piece and to mail it to a friend.¹⁴ Tolstoy is won over by Thoreau's lifestyle to such a degree that he commissions an edition to be published by his publishing house Posrednik.¹⁵ In Japan, to assess Thoreau's impact outside Europe as well, *Walden* was first known in English starting with the 1880s when excerpts from the book were collected in Francis H. Underwood's *A Handbook of English Literature*, a manual used at what later would become University of Tokyo. Katsuhiko Takeda writes the anthology contained three passages,

The three selections were "The Bean Field," "Berries," and "The Pond."
The first appealed to the Japanese love for agriculture, the second to their

love for solitude, nature, and the fruits thereof, and the third to their deep response to the changing of season in nature. All three passages were evidently chosen for their potential appeal to Japanese readers.¹⁶

Indeed, Thoreau's work might have appealed to the Japanese readers as long as they were able to surpass the language and culture barrier since the first annotated translation of *Walden* was only published in 1911. This is a decade earlier than Harding mentioned in his *Check-list*, and Takeda informs us that it was a great success since it went through three printings in three weeks.¹⁷

Walden in France

Because Mușoiu translated *Walden* from French to Romanian, here's how Thoreau's work had been received in France. For this, I am using an essay titled "Thoreau in France" and published by Micheline Flak and Maurice Gonnaud in the above mentioned collection of essays edited by Eugene F. Timpe in 1971. In their essay, Flak and Gonnaud, mention a first article dedicated to Thoreau's work as early as 1887 ("Le Naturalisme aux Etats-Unis" by Thérèse Bentzon in the "Revue des Deux-Mondes" in September) followed by some translations in 1896 (thus, excerpts from Thoreau's journal, translated by I. Will, appeared in July in "Magazine International" and an abridged version of "Civil Disobedience," translated by A. Phélibé, was published in the "Revue Blanche" in November).

As I mentioned before, although the first excerpts translated to French by Winnaretta Singer from *Walden* were only published beginning with 1903 they were presumably enough for Mușoiu to become interested in Thoreau's work. However, Flak and Gonnaud remind us, not everybody seemed to be happy with that first translation, including Marcel Proust who presumably had planned to translate *Walden* himself together with his friend Antoine Bibesco. That never happened, though, and it takes another decade before Louis Fabulet starts working on his translation of *Walden*, and that very moment is memorable both for the translator and for the history of Thoreauvian translations.

The anecdote, that both André Gide and Fabulet recount separately, although Flak and Gonnaud only mention Gide's version, goes like this: afraid that somebody else would be the first one to translate *Walden*, Fabulet tells Gide in October 1913 that he plans to translate "un livre

extraordinaire” that nobody yet knows... except for Gide who happened to have the book in his pocket that day.¹⁸ In Fabulet’s telling, Gide not only had the book in his pocket, but also just started translating it a few days before:

André Gide, avant que j’eusse prononcé nom d’auteur ni titre d’ouvrage, mais sur la nature du bien que je lui disais des deux, sourit, porte la main à sa poche, en tira un livre, qu’il me tendit. C’était *Walden*, et il en avait, me dit-il, entrepris la traduction quelques jours auparavant. Nous nous rencontrions à un carrefour. Mon instinct devenait certitude. En l’aimable fraternité que nous lui connaissons, et sachant que je m’étais fait métier de donner à notre pays la version de ce que je sentais lui être profitable, il m’abandonna généreusement le privilège de traduire *Walden*.¹⁹

Going beyond the grandiloquence of this passage, it appears clear that even though they were late to translate *Walden*, compared to other nations, the French did see the task, according to Fabulet, as a privilege. To have Proust and Gide wanting and almost competing to translate your work is sign of great literary achievement.

