

MĂDĂLINA AGOSTON

**THE RECEPTION OF THE GENEVA SCHOOL OF
LITERARY CRITICISM.
THE IRONY OF JEAN STAROBINSKI IN THE
ROMANIAN TRANSLATIONS**

In 1993 a collection of texts by Jean Starobinski was published in Bucharest, compiled into a volume entitled *Melancolie, nostalgie, ironie* [*Melancholy, Nostalgia, Irony*], translated into Romanian by Angela Martin and prefaced by Mircea Martin. In a Romania fresh out of communism, this collection came in the wake of the propagation of certain theoretical ideas that shocked the scene of the Romanian discourse precisely by its abandonment of the conventions of literary theory at the time. In other words, Jean Starobinski's literary theory not only begins from the extra-literary field, but it also proposes an interdisciplinary approach to literature. Naturally, at a first level neither the approach nor the theme are remarkably innovative, but a brief foray into the 1970s facilitates the identification, in the fabric of Jean Starobinski's texts, of the register in which the critical convention occurs. The interdisciplinarity thus constructed consolidates a theory of thinking the critical act from its incipient form. Therefore, we are faced with a construction, on a macro level, of a lesson about text, about reading and literature (see *La relation critique*), and on a micro level (the one approached in the present paper), of a theorisation of a dialectical form of irony:

Our author is the first who is fully aware of the fact that he cannot achieve totality, he who subjects everything to the "ironic control of his reflection". The deliberate fragmentation that he cultivates in this area is not so much a form of melancholy as of irony, of melancholic irony. Incompletion and procrastination seem to be the existentially assumed signs of critical distance. In reality, they testify to the impossibility of maintaining this distance¹.

Moreover, irony understood in this way leads to reclaiming certain stances on

¹ Mircea Martin, "Cerneala ironică a melancoliei" ["The Ironic Ink of Melancholy"], in Jean Starobinski, *Melancolie, nostalgie, ironie* [*Melancholy, Nostalgia, Irony*]. Translated by Angela Martin, preface by Mircea Martin, București, Meridiane, 1993, p. XIV: "Autorul nostru e cel dintîi conștient că nu poate atinge totalitatea, el care supune totul 'controlului ironic al reflecției'. Fragmentarismul deliberat pe care îl cultivă în acest domeniu nu e atît o formă a melancoliei, cît a ironiei, a ironiei melancolice. Neterminarea, amînarea par să fie semne – angajate existențial – ale distanței critice. În realitate, ele mărturisesc despre imposibilitatea menținerii acestei distanțe". If not marked otherwise, all cited translations from Romanian were made by the translator of the present paper.

method and on the critical model. Precisely because Starobinski is connected to the two through critical reflection, he counterbalances a homogenous perspective on the text “to be read”, by weaving the psychological (and, therefore, biological) instrument into the act of reading. Thus, the critic (the literary critic in general) reacts to these readings: “Because of this, Starobinski was able to allow himself to react against the ‘methodological terrorism’ of literary criticism and to despise the terminological models. Compared to others’ facile enthusiasm or abuses, he always retained a certain ironic circumspection”². In the preface, Mircea Martin thus speaks of the theoretical convictions underlying the texts gathered in the aforementioned volume. These convictions are actually the main reasons why a dialectical approach to irony, for Starobinski, allows for the configuration of a distinction between postmodern irony and “melancholic irony”. In the preface, the Romanian critic emphasises the mechanisms of irony by transplanting the concept into the Romanian space and configuring the idea of concept translation in the literary criticism.

The present study thus begins from the above-mentioned collection of texts and proposes a reflection on the concept of irony in the critical works of Jean Starobinski, in order to investigate the way in which the relation between melancholy and irony responds to the critical commentary as a subversive act towards the text. The concept proposed by Mircea Martin, namely that of “melancholic irony”, actually refers to the interdependence established by Starobinski between the two, beginning from the pathological character of melancholy. As a doctor of medicine, with a thesis on the history and treatment of melancholy³, Jean Starobinski opened a new horizon in the study of literature by allowing it access to a psychology of the literary text. Thus, the course of the disease (a course built precisely for its treatment) and the types of melancholy defined by Starobinski led to its representation in art, philosophy and literature. If nostalgia, delirium and utopia are disease typologies, then imagination, intellectualism cultivated by art and literature, places irony at the opposite end of melancholy. The dialectic of the two is read, in the terms of the Genevese critic, as a post-Kierkegaard relation (irony being the reverse of melancholy) within the literary text. In the following, I shall attempt to determine to what extent this relation can be applied to an analysis that aims to highlight irony, and how the latter is defined / constructed in Starobinski’s view. The present study aims to exploit the way in which these essays were used by the Genevese author in order to present a history of the idea of irony from two complementary perspectives. The

² *Ibidem*, p. IX: “Din această cauză, Starobinski și a putut îngădui să reacționeze împotriva ‘terorismului metodologic’ din critica literară și să disprețuiască modele terminologice. Față de asemenea entuziasme facile ori abuzuri, el a păstrat mereu o anumită circumspecție ironică”.

