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English-Canadian Literature in Post-Communist Romania

Ana-Magdalena Petraru

Abstract

In Romania, Canadian literature after 1990 spread like mushrooms after the rain due to various factors: a rising academic interest shown in the foundation of Canadian Studies centres at our main universities, the translation of genres that were little enjoyed previously or not at all under the Communist period (science fiction, romance novels, Christian fiction) or film adaptations. Generally drawing on (Romanian) Translation Studies, this article tackles the reception process of English-language Canadian literature in post-Communist Romania; I will attempt to distinguish literary trends before and after 2000 and consider the publishers' and public's preference for certain genres and authors. The material relies on the CEACS database of Canadian authors in translation and previous doctoral research on the topic, while the methodology is derived from such fields as translation studies, reception studies, the history of the book and periodical studies.

Résumé

En Roumanie, après les années 1990, la traduction des romans appartenant à la littérature canadienne a poussé comme des champignons le lendemain d'une pluie, étant influencée par des facteurs comme: l'intérêt croissant pour les études canadiennes concrétisé dans l'apparition des centres d'études canadiennes auprès des principales universités du pays, la traduction des genres peu connus ou inconnus sous communisme (la littérature science-fiction, les romans d'amour, la fiction chrétienne) ou les adaptations cinématographiques. En s'appuyant sur les études traductologiques roumaines, notre recherche se propose d'aborder le processus de réception de la littérature canadienne anglophone dans la Roumanie post-communiste; nous essayerons de distinguer entre les tendances littéraires avant et après 2000, en considérant les préférences des maisons d'édition et du public pour certains genres littéraires ou certains auteurs. Notre matériel est extrait de la base des données CEACS des auteurs canadiens traduits et de la recherche doctorale finalisée dans ce domaine, avec les méthodes des disciplines académiques comme la traductologie, les études sur la réception, l'histoire du livre et l'étude des périodiques.



Introduction

According to national bibliographies, Canadian literature has been known in Romania for a hundred years, as in 1915–1917 translations of poems (by W.H. Drummond and others) were published in Romanian periodicals. Nicolae Iorga, one of our most famous historians, signed some of these translations and, interestingly enough, our appreciation for Canadian literature coincides with the presence in Romania of the Canadian adventurer-businessman Joseph W. Boyle (1867–1923), who befriended Queen Marie (1875–1938) and was decorated for giving aid to our country.

In the interwar period and during World War II mainly translations from popular fiction (Mazo de la Roche) and short stories (Stephen Leacock, Ernest Thompson Seton) came out, either individually in periodicals or as collections. Some of the novels in the *Jalna* series were probably introduced to the Romanian public as a result of the incoherent translation policies of private publishers, which were exclusively guided by commercial criteria;¹ Seton's wildlife settings and Leacock's humour were key factors that determined the publication of work by the authors, as well as the public's preference for short fiction in an era that followed the French taste (Dimitriu 1999, 191).

During the Communist years state publishing houses were founded; they had coherent selection processes and translation policies, and renowned philologists made outstanding translations from English from the classics or canonical authors (Dimitriu 2000, 185). English-language Canadian literature took a new turn. Seton, Leacock and de la Roche continued to be published at intervals, but they were joined in the 1950s by Communist-oriented works, including one particular piece of non-fiction widely translated in Central Europe at that time, Ted Allan and Sydney Gordon's *The Scalpel, The Sword: The Story of Dr. Norman Bethune*. Later decades, however, brought translations of a number of Canadian classics: Hugh MacLennan's *Barometer Rising*, Grey Owl's *Pilgrims of the Wild*, Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*, Morley Callaghan's *They Shall Inherit the Earth*, and in 1989, just before the fall of the Communist system, Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman*. Two extensive anthologies of Anglophone Canadian poetry offered a broad survey of this genre and its best-known practitioners. Quite interestingly, the key works of two of Canada's greatest critical thinkers were translated, Marshall McLuhan's *The Gutenberg Galaxy* and Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*. In both cases, these were the first translations of these works in Central Europe.

