

GUIDING INTO OTHERNESS: THE PARATEXT IN THE ROMANIAN TRANSLATION OF THE NOVEL 仮面の告白 (KAMEN NO KOKUHAKU), CONFESSIONS OF A MASK BY MISHIMA YUKIO

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Abstract: *The Other – in our case, Japanese culture – can be (re)constructed by means of translation methods, but also by various paratextual components, which sometimes aim at reimagining its distinctive features, thus creating specific expectations in the minds of the potential readers. Especially paratextual elements are powerful tools when we think about the way the reader is guided in understanding the qualities that highlight the Otherness. This study will focus on some parts of the paratext – book covers and blurbs – that are present in the Romanian translation of Mishima Yukio’s literary work Confessions of a Mask. We shall argue that the blurbs act as a form of recreating Mishima’s literary fame in the Romanian cultural space, while having at the same time the role of stressing the autobiographical content, thus insisting on a specific way of understanding this novel. Additionally, we will demonstrate the fact that the cover design of the first edition has the function of marking the cultural difference, thus enjoining the reader to read the literary work from a specific perspective, while the cover design of the second edition introduces him/her into Mishima’s narrative, laying emphasis on the relation between the figure of Saint Sebastian and the novel as well, which is an aspect that also influences the understanding of the novel.*

Keywords: *paratext, Japanese literature, Otherness, translation studies, symbolic capital, linguistic hospitality, Mishima Yukio*

Introduction

Paratexts can be regarded as the *pièce de résistance* in the trade with books and ideas. Who has never been captivated at least one time by the aesthetic covers of a book and, moreover, by the words comprised in the blurbs, which, grammarly speaking, often make use of superlatives? Paratexts are not only forms of branding, but also – in the case of books that belong to other cultural spaces – of controlling and influencing a reader’s way of interacting with the Other. What is more, (translated) novels pack their bags (or rather words) and move to other countries; as a result, in their published form, they are a means of introducing, promoting and presenting to a new culture the literary works written by an author who belongs to a different culture. Undeniably, book covers and blurbs represent, more or less, the first contact between a reader and a writer’s literary world. Additionally, book covers represent a form of physical contact that attire the immateriality of words. Interestingly, we could

further discover other analogies that incorporate not only a tactile experience, but also a gustatory one. Is it not true that before actually reading the book, the reader *tastes* it by (visually) touching its garment (or should we say *appetizer*?) – the covers? Typically, they can contain a variety of masterly joined pieces: details of famous paintings, a selection of colours and nuances that may illustrate a part of that writer’s vision, fonts and sizes of the letters that compose the title of the book which, in addition, outline the materiality of words. Ultimately, the covers may well be perceived as the ludic part in the reception process, since by seeing them, the potential readers become “actors” in the play with the book content. Simply put, the covers can influence how the readers understand the book.

As regards the different analogies, Gérard Genette uses specific words in order to describe the paratext: “only an assistant, only an accessory of the text” (410). He perceives the paratext as a factor of “influence” (409), of “manipulation” (409), while for Sonzogni, “covers may well change how people read books” (13). At the same time, Genette reminds us of Philippe Lejeune’s view: “a fringe of the printed text which in reality controls one’s whole reading of the text” (Lejeune, qtd. in Genette 2). Besides, the paratext can be “[...] a means of fashioning and marketing the text as a valuable object for readers to acquire” (“Paratext and Literary Value”), thus contributing to the recreation of that author’s fame and to the (re)confirmation of the value that characterizes the literary work. Undoubtedly, paratextual elements and especially book covers hold an exceptional power when properly orchestrated – that of potentially changing one’s view on a specific literary work. According to Sapiro, four dimensions influence the way “literary works cross borders or (not)”¹: the political, economic, cultural and social ones (Sapiro 82). Furthermore, these dimensions control the process of creating book covers as well. Apart from this, in the case of novels written by foreign authors, book covers can function as a form of translation, since they sometimes constitute, more or less, a visual representation and interpretation of a specific culture. This aspect is in consonance with Tahir-Gürçaglar’s view on paratexts: “The most concrete links that connect translated texts with their immediate or larger socio-cultural contexts” (288). In this regard, not only the strategies employed in translating the novel, but also paratexts can differ depending on the target culture’s features.

To quote Ricœur,

¹ The phrase is a part of the title of her article titled “How Do Literary Works Cross Borders (or Not)?”

