

The Complete Romanian Editions of Les Fleurs Du Mal

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Abstract

This article analyzes the complete Romanian editions of Charles Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du mal, focusing on the main editions published to date and the challenges involved in translating this emblematic work in full. It starts from the observation that the intention to produce a complete version of Baudelaire's work has often been expressed, but rarely carried out, due to aesthetic, technical and interpretative difficulties. The first anthological efforts are discussed at length - in particular the significant contribution of Geo Dumitrescu, who, in the absence of a single translation, coordinated a composite edition, brought together from variants belonging to several translators. Subsequently, three major editorial projects from 1991 - signed by Al. Cerna-Rădulescu, C. D. Zeletin and Radu Cârneli - are analyzed, which represent the first successful attempts to offer the public a complete translation made by a single author. Each translator is presented both through the prism of their selection and organization of poetic material, and by reflecting their own vision of translation as an act of creation and aesthetic reconfiguration. The article also pays special attention to the recent edition signed by Octavian Soviany (2014), remarkable for its completeness, but lacking adequate critical reception, despite the artistic quality recognized by informed readers. In parallel, the conceptual difficulties related to the notion of "complete edition" are discussed, which vary depending on the French sources consulted by the translators and the delimitations imposed by the publishers. Peritextual resources (prefaces, introductions, translator's notes) are also highlighted as relevant tools in shaping the translation profile. The comparative analysis of these volumes shows that the complete translation of The Flowers of Evil is not a simple exercise in textual fidelity, but a complex form of dialogue between the original poet and the poet-translator, which simultaneously requires deep identification, critical distance and technical mastery of lyrical language.

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Keywords: Baudelaire; complete editions; Romanian translations; poet-translator; translation studies; Les Fleurs du mal.

In what follows, we will focus on the complete Romanian-language editions of Baudelaire's lyrical works, particularly the collection *Les Fleurs du mal*, which we have consulted so far. Before presenting them, a few observations are necessary.

We focused on published volumes, knowing that the desire to create a complete edition of Baudelaire's works sometimes remained just that - a project. In the foreword to the 1968 anthology, Geo Dumitrescu mentions the names of several translators who expressed interest in a complete translation of the French poet's work. The pieces translated by Alexandru Hodoș (96), Lazăr Iliescu (155)², and Lucian Rădan (60) are found only in manuscripts; however, in the case of Tudor Bogdan, Nicolae Roșca, and Constantin Stelian, the anthologist referred to periodicals, due to the absence of a published book or manuscript containing their translations. Radu Cârneli includes Șerban Bascovici in the list. Also determined to provide a complete translation, he would be content to publish 70 pieces in the volume *Charles Baudelaire, Florile răului*, in 1940.

Therefore, the first complete edition of *Les Fleurs du mal* appears to be Geo Dumitrescu's anthology, *Les Fleurs du mal - Florile răului*, which has been published in two editions. The first, from 1967, was intended for a general audience and included the French text and the closest translation (chosen by the anthologist). The second, from 1968, was aimed at bibliophiles and included an *addendum* containing various versions of the same poem. Published to commemorate the centenary of the poet's death, this collection is unique in its composition, being the result of the work of several translators. This was the solution the anthologist found to create a complete volume, given the lack of a single translation.

The dream of reading Baudelaire's complete lyric poetry in Romanian, translated by the same translator, became a reality towards the end of the 20th century: specifically in 1991. This was a banner year for Radu Cârneli (Baudelaire, 1996) as it saw the publication of three complete editions of Baudelaire's poetry: two published in Romania by Al. Cerna-Rădulescu (Baudelaire, 1991c) and C. D. Zeletin

² The manuscript contains (with small differences, according to Geo Dumitrescu) the 35 translations published in his 1939 volume, *Charles Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du mal*, Bucharest, Monitorul Oficial / Imprimeria Națională.

(Baudelaire, 1991b), and one in Moldova by Radu Cârnelci (Baudelaire, 1991a). The 21st century brought a new complete edition in 2014, edited by Octavian Soviany and published by Max Blecher.

Another point to consider is the concept of a complete edition. We have observed differences in the structure of the editions, stemming from the original volumes consulted and selected by the translators. For example, in compiling the table of contents for his anthology, Geo Dumitrescu adopted the “*classic*” repertoire (Baudelaire, 1968), comprising approximately 150-160 pieces, which appears in the original publications of the volume **Les Fleurs du mal** and in most re-editions, whether for the general public, schoolchildren, or bibliophiles. However, he acknowledges that he deliberately omitted some texts from the poems added in editions after the 1857 edition. While he justifies his choices by citing the opinions of some French editors, Radu Cârnelci criticizes this selection, which he considers insufficient for a comprehensive understanding of Baudelaire's creative world. That is why he preferred to follow the format of the volume *Baudelaire - Les Fleurs du mal et autres poèmes*, published by “J'ai lu” in Paris in 1986.

