

ANCA-MARIANA PEGULESCU

Analogous Proverbs in Ten Languages [English, Romanian, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Danish, Portuguese, Latin]. By E.B. Mawr. London: Elliot Stock, 1885. Pp. 113. Rpt. ed. by C.G. Săndulescu and Lidia Vianu. București: Contemporary Literature Press, 2011. Pp. 152.

Analogous Proverbs in Ten Languages, a book published in 1885 by E.B. Mawr, has been brought back to the readers' attention in 2011 by C.G. Săndulescu and Lidia Vianu. The two Romanian editors, C.G. Săndulescu and Lidia Vianu, are not only distinguished academics and book writers themselves, but they also play the guides' role for younger readers, fond of literature, in general, and of more detailed knowledge in linguistics, semiotics, paremiology, orthography and axiology. The 2011 edition is an electronic product, issued at Contemporary Literature Press, an electronic publishing house of the University of Bucharest, Romania.

The reader is warned of the fact that Mrs. E.B. Mawr had an extraordinary language prevision, announcing ever since 1885 the status of English as a global, international language. The book reveals itself as a multilingual paremic collection where Romanian proverbs are inserted among proverbs in 9 other European languages, and, in a certain way, compared to these European proverbs.

The contents of the book opens with Professor Săndulescu's professional opinions about paremiology, orthography, axiology and spirituality. This introductory message underlines Mrs. Mawr's particular gift in searching "interlanguage propositional equivalence of stable cliché-types with high moral incidence." This Foreword written by Professor Săndulescu is rather an invitation to read the collection and "taste" it as a proverbs' "gourmet" does. In fact, here, Professor Săndulescu intermingles personal memories with a general technical evaluation on paremiology and axiology (the latter being considered to be the "values" science).

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After this opening, there is the European languages' list in which the proverbs are displayed and the 1885 index of the proverb collection.

Mrs. Mawr's Preface is not only the very best image of what we can call editor/author –book relationship, but it also gives us information about her previous collection, issued in 1882 and the authoress' personal opinions about Romanian folklore and proverbs. More than that, it is for the first time (and this syntagm is used long before the structuralists' dichotomy between *expression* and *content* within the linguistic sign) when an author/editor of a proverb collection (at least within Romanian paremiology) affirms the undeniable relationship among different languages. She made such a statement bringing “under one heading the same *expression of thought* in different countries” (meaning European countries). Proverbs are considered to be by E. B. Mawr “the veritable Folk-Lore of the Peoples”. English is for E.B. Mawr, the starting point for all the other languages the collection displays. E.B. Mawr admits that she did not try to translate the proverbs and she realized that in certain cases “a proverb will be met with bearing a directly contrary sense to that expressed in English”.

E. B. Mawr acknowledges that Romania is “particularly rich in folk-lore” and at the same time she states that representatives of the Romanian Academy of that time helped her in her task (the editors of the 2011 edition include a list of the members of the Romanian Academy, as an appendix, taken from the Encyclopedic Illustrated Dictionary “Cartea Românească”, issued at Cartea Românească Publishing House, in 1933 and having I. Aurel Candrea as its author.

The volume issued in 2011 at Contemporary Literature Press, that is an electronic publishing house, includes the original index of the 1885 edition, the content of the 1885 volume, to which the editors added the new index of the 2011 edition, modernized and completed. The 2011 edition also contains the original cover of 1885 edition.

The 1885 edition, published at London Elliot Stock is the second analogous edition published by E.B. Mawr. The authoress mentions in the Preface to the 1885 edition the fact that she had been encouraged by the success the 1882 edition had. In the 1882

edition there were only four analogous languages to English, among them being Romanian.

There are examples of English proverbs for which E. B. Mawr did not discover a Romanian equivalent:

Useless to spur the willing horse.

What helps the Romanian reader, in such a situation, is definitely the French version:

A bon cheval, point d'éperon.

("a willing horse" can be or not a "bon cheval"; for the French/Romanian/Italian/ or German reader "a willing horse" is a horse that does what the master imposes, while "un bon cheval" can be "a willing horse" but even more than that.)

In E.B. Mawr's 1885 edition, there are proverbs that are not so much used nowadays. They are still the expression of the folk's wisdom:

When the blind leads the blind both fall into the ditch.

Orb pe orb povătuind, cad amândoi în mormânt.

And also:

Crows will not pick out crows eyes.

Corb la corb nu-și scoate ochii.

All these examples send a message, be it a positive or a negative one. It is the idea of belonging to a certain category or class which leads to common decisions and results (the *blind* making *the other blind* fall in the grave or the people of the same kind, doing the same things).

For today's reader, E.B. Mawr's 1885 edition brings a standard Romanian that is no more used, being retained only in the Romanian literature of that particular period of time.

This collection is not the only multilingual proverb collection where Romanian (which is still a language not widely used, spread or even known) is launched together with languages internationally spoken and used. Gabriel Gheorghe's book *Proverbele Românilor și proverbele lumii romanice. Studiu comparativ*, published in 1986, at Albatros publishing house, is a successful example of multilingual proverb collections. There are more than one hundred years between the publication of the two multilingual

proverb collections and each of them is the image of the particular period of time the editors/authors lived and carried out their activity, or their hobby targeting proverbs.

All the proverbs collections (be they monolingual or multilingual) prove the richness and the complexity of the Romanian proverbs (counted as more than 4000 paremic units in the Romanian country of that time).

Even if the proverbs were not selected according to the *ethofields* criterion (a concept discussed and analyzed by Professor C. Negreanu in his book *Structura proverbelor românești*), they display common themes and similar structures.

That is why E.B. Mawr's collection, as a leading example, should be valued and treasured as the sparkle of a permanent flame which continues burning in various contributions like articles, studies, dictionaries of proverbs, sayings, idioms.

We have to be thankful to the editors C.G.Sandulescu and Lidia Vianu for their dedicated work and contribution to the paremic international world.

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