1) Leading Translation Studies scholars (Dimitriu 1999, 191; Lăcătușu, 70) speak about unacceptable translations from popular fiction, shortened not to bore the readers, and the ignorance of canonic writers on the part of publishers despite the current demand of intellectuals for them. The Romanian history of the book argues that titles, especially in short stories, were changed or simplified for commercial purposes (Ionescu, 39).



However, it is only during the post-Communist years that Canadian literature has truly flourished in Romania, a development paralleled, and promoted, by increasing academic interest in Canada, as reflected in the foundation of Canadian Studies centres within important universities (at Bucharest, Iași, Cluj-Napoca and Baia Mare) and undergraduate and post-graduate programs that lead to BA, MA and PhD theses on various Canada-related topics.

English-Canadian literature translated after 1989

Romanian Translation Studies and the history of the book record that, Romania, like the rest of the ex-Communist countries, experienced a sort of “reading celebration” in the first years after 1990: all sorts of books were sold on the streets of small and big towns. In addition to titles that had been prohibited or censored during the totalitarian regime, bookstalls were invaded by ‘low genres’: dime novels, detective novels, spy novels, science-fiction novels and cheap sensational novels. The purpose was to make a quick profit, even if it meant sacrificing the quality of translations; the low purchase price reflected the flaws of copyright legislation, not yet entirely regulated. In addition, the rising inflation led to the production of books meant to be sold quickly on a market without proper distribution channels – which was thus inoperative for most actors in the field. Last but not least, ‘intellectual’ works addressing a small number of readers were less popular, while other genres (such as poetry) hit a low, thus making room for mass literature. As a result, new fields, totally inexistent or neglected in part during Communism, in particular religion, mysticism and esotericism, attracted editors (Jeanrenaud 2006, 180–181, *passim*).

The situation of the Romanian book market in the early post-Communist period also influenced the translations from (English) Canadian literature. As statistics conducted on the CEACS databases and individual studies show (Bottez 2012, Petraru 2016), the most translated authors are mainly commercial ones. Thus, Janette Oke has had much of her inspirational fiction (30 entries) translated after 1989; the author was introduced to the Romanian public by a publisher specialized in Christian books, Casa Cărții, whose slogan, “Împreună slujitori ai cuvântului” [“Together we serve the world”] targets Christian readers.

A.E. van Vogt’s science fiction novels (29 entries) come second; among the first intensively translated English-Canadian authors after 1989, his works came out in a specialized series (‘Nautilus’) at Nemira publishers, considered one of the best-known Romanian science fiction ‘brand names’, as well as through general publishers (Vremea, Cristian or Valdo). Note was taken in my earlier research (Petraru 2016, 177) of the post-Communist era in Romania, which distinguished itself from previous



periods of reception through specialized series created to deal with genres such as science fiction that were less widely published before 1989 due to ideological constraints imposed on publishing houses. Most A.E. van Vogt editions came unprefaced, with general bio-data on the back covers. One notable exception to this rule is *The Changing* (1995), where Silvia Colfescu's preface hails the Canadian novelist as "the most published science fiction author of our times", a writer who has a "special imagination unlimited in space or time and in alliance with blind trust in what the human race is capable of" (1995, 10 *passim*). She also acknowledges some claims made against van Vogt: the absence of ideological and scientific verisimilitude, along with occasional flaws such as stylistics, literary value, plot-related issues and the portrayal of characters.

Mazo de la Roche is the third-most translated English-Canadian author after 1989 with her *Jalna* series (17 entries). Jul Giurgea's interwar translations of the first novels in the series were republished by Venus publishing house; as argued in my earlier research (Petraru 2016, 167), in spite of their low quality the old translations were probably preferable to new ones because they did not incur any additional costs, translation rights included. Two came out during the Communist years and were also republished – *Mary Wakefield* (trans. Simona Copceag and *Whiteoaks* (trans. Liana Dobrescu). De la Roche is followed by another popular favourite, David Morrell, with 15 entries. His commercial thrillers were certainly less appreciated than the film *Rambo*, which turned into a cult film mainly due to its hero, played by Sylvester Stallone; aside from two film reviews in the press, there is no critical treatment of Morrell's work.