³ Jean Starobinski, *Histoire du traitement de la mélancolie des origines à 1900*, the doctoral thesis appeared in Basel, Switzerland, 1960.

first, chronological, perspective concerns both the evolution of the concept for Starobinski in the broader context of his contributions to explaining melancholy and irony and in the historical context of European ideas, and the way in which the idea of translating the concept of history – by extrapolation, of any concept – influenced post-war Romanian criticism. Whether we consider the turn taken by Romanian criticism in the 1970s, with its autonomy of the aesthetic and (at least apparent) ideological independence, or the theoretical translations of foreign books as mechanisms for the implementation of certain passage channels for post-war literary studies⁴, a history of concept translation becomes part of the history of the Romanian literary ideas. The second perspective refers to the theoretical essence of the concept: on the one hand, the relation between melancholy and irony as it emerges from Starobinski's texts and, on the other hand, the particular nature of the concept in the essay "Cerneala melancoliei" ["The Ink of Melancholy"]⁵ in

⁴ I am referring here to what Adrian Marino called the "new Romanian criticism" beginning in the 1970s, repeatedly pointing out that the influence of the "Geneva school" represented the main engine for a new paradigm in our literary criticism. Moreover, Marino's interest in Starobinski's works is strongly linked to the way in which Romanian criticism understood that it must move beyond its journalistic phase; in this sense, his articles function almost like companion-texts for the translation projects of Starobinski's works started in 1968–1969. Thus, we must quote Adrian Marino in an explanatory article, "Jean Starobinski și istoria ideilor" ["Jean Starobinski and the History of Ideas"], published in *România literară*, 2, 1969, 51, p. 4: "Jean Starobinski theorises and professes a type of criticism and literary essay writing towards which our affinities also gravitate: a form that is oriented towards the classics in an aesthetic and ideologically historicised perspective, through unique readings, accomplished with a joint conjecture of methods. We openly sympathise with this type of integralism and spirit of synthesis, adherent to and at the same time selective of new methods (structuralism, form study, stylistics, psychoanalysis), to which the critic takes an understanding but lucid stance, which, for the time being, we shall merely mention: *Considerations sur l'état présent de la critique littéraire* (a lecture held at the Cini Foundation colloquium, *La critica forma caratteristica della civiltà moderna*, 6-7 September 1969, Venice). We shall not analyse the coincidences between a series of theses from the *Introduction* and the remarkable essay *La relation critique* (*Studi francesi*, 1967–1968), which already represents one of the reference texts for the current critical consciousness. A particularly useful discussion would be on another aspect of this form of critical thinking: the relation between criticism and the history of ideas." Original text: "Jean Starobinski teoretizează și profesează un gen de critică și eseistică literară, către care merg și afinitățile noastre: orinetată fundamental spre clasici în perspectivă estetică și ideologică istorizantă, prin lecturi inedite, realizate printr-un concurs solidar de metode. Simpatizăm deschis cu acest integralism și spirit de sinteză, aderent și în același timp selectiv față de noile metode (structuralism, studiu formal, stilistică, psihanaliză), față de care criticul ia o poziție înțelegătoare, dar și lucidă, pe care ne mărginim deocamdată doar să o amintim: *Considerations sur l'état présent de la critique littéraire* (comunicare la coloctiul Fundației Cini, *La critica forma caratteristica della civiltà moderna*, 6-27 septembrie 1969, Venezia. Nu vom analiza nici coincidențele dintre o serie de teze ale *Introducerii* și remarcabilul eseu: *La relation critique* (*Studi francesi*, 1967–1968) în care vedem, de pe acum, unul din textele de referință ale conștiinței critice actuale. Deosebit de util ni se pare a comenta un alt aspect al acestei gândiri critice: relația critică – istoria ideilor".

⁵ The text belongs to Jean Starobinski and is part of the collection of texts *Melancolie, nostalgie, ironie* [*Melancholy, Nostalgia, Irony*].

relation with Mircea Martin's essay, "Cerneala ironică a melancoliei" ["The Ironic Ink of Melancholy"]. Martin's paraphrase contains both the contextual explanations for the Romanian translation and the nuance of meaning for understanding the concept and, consequently, Starobinski's criticism itself:

The *literary* quality of the exegesis is not obtained by additional charms or by removing the texts, but by their adaptation and recreation as possessors of meaning, of "irremovable contingency". Criticism and literature share a need for meaning. Thus, the critical commentary must not be a demonstration, a plea, as the facts only need to be placed in a favourable light: "Facts do not need to be demonstrated. They need to be shown". A space is thus opened for discovery and creation. The test of vocation becomes indispensable to criticism. Starobinski has long been aware of this risk or of this chance: "as a comprehensive discourse about works, criticism cannot remain within the boundaries of verifiable knowledge; it must, in its turn, become an opus and it must face the risks of an opus".⁶

*Case Study: Jean Starobinski, "The Ink of Melancholy" and "Irony and Melancholy. Gozzi, Hoffmann, Kierkegaard"*⁷

This part represents a starting point for understanding the concept of melancholy and for highlighting its relation with irony. In fact, for the present demonstration, the chosen studies constitute the model that allows for the above-mentioned approaches. It is known that, for Starobinski, the theme of melancholy remains an almost obsessive one. Consequently, the theory of irony placed in a one-on-one relation with melancholy will always give way to the interrogation of the critical discourse. Thus, the demonstration allows me to emphasise not only the complexity of the theory of "melancholic irony", but also to explain the way in which, for the recent post-communist environment – by way of extrapolation – the essays gathered in this volume speak of a manner of reception and, in addition, of the influence on the local critical model. Here is how Starobinski ends the analysis on Hoffmann, a segment that is relevant to the present endeavour precisely because it concurrently speaks about a construction of the critical model and (alternatively) about a construction of a theory of irony:

If irony and melancholy are the two aspects of the same spiritual level, the remedy of the "inverted vision" or, in Kierkegaard's terms, the qualitative leap would have to be applied to both, but much more radically. Undoubtedly, one must go through irony (in the "romantic" sense) in order to become free from serious falsehood and philistinism. The irony would then have to surpass itself; the existential act of repentance would have to substitute the intellectual act of negation for settlement into

⁶ Mircea Martin, "Cerneala ironică a melancoliei", p. XIII.