Linguistic hospitality, therefore, is the act of inhabiting the word of the Other paralleled by the act of receiving the word of the Other into one's own home, one's own dwelling. (25)

Likewise, a form of hospitality is present in the paratext too, when it benefits from the proper choreography of images, nuances and words. The publishing house is thus hospitable to the text, to the cultural context and, what is more, to the writer's innermost thoughts. In other words, the Other is accepted in its authenticity or reshaped in order to fit some domestic ideas.

In this respect, we should pay attention to the way a paratext is constructed. As Compagnon puts it,

To remove a work from its literary and historical context is to give it another intention (another author—the reader), making it another work altogether, and it is therefore no longer the same work that we are interpreting. (Compagnon 67)

In a similar manner, using unsuitable paratextual resources – in our case, book covers and blurbs – is equivalent to giving the translated work another intention and even another author – namely the editor and, after publishing the book, the readers, who may weave another text and another narrative around the original book content.

Finally, book blurbs and covers, be they understood as a paratextual means of influencing the reception process, can be seen as elements that guide the reader into the world of the Other. Moreover, they contribute to the target culture reader's understanding of the source culture. At the same time, to use Ricœur's words, book blurbs and covers can be interpreted as a form of *visual hospitality*. To put it differently, one can speak of a *paratextual hospitality* when the proper (paratextual) resources are used.

Paratextual hospitality and guiding into Otherness

As Rovira Esteva observes,

The way in which different paratexts are used not only affects the reception and consumption of the text, but can also effectively determine the way in which the Other is represented. (192)

These ideas hold true especially in the case of the contact between the Japanese and Romanian cultures, which are distant geographically, but also different in terms of interpersonal relationships, mentalities, traditions, gastronomy, flora, fauna and views on life and death. More than any other translation strategy, paratextual resources can be manipulated with the aim of

constructing a specific image of the Other. As a result, Japan has been frequently illustrated – not only in our cultural space, but also in the United States of America – by means of figures such as a samurai, a geisha, a woman in a kimono, of elements such as a Buddhist temple, a *shintō* shrine, swords, components of tea ceremony, cherry blossoms or even modified woodblock prints. Such constituents have the function of adding an extra layer of exoticism and, moreover, of dramatizing the subject of the book. In addition to this, Toledano Buendía (157-159) presents a classification with regard to the translator’s notes as a part of the paratext, “explanatory notes” (157) and “discursive notes” (158), the latter being characterized by “their illocutionary force” (159). Obviously, we could further expand her theory in our current field of expertise and say that book covers too can gain such an “illocutionary force”; they can include images that guide or even dictate the reader’s expectations and ways of interpreting the literary text before and after the act of reading.

In addition, the titles of the different novels are “stimulating a previous interpretation of the text” (Orgado and Sá 169). Furthermore, the covers and the book blurbs also mediate this encounter, thus creating specific expectations in the minds of the potential readers. They can even create a parallel narrative, although this narrative does not constitute the content of a specific literary work and not even the writer’s intention. Importantly enough, the Other is sometimes illustrated through images that vividly represent the cultural difference. However, what happens when other publishing strategies are applied, for instance the use of a picture belonging to the European cultural heritage on the first cover of the Romanian version (2015) of the novel 仮面の告白 *Kamen no Kokuhaku, Confessions of a Mask* (Romanian title: *Confesiunile unei măști*)? Guido Reni’s painting *Saint Sebastian* is representative for the plot in Mishima’s novel, but how can this choice influence the reception process? Alternatively, Alworth wonders “what happens to the notion of reading when designing a jacket is understood to comprise giving a reading in a meaningful sense?” (1130).

In what follows, we will analyse two elements of the paratext that are present in the two Romanian versions of Mishima’s² novel, which were

² Mishima Yukio (1925-1970) was a Japanese author renowned for his literary works that illustrate traditional Japanese values, some of them being translated also into Romanian: 金閣寺 *Kinkaku-ji, The Temple of the Golden Pavilion, Templul de aur* (1985, 2000, 2013); 春の雪 *Haru no Yuki, Spring Snow, Zăpada de primăvară* (2009); 仮面の告白 *Kamen no Kokuhaku, Confessions of a Mask, Confesiunile unei măști* (2003, 2015); 宴のあと *Utage no Ato, After the Banquet, După banchet* (2004, 2015); 潮騒 *Shiosai, The Sound of Waves, Tumultul valurilor* (2010); 午後の曳航 *Gogo no Eikō, The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea, Amurgul marinanului* (2017); 奔馬 *Honba, Runaway Horses, Cai în galop* (2010); 天人五衰 *Tennin Gosui, The Decay of the Angel, Îngerul decăzut* (2012); 命売ります

published in 2003 and in 2015 at Humanitas Publishing House: the book covers and the blurbs. Our major concern is to describe how the reader is guided into the richness of the Japanese cultural space, a richness that encompasses more than what is visually presented by means of the covers. We consider Rovira Esteva's view – that the covers “convey information about the publisher's intention and contribute to form the image of the Other” (Rovira Esteva 190) – a handy tool for analysing the function of these paratextual resources. In fact, her words suggest that we have here under focus no more the writer's intention, but “the publisher's intention” (190), an external one (since it is not part of the writer's culture), which can alter or faithfully represent Mishima's authenticity.