The other translator Fabulet feared was going to outdo him was Léon Bazalgette, who published his translation of *Leaves of Grass* in 1909 while Fabulet was still working on his version of Whitman’s poems. After all, Fabulet had good reason to be cautious since Bazalgette did manage to publish first a volume of translations from Thoreau’s essays called “Désobeir” in 1921, whom he considered an extension of *Walden*. A year later, though, in 1922, Fabulet publishes the first complete French translation of *Walden*, an edition that Mușoiu later used as a source for his Romanian translation.

Walden in Romania(n)

Before I delve into presenting Mușoiu’s translation, I will provide an overview of the limited reception of Thoreau and of his work in Romania(n). When it comes to poetry, an important but understudied part of Thoreau’s work, I could find only three poems translated, as follows: “Smoke” translated by Nicolae Iorga with the title “Fum: Ușor înaripate fum” and published in “Cuget clar” in 1930; another version of the same poem was translated by Petre Solomon with the title “O, fum involt” and

was published in 1979, together with two other poems (“Sic Vita” and “Winter Memories/Amintiri de iarnă”) in *Antologia poeziei americane (The Anthology of American Poetry)* edited by poet Ion Caraion. The reason why only three of Thoreau’s poems were translated into Romanian has to do, perhaps, with the fact that these are among the few poems excerpted into anthologies of American literature to which Romanian translators must have had access. This explains both the importance anthologies and collections played in disseminating canonical texts across ages and cultures and the translators’ reliance on the very same canonicity, as exemplified by the translation of the same poem (“Smoke”) two times fifty years apart.

If the interest in poetry seems to be almost nonexistent, things are looking slightly better on what we might call the literary studies section. The very first mention of Thoreau and his work in Romania I was able to trace but could not find yet dates from a 1902 piece published in the short-lived magazine “Pagini alese” edited by Al. Gherghel. Written by Paul Reiner, the text is titled “Un Tolstoi American” (“An American Tolstoy”). Both because there is no way of knowing at the moment whether the text was originally written in Romanian or translated into Romanian and because its contents are yet unknown, I cannot comment on its importance and impact it could have had in promoting Thoreau and his work in Romania at the turn of the twentieth-century. Even so, I find it interesting that Thoreau is making his “debut” on the Romanian literary stage under the guise of Tolstoy. A promoter of Thoreau himself, Tolstoy is far wider known both in Romania and in the world at that time and the fact that his name is associated with that of Thoreau in a short piece appearing in a local Romanian paper and probably elsewhere, as well, is relevant to the literary reception of Thoreau’s work during the last decades of the nineteenth-century: as his work, particularly *Walden*, began to be rediscovered and translated in various languages, so his prestige started to grow.

Karl Federn’s “Thoreau” proves exactly that this is the case. As mentioned before in the brief section dedicated to the reception of Thoreau in Germany, *Walden* was translated into German following the demand of the public who had read critical essays and were eager to read the book itself. In Romania, Federn’s essay played that role in that it had a great influence on Mușoiu, who first found out about Thoreau from it, according to his own admission.²⁰ In Romanian, Federn’s text, in Grigore Goilav’s translation, first appeared in 1908 being published in “Revista

Ideeii," the literary and propaganda magazine Mușoiu edited between 1900 and 1916. Interestingly enough, like other influential essays and studies published in Germany, Federn's text appeared before *Walden* was published, but unlike in Germany, its impact was not big enough to prompt the public's calling for the immediate translation of the book it analyzed. In fact, after it was published in "Revista Ideei," the essay is reprinted twice together with Mușoiu's own translation of *Walden* in 1929 in the literary magazine "Adevărul literar și artistic" ("The Literary and Artistic Truth") and in 1936 in book format.