⁷ The essays are part of the collection of texts translated and published in 1993.

a superior instance of humour and seriousness to take place. A point would thus be reached in which, under the gaze of humour, poetic irony itself would break down... The ironist is thus a man who risks losing his balance under the vertigo of the possible; however, he also holds an instrument of spiritual progress if he is able to point the sharp tip of negation against his own vane freedom⁸.

The Romanian Context

Alex Goldiș explains the affiliation of the critics of the '60s to the Genevese model (although he does not name it as such but rather attributes it to the French New Criticism) in the form of criticism that “does not confuse”:

Georges Poulet, Jean Starobinski or Jean Rousset (with their precursors Marcel Raymond or Albert Beguin) postulated the immanence of literature without violently proclaiming its rupture from the subject. The focus on the subtle relations between consciousness and the work, the preference for *analytical criticism*, sensitive to the inflections of the text without slipping into the technicality of linguistics, the search for meaning in whatever the work hides (the passion for the hidden layers), are indeed renewing principles, but they do not disrupt the traditional manner of criticism. This is why they were almost unanimously shared by the '60s generation⁹.

The political context often provides answers at the key moment of a methodological influence. However, if, after World War II, the structuralist moment became predominant in the Romanian culture, what was “left aside” was the interlude that characterised it. I am referring here to the decade of the '70s. The important figures of our literary criticism, such as Adrian Marino, Ion Pop and Mircea Martin found alternative solutions regarding the structuralist model. A history of critical ideas thus constructed remains duty-bound to advocate the

⁸ Jean Starobinski, *Melancolie, nostalgie, ironie*, p. 130: “Dacă ironia și melancolia sînt cele două aspecte ale aceluiași nivel spiritual, va trebui să li se aplice amîndurora, în mod însă mai radical, remediul „viziunii inversate” sau, în termenii lui Kierkegaard, saltul calitativ. Fără îndoială, este nevoie să fi trecut prin ironie (în sens „romantic”) pentru a te elibera de falsul serios și de filistinism. Va trebui apoi ca ironia să ajungă ca însăși să se depășească; va trebui substituit actul existențial al cănței actului intelectual al negației în vederea instalării într-un umor și într-un serios superioare. Se va ajunge la punctul în care, sub privirea umorului, însăși ironia poetică va fi la pămînt... Ironistul e deci un om pe care vertijul posibilului riscă să-l facă să piardă echilibrul; dar el deține și un instrument de progres spiritual, dacă știe să îndrepte împotriva vanei sale libertăți vârful ascuțit al negației”.

⁹ Alex Goldiș, *Critica în tranșee. De la realismul socialist la autonomia esteticului* [*Criticism in the Trenches. From Socialist Realism to Aesthetic Autonomy*], București, Cartea Românească, 2011, p. 283: “Georges Poulet, Jean Starobinski sau Jean Rousset (cu precursorii Marcel Raymond sau Albert Beguin) postulau imanența literaturii fără a-i proclama cu violență ruptura față de subiect. Focalizarea asupra raporturilor subtile dintre conștiință și operă, preferința pentru o critică analitică, atentă la inflexiunile textului fără a aluneca în tehnicismul lingvisticii, căutarea semnificației în ceea ce opera ascunde (pasiunea pentru substrat), sunt principii înnoitoare, dar care nu bulversează maniera tradițională a criticii. De aceea, ele vor fi împărțite aproape unanim de șazeciști”.

reconstitution of the “forgotten” parts of the modern construction of literary criticism. Neither Marino’s modernity nor the aesthetic autonomy of literature, as seen by Ion Pop, and much less the literary criticism in the form practiced by Mircea Martin could have been useful without the Romanian ideological context of the ’60s-’70s, and without the direct access to a French-speaking Western environment in the case of the aforementioned critics. My aim was to unveil an *à côté* perspective on the construction of the literary criticism of the ’70s, one that would focus on the intellectual and, implicitly, contextual formation of these critics. Their journeys abroad and their dialogue with Western counterparts favoured the creation of a Romanian specificity regarding the autonomy of the aesthetic. Moreover, when the aims of the translator (who is also the established, competent critic in the Romanian space) overlap with the methods he/she employs in his/her own critical or theoretical discourse, we are dealing with a situation if not of *influence*, at least of conjuncture. The moment Romanian criticism enters structuralism is simultaneous with the rifts that open in the criticism of the aesthetic and of the autonomous value of the literary work, which can be explained by the “ideological thaw” of the ’60s. Access to the West, to western influence, is all the more disturbing since it would appear that the local critical space borrowed models and methods precisely in order to compensate for the setback caused by the political context. Therefore, the mosaic of the post-war Romanian critical environment is criss-crossed by influences and models that often become tangled:

However, flight from ideology remains a strong intellectual vector. As soon as socialist realism shows signs of lethargy, intellectual energy finds other forms of manifestation, different from the ones visible in the *mainstream* practice of the criticism of the ’60s. We could say that it was precisely the political climate of post-war Romania, with its oppressive ideology, followed by permissive strategies, including a degree of access to the West, that facilitated the acquisition of structuralism. This theory that is difficult to conceive – and to transplant – against the philosophical-cultural background of Romania in the ’30s, enters the communist climate with the complete aura of a scientific discourse that is (seemingly) pure and uncorrupted by ideology¹⁰.