Alvstad et al. propose the concept of “metaphorical ‘voice’ to refer to how individual or collective conceptions and attitudes are expressed by publishers, translators, and others in both contextual material and translated texts” (5). Most importantly, the paratext has a role in reception, as Sapiro stated in her chapter titled “The Sociology of Reception” (322), or, to put it otherwise, it “frames the translation” (Summers 13). As Sapiro observes in her article titled “Faulkner in France: Or How to Introduce a Peripheral Unknown Author in the Center of the World Republic of Letters”, book blurbs can be a means of transplanting the symbolic capital (399). Similarly, extending Sapiro's above mentioned idea that was discussed in her study on how Faulkner's literary works were introduced in France (399), we could claim that the paratext as a whole serves as a donor of symbolic capital. Because she writes in this article that blurbs are a contemporary form of prefaces (399) and that “the preface also provide[s] an interpretation of the work (Genette)” (399), we could infer that blurbs have this goal as well. Among those who have also studied the paratext, Furukawa mentions its influence in the reception process and its informative role (Furukawa 215-216). Zbanț identifies another quality of the paratext: “the adaptation of a translation on an interlingual, semiological, chronological, social, cultural, etc. level” (Zbanț 123). Rovira Esteva writes about adaptation with regard to the temporal and the (cultural) spatial axes (Rovira Esteva 204). Vuaille refers to the idea of adaptation (with regard to Skopos theory) (72). She inserts in her analysis on the paratext two influential theories – Polysystem theory and Skopos theory – and remarks that they “converge around this idea that a text can be modified so as to ensure its acceptance in the target system.

Inochi Urimasu, Life for Sale, Viață de vânzare (2018); 愛の渴き *Ai no Kawaki, Thirst for Love, Sete de iubire* (2013); 暁の寺 *Akatsuki no Tera, The Temple of Dawn, Templul Zorilor* (2012); *Hanjo* (2017); *Seijo (Sfânta)* (2018). They were translated by Stanca Cionca, Ana Laura Cocora, Andreea Sion, Iuliana Oprina, Emil Eugen Pop, George Șipoș, Ana Maria Năvodaru, Iuliu Rațiu, Angela Hondru, Mihaela Merlan.

The paratext facilitates this ‘intrusion’” (74). Reiß and Vermeer summarise the essence of the translating process as follows:

A translational action is an offer of information produced in a target culture and language about an offer of information produced in a source culture and language. (94)

Admittedly, not only texts translated into the target language, but also paratexts are such “an offer of information” (in Reiß and Vermeer’s terms) which is, moreover, “produced in a target culture and language”. The formula proposed by Reiß and Vermeer can be implemented in our case by virtue of the fact that paratextual resources are a communication channel which was not created by the writer him-/herself – in our situation, Mishima Yukio –, but by external sources that sought to convey a specific message and at the same time image, to direct the reader’s attention to a specific interpretation of the literary work.

As regards the way Otherness is illustrated through book covers (in the case of Japanese novels translated into Spanish), Serra Vilella observes that Japanese elements and, most importantly, many cultural components that belong to the past are used, while the modern ones are not numerous (158). Besides, Orgado and Sá remark that

Paratextual resources [...] optimize the process of reception and representation performed by the reader, particularly the expansion of the sense of lacunar components, which is filled by information in the paratexts in general. (173)

To put it differently, the paratext has an active role in the interpretation of the literary work by extending its potentialities. It has a complementary function, namely that of rewriting and renarrating the original text. On the other side, Watts presents another role of the paratext, which is of utmost importance for our study: “the secondary function of the paratext (which Genette presents as being one of explanation and guidance) is one of cultural translation, especially for the metropolitan readership” (31). Interestingly, Furukawa includes in her analysis on book covers Venuti’s concepts – *foreignization* and *domestication* (215) – and terms used by Roman Jakobson in the study “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation”: “the representations in cover designs can be regarded as a type of intersemiotic translation (Jakobson 139)” (Furukawa 228). After quoting Alvstad (“there is a strong paratextual construction of sameness” (Alvstad, qtd. in Batchelor 38), Batchelor writes that “As part of this construction of sameness, many publishers adopt exoticising as well as universalising discourses” (Batchelor