Another point concerns the paratext (authorial: dedication, epigraph, preface etc.), a valuable resource for sketching the translator's profile. Very rich in the editions of Radu Cârnelci or C. D. Zeletin, paratextual elements have been lacking since the volume by the poet-translator Al. Cerna-Rădulescu (1920-1990)³, hence our choice in presenting the collections consulted.

The anthology edition by Geo Dumitrescu (1968)

Romanian writer, poet, and translator Geo Dumitrescu (1920-2004) is a key figure for anyone interested in the relationship between Romanian literature and the lyrical works of Baudelaire. Although he is not listed among the translators of the French poet, his work resembles that of a historian of translations. His efforts culminated in 1967 when Editura pentru Literatură Universală (Universal Literature Publishing House) published the first edition of the anthology *Charles Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du mal - Florile răului*. Aimed at a general audience, the collection included 156 translations, placed alongside the original texts. These versions were later included in the monolingual volume *Baudelaire - Florile răului*, published in Bucharest by Minerva in 1978.

³ It should be noted that we consulted the 1999 edition, perhaps a reissue of the 1991 collection, which Radu Cârnelci mentions, and which we did not find.

The second edition, published in 1968, includes an *Addendum* which, in our opinion, is its strongest point because it allows readers to compare various versions of the same poem. It is a true treasure, both for those who wish to follow the history of Baudelaire's translations into Romanian and for those who undertake an analysis of these translations. Furthermore, thanks to the introductory study by Vladimir Streinu, we can outline some observations about the profile of the translator. On the one hand, there are translators *specializing* in Baudelaire's work, for example, Al. A. Philippide, Lazăr Iliescu, Șerban Bascovici, and Constantin Z. Buzdugan; On the other hand, there is the occasional translator *who* looks into the creation of the French poet through artistic affinity or curiosity, given the place occupied by Baudelaire in the evolution of poetry.

From the second category, some included their translations in volumes of personal creation. We can note the name of the poet and literary historian Leon Feraru (1887-1961) who appears with a single translated piece, "La Chevelure" [The Head of Hair], previously published in the volume *Maghernița veche* [*The Old Dive*], Bucharest, Cartea Românească, 1926. The avant-garde poet Horia Bonciu (1893-1950) is mentioned for the translation of the poem "Le Mort joyeux" [The Joyful Dead], which appeared earlier in the 1932 volume, *Lada cu năluci* [*The Chest of Fantasies*], Bucharest, Vremea. Ion Focșeneanu is represented by several translated poems: "Elevation" [Elevation], "Beauty", "Exotic Perfume", and "The Owls", also included in the volume *În sus* [*Upwardly*], Brașov, Brașovul literar, 1934, and "The Enemy", previously published in the periodicals *Propilee literare* [Literary Propylaea], number 21, 1928, and *Ritmuri* [Rhythms], number 6, 1930. The writer Horia Vintilă (1915-1992), winner of the Prix Goncourt for the novel *God Was Born in Exile*, 1960, is included with a translated poem, "Autumn Song", encompassed in *Procesiuni* [*Processions*], book published in 1937, in Bucharest, by Pavel Suru.

Others chose to group the translations into anthologies, for example N. Țimiraș, author of the volume *Cîntece de cristal*, III, A. de Vigny, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Baudelaire [Crystal Songs, III, A. de Vigny, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Baudelaire], published in 1940 by Cugetarea-Georgescu Delafras.

Although he was one of the first translators to show interest in publishing his translations in an author's volume, Al. Westfried is generally perceived as an admirer of Baudelaire. According to Vladimir Streinu, his versions lack expressiveness (Baudelaire, 1968), which is why his collection, *Les Fleurs du mal - Tălmăciri*, published in Bucharest in 1932, went unnoticed. In the 1967 edition of the

anthology, Al. Westfried appears with only one translated poem, “La Mort des Pauvres” [The Death of the Poor]. In contrast, there is Lazăr Iliescu (1887-1977), whose translation skills are matched only by his courage. First, he did not hesitate to retranslate poems already considered by Tudor Arghezi (“To the Reader” and “The Albatross”) or Al. A. Philippide (“The Death of Lovers”). Second, he dared to translate into Romanian, the language of an Orthodox people, poems such as “Punishment of Pride”, “To a Madonna”, and “De profundis clamavi”, all marked by the specific characteristics of French Catholicism. Vladimir Streinu praised his audacity and noted the translator's subtlety in preserving the schematic nature of certain verses (Baudelaire, 1968). The volume *Charles Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du mal, traducere în versuri*, published in 1939 in Bucharest by Monitorul Oficial / Imprimeria Națională, which brings together thirty-five translated texts, will be one of the resources for this edition.