Margaret Atwood is the only canonical author who made the top five, with 13 entries – not to mention in addition poems translated in periodicals and the inclusion of her short story "Lusus naturae" in the Romanian translation of the anthology *McSweeney's Enchanted Chamber of Astonishing Stories* (2006). Atwood's novels have been published by several publishing houses. Apart from Corint, where seven of her novels came out in the "Leda Masters" collection (thoroughly accounted for by Bottez, 85–86), and some republished by Polirom (*The Robber Bride*, 2013; *The Blind Assassin*, 2014), Tritonic published her non-fiction work about the position the writer finds her/himself in, *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing* (*Negocierea cu moartea: un scriitor despre scriitură*). The poor quality of the translation was sharply criticised by reviewers (Ciobanu 2007; Irimia 2007), who complained about the unacceptability of the Romanian version, obvious even to a reader who did not speak English. Fortunately, the other translators of Atwood's novels are all professionals, specialized in the translation of English literature (Lidia Grădinaru), philologists and writers themselves (Virgil Stanciu, Gabriela Nedelea) and Canadian Studies scholars (Monica Bottez, Margareta Petruț, Florin Irimia).



The Sri Lankan born Michael Ondaatje made the top ten (9 entries) mainly because of the many editions of *The English Patient* (*Pacientul englez*, 1997, 2005, 2006, 2011, 2013); three other novels and a book of poetry were also translated. As in the case of other postmodern authors (Margaret Atwood, Leonard Cohen), major Romanian works in Canadian Studies (be they studies, courses or doctoral theses) have devoted sections or entire chapters to his writings. His publishers are among the best on the book market (Univers, Polirom) and the translators all professional, among them a Romanian writer and translator who is Secretary of the Romanian Cultural Institute (Livi Bleoaca) and a woman who, besides translating, is a specialist in conflict resolution and held a key post at the time of the Kosovar refugee crisis (Monica Wolfe-Murray). *The English Patient* and *Divisadero* benefited from kiosk distribution via the 'Literature' collection sold with the national daily newspaper *Cotidianul*.² *Anil's Ghost* had a comprehensive afterword by Maria-Sabina Draga, who indicated the slightly disadvantageous position of the novel, which, "unlike *The English Patient*, does not have a famous film adaptation or a tragic-melodramatic plot" (2002, 321).

The authors that make up the rest of the list of those with most works translated can be divided roughly into three groups: writers of commercial fiction, serious writers (of both literature and non-fiction), and religious writers. Three commercial writers have been particularly successful: Kelley Armstrong with her fantasy novels for youngsters (10 entries); Judy Gill (10 entries), whose specialty is romantic fiction; and Arthur Hailey (9 entries), internationally famous for his factually based fiction with their highly dramatic plots. Turning to more serious writers, Ross Macdonald (8 entries) has his novels published under the Masters of Crime Fiction collection at Fabulator and excerpts of his works accompanied by bionotes are also available online courtesy of important Romanian literary portals (e.g. *LiterNet.ro*). Alice Munro and Leonard Cohen (each with 5 entries) are treated separately in another article in this volume, "Two Canadian Celebrities: Alice Munro and Leonard Cohen in Romania" (pp. 191–204), so are not treated here. Madeleine Thien (4 entries) is the only writer representing the new multi-ethnic reality of Canadian fiction in Romania. Other authors translated during the post-Communist years include the master of cyberpunk William Gibson (7 entries) and the postmodern advocate of the X generation and its miscontents, Douglas Coupland (4 entries). A special case is the Czech-born Canadian writer Josef Škvorecký (5 entries), whose work speaks about the horrors of totalitarianism that is only too familiar to Romanian readers. Two non-fiction authors should also be mentioned here, Marshall MacLuhan (4 entries) is an old Romanian favourite: the 1975 translation of *The Gutenberg Galaxy* is the only pre-1989 translation of McLuhan noted in the CEACS Translation Research Project database, while the

2) This collection also included the Booker Prize winner Yann Martel's masterpiece *Life of Pi* (*Viața lui Pi*, 2007) and William Gibson's cyberpunk science fiction novel *Neuromancer* (*Neuromantul*, 2008).