In Romania, as shown before, the reception of Thoreau starts under the guise of a foreign writer (Tolstoy in Reiner's text) and the interest in *Walden* is prompted by the text of a German literary critic (Federn). Despite being a bit late, the French influence is present, as well, with an unsigned review of Fabulet's translation of *Walden* published in 1922 in the above-mentioned "Adevărul literar și artistic" with the title "Poezia singuratății" ("The Poetry of Loneliness"). It then takes another seven years before the first installments of Mușoiu's Romanian translation of *Walden* begin appearing in the same literary magazine, accompanied by Mușoiu's short introduction, Federn's essay, and another text by Maurice Muret, initially written as a preface to Singer's incomplete French translation of *Walden* in 1903. Moreover, in a note advertising the publication of the book, M. Sevastos, the editor of "Adevărul literar și artistic" compares it to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and positions the pond in Canada!

At long last, also in 1929, Thoreau tentatively becomes *American* according to the title of the short introduction written by Nicolae Iorga to "Smoke," the poem he translated into Romanian: "Din Thoreau, poet american" ("From Thoreau, American poet") published in "Cuget clar" ("Clear Thought"). A year later, in 1931, in a short dispatch for the daily "Cuvântul" ("The Word") sent from Paris, France, the celebrated memoirist, novelist, and playwright Mihail Sebastian writes about Thoreau's *Journal* he must have read in English and considers Thoreau a representative for an America that is long gone and argues that, in the wake of industrialization, the Great Depression made the so-called "poetry of nature," as described by Thoreau, almost impossible. This limited reception only goes to show that Thoreau's work is still uncharted in Romania before and even after Mușoiu translates *Walden*. This absence, as it were, reflects almost in real time how great literary works travel in translation. The lack of information, the lack of access and even the confusion coming from mistranslation and misinterpretation are, eventually, compensated by the enthusiasm that

writers, translators, journalists, and editors tap in when it comes to works and authors with whom they resonate.²¹

When it comes to *Walden* itself, there are now three complete translations, including the one by Mușoiu: *Walden sau Vieața-n Pădure*, with a forward by P. Mușoiu and texts by Maurice Muret (translated by P. Mușoiu), Dr. Karl Federn (translated by Grigore Goilav), and Ralph Waldo Emerson (translated by Stanciu Stefanof), București: Biblioteca Revistei Ideei, 1936; unlike Mușoiu's version made following a French translation, the other two are made following the English original, but they leave out the "or Life in the Woods" part of the title: *Walden*, translated by Ștefan Avădanei and Al. Pascu, with a preface by Mihail Grădinaru and a biographical note by Don Eulert, Iași: Junimea, 1973 and *Walden*, translated by Silvia Constantin, București: Aldo Press, 2004.²² In addition, the famous passage about simplicity from the second chapter of *Walden*, "Where I Lived, and What I Lived for," is anonymously translated and published in 1920 in "Pagini libere," a short-lived magazine published by Mușoiu's friend A. Gălățeanu.²³ Last but not least, I should add, as mentioned just before and detailed a little later, that managing editor M. Sevastos of "Adevărul literar și artistic" intended to publish Mușoiu's translation of *Walden* in its entirety in weekly installments starting with January 1929 but the publication stopped in March after only 10 parts.

Moreover, I recently found that Don Eulert is the person behind the 1973 translation of *Walden*. In fact, the book has a foreword written by Mihail Grădinaru and a biographical sketch of Thoreau by Don Eulert. Although I need more information, I know Eulert had been a Fulbright fellow in Romania during the early 1970s and either brought along a copy of *Walden* or introduced the book and its author to Romanian students. He nonetheless recommended its translation. Here's what Cornelia Hâncu wrote when Eulert received the Odyssey Lifetime Achievement Award from the San Diego Psychological Association in 2014:

I believe that "Don's Odyssey" should include his unique experience in Romania, his love of villages and peasants, the folk art, the shepherds' rituals. His presence there at that particular time was extremely important for the students. The historical context was that of an awakening all over the world... Spring of Prague, the cultural revolution, the Vietnam war, The "All we need is Love" revolution. An international unrest was bubbling everywhere. Music, Dance, Poetry, Literature, Art in general was reflecting the change to come. That time in fact seeds were planted which made

possible for Communism to collapse. And he was one of many many gardeners of that time.²⁴

If Thoreau had been arguably rediscovered during the Civil Rights movement of the 50s and 60s in the US, where his ideas had been planted a century before, it would be interesting to see how his ideas had been seeded in Romania at the height of the Cold War. This would be yet another example of how the focus on the circulation of texts and, especially, of literature in translation as well as on reception theory does provide a fresh perspective for the study of world literature and a new understanding of the global flow of texts, people and ideas.