32), thus showing the two strategies implemented in the publishing world. Researchers from the University of Vigo have developed the concept of “paratranslation”:

The aim of paratranslation is to become a symbolic reference to the physical or virtual space occupied by all the possible productions that surround, wrap, accompany, extend, introduce and present a translation. (Yuste Frías 119)

Kovala presents the roles of the paratext thus: “identification, metatextual function, placing, giving background information, illustration, reference to reader, advertising, and the artistic and legal/bibliographic functions” (Kovala 134). Furthermore,

It turned out that both prefaces and blurbs seem to reflect a tendency to stress thought content and biographical and social context as compared to literary form and literary context. They also seem to stress the informative and conative functions – that is, information and influence on the reader [...]. (Kovala 136)

These ideas hold true when we take into consideration the information that is frequently presented in the book blurbs: references to dramatic events in that writer’s existence (for instance, the context that surrounds Mishima’s suicide), which are inserted in order to captivate the reader, some aspects regarding, for example, Mishima’s health condition and relationship with 武士道 *bushidō* (the samurai code), his relationship with his father and his paternal grandmother, but also his ideals. Toledano Buendía’s above presented classification could also be extended in the field of book blurbs; we could infer that some parts of the blurbs have an “illocutionary force” (Toledano Buendía 159).

In addition, Bös and Peikola have created a scheme in order to illustrate the “paratext in a prototype perspective” (7):

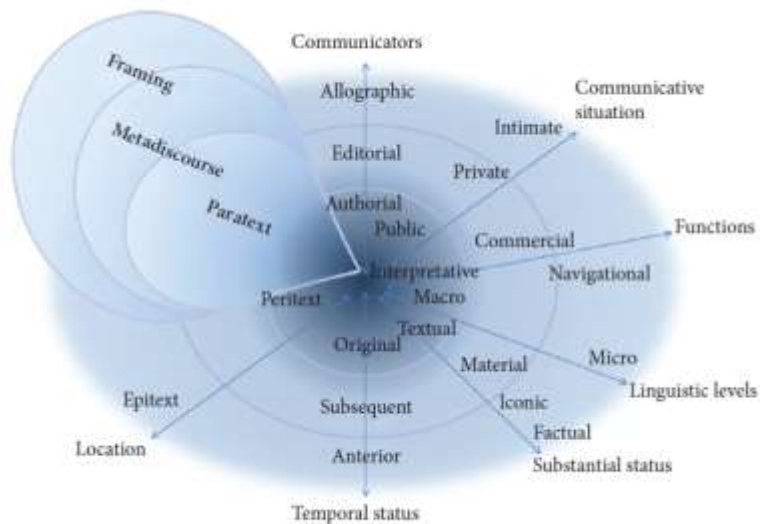


Figure 1. Paratext and related phenomena in a prototype perspective

(Source: Bös and Peikola 8)

It should be noted that Alworth underlines another essential dimension: “contemporary literature [...] constitutes a visual culture” (1126). Tymoczko writes on the paratextual elements that are specific for “a scholarly translation” and “a popular translation” (49).

Book covers and the image of Alterity

The two Romanian editions of *Confesiunile unei măști* (2003, 2015), Mishima’s *Kamen no Kokuhaku* (*Confessions of a Mask*), have covers that illustrate different ways of interacting with the Other: while the first one shows a part of a work of Tōshūsai Sharaku, a Japanese artist who is known for the portraits of *kabuki*³ actors, the second one contains Guido Reni’s (1575-1642) painting *Saint Sebastian*, a piece of art that influenced the protagonist of the novel *Confessions of a Mask*.

The cover of the edition published in 2003 is a detail of a 役者絵 *yakusha-e* (prints in which the figures of various *kabuki* actors appear), thus illustrating the alterity of the novel in an artistic manner. The fourth cover provides details on the source of this image: the figure belongs to “Actor Yooso in the role of Kanpei” (the fourth cover in Mishima 2003). The Romanian reader visually meets a part of a new culture and observes a figure which has Japanese facial features: the eye shape, the facial colour and the hairstyle of this actor introduce the reader in the world of the Other. By depicting only a human face and including the title of the literary work,

³ A form of Japanese theatre that includes dances.

which suggests the fact that the novel focuses on the nature of a human being, the cover has the role of presenting in a suggestive way the autobiographical subject of Mishima's literary work. Moreover, the symbolism of the mask – an art object that hides one's identity – is (somehow) convergent with the image of an actor, who willingly assumes the identity of another human figure during a specific play. Thus, the cover aims at anticipating the narrative. To use Furukawa's words (215), this strategy is *foreignizing* and maybe even exoticising, since the image on the first cover seems to seize the cultural difference, which can attract the potential reader's attention. Importantly enough, this actor's face occupies almost the entire surface of the first cover, an aspect meant to enjoin the reader to focus on its particularities and its relationship with the autobiographical content of the novel. As regards the visual interaction with the Other, then, the great dimension of the face has a powerful impact on the reader.