4 post-1989 Romanian entries account for half in the whole Central European region. And the books by Malcolm Gladwell popularizing the social sciences (7 entries) have met with great success among Romanian readers.

Somewhat surprisingly, Canadian spirituality writers form one remarkably well-represented group, in particular Eckhart Tolle (9 entries) and Elisabeth Mittelstaedt and Roger J. Morneau (4 entries each). Smaller numbers of entries come from John White and Chris Evans. These authors became familiar to Romanian readers due to the publication of their works in translation by Curtea Veche (Tolle), Romanian Christian Ministries (White), Logos (White) and Emanuel University's Publishing House (Evans). As a general remark, if Curtea Veche is a well regarded national publisher aiming at a wide audience and issued Tolle's books in three (*A New Earth*) or even six editions (*The Power of Now*) in the Bibliotherapy collection and an author series, Romanian Christian Ministries and Emanuel University's Publishing House target a narrower readership with a Protestant background in a country where the great majority of believers is of the Orthodox faith.

Richard Rohmer's *Rommel and Patton* (1995) is of particular interest to any study on reception because of the foreword signed by King Mihai I of Romania (see Petraru 2014, 101; 2016, 180). His Majesty was asked by the author himself to preface it, as was William Stephenson for the original. King Mihai gives an account of his first encounter with Rohmer in 1992 at a Toronto lunch, where they discovered they shared in common a passion for flying airplanes. The king introduces Rohmer's book, which discusses the period between 17 June and 15 August 1944, i.e. the time when Romania ended relations with Germany, eight days prior to a coup d'état led by King Mihai himself, and gives an account of many events of that summer, comparing Romanians to Rommel in their hatred for Hitler; he also portrays Rohmer as a brave soldier, excellent lawyer and public figure.

All in all, works introduced to Romanian readers during the post-Communist period range from canonical authors (Atwood, Ondaatje) and other award winning novelists (Thien, Carol Shields, Yann Martel, Coupland) through serious authors in newer genres (science fiction, fantasy), to commercial authors. Translators of canonical works are generally the most highly regarded Canadianists in our country, while certain genres, in particular science fiction, have their well-established translators, also specialists in the field. However, there are some poor translations especially in the area of commercial fiction in general and popular fiction for women in particular. Last but not least, the critics' and general public's reactions testify to the popularity of the works, as can be seen from the critical studies in periodicals and bloggers' reactions discussed below.



Critical studies on English-Canadian authors

There are more than 120 articles on English-Canadian literature in post-Communist Romanian reviews, magazines and newspapers, most of them dealing with the reception of postmodern authors (for example Cohen, Atwood, Ondaatje), ranging from book and film reviews to academic criticism (see Petraru 2016, 183–232). However, there is very little translation criticism of the works, either good or bad, and the translator's merits are rarely acknowledged even in a line or two.