It is indeed interesting to see how, mediated by a chain of friends and friendships, a discourse emerged – one that, at the time, represented the alternative

¹⁰ Adriana Stan, *Bastionul lingvistic. O istorie comparată a structuralismului în România* [*The Linguistic Bastion. A Comparative History of Structuralism in Romania*], București, Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2017, p. 35: “Cu toate acestea, fuga de ideologie rămâne un vector intelectual puternic. De îndată ce realismul socialist dă semne de amorțeală, el își găsește și alte forme de manifestare decât cele număidecât vizibile în practica *mainstream* a criticii șaizeciste. Se poate spune că tocmai climatul politic al României postbelice, cu o ideologizare forțată, urmată de strategii permisive, printre care deschiderea anumitor breșe spre Occident, face posibilă implantarea structuralismului. Căci această teorie, greu de conceput – și de transplantat – pe fundalul filozofico-cultural din România anilor ’30, se încarcă în climatul comunist cu întreaga aură a unui discurs științific (aparent) pur și nevirusat de ideologie”.

model for a means of constructing the relation between the literary critic and the text under scrutiny. The situation is much more clearly contextualised in the prefaces signed by the Romanian authors. Thus, Ion Pop, Mircea Martin, Angela Martin, Alexandru George or Romul Munteanu, among the translators of the texts, became their mediators by explaining, on the one hand, their personal choices and, on the other hand, the situations effected by these texts in the Eastern European cultural climate of communist Romania. However, if we were to consider that the *close reading* method runs against certain aesthetic and political issues facing the Romanian society of that period, these studies support identity hypotheses. The present paper does not aim to exhaustively scan the theoretical imagination of the Genevese critics. We believe that the chosen subject carries a novelty meant to draw attention to the translatable nature of the concepts of criticism and literary theory to the extent that it meets certain requirements for the reception of these translations in the Romanian space. The free movement of the western model is the reason for interrogating the two contexts: the Romanian and the Genevese. For this reason, a much more important aspect is a focus on the entire critical and theoretical climate that the Romanian space imports and translates, for the most part (not in the substantial sense of the actual translation of texts – there was a relatively small number of translations as opposed to the number of the original texts – but rather in the sense of the import model; there were quite discreet moments during the '70s in which certain mutations were actually explained; the texts that accompanied the translations were often either few or insufficiently compact, relying on impressions and personal admiration). Therefore, the Eastern European context that placed Romania on the map of cultural and political imbalances refers to the interrogation of the reception of the “Geneva school of literary criticism” within the aforementioned grid.

The interest in Jean Starobinski's research was exploited in the works of authors such as Carmelo Colangelo, whose monograph (translated in Romanian by Ioana Bot) generates the image of a critic of French expression who identifies and interrogates the points of reflection of the Starobinskian thought. Colangelo's book, *Jean Starobinski sau ucenicia privirii*¹¹ [*Jean Starobinski ou l'apprentissage du regard*] raises the issue of the “meaning of the reflection”, beginning from the relation between man and self, and between man and the world. The meaning referred to by Colangelo (and, implicitly, by Starobinski) is that of the rational assumption, of placing reason within the field of the hermeneutic process, consciously integrating it into reflection. The ethical act must not distance itself from the critical act. The translator of the monograph speaks of the work's

¹¹ Carmelo Colangelo, *Jean Starobinski sau ucenicia privirii*. Translation and edition by Ioana Bot, Cluj-Napoca, Limes, 2006. See Carmelo Colangelo, *Jean Starobinski ou l'apprentissage du regard*, Genève, Editions Zoé – Fondation Pittard de l'Andelyn, 2004.

importance and the importance of Starobinski's criticism in the Romanian cultural space, highlighting its role in understanding the construction of "our post-war literary ideology". In this context, the Romanian translations, issued relatively soon after the works' publication in French, become important as they interrogate the way in which the Romanian post-war society explains (itself) given the confirmation of the existence of a survival mechanism defined in the area of literature and literary studies of the period following the structuralist fashion still in effect.

Although all the translators of the books claim to follow the Genevese school of thought (and one must not overlook the fact that they are the well-known names of our literary criticism), and despite this declared affinity, the model of the Romanian authors' books either loses the reading and critical practice of the Swiss counterpart or contemplates the established model with extreme admiration. In both situations, however, there is a major interest in adopting foreign books and in maintaining a dialogue between the two cultures. The case of Ion Pop-Jean Starobinski (I am referring here to their friendship and to the relationship implied by the translation) is one example of a complex exercise of popularisation in Romanian post-war criticism of a reading model that privileges *le regard surplombant* (the gaze). Naturally, when Ion Pop offers the contextual explanations of the text's reception, he also constructs a reading grid that is placed on the extremely fine borderline between subjective choice and scientific rigor:

In all cases, "the critical relationship" is defined, for Starobinski, by an extreme mobility of the gaze, by successively close and remote stances, through forays and round turns to get to the most complete understanding of the *text* placed within its *context*, considered in the extended framework of its intertextual relations. [...] Perhaps to the highest degree, he is the one that contributes the corrective "distant reflection", the free confrontation with the text, the latter being a space for the affirmation of the originality of the critical discourse¹².