Mușoiu's *Walden*

At long last, here is the culmination of my project: the presentation of *Walden sau Vieața-n Pădure*, Mușoiu's translation of Thoreau's book. I cannot address the complete translation published in 1936 without mentioning how the Romanian translator found out about Thoreau's book. According to his own admission, Panait Mușoiu got a taste for Thoreau's work via an incomplete French translation of *Walden* by Winnaretta Singer, which was published in two consecutive numbers of the short lived magazine "La Renaissance Latine" (1903-4). Doing research for this project in the manuscript collection of the National Library of Romania in Bucharest I was fortunate to find a folder with Mușoiu's transcription by hand of the first installment and the loose pages of the second printed installment. The first installment (30 pages long in Mușoiu's handwriting on undated railway telegram sheets) also contains a text by Maurice Muret, which Mușoiu translated and later published in the incomplete magazine version from 1929 and in the 1936 complete book edition of *Walden*.

Unfortunately, my efforts to date the paper on which Mușoiu copied Muret's preface and Singer's translation or to find a railroad or paper historian who could help me do so have been unsuccessful so far. Establishing a reliable timeframe when Mușoiu first read and transcribed passages from *Walden* is crucial to my project in that it would allow me to show exactly the moment of the so-called first contact. Equally difficult is dating the first time Mușoiu heard or read about Thoreau. Even though, according to his own words, I now know that he first found out about the American writer from Karl Federn's essay, I could not tell the exact date

when Mușoiu read Federn's text; yet, I can draw a window of time, from 1899, when the essay was published in German, to 1908 when Grigore Goilav translated the text and Mușoiu published it in the magazine he edited "Revista Ideei."

At the moment there is no way of knowing when Mușoiu first read Singer's translation and Federn's essay, nor there is information about the order in which he read them. Even though the same can be said about the first time Mușoiu read Louis Fabulet's 1922 French translation of *Walden*, one thing is certain: he started working on the translation in 1928. While further research is needed in order to find documents that would help me give a better timeframe, there is plenty of information regarding the publication record of the first Romanian translation of *Walden*. Thus, the first selections in Panait Mușoiu's translation appeared in the literary supplement of the daily "Adevărul" ("The Truth") in 1929. The ad advertising the publication reads as follows: "Starting with this issue / "Adevărul literar" (The Literary Truth) presents / Life in the Woods / a novel by Henry David Thoreau / Wonderful scenes of authentic life spent / by an American intellectual in the middle of nature."

As already mentioned, in a longer promotional text published on January 22nd, 1929, the editor of "Adevărul," M. Sevastos, compares Thoreau's *Walden* to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. For his love of nature, Sevastos also compares Thoreau to the Greek god Pan and writes that Walden Pond is in Canada. More importantly, Sevastos informs the readers that "Life in the Woods" will be published, chapter by chapter, in "Adevărul literar." Unfortunately, that's not going to happen because the publication stops only after ten installments (the first two of which being dedicated to texts about the book and the author by Mușoiu, Maurice Muret, and Karl Federn). My provisional guess, for now, regarding the interruption of *Walden*'s publication is that the translator couldn't keep pace with the demands of weekly installments.

In fact, according to information provided in the printed version of *Walden* (1936), Mușoiu began the translation in October 1928, a date which is concordant with the installment publication schedule presented in "Adevărul" starting with January 1929. However, it took Mușoiu another two years to finish the translation in 1931 and two more years to revise it (1932-1934). He then sent the manuscript to the printing press in August 1935 and the first copies of the book were finally published in March 1936.