Most of the critical pieces on Atwood are signed by the Canadianist Florin Irimia, who reviewed many of her (translated) novels. In some cases, he discusses both the original publications when they came out in Canada, and their Romanian translation. One of the most dealt-with novels by Atwood in Romanian periodicals is *Oryx and Crake*, a work that Irimia translated and prefaced (Irimia 2008). Apart from the comprehensive study in his doctoral thesis (2006), he devotes two articles (2003, 2004) to Atwood's speculative fiction novel and a fragment from this novel came out annotated by the same author in *Dilemateca* (2008). Codrin Liviu Cuțitaru reviewed the novel in another issue of the same periodical; the publication of the novel was considered “a cultural event” and its translation, undertaken by Florin Irimia, “difficult, complicated by the scientific and technical terminology, sometimes invented by Atwood” (2008). Some articles also tackle work by Atwood that has not yet been translated into Romanian – *Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth*, poetry, short fiction (*Moral Disorder*, *The Tent*) – a sure sign of Atwood's high standing with the Romanian reading public. At the Edinburgh International Book Festival in 2007 she had an encounter with Florin Irimia, who interviewed her (Irimia 2008b). The criticism, mostly published by *Observator cultural*, is academic with postmodern and feminist influences, drawing on Cultural Studies (Florin Irimia, when dealing with *Negotiating with the Dead*, is sometimes impressionistic and psychologically-oriented in his comments). In the 2002 introduction to a translated fragment from Atwood's science fiction short story “Homelanding,” Mihaela Mudure cites Freud and Lacan to support her psychological assumptions and Nan Bowman Abinski for the distinction between utopia and dystopia, comparing Atwood's Republic of Gilead to Ceaușescu's Romania and its aberrant pro-natalist policies. Attempts at comparisons of the Canadian author's work to other literary figures are also made: common patterns for Richardson's *Clarissa* (and the Lovelace syndrome) and Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* are found by Alexandra Olivotto (2003); Snowman/ Jimmy in *Oryx and Crake* is compared by Irimia (2003) to Robinson Crusoe and the novel to other popular dystopias – *Brave New World*, 1984, *Fahrenheit 451* and *A Clockwork Orange*.

Michael Ondaatje began to be reviewed in the late 1990s; half of the articles focus on his masterpiece, *The English Patient*, and/or its film adaptation, but some other



novels translated in our country are brought into play as well: *Obsesia lui Anil* (*Anil's Ghost*), *În pielea unui leu* (*In the Skin of a Lion*) and *Divisadero*. The author offers an opportunity for an account of the impact of Canadian literature in Romania. This was low in 2000 (Irimia 2002) and the three novels by Atwood and one by Ondaatje translated up to that moment did not even receive the attention deserved either in academia or among the general public. One reason would be the long time between the issue of the originals and their (Romanian) translation. The criticism on the authors ranges from the biographical approach (short critical pieces in *Cotidianul*) through impressionistic reactions (general comments on the novels in almost all the articles) to postmodern (Irimia 2002), psychological, psychoanalytical and mythological (Popovici 2009) stances. However, there are few comparisons with other authors except for those made by Irimia, who found similarities in the dream from *Running in the Family* with Marquez's Macondo from *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

Other articles include comments on translations from other authors – William Gibson, Yann Martel, Douglas Coupland, Carol Shields, Rawi Hage, George Elliott Clarke and Stephen Henighan. William Gibson is the most popular Canadian author after Cohen, Atwood and Ondaatje in post-Communist periodicals, yet some of the articles on him are just an occasion for Romanian critics to debate on cyberculture (Mihalache 2002; Manolescu 1999). Criticism on the author is impressionistic or biographical and supported by the science fiction theorists of the (sub)genre. A few comparisons are made with other authors; in terms of science fiction, Gibson's dystopian world resembles those of Huxley's *Brave New World* and Orwell's *1984*, whereas the concept of 'strange attractors' could be applied equally to Gibson's prose and the Romanian author Mircea Cărtărescu's *Blinding* trilogy.

The critical pieces on Yann Martel either refer to *Life of Pi* in the original, which brought Martel the Booker Prize in 2002, or to its Romanian translations. Two periods of reception may be distinguished for the author and his novel, the one before the 2012 film adaptation of *Life of Pi* by Ang Lee and the one afterwards, when the articles published deal exclusively with the movie. Few mentions are made of the rest of his works; they are simply regarded as less successful. *Life of Pi* is compared to works dealing with a similar topic (*Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Moby Dick*, *Friday or the Limbo of the Pacific*, *The Old Man and the Sea*) or others, for example Kipling's *The Jungle Book* or Aesop's *Fables*, probably owing to the treatment of animals in the novel, drawing on the animal psychologist Konrad Lorenz (Antip 2003). The main character is compared with Noah by almost all critics and Pi's stories to Scheherezade's. International criticism is also employed, especially by the authors of *Cotidianul*, as in the case of previous authors introduced within the same collection that benefited from kiosk distribution.