But beyond these translations, the anthology has the merit of including previously unpublished versions, preserved only in manuscript volumes that the authors never had the opportunity to publish. This is the case with Lazăr Iliescu's manuscript, which comprises 155 pieces, the result of his intention to produce a complete Baudelairean work in Romanian. A similar situation is represented by the manuscript of the journalist and politician Alexandru Hodoș (1893-1967), which contains 96 texts. According to Vladimir Streinu, his name deserves to be included among the most remarkable translators of Baudelaire's work thanks to two attributes: a thorough knowledge of the poet he translated and a strong command of the Romanian language, which enabled him to produce a faithful translation (Baudelaire, 1968). As a translator, he also offered a version for the novels *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua* by François Rabelais, and *Salammbô* by Gustave Flaubert, translations published in 1967.

In addition, this work allowed us access to translations published only in journals and periodicals. This made our research much easier by providing us with several versions scattered across various publications. The most relevant example is the translation by Vasile Pogor, who appears to be the first translator of Baudelaire into Romanian. In issue 3 of the journal *Convorbiri literare*, from 1870, appear his versions of the poems, “Bohemians on a Journey”, and “Don Juan in Hell”. On the same list we can add the translation by the anonymous P. E. for the text “Sadness of the Moon”, published in 1875, in issue 1 of the periodical *Revista Junimei*; Ciru Oeconomu's version of one of the condemned plays, “Lesbos”, published in 1875, in issue 8 of the journal *Revista contemporană*, and in 1876, in issue 6 of the

periodical *Telegraful*; the translation of the poem “The Seven Old Men”, signed by G. D. Pencioiu, published in 1895, in issue 1 of the journal *Lumea nouă literară și științifică*, reprinted in 1919, with small differences, in issue 1 of the periodical *Ramuri*, under the title “*Cei șapte moșnegi, halucinație, după Baudelaire*” [The Seven Old Men, a Hallucination, after Baudelaire] etc. All these publication details argue, once again, for the usefulness of the edition in tracing the history of translations of the French poet into Romanian.

Apart from the *Addenda*, the volume includes an *Introduction* by critic Vladimir Streinu, who also provides a chronological overview of the poet, and a foreword by Geo Dumitrescu. The *Introduction*, divided into two parts, “*The Baudelaire Phenomenon*”, and “*Baudelaire in Romanian Literature*” aims to present the role played by the writer in the development of French and world lyric poetry and the relationship established between his work and the Romanian cultural sphere. While the first part offers information concerning the author's artistic and literary journey, the second part is worthy of inclusion among texts dedicated to the history of translations. Vladimir Streinu observes that Baudelaire's entry into the Romanian literary landscape occurred in a rather paradoxical way. Thanks to Titu Maiorescu, Baudelaire's name was known, during his lifetime, for his critical writings and his translations. However, his poetic work had to wait another three years after his death to enter Romanian literature, following the translations of Vasile Pogor. After this initial entry, the chain of translations experienced gaps for which Romanian critics have attempted to find explanations. On the one hand, there was the indifference of Romanian modernists, such as Al. Macedonski and Ovid Densusăianu, towards the work of the French poet, a fact that delayed its reception in Romania.

On the other hand, Vladimir Streinu highlights an aspect that should not be overlooked for our research. Thanks to knowledge of French, which allowed for reading Baudelaire's work in its original form, the influence of Baudelairean lyric poetry was evident in Romania even before the period rich in translations, and it marked the poetic beginnings of certain Romanian writers, such as Tudor Arghezi and George Bacovia. Nevertheless, he is careful to point out that, despite this influence, each developed their own unique creative universe, as evidenced by their place within Romanian lyric poetry. Hence Vladimir Streinu's conclusion: Tudor Arghezi was more faithful to his own creative genius than to the translated author. This perhaps explains why the most authoritative voice to provide a complete translation of Baudelaire into Romanian limited itself to translating a few poems (versions that inevitably bear the personal marks of the poet-

translator). His analysis, sometimes comparative, helped us to delve deeper into the issue of the profile of the poetry translator who must fulfill certain conditions: be a poet himself, maintain a considerable distance from his creative genius, understand in depth the author's creative universe and have a very good command of the target language.