As a concept translation, the transfer that takes place with the Romanian translations of Jean Starobinski's thinking, and implicitly that of the Genevese school, into the Romanian cultural, social and political space, is based on the need of our post-war society to receive European cultural models in order to import them afterwards. Thus, the apparently simple process of import by translation corresponds to an identity issue present in the environment of our national culture. The Romanian translations of Jean Starobinski's books were published around

¹² Ion Pop, *Ore franceze [French Classes]*, București, Univers, 1979, p. 320: "În toate cazurile 'relația critică' se definește pentru Starobinski printr-o extremă mobilitate a privirii, prin apropieri și distanțări succesive, prin incursiuni și întoarceri pe drumul parcurs spre înțelegerea cât mai deplină a *textului*, plasat în *contextul* său, judecat în cadrul extins al relațiilor intertextuale. [...] el îi aduce, poate în gradul cel mai înalt, corectivul 'reflecției distante', al confruntării libere cu textul, spațiu, acesta din urmă, al afirmării originalității discursului critic".

1974. Later, in 1985, Ion Pop signed the translation and the preface to *Textul și interpretul* [*The Text and the interpreter*] and motivated the necessity of receiving this model not so much in the terms of the Romanian post-war culture, as in terms that were much more autonomous in relation with Starobinski's theory itself. Ion Pop calls it the influence of the "ex-centric", referring to Geneva's status as an alternative centre of the francophone critical discourse, as opposed to Paris. Here, the Romanian critic's affinity is all the more obvious as the autonomy of the aesthetic becomes a form of subversiveness of any form of ideology. The transplant of Starobinski's model is all the more relevant in this respect:

Freer in relation to the structure, the book that – with the author's consent – I placed under the title of a programmatic essay, *The Text and the Interpreter*, could offer a moving image of the interpretative act as it takes shape for a critic who understands that he needs to continuously amplify the reading systems provided by contemporary literary and scientific research, exploiting them with the skill of a perfect connoisseur, as well as with the detachment of a free, creative consciousness¹³.

The entire discussion about the method is focused on two coordinates: one related to the "national" view of literary criticism, which is actually represented by the innovative character of the "Geneva School of Literary Criticism" as opposed to the structuralist model or the model of the French "New Criticism", and the second located in the area of the fortuitous circumstances that, during the post-war years in Romania, facilitated the dialogue with a western culture that was less politically centred. This inclination towards the western alternative model (the Genevese one) decisively contributes to the formation of a class of followers (loyal translators and readers) who understood the model of Jean Starobinski's criticism (as well as that of the other representatives: Marcel Raymond, Jean-Pierre Richard, Jean Rousset, Albert Béguin, Georges Poulet) as an alternative means of approaching the literary text, thus rejecting the structuralist method implicitly, if not declaratively.

From the "Geneva School of Literary Criticism" to a Romanian Network of Translators

When discussing the current state of literary criticism, Romul Munteanu – one of the translators of the critics of the "Geneva school" – explains Jean

¹³ Ion Pop, "Jean Starobinski și mobilitatea privirii critice" ["Jean Starobinski and the Mobility of the Critical Gaze"], in Jean Starobinski, *Textul și interpretul* [*The Text and the Interpreter*]. Translation and preface by Ion Pop, București, Univers, 1985, p. 26: "Mai liberă sub raportul structurii, cartea pe care – cu acordul autorului – am așezat-o sub titlul unui eseu programatic, *Textul și interpretul*, poate oferi însă o imagine în mișcare a actului interpretativ, așa cum se concretizează el la un critic ce înțelege să-și amplifice mereu sistemele de lectură puse la dispoziție de cercetarea literară și științifică contemporană, exploatându-le cu pricepere de perfect cunoscător, dar și cu detașarea unei conștiințe libere, creatoare".

Starobinski's method by referring not to the source text, but to the Romanian translation. Thus, there are two directions: on the one hand, the author supports the mediator role played by the literary critic and, on the other hand, he uses, within his own discourse, a form of assuming the adherence to the model he follows – the Genevese one:

The critic is, in our opinion, a *mediator*, not a *creator* of autonomous universes. [...] In this context, the *criticism of criticism* is a periodic examination of the validity of the tools used, of their change in time, of their ability to subscribe to a mobile present, ready to flow into the future. To a much greater extent than in other circumstances, the critical approach exercised on an object that gets so rapidly obsolete, such as criticism, is carried out in the name of principles belonging to the present. Therefore, if one can speak of a certain diachronic dimension of the trajectory, it is configured only by an act of reception that irradiates from the present to the past¹⁴.

Regarding the discussions in cultural magazines, the most frequent occurrence of Jean Starobinski's reception – whether in connection with the translated fragments or the interviews and chronicles – was during the post-war period in *România literară*, beginning with 1972. Thus, until the fall of communism, the magazine issued by the Writers Union – which makes it a cultural magazine of the highest level, thus an “official” magazine – published articles about what could already be regarded as the newest events on the scene of foreign influences in literary criticism. The chronicles authored by Cristian Unteanu or Doina Uricariu (which are only two names that accompanied the reception of the translations at that time) construct a relatively open panorama of the reception of Starobinski's books, even though they failed to include a contextual explanation or, in other words, to argue for the novelty of the model that infiltrated the cultural sphere at that time. Moreover, the comments were often reduced to the way in which the Romanian representatives resonated with the new theoretical climate. Doina Uricariu even spoke of the balance offered by the Genevese direction to the young philologists (Ion Pop, Romul Munteanu, Al. George et al.), for whom the foreign context represents not only a means to resonate with a mature and autonomous critical thinking, but also the expression of a subversive act, given the personal choice of this model:

¹⁴ Romul Munteanu, *Metamorfozele criticii europene moderne* [*The Metamorphoses of the Modern European Criticism*], București, Editura Pro Humanitate, 1998, pp. 10-11: “Critical este, după părerea noastră, un *mediator*, nu un *creator* de universuri autonome. [...] În acest context, *critica criticii* este un examen periodic al validității instrumentelor utilizate, al devenirii lor în timp, al capacității lor de înscriere într-un prezent mobil, gata să se reverse în viitor. Într-o măsură mult mai mare decât în alte împrejurări, demersul critic exercitat asupra unui obiect care se perimează atât de repede, cum este critica, se realizează în numele unor principii care aparțin prezentului. De aceea, dacă se poate vorbi de o anumită dimensiune diacronică a traiectului, ea se configurează numai printr-un act de receptare care iradiază din prezent spre trecut”.