Criticism on Douglas Coupland's novels was published by leading journals such as *Adevărul literar și artistic*, *Contemporanul – Ideea Europeană*, *Lettre Internationale*,



Dilema veche, and *România literară*, but the only books discussed were *Generation X* and *Girlfriend in a Coma*. They focused on the definition of the X generation, also referring to the movies that addressed it (*Friends*, *Melrose Place*, *Beverly Hills 90210*). Comparisons to other authors and their works included international figures (Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*, Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club*, J.D. Salinger and Kurt Vonnegut) and Romanian novelists (Marius Ianuș's *Manifest anarhist și alte fracturi* [An anarchist manifesto and other fractures] and Marius Chivu's 69).

The Lebanese-born Canadian writer Rawi Hage was interviewed by Nadine Vlădescu in "Nici o carte nu spune toată povestea" published in *Observator cultural*: the author came to the Bucharest Bookfest in 2010 and launched his second novel, *Cockroach* (*Gândacul*), published by Leda. The interviewer's opinion is that Hage became famous in 2008 when he won the IMPAC Dublin Award for his first novel, *De Niro's Game* (*Jocul lui De Niro*); his writings reflect his nine-year experience in Beirut during the Civil War and that of the immigrant rejected by Western society, and the style combines force and sensuality with the lyricism of Arabic poetry in its approach to the themes of alienation, suicide, death and sex (Vlădescu 2010, 14).

To summarize, in my discussion of the corpus of articles in post-Communist Romanian periodicals, I tried to give an accurate image of Canadian novelists and their works and show that such critical pieces refined the reception process. The interpretations furnished by Romanian reviewers range from biographical (as practiced by the authors of *Cotidianul*), impressionistic and narrative (in reviews summarizing the plot of the novels), to more elaborate postmodern ones (e.g. Florin Irimia's samples of academic criticism). Sometimes critical interpretations take a psychological and psychoanalytical turn, with mythological influences. Numerous parallels with foreign and Romanian authors and their works are made and international authors are quoted to support domestic views, thus testifying to the Romanian critics' keen awareness of Canadian letters.

Canonical authors as seen by ordinary readers. The case of Margaret Atwood and Michael Ondaatje

Although Atwood's and Ondaatje's works have been translated since the early nineties and benefited from many editions in our country (the former, who was first introduced to the Romanian public in 1989, even has her own author series at Leda), it is mostly the screen and TV versions of their novels that have made them popular among ordinary readers. Thus, *The Handmaid's Tale* (*Povestirea Slujitoarei*) is recommended on *Literaturapetocuri.ro*, a small-scale Romanian Goodreads counterpart, as "fascinating," "a psychological thriller with erotic and horror scenes, ironic turns" to



all those that prefer “psychological dramas, shocking novels, fascinating life stories and dystopias” because “one feels the need to take a walk, a deep breath and admit that one is privileged for being free, and not repressed in life” (Pușcașu 2016). On a similar website, *booknation.ro*, the reviewer Denisa Gheorghiescu quotes Atwood herself, when the Canadian author compared the totalitarian regime of Gilead to the Communist regime in Romania, since the latter anticipated the former in the 1980s by “banning contraceptives and forcing women to undergo mandatory controls to find out whether they were pregnant or not and relate condition salary raises to a person’s fertility” (Gheorghiescu 2016). A blogger going by the name of “Printesa Urbana” [urban princess] who writes about pregnancy, parenting and children also strongly recommends the HBO adaptation of the novel where women are metonymically reduced to a uterus standing on two feet simply because “everything that happens there is not only sinister, but also extremely current in the context of the latest news on several associations and organizations’ attempts to discourage women’s return to their jobs after childbirth, divorce, etc.” (Printesa Urbana 2018). Last but not least, even the boycott campaign against the change of the Constitution in Romania so as to specifically mention that the traditional family needs to consist of a man and a wife and not spouses drew on Atwood’s dystopia for its clip “The Children of the Referendum” (“Copiii referendumului”). For its anti-referendum purposes, the advertising agency Papaya depicted a Romanian dystopian society led by a figure photo-shopped from Liviu Dragnea, the controversial current Chair of the Social Democrats, and Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu, President of the Senate. Political references such as the three roses of the Social Democrats’ logo on the armband being worn by an Aunt-like figure and the slogan “Dare to believe” (used by the Social Democrats in the 2016 national elections) are included in the clip, which presents brainwashed children dressed in the same uniforms as the handmaids in the TV series who are living in a fascist society forced to commemorate 6 and 7 October 2018 as the day of the referendum for the definition of the family. This is before they witness a heretic being burned at the stake on a field of stakes near the Romanian Palace of the Parliament in Bucharest. The clip ends with a warning for adults and their children: the latter’s future depends on us. If you care about your children’s fate, stay home. Overall, Margaret Atwood is considered to be a writer who must be read; she is a force of nature in general, and of writing, in particular owing to her journey across all literary genres she devoted herself to as an endless spring of creativity. Ordinary readers such as Luisa Ene on *Cărți, cafea și tutun* [Books, coffee and tobacco] claim that her books generally attract you like magnets and when one has finished reading an Atwood book, characters live beyond the experience: they stick to one’s memory as if they were real people met in real life. Thus, *Cat’s Eye*, for instance, is life experience, not just reading, and the National Film Board documentary *Margaret Atwood: Once in August* is further recommended