Geo Dumitrescu's foreword, by his own admission, appears as a "Prospect" (Baudelaire, 1968), a kind of guide for the reader. The anthologist announces the initial intention of the work: to honor the centenary of the poet's death by offering the general public a complete edition of the volume **Les Fleurs du mal** in Romanian. Given the wealth of material obtained, the 1968 edition becomes a tool as much for translators as for historians and critics of translations, who can analyze, thanks to the *Addenda*, the evolution of techniques in translating poetic works into Romanian. At the same time, this collection fills a bibliographical gap noted by Perpessicius, who observes that the critical edition of Baudelaire's complete works contains no reference to his Romanian translation.

Next, the coordinator presents how he designed the table of contents and provides a classification of the resources used (identifying three categories: translations published in author's volumes, which include only translations of Baudelaire's poetry; translations published in periodicals or in self-published volumes; and unpublished translations, mostly found in manuscripts). This allows him to address the absence of a complete Romanian translation of *Les Fleurs du Mal* by a single translator, an intention that, until then, had remained only a project.

Another aspect addressed by the anthologist concerns the criteria used to select version number 1, that is, the translation placed alongside the original and also included in the 1967 edition. This section of the foreword, in some places, resembles a critical analysis of the translations. To begin, Geo Dumitrescu indicates the primary concern in selecting this version: to preserve, as far as possible, the "Baudelairean" homogeneity (Baudelaire, 1968) of the original text as a whole. In this sense, the fundamental criterion was fidelity to both technique (prosody, rhyme etc.) and content (meaning, atmosphere etc.). This is why a number of translations (in free verse, blank verse, prose, awkward language etc.) are not reproduced in the *Addenda*. Sometimes, the selection was limited by the lack of a suitable version, despite the multitude of variants, or by the abundance of texts of equal value. In the first case, the anthologist called upon the translators for an *ad-hoc version*; in the second, "*The quagmire of choice*"

(Baudelaire, 1968)⁴ was resolved by ensuring consistency, hence the predominance of Philippide's translations, which Geo Dumitrescu presents in a highly appreciative manner. The poet-translator managed to remain faithful (in both form and content) to the original, but, most importantly, he refrained from adding or omitting elements to address the difficulties encountered. Thus, his translation becomes a benchmark for examining other versions.

Finally, the foreword also reveals some shortcomings of the collection, for example, the order of the versions of the *Addenda*, for which the anthologist attempted to follow a chronological criterion. The challenge arose from the discrepancy between the actual date of translation (indicated by the translator), the date of publication in a periodical, and the date of publication in book form, as in the case of C. Z. Buzdugan or Ioan I. Ciorănescu.

Coordinated by Geo Dumitrescu, the anthology is the result of the work of several contributors to whom the anthologist expresses his gratitude.

Radu Cârneci's edition (1991)

A graduate of the Faculty of Forestry in Braşov and the Academy of Psychological and Social Studies in Bucharest, Radu Cârneci (1928-2017) was an assiduous translator of poetry, evidenced by his volume of translation of the poetic work *Charles Baudelairene. Florile Răului and other poems translated into Romanian by Radu Cârneci*, published in 1991, in Chişinău, at the publishing house Hyperion. This publication has the merit of being one of the complete editions of Baudelaire's lyric, in the Romanian version of a single translator. In addition to the poems including the integrals of the poets Al. Cerna-Rădulescu and C. D. Zeletin, published the same year, Radu Cârneci's book includes several separate verses, grouped under the title "Fărămituri" ["Fragments"], the text "Draft for the Epilogue to the Second Edition" and "Miscellaneous poems" (18 miscellaneous texts).

The preface, written by critic and literary historian Mihai Cimpoi, focuses primarily on Baudelaire's creative world and his reception in Romania. Regarding the translation, he merely compares, in a single sentence, Radu Cârneci's version with that of Al. A. Philippide, concluding that the differences between the various versions stem from the varying perceptions of the French poet among the translators.