In 1974, when Jean Starobinski's volume *Relația critică* [*The Critical Relationship*] was published in Romania as translated by Al. George, an entire generation of young people licensed in philology and confronted with the arcana of several methodological values, felt the beneficial effect of a calm liberation by discovering in the Genevese professor's writings an authentic anti-dogmatism, grafted on the older myth of transparency. Starobinski offered us the much-desired balance after so many lessons in the exclusiveness abundant in the innovative spirit, which is doomed to be stubborn and rigid even at the moment of its utmost openness¹⁵.

In 1972 and 1974, Cristian Unteanu also signed a series of articles in *România literară* along the same lines, recording the moments of publication¹⁶. Moreover, on the 150th anniversary of Benjamin Constant's birth, at the International Congress in Lausanne in July 1980, Henri Zalis also noted in *România literară* that the integration of his Romanian colleagues into the group of foreign participants, especially the meeting with Jean Starobinski, would configure a bond based not only on an intellectual admiration, but also on the understanding that this way of thinking adopted in the Romanian space would indicate a strong sense of belonging to a European school of thought:

I was delighted that Jean Starobinski, the well-known Genevese critic, had warm words regarding our Romanian colleagues – George Ivașcu, Adrian Marino, N. Tertulian. [...] I had the honour of being invited by Jean Starobinski to his home in Geneva. I was welcomed by a writer and a researcher preoccupied by the motivations inside a work [...] Starobinski, whose name was linked to solid works, but also to the *Rencontres internationales de Genève*, seems to naturally complement the Swiss spirit, since he adds a dose of Sorbonne-type erudition to a state of lucidity¹⁷.

¹⁵ Doina Uricariu, "O lume într-o lume mai mare" ["A World in a Greater World"], *România literară*, 19, 1986, 32, p. 20: "În 1974, când s-a tipărit la noi volumul lui Jean Starobinski *Relația critică*, tradus în românește de Al. George, o întreagă generație de tineri licențiați în filologie, confrunțați cu arcelele mai multor valori metodologice, trăia sentimentul benefic al unei calme eliberări, descoperind în scrisul profesorului genevez un antidogmatism autentic, altoit pe mai vechiul mit al transparenței. Starobinski ne oferea acel echilibru mult râvnit după atâtea lecții ale exclusivismului de care nu e lipsit spiritul novator, osîndit să fie încăpățînat și rigid în chiar ceasul maximei lui deschideri".

¹⁶ See Cristian Unteanu, "Jean Starobinski, 'Les mots sous les mots'", *România literară*, 5, 1972, 29, p. 13; Cristian Unteanu, "Jean Starobinski, 'Emblemele rațiunii'" ["Jean Starobinski, 'Emblems of Reason'"], *România literară*, 7, 1974, 15, p. 20; Cristian Unteanu, "Jean Starobinski, 'Relația critică'" ["Jean Starobinski, 'The Critical Relation'"], *România literară*, 7, 1974, 43, p. 20.

¹⁷ H. Zalis, "Moment helvet" ["Helvetic Moment"], *România literară*, 13, 1980, 32, p. 21: "M-a bucurat mult faptul că Jean Starobinski, cunoscutul critic genevez, a avut cuvinte calde la adresa colegilor de breaslă români – George Ivașcu, Adrian Marino, N. Tertulian. [...] Am avut cinstea să fiu invitat de Jean Starobinski la el acasă, la Geneva. M-a întâmpinat un scriitor și cercetător preocupat dinăuntru de motivațiile operei. [...] Starobinski, care și-a legat numele de lucrări solide dar și de acele *Rencontres internationales de Genève*, pare în chip natural complementul spiritului elvețian, întrucît aduce la starea de luciditate o doză de erudiție de tip sorbonard".

Many of the records published in the cultural magazines regarding the Genevese subject, refer to the group that had unmediated access not only to meeting a free European culture, but also to the atmosphere of a dialogue that seems, from the very beginning, to build a network inside the environment of the Romanian post-war criticism. The 2004 issues of *Secolul 21* are dedicated completely to Swiss culture; they contain three articles signed by Jean Starobinski and translated by Alina Ledeanu, which confirms the attempt to continue maintaining the model in the post-communist cultural magazines. Following what we have identified as a subversive act against the official discourse (the import of a model that, as we have seen, represents a passage route for the Romanian cultural space), the references with which the critical language juggles in journalism remained strongly anchored in the criticism of the '60s generation.