In contrast to this version, a part of Guido Reni's painting *Saint Sebastian* appears on the first cover of the edition published in 2015. In fact, the entire piece of art is thoroughly described in Mishima's novel in the context of the narrator's experiencing facets of his intimacy. Moreover, the Japanese writer imagined himself in the role of Saint Sebastian in photographs taken by Kishin Shinoyama (1968). The cover of the Romanian version presents the figure of Saint Sebastian (not the entire Reni's painting) and a flower which seems to be withered, while the background contains different shades of yellow. In comparison with the covers of the first edition, the ones of the second edition can be considered as being more aesthetically appealing to the potential Romanian reader. The chromatic dimension and the floral image allude to one of the features of Mishima's writings, decadence, the above mentioned colour being exploited in his texts. The content of this cover is more dramatic than the content of the early edition; importantly enough, no Japanese element is present. Indeed, alterity exists only in the name of the author, for the Other is otherwise represented through an European artwork, thus probably implying the fact that the image of the European cultural space is crucial in Mishima's novel (he was actually influenced by many European writers and philosophers). The cover incorporates in this case a part of the book content, being illustrative for Mishima's intention. Furthermore, in this cover the portrait of a human being (actually a saint – Saint Sebastian) is inserted as well, thus anticipating the focus on the human nature in the narrative. Contrary to the remarkable size of the actor's face on the first cover of the first edition, the dimension of Saint Sebastian's figure is noticeably smaller, but the subject of the image contained in the second edition is more dramatic, which doubtlessly has a strong effect on the Romanian reader. In this view, the cover illustration lays emphasis on a specific reading of the book, based on the importance of Saint

Sebastian for Mishima's novel, foreshadowing its close connection with the subject of the literary work.

Blurbs and symbolic capital

No preface is included in the two Romanian versions, yet their book blurbs do have the function of reconfiguring Mishima's literary world. They are related to the concept of symbolic capital, which is transplanted to them in this process, a concept discussed by Sapiro in her article "Faulkner in France: Or How to Introduce a Peripheral Unknown Author in the Center of the World Republic of Letters" (399).

Book blurbs are constituents of the first Romanian edition; nevertheless, they do not contain statements written by other authors or literary critics. Only two quotes belonging to Mishima appear on the fourth cover: "I am a complicated useless paradox" and "This is the psychological proof of the fact" (the fourth cover in Mishima 2015). The fourth cover presents the audience the narrative and some interpretations with regard to the meaning of the mask and Mishima's identity. This blurb lays stress on the autobiographical content, thus possibly guiding the reader to understand the novel in a specific way. It incorporates a reference to Guido Reni's painting, thus highlighting its central place in Mishima's view. Besides, a longer text provides information on aspects such as biography, the influence of the paternal grandmother on his education, the last day of his life, the things he valued and the relationship to Greek cultural heritage (in Mishima 2003). Furthermore, the blurb quotes Kawabata Yasunari⁴ statement with reference to Mishima Yukio's literary genius: "In terms of talent, he is far superior to me" (in Mishima 2003). This quote lays emphasis on the quality of Mishima's literature. We can notice that this text starts with the presentation

⁴ Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972) was the first Japanese writer that was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature (in 1968). His literary works have also versions in Romanian: 伊豆の踊子 *Izu no Odoriko*, *The Dancing Girl of Izu*, *Dansatoarea din Izu* (2008, 2012); 雪国 *Yukiguni*, *Snow Country*, *Țara Zăpezilor* (2007, 2015, 2018); 名人 *Meijin*, *The Master of Go*, *Maestrul de go* (2007, 2014); 千羽鶴 *Senbazuru*, *Thousand Crane*, *O mie de cocori* (2000, 2015); 山の音 *Yama no Oto*, *The Sound of the Mountain*, *Sunetul muntelui* (2010, 2016); みづうみ 片腕 散りぬるを *Mizuumi Kataude Chirinuru