The organization of the volume reveals a deliberate and consistent effort on the part of the translator, who provides the reader

⁴ "Buclucul alegerii"

with a classification of Baudelaire's work and a chronological table, unique in its structure. Radu Cârnelci does not limit himself to a bio-bibliographical presentation of the author, but also compares important moments in the poet's life with the political, literary, and cultural aspects of the era. Furthermore, from the foreword, *Integrala lirică Baudelaire* [*The Complete Lyric Works of Baudelaire*], dated Chişinău, November 1990, we can deduce his vision regarding the translation (of the poetic text). From the title itself, the translator indicates that his text is a plea for the creation of a complete edition of Baudelaire's poetry in Romanian. His primary argument is the lack of such an undertaking. Even Geo Dumitrescu's collection omits some pieces. We must mention that, from the original works consulted, he chose the collection *Baudelaire - Les Fleurs du mal et autres poèmes*, published by "J'ai lu", in Paris, in 1986, which brings together the complete lyric poems of Baudelaire, including "The fragments" and some letters in verse, very valuable, in the eyes of the translator, for the play on words and for the ingenuity of the rhymes. (Baudelaire, 1991a). This is why he opposes the decision of Geo Dumitrescu who deliberately omits a few pieces, in the 1968 anthology, for example "Le Calumet de Paix" [The Calumet of Peace], a sort of adaptation of the poetry "The Song of Hiawatha" by Longfellow, "The Monster or the Paranymp of a Macabre Nymph", "Les Promises d'un Visage" [The Promises of a Face], "Vers pour le Portrait de M. Honoré Daumier" [Verses for the Portrait of Mr. Honoré Daumier], or "On *Tasso in Prison* by Eugène Delacroix". In his opinion, neither the texts included in the section "Poèmes divers" [Miscellaneous Poems] should be neglected for a better understanding of Baudelaire's creative universe and for highlighting his writing technique (Baudelaire, 1991a).

A second argument concerns the importance of preserving the artistic unity and harmony of the original, hence the external and objective necessity of a complete lyric translation of Baudelaire's works into Romanian, by a single translator. Finally, a third justification is the desire to offer the public a modernized Baudelaire, in a contemporary style.

Other reasons for producing this volume stem from subjective considerations. The translator's testimony allows us to arrive at three observations relevant to our analysis. First, Radu Cârnelci adds to the number of translators who find a strong link between the act of creating and the act of translating. For him, personal work and translation are triggered by the same factors; he has used words to convey the feelings and ideas that have contributed to the development of his

being. Thus, he has invested himself equally in both processes and offers as evidence his experience translating Baudelaire's work.

*“Surrounded only by Baudelaire and his wonders, I felt as if I were in seclusion. Sometimes I worked up to fifteen hours a day, overwhelmed by the mysteries of beauty I was discovering, by the formidable states of mind that translation demanded of me. I had experienced the same sensations while writing the works *Cîntarea cîntărilor* [The Song of Songs], *Banchetul* [The Banquet], and *Sonete* [Sonnets], but this time the ecstasy of fulfillment seemed even stronger.”* (Baudelaire, 1991a)

This confession reveals that, in the case of Radu Cârnelci, the translator's enthusiasm is sometimes more evident and rises above the creator's rapture.

Next, he describes the path he followed to arrive at a complete translation of Baudelaire's poetry. At the very beginning, he read the French author in the version translated by Al. A. Philippide, which he found inspired and accurate because it retained the essential features of the original's content and form. Thus, his first encounter with Baudelaire's work was marked by a twofold jubilation: first, for the writer's “fundamental sound”, to use Ștefan Augustin Doinaș's phrase, and second, for the new text, the translation. This reaffirmed Philippide's skill as a translator, as he had managed to preserve this “fundamental sound.” A few years later, Geo Dumitrescu's 1968 edition allowed him to compare the target text with the source text and to analyze the different versions offered for the same piece, a diversity stemming from the translators' personalities. By his own admission, it took him some time to assimilate and identify with Baudelaire's writing. *“By reading and rereading the poems in the original and their translations, I seized hold of Baudelaire, I felt that **I was him**, that his poetry is the poetry I have not yet written, that I must write!”* (Baudelaire, 1991a). It was a long-term process. He began translating a few poems around 1976 (“The Albatross”, “Evening Harmony”, “The Giantess”, “The Owls”, “A Carcass”), versions with which he was not entirely satisfied: *“[...] it sounded good, but I wasn't totally happy, something was off! [...] I realized that the mystery of the poems was eluding me as I tried to produce the most faithful translation possible. I then opted for a translation **focused on essentiality**.”* (Baudelaire, 1991a). This expression, in fact, refers to translation work that focuses as much on form as on content, unlike faithful translation, which, in Radu Cârnelci's view, means an orientation toward form. Until 1987, he

translated approximately 20-25 poems, a fact that allows him to assert that the “*Baudelaire moment*” (Baudelaire, 1991a), the *kairos*, was not yet ready. It arrived between 1987 and 1989 when the translator won, as he metaphorically puts it, “*The Struggle with the Angel*” (Baudelaire, 1991a), and completed the translation of *Les Fleurs du Mal*.