The table of contents of *Walden sau Vieța-n Pădure* in Panait Mușoiu's translation is an interesting document in that it both presents the book

and the effort it took to be published. The actual chapters of *Walden* are prefaced by Mușoiu's presentation of the book, followed by translations of three texts about the book and the author by Maurice Muret, Karl Federn, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. The second half of the page functions as an acknowledgment section, wherein Mușoiu details the timeframe of the translation, together with the names of his family, friends, and benefactors who housed him throughout the years.

In his preface, Mușoiu names Thoreau one of his favorite writers next to Nikolay Chernyshevsky (1828-1889), the Russian socialist critic and revolutionary embraced by, among others, American anarchist Emma Goldman, who also tried her best to recover Thoreau as an anarchist and supposedly established Thoreau's legacy within anarchist and libertarian circles. Incidentally, Chernyshevsky and Thoreau share the same birthday (July 12th) and Mușoiu made a name for himself by translating (from French, again) into Romanian and publishing the Russian writer's well-known novel *What Is to Be Done?* (1863, the Russian first print and 1896 and 1909 for the Romanian editions). Mușoiu then recounts how he first got acquainted to Thoreau's work. In order, he mentions Federn's essay, Singer's translation, and, finally, Fabulet's complete translation. He even favors Singer's version over Fabulet's and writes that before acquiring the latter's translation he tried his hand translating Singer's rendition. As of yet, I am not able to say what happened to that translation, nor when or if it was published. Similarly, as mentioned before, I cannot provide a clear timeframe regarding Mușoiu's interactions and contacts with those texts. Furthermore, he also boasts that he was able to verify Fabulet's translation against an English original and event to have expanded the notes the French edition copied following an edition of *Walden* edited by Francis H. Allen. However, that does not seem to be the case.

Maurice Muret's piece, probably translated by Mușoiu himself, is the introduction to a previous incomplete French translation by Winnaretta Singer, which was published in the short lived magazine "La Renaissance Latine" (1903-4). The text welcomes Singer's translation and compares Thoreau's reception in England, where his work is discussed ("elles est discutée" in French or "ie discutată" in Romanian) and in Germany, where the work is commented upon ("elle est commentée" in French or "ie comentată" in Romanian). Muret then presents a short biography of Thoreau and, out of the 11 volumes (sic) of Thoreau's complete works, praises *Walden* as the most accomplished ("le plus achevé" in French and "cea mai desăvârșită" in Romanian).

Karl Federn's "Henry David Thoreau" (reprinted here after it appeared in Mușoiu's own magazine "Revista Ideei" in 1908) was originally published in a literary criticism volume *Essays zur amerikanischen Litteratur* in 1899. It had been translated from German to Romanian by Grigore Goilav following a reprint in the New York based German language magazine "Freiheit," edited by the German-American politician and journalist Johann (John) Most. By far the longest piece of the three, Federn's essay gives a good overview of both Thoreau's life and work, including *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, Thoreau's first published book he drafted while living at Walden Pond.

Ralph Waldo Emerson's eulogy of Thoreau, which does not appear in the French edition, is translated by Stanciu Ștefanof following the Bulgarian translation of *Walden*, which in turn follows the Russian translation. In the words of Emerson, his friend and mentor, Thoreau was a "searching judge of men" and "attorney of the indigenous plants" who "lived for the day." Emerson's eulogistic recollection of his friend informs to a large extent all subsequent references to Thoreau's life and work. As a judge of men and a political activist, Thoreau is remembered as an awkward personage who spent a night in jail for refusing to pay the poll tax and who became a staunch abolitionist while risking his life to transport fugitive slaves to Canada. His public protest, in essays such as "Civil Disobedience" and lectures such as "Slavery in Massachusetts," against the Mexican War, against slavery, and against the Indian Removal contributed as well to his image of a radical writer. In fact, Thoreau's radical image is best expressed in his support for John Brown, the infamous homegrown terrorist and/or martyr who brought violence and murder to the abolitionist movement. As an attorney of plants, however, Thoreau is remembered as the aloof pseudo-scientist who traveled the woods and observed and absorbed nature in all its manifestations because, as both a naturalist and a natural historian, he showed interest in much larger issues than the current political events of the day.