to get to know the author better along with her family (Ene 2018). When discussing *Oryx and Crake* on the same website, Ene sees it as not just portraying catastrophic dystopian worlds, science and experiments; for her it is also a story that goes to the depths of the human soul (Ene 2017).

If Margaret Atwood is only praised for her writing style, there are Romanian bloggers who dislike Michael Ondaatje's postmodernist *The English Patient*, for instance, since it requires the reader's patience because of its "chaotic" trajectory, which resembles Virginia Woolf's plot "disorder" (Escobar 2010). In a more sarcastic stance, a blogger who dislikes the author's novel and style draws on Elaine from *Seinfeld*, who also watched the movie and shouted: "Quit telling your stupid story about the stupid desert, and just die already! DIE!" (*Ane are cărți.ro*). On the other hand, another ordinary reader finds the book stunning since its reading gives "a sweet painful state beyond words" (Tharesse 2014). Readers that first watched the film and then read the book argued that the former was better than the latter or they simply found it difficult to picture the author's characters beyond the actors' interpretations. Despite this, the book is generally considered a masterpiece; it reads easily, and evokes "melancholy, sensuality and brutality" as a version of its film adaptation in "slow motion" (blogger on *Me, my books and I*). Last but not least, along with Margaret Mazzantini's *Don't Move*, Gabriel García Márquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera*, Tracy Chevalier's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* and Garabet Ibrăileanu's *Adela*, Ondaatje's *The English Patient* made the top five books whose popularity skyrocketed after a successful movie adaptation (Morozov 2016). Although his other novels are generally viewed as standing below *The English Patient* in literary value, for one reader at least it cannot be denied that *Anil's Ghost* has a "pleasant flow notwithstanding the viscosity of the narrative" (Bacica 2010). Similarly, for "dreamingjewel," *Divisadero* is "honest" and "well written" and may please Ondaatje's readers, but it does not strike like lightening. The opposite claims go for *The Cat's Table*, deemed as equally representative for the Canadian author, "who uses his personal experience to create this literary jewel" ("roberts" 2013),

To conclude, in the past twenty-five years or so the development of technology and the media has broadened the possibilities for gauging the impact of literature of all kinds on the reading public. As part of this development, English-Canadian authors of all types have enjoyed a broad reception in Romania since 1989. "Canonical" authors in particular are widely reviewed by academic and professional critics in specialized journals and frequently commented on by ordinary readers on on-line forums. And it can be argued that the reactions on the personal blogs give us as valuable insights into the psychological reception of the great mass of readers as the respected reviewers in cultural reviews do of the authors' reception among the elite. And what is encouraging is that both groups appear to be responding positively to the growing number of works by Canadians being translated into Romanian.



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