Finally, he discusses the profile of the poetry translator, who must, in turn, be a poet, more or less renowned thanks to their original work. He identifies two categories: poet-translators (Tudor Arghezi, Al. A. Philippide, Ion Barbu, Ion Pillat, Perpessicius, Mihai Codreanu, Ștefan Augustin Doinaș etc.) and translator-poets (Al. Westfried, Constantin Z. Buzdugan, Șerban Bascovici, Lazăr Iliescu etc.), a classification we have taken into account and supplemented with our own assessments. But it is not a one-way relationship, because the creator is influenced by the act of translation, each translation and each translated author contributing to their fulfillment.

“By transposing his poetic work into Romanian, a task undertaken with difficulty and with a sacred passion, I was in the process of rebuilding myself, of becoming whole. I, who had written a considerable number of sonnets up to that moment, kept discovering, again and again, the grace of fulfillment in an architecture of lines and colors never seen before. Baudelaire was me!...” (Baudelaire, 1991a)

This is why the translation of poetry involves a double movement: identification with the translated author, possible only in the case of a poet-translator, and the reconfiguration of the latter's creative universe.

In the final section of the foreword, the translator justifies the editorial choice of publishing with Hyperion, a publishing house in Chișinău, to which he expresses his gratitude. He offers three reasons. First, this volume represents the first Romanian translation of Baudelaire published in the Republic of Moldova, a fact that can serve as an artistic model for creators and a source of satisfaction for the general public. Second, this book provides an excellent opportunity to highlight the cultural connections between this geographical area and the Francophone world. Finally, the collection can serve as a valuable research tool for scholars in both Moldova and Romania.

Apart from the translations, the edition includes a facsimile of the poem “The Seven Old Men”, a portrait of the poet signed by Nadar⁵, the dedication page corrected by Baudelaire, paintings which refer to his poems (“Love and the Skull”, “The Complaints of an Icarus”, “To a Red-Haired Beggar”, “A Fantastic Engraving”, “Duellum”, “The Beacons”, and “The Vampire”), a self-portrait, drawings by the writer, a photograph taken by Carjat for Marie Daubrun, an anonymous portrait of Madame Autard de Bragard and the poet's death mask.

The 1996 volume, *Florile răului / Les Fleurs du mal*, published in Braşov by Arania, is a bilingual edition that includes, with some minor differences⁶, 48 translations from the 1991 complete edition, the poems “*most Baudelairean*” (Baudelaire, 1996). This time, the preface is written by the translator, *Nevoia de Baudelaire* [The Need for Baudelaire], who makes remarks about the impact of Baudelaire's work on French and world literature.

The Zeletin C. D. edition (Constantin Dimoftache) (1991)

Among translators of Baudelaire into Romanian, the physician C. D. Zeletin (1935-2020) occupies a prominent place for several reasons. First, it is important to remember that he developed a personal perspective on the translation of poetic texts. According to him, a translator's choices are preceded by a psychological analysis of which they are not always consciously aware. They choose based on their “*affinities, resonances, admirations, and even passion*” (Baudelaire, 1991b), an observation already found among other translators. However, the novelty lies in the fact that he perceives translation as the result of a conflict of conscience, which manifests itself particularly in the case of a poet-translator. No translation escapes the psychological tension between the translator's intention and that of the poet, hence the two possible outcomes. If the version is very faithful to the original, the translator is satisfied, despite the poet having to accept

⁵ Félix Nadar, or simply Nadar, born Gaspard Félix Tournachon (1820-1910) was a French caricaturist, photographer, and aeronautics pioneer. He is also well known for having frequently photographed Charles Baudelaire, capturing some of the most iconic images of the poet.

⁶ As an example, in the poem “Rêve parisien” / [“Parisian Dream”], dedicated to Constantin Guys, the phrase *de nevăzut* [unseen] is replaced with *de necrezut* [unbelievable] (“Of that terrible landscape / That no mortal eye has seen”, “A strange and grand sight / *Unseen* (1991) / *Unbelievable* (1996) by an open eye”), or in the poem “La vie antérieure” [The Former Life], where the translator replaces the imperfect tense of the verb *a se asemăna* [to resemble] with the present tense (“And whose great columns, upright and majestic, / Made them resemble basaltic caves in the evening”, “Whose tall pillars *resembled* (1991) / *resemble* (1996) them completely”).

anonymity. However, if the translation bears the hallmarks of the poet-translator, another conflict arises, between their pride in literary authorship and a kind of guilt felt by the creator who needed an external impetus, the source text (Baudelaire, 1991b). His judgment reinforces the fact that it is almost impossible to establish where the poet's work ends and the translator's begins, and vice versa. Translation is itself the result of a process of recreation; thus, both are creators, but one, the translator, must be more discerning than the other to grasp the subtext the author produced in their lyrical enthusiasm. Therefore, aside from the challenge of restraining their artistic impulse, the poet-translator is obliged to temper their jubilation before the text to be translated.