This is just a glimpse into the impressive European circulation of *Walden* at the beginning of the twentieth century. Analyzing the French, and, it seems, German, Russian, and Bulgarian origins of the Romanian translation offers a better understanding of the circulation of literary texts, of their impact on national literary histories, and of their global trace.

Conclusion

In my paper I researched and analyzed sources dealing with Thoreau's and *Walden's* reception in France and Romania. For instance, while in France major writers such as Marcel Proust, André Gide, and Romain Rolland had all been interested in Thoreau's work, in Romania the American author had only sparked the interest of minor socialist intellectuals such as Mușoiu. My analysis gave insight both into the Romanian intellectual life in the first half of the twentieth century and into the reception of world literature in translation. When it comes to world literature studies, I agree with the comparatist David Damrosch, who argues in his book *How to Read World Literature* (2008) that literary value can also be created away from the point of origin. I am also following closely Emily Apter's ideas espoused in *Against World Literature, On the Politics of Untranslatability* (2013), wherein the critic argues for a plurality of "world literatures" oriented around geopolitics, radical activism, and resistance. In this respect, as I tried to show in my project by analyzing Mușoiu's translation of Fabulet's translation of *Walden*, here it is a clear example of how world literature gains through translation. Ultimately, then, the examination of this process both traces back the meaning of texts to their original moment and offers critical insight into the act of interpretation itself by focusing on the production, translation, and circulation of literary works in a world driven by economic, political, and cultural capital.

Last but not least, world literature also gains new meanings after the recent digital turn in the humanities. While almost instant digital translation produces a disruptive shift in the understanding of the world literature canon, such as a reevaluation of what constitutes translation and what constitutes literary text, it also brings us closer to analyzing a digital archive of world literature that can be accessed from everywhere in the world. Thus, beyond the close reading approach to literature, to hermeneutics and, eventually, to translation, the digital turn allows us to take a more distant and more inclusive look at world literature. As Franco Moretti is advocating, distant reading and data visualizations help us make better sense of the whole archive of world literature and not only of the canonical works. To complement my project, in the future I plan to accompany my traditional text-based research with digital tools in order to analyze the impact of the translation, publication, and reception of *Walden* throughout Europe in general, and in France and Romania,

in particular. For instance, in the Romanian edition, the text of *Walden* (in Mușoiu's translation from a French translation) is prefaced by the translations of two auxiliary texts: one written in German (by Karl Federn and translated into Romanian by Grigore Goilav) and the other written in English (by Ralph Waldo Emerson and translated into Romania by Stanciu Stefanof from a Russian and Bulgarian edition). This fact only shows why data mining through the European publication record of *Walden* could give us a better understanding of the circulation of literary texts, of their impact on national literary histories, and of their global trace. I also intend to use data visualization software to showcase the differences between the French and the Romanian translations against the original.