Moreover, adding a discussion about translations and translators to the present context has not only collateral value, as cultural capital transfers from one culture to another, but also provides the data that contributes to the crystallisation of a western atmosphere. A companion-text is part of Starobinski's *Gesturile fundamentale ale criticii* [*The Fundamental Gestures of Criticism*] (2014), translated and prefaced by Angela Martin, with a foreword by Mircea Martin. What the translator notes is that the central theme of Starobinski's "critical programme" is connected to the idea according to which the values of literature are curative and strongly anchored into consciousness. The essay that accompanies the translation, however, speaks of the contemporary world's need to explain the social and political phenomena of a society through what Mircea Martin calls the "anticipatory... opus":

His work remained valid because it was, time and time again, anticipatory. Hans Robert Jauss noted as early as 1985 that Starobinski "anticipated the future centres of interest of the modern methods: the archaeology of science, the critique of ideologies, psychohistory, the history of lifestyles, the history of concepts, historical semantics and even semiotics". [...] we could say that his volumes, with their topic diversity and the originality of their viewpoints, are the ones that defied – and continue to defy today – the developments around them: not through noisy and aggressive attitudes, not through spectacular radicalisms, but through their very consistency immune to fashion, through their calm and serene naivety, through the implicit ethics of writing and of intellectual engagement¹⁸.

¹⁸ Mircea Martin, "Cuvânt înainte" ["Foreword"], in Jean Starobinski, *Gesturile fundamentale ale criticii* [The fundamental gestures of criticism]. Translation and preface by Angela Martin, București, Art, 2014, pp. 8-9: "Opera lui a rămas validă, valabilă și pentru că a fost, nu odată, anticipatoare. Hans Robert Jauss observa încă în 1985 că Starobinski 'a anticipat centrele viitoare de interes ale metodelor moderne: arheologia științei, critica ideologiilor, psihoistoria, istoria stilurilor de viață, istoria conceptelor, semantica istorică și chiar semiotica'. [...] am putea spune că volumele sale, cu diversitatea lor tematică și cu originalitatea punctelor de vedere avansate, sunt cele care au sfidat – și continuă să sfideze și astăzi –

In fact, Mircea Martin contextualises the works of Jean Starobinski not only in the Romanian space, but in the Eastern European space implicitly, precisely because the explanation of an anticipatory work contributes to a history of the critical ideas that are continuously part of a dialogue with the ways in which it is achieved. Moreover, this happens in the context in which the model import – and the import of critical thinking – takes place by dispersing and translating texts, which once again validates the fact that the time of the communist regime in Romania was strongly marked by tacit stances taken by the young critics whose personal convictions joined those of their Genevese colleagues. Hence, the hypothesis that critical and conceptual discourse as theorised and practiced by Jean Starobinski is connected to the relation between the generation of critics already consecrated in the '70s and the francophone context. The entire climate requires a two-level dialogue: an internal one, connected to the national network of our post-war literary criticism, and an external one, connected to the points in which the network was consolidated based on the nodes implied by the “Geneva school”-type of foreign influence. The issue raised by Alex Goldiș in this sense (namely that of influence) interrogates the way in which the characteristics of the cultural and critical atmosphere in Romania in the '70s are shaped:

The problem is that, while the representatives of the “Geneva School of Literary Criticism” accepted the pact – at least temporarily or partially – with stylistics, with linguistics or even with the historical excursion –, the Romanian critic isolates himself completely in the present of the work and, even more than in the present of the work, in the present of the “creative figure”. What he is truly interested in is not the writing, the text itself, but rather the intimate structure hidden by it¹⁹.

The way in which the contemporary Romanian critic describes the relation between the Genevese school, and the reality of Romanian criticism compensates for a system reading of the models that become established in the Romanian post-war space. Thus, we could say that Jean Starobinski's model and method can be used to identify a pattern in the Romanian literary criticism which is built in complete dialogue with and with complete popularisation of a western context that can be defined in terms of a subversive act – where subversiveness must be understood as an instrument of following an alternative model.

Thus, the aim of explaining this translation phenomenon was to exemplify, by

evoluțiile din jur: nu prin atitudini zgomotoase și agresive, nu prin radicalisme spectaculoase, ci prin însăși consistența lor indiferentă la mode, prin naivitatea lor calmă și senină, printr-o etică implicită a scrisului și a angajamentului intelectual”.

¹⁹ Alex Goldiș, *Critica în tranșee*, p. 41: “Numai că, dacă reprezentanții ‘Școlii de la Geneva’ acceptau pactul – măcar temporar și parțial – cu stilistica, cu lingvistica, sau chiar cu excursul istoric –, criticul român se izolează complet în prezentul operei. Și mai mult decât al operei, în prezentul ‘figurii creatoare’. Căci ceea ce-l interesează nu e scriitura, textul propriu-zis, ci mai degrabă structura intimă pe care acesta o ascunde”.

means of the concept of irony as it appears in Jean Starobinski's works, a model of the circulation of western critical ideas to post-war Romania. Therefore, the entire group of texts translated into the Romanian language consolidates the development (the history) of the concept of irony as defined by the Genevese author and a reading model for both the literary and the critical text. What is of interest is precisely the dialogue with the literary text and its connection with a history of literary ideas. The presentation of the Romanian context contributes to the pertinent formulation of the following thesis: the import into Romanian literary criticism, through the translations of the Geneva school texts, occurs both at the level of the method and at the level of the model.

Translated from Romanian by Anca Chiorean.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- COLANGELO, Carmelo, *Jean Starobinski ou l'apprentissage du regard*, Genève, Editions Zoé – Fondation Pittard de l'Andelyn, 2004
- COLANGELO, Carmelo, *Jean Starobinski sau ucenicia privirii*. Translation and edition by Ioana Bot, Cluj-Napoca, Limes, 2006.
- GOLDIȘ, Alex, *Critica în tranșee. De la realismul socialist la autonomia esteticului* [*Criticism in the Trenches. From Socialist Realism to Aesthetic Autonomy*], București, Cartea Românească, 2011.
- MARINO, Adrian, "Jean Starobinski și istoria ideilor" ["Jean Starobinski and the History of Ideas"], *România literară*, 2, 1969, 51, p. 4.
- MARTIN, Mircea, "Cerneala ironică a melancoliei" ["The Ironic Ink of Melancholy"], in Jean Starobinski, *Melancolie, nostalgie, ironie* [Melancholy, Nostalgia, Irony]. Translated by Angela Martin, preface by Mircea Martin, București, Meridiane, 1993, pp. I-XIV.
- MARTIN, Mircea, "Cuvânt înainte" ["Foreword"], in Jean Starobinski, *Gesturile fundamentale ale criticii* [*The Fundamental Gestures of Criticism*]. Translation and preface by Angela Martin, București, Art, 2014, pp. 5-12.
- MUNTEANU, Romul, *Metamorfozele criticii europene moderne* [*The Metamorphoses of the Modern European Criticism*], București, Editura Pro Humanitate, 1998.
- POP, Ion, "Jean Starobinski și mobilitatea privirii critice" ["Jean Starobinski and the Mobility of the Critical Gaze"], in Jean Starobinski, *Textul și interpretul* [*The Text and the Interpreter*]. Translation and preface by Ion Pop, București, Univers, 1985, pp. 5-26.
- POP, Ion, *Ore franceze* [*French Classes*], București, Univers, 1979.
- STAN, Adriana, *Bastionul lingvistic. O istorie comparată a structuralismului în România* [*The Linguistic Bastion. A Comparative History of Structuralism in Romania*], București, Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2017.
- STAROBINSKI, Jean, *Gesturile fundamentale ale criticii* [*The Fundamental Gestures of Criticism*]. Translation and preface by Angela Martin, București, Art, 2014.
- STAROBINSKI, Jean, *Melancolie, nostalgie, ironie* [Melancholy, Nostalgia, Irony]. Translated by Angela Martin, preface by Mircea Martin, București, Meridiane, 1993.
- STAROBINSKI, Jean, *Textul și interpretul* [*The Text and the Interpreter*]. Translation and preface by Ion Pop, București, Univers, 1985.
- UNTEANU, Cristian, "Jean Starobinski, 'Emblemele rațiunii'" ["Jean Starobinski, 'Emblems of Reason'"], *România literară*, 7, 1974, 15, p. 20.

- UNTEANU, Cristian, “Jean Starobinski, ‘Les mots sous les mots’”, *România literară*, 5, 1972, 29, p. 13.
- UNTEANU, Cristian, “Jean Starobinski, ‘Relația critică’” [“Jean Starobinski, ‘The Critical Relation’”], *România literară*, 7, 1974, 43, p. 20.
- URICARIU, Doina, “O lume într-o lume mai mare” [“A World in a Grater World”], *România literară*, 19, 1986, 32, p. 20.
- ZALIS, H., “Moment helvet” [“Helvetic Moment”], *România literară*, 13, 1980, 32, p. 21.

THE RECEPTION OF THE GENEVA SCHOOL OF LITERARY CRITICISM. THE IRONY OF JEAN STAROBINSKI IN THE ROMANIAN TRANSLATIONS

(Abstract)

Considering that the “official” literary studies discourse of the post-war era in Romania was shaped by Structuralism, I would emphasize the fact that Geneva School of Literary Criticism’s main theoretical directions, coming from the Francophone area, as a recursion to French language contexts, not from Paris this time (as was the case in 19th century and the first half of the 20th century), but from Geneva. The analysis of this model, thus, taken from the West to an East-European space aims to see how, in the case of concept translation – of theoretical and cultural transfer – , translation itself answers to the demands of today’s literary market: how does this transfer take place, from a source-culture to a target-culture, how can we examine it from a transnational theory perspective? The research of esthetical and political issues that the Romanian society (together with the East-European one) has faced in the 70s could be the solution itself. My paper shall therefore focus on analyzing the circulation of critical texts, both in translation and in critical debates and theoretical constructions, in periodical texts, as well as in critical volumes – and the main example for this is the Romanian translation of irony concept at Jean Starobinski.

Keywords: Geneva School of Literary Criticism, translation, post-war literary criticism, melancholy, Jean Starobinski.

RECEPTAREA ȘCOLII DE CRITICĂ LITERARĂ DE LA GENEVA. IRONIA LUI JEAN STAROBINSKI ÎN TRADUCERILE ROMÂNEȘTI

(Rezumat)

Dacă discursul oficial în studiile literare ale perioadei postbelice era cel venit pe filieră structuralistă, cel al criticii de idei/criticii de la Geneva pătrunde din spațiul francofon ca o revenire asupra contextelor de limbă franceză, de data aceasta nu de la Paris (ca în secolul al XIX-lea și prima jumătate a secolului XX), ci de la Geneva. Analizarea modelului de construcție al *criticii geneveze*, așadar, transportat dintr-un spațiu occidental într-unul est-european își propune să urmărească în ce măsură, în cazul traducerii de concept – al transferului teoretic și cultural –, traducerea însăși răspunde cerințelor pieței literare actuale: cum are loc acest transfer, dinspre cultura-sursă înspre cultura-țintă, dacă interogăm din perspectiva teoriilor transnaționale. Investigarea unor problematice de ordin estetic și politic cu care societatea românească (și est-europeană deopotrivă) s-a confruntat în anii 70 este și soluția la care propunerea de față recurge prin analiza importului de text critic tradus și comentat, fie în revistele culturale ale perioadei, fie în volume – exemplul de la care pornesc în analiză e cel al traducerii conceptului de ironie de la Jean Starobinski.

Cuvinte-cheie: Școala de la Geneva, traducere, critică literară postbelică, melancolie, Jean Starobinski.