Next, we can consider his concerns regarding the translation project. In the testimony accompanying the anthology **La lyrique française moderne** [*Modern French Lyric Poetry*], C. D. Zeletin expresses his disapproval of creating a bilingual volume or anthology of poetry because the poetic text, in translation, should be more like a crystal than a mirror. In other words, the translation is not a replica, but a new entity, bearing the translator's own characteristics. Placing the source and target texts side by side diminishes the artistic independence of the latter. This is why the 1981 anthology is a monolingual collection. Furthermore, he justifies the selection of texts for the anthology, the primary criterion of which was the translator's preference, coupled with a desire to capture the modernity of poetic discourse. Even though he acknowledges that the contents of an anthology are not a complete reflection of the translator's preferences, he finds it impossible to treat all translated authors equally, especially in the case of a translator who is also a poet. The content of **La lyrique française moderne** [*Modern French Lyric Poetry*] is a compelling argument in this regard. Among the eight authors included in the anthology (Gérard de Nerval, Théophile Gautier, Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Valéry, and Guillaume Apollinaire), Baudelaire takes first place, represented by 34 poems⁷. He is followed by Apollinaire and Verlaine, each with more

⁷ "Blessing", "The Albatross", "Elevation", "(My Memory Is Dear...)", "The Lighthouses", "The Enemy", "In Another Life", "Bohemians on a Journey", "Man and the Sea", "Don Juan in Hell", "The Giantess", "Hymn to Beauty", "The Head of Hair", "A Corpse", "Semper Eadem", "Autumn Song", "The Ghost", "Sorrows of the Moon", "The Bell That Has Been Broken", "Spleen", "The Self-Tormentor", "To a Passerby", "At Twilight", "(I Have Not Given to Forgetfulness)", "(To the Gentle Servant...)", "At Dawn", "Allegory", "Beatrice", "Death of Lovers", "He Who Warns", "To a Juggler", "On 'Tasso in Prison' by Eugène Delacroix", "Epigraph for a Condemned Book".

than 20 translated texts, with the last position being contested between Nerval and Gautier. The work, dedicated to the memory of Perpessicius and Tudor Vianu, comes as an example of discipline due, perhaps, to his profession, because the translator indicates for each poem the place that it occupies in the whole of the author's work (the volume, the part etc.). At the same time, the florilegium is the book of masterpieces, as the translator specifies who found in this word, *florilegiu*⁸, the most appropriate term to suggest, in Romanian, the criterion for selecting the texts, the beauty.

Finally, his 1991 volume, *Florile Răului de Charles Baudelaire*, represents one of the first complete translations of Baudelaire's poetic works into Romanian, published by a single translator. We observe, once again, his disciplined approach to his work. The collection is accompanied by a note outlining his translation project. He provides details concerning the editions of the original that he consulted to complete the translation and to establish the order of the texts. The work includes versions of the poems from the last posthumous edition of the volume *Les Fleurs du Mal*, from 1861, to which the translator adds the chapter "Supplement to The Flowers of Evil" which brings together some pieces from the supplement that appears in Paul Valéry's edition, from 1926 (*Les Fleurs du Mal by Charles Baudelaire, text of the second edition*, published with an introduction by Paul Valéry and decorated with twenty drawings by Baudelaire, Paris, Payot) and some poems from the volume *Les Épaves*, published in 1866. At the end, he offers translations for the draft prefaces written by Baudelaire, texts published posthumously, in the edition by Eugène Crépet, *Charles Baudelaire, Œuvres posthumes et correspondances inédites*, Paris, Quantin, 1887, another proof that attests to the professionalism of C. D. Zeletin, whom we can call a *specialized translator*. Our assertion is based on the observations of Tudor Vianu and Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, quoted on the volume's cover. The former praises his mastery of classical verse in comparison to the translation of Michelangelo's sonnets, while the latter considers Baudelaire's work, in C. D. Zeletin's version, to be a triumph for the Romanian language (Baudelaire, 1991b).