NOTES

- ¹ See Valéry Larbaud's review of L. Fabulet's translation in "La Revue de France," pp. 658-662.
- ² For the historical *quarrel* between German- and French-style translation during the European Romanticism, see Antoine Berman's seminal work *L'Épreuve de l'étranger. Culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique* (1984); for the application of Berman's theories to a Anglo-American genealogy of translation, see Lawrence Venuti's treatise *The Translator's Invisibility, A History of Translation* (1995); last but not least, for the reassessment of the field from a more political perspective in the twenty-first century, see Emily Apter's book *The Translation Zone, A New Comparative Literature* (2006).
- ³ Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, "General Editors' Preface" in Lawrence Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility, A History of Translation*, p. vii.
- ⁴ Consider, for instance, how Martin Luther's translation of the *Bible* (which in turn led to Tyndale's translation of the *Great Bible* and to the *King James Bible* in England) is on an equal foothold with the Arabic translations and preservations of Ancient Greek philosophy and science that survived the European Dark Ages.
- ⁵ Paul de Man, *The Resistance to Theory*, p. 73.
- ⁶ In the alphabetical order of the authors, here are the (significant!) titles of these essays: Maurice Blanchot, "Translating," Paul de Man, "Conclusions: Walter Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator,'" Jacques Derrida, "Des Tours de Babel," Carol Jacobs, "The Monstrosity of Translation" and Barbara Johnson, "The Task of the Translator."
- ⁷ For a list of Thoreau's translations, see *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau. Translations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- ⁸ Henry D. Thoreau, *The Writings of Henry David Thoreau. Walden*, p. 100.
- ⁹ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 82.
- ¹⁰ Laura Dassow Walls, *Seeing New Worlds, Henry David Thoreau and Nineteenth-Century Natural Science*, p. 108.
- ¹¹ Walter Harding, *A Centennial Check-list of the Editions of Henry David Thoreau's Walden*, pg. vii-viii.
- ¹² Walter Harding, "Foreword" in *Thoreau Abroad, Twelve Bibliographical Essays*, p. 3.
- ¹³ Eugene F. Timpe, "Thoreau's Critical Reception in Germany," *idem*, p. 76.
- ¹⁴ Jerzy R. Krzyzanowski, "Thoreau in Russia," *idem*, p. 133.
- ¹⁵ Nikita Pokrovsky, "Thoreau in the Global Community" in "The Concord Saunterer, Special Walden Sesquicentennial Issue: Walden the Place and Walden the Book," p. 53.
- ¹⁶ Katsuhiko Takeda, "Thoreau in Japan" in *Thoreau Abroad, Twelve Bibliographical Essays*, p. 169.

- 17 *Ibidem*, p. 172.
- 18 Micheline Flak and Maurice Gonnaud, "Thoreau in France," *idem*, p. 39.
- 19 Fabulet, "La Revue de Paris," p. 48.
- 20 P. Mușoiu, "Prezentare" in *Walden sau Vieața-n Pădure*, p. 3.
- 21 It should be mentioned here that there are also some critical essays dedicated to Thoreau's work, but until the present moment they do not seem to have gotten any traction. For instance, in 1974 Nicolae Balotă publishes a short piece dedicated to *Walden* in the leading literary magazine "România literară." Published a year after the first Romanian translation of the book from English, the article does not make any reference to it, which makes me suspect Balotă became familiar with Thoreau via a French translation. The piece was reprinted in the essay volume *Universul prozei* two years later. The year 2001 chronicles the publication both of a chapter and of a whole book dedicated to Thoreau. The chapter, by Codrin Liviu Cuțitaru, appeared in *Transcendentalism și ascendențialism. Proiect de fenomenologie culturală a romantismului American*, originally the author's doctoral dissertation. The book, by Marius Jucan, is titled *Singuratea Salvată, O încercare asupra operei lui Henry David Thoreau din perspectiva modernității americane*, and, so far, is the only book-length study dedicated to the work of the American writer.
- 22 Act & Politon Publishing House in Bucharest recently republished the 1973 edition of *Walden* but without Grădinaru's preface and Eulert's biographical sketch.
- 23 Interestingly enough, A. Gălățeanu is not only drawn to Thoreau, anarchism, and simple living but he is also Mușoiu's biographer having published, together with N. Gogoneață, a bio-bibliographical brochure in 1970 called *Evocări, Panait Mușoiu*.
- 24 Iuliu Rațiu. 2016. Thoreau in Translation. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://thoreauintranslation.tumblr.com/post/138920095494/walden-1973-and-the-seeds-of-change>. [Accessed 14 July 2016]. [original link no longer available]

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