Octavian Soviany's edition (2014)

According to our analysis, the most recent complete translation of the volume *Les Fleurs du mal* is that provided by the writer, poet, and literary critic Octavian Soviany (b. 1954). He made his poetic and

⁸ Anthological collection of literary fragments

critical debut simultaneously in the Cluj-based journal *Echinox* in 1975, while his first published volume, *Ucenicia bătrânului alchimist* [*The Apprenticeship of the Old Alchemist*], published by Dacia in 1983, was devoted to poetry. His publishing career demonstrates a predilection for lyric poetry, but he has also written prose and plays.

Published in 2014 by Max Blecher, the volume *Charles Baudelaire, Florile râului* also includes *Epavele* [*The Wrecks*], that is, the translation of the poems from the collection published in 1866 in Belgium, *Noile flori ale râului* [*The New Flowers of Evil*], *Alte poeme* [*Other Poems*], and the introductory note by Théophile Gautier. The translated pieces are accompanied by a brief confession from the translator, who admits how Baudelaire's work influenced his literary and personal development. He first encountered the French poet's work very early, at the age of fifteen, through Philippide's "exemplary" translation (Soviany, 2014). This encounter was followed by a period of "cohabitation" that proved quite fruitful for the Romanian poet, who testifies that Baudelaire's work allowed him to arrive at a sincere self-analysis. Later, when the author begins writing his autobiographical texts, he identifies with the image of the Baudelairean king whose veins are traversed by the waters of the River Lethe and aligns himself with the ideas of the poem "The Self-Tormentor" We observe that he speaks primarily of the influence of the foreign author on the development of his writing, without providing details about the translation process. One possible explanation would be that he was familiar with Baudelaire's work long before embarking on his translation, which stemmed from an affinity for the French poet. These revelations bring to mind Philippe Jaccottet's "secret transaction" (Lombez, 2016); thus, the text, whether a personal creation or a translation, becomes the meeting point for several poetic voices.

Regarding the reception of the edition⁹, the poet, translator, and editor Claudiu Komartin laments the lack of attention the volume has received from critics and in the media. He expresses his dismay in the article "Baudelaire. A Publisher's Astonishment" and wonders why a complete and recent translation, such as that of Soviany, "one of the best and most active contemporary Romanian writers" (Komartin, 2015), has not attracted the attention of commentators. One explanation he offers is related to the prominent position held in the Romanian publishing landscape by the Max Blecher publishing house,

⁹ It includes the introductory text by Théophile Gautier, which, according to Komartin, does not appear in its entirety in any other Romanian edition of the volume *Les Fleurs du mal*.

of which he is the editor-in-chief. Furthermore, he announces the forthcoming publication of the translation of the *Prose Poems* [*Mici poeme în proză*], by the same translator, from which we can infer his persistence.

The situation remained unchanged the following year. Literary historian Alexandru Călinescu noted the same critical gap. In his article “Baudelaire translated by Octavian Soviany”, published in the periodical *Ziarul de Iași*, he praised the Romanian poet's translation. To highlight its merits, he recalled the difficulty of translating Baudelaire's poetry, one of the challenges being the constraints of formal perfection. Furthermore, to demonstrate the qualities of Soviany's version, he compared a few verses translated by him and by Philippide, the latter being the author of the standard translation of Baudelaire's work (Călinescu, 2016).

But despite this silence from specialists, the public confirms the value of Octavian Soviany's translation, as evidenced by the results of a 2021 survey of 20 people. Of the three versions offered for the poem “Correspondances”, Soviany's translation, “Correspondances”, came in first place, preferred by 8 participants. It was followed by Philippide's “Correspondances” (7 choices), while Arghezi's variant, “Answers”, took third place (5 choices)¹⁰.

In this article, our attention has been focused on the complete Romanian editions of Baudelaire's **Les Fleurs du mal**. Based on this overview, we can make a few observations. Baudelaire's poetic works have consistently attracted the attention of translators, and he is among the most translated authors into Romanian. Nevertheless, the complete translation of **Les Fleurs du mal** appears to be a task that demands, among other attributes, unwavering dedication from the translator. As we can see from the evidence analyzed, the translator must be fully committed to the work and identify with the author being translated.

Geo Dumitrescu's anthology is concrete proof that a complete edition is the product of substantial effort, especially in the case of an author like Baudelaire. Thus, the depth of his creative universe may be another reason justifying the delayed publication of a complete edition.

¹⁰ The survey is included in the study “The Baudelaire Phenomenon in Translation”, published in the journal *Al-Kimiya*, issue 20/2021, pp. 25-45, available online: <https://journals.usj.edu.lb/al-kimiya/article/view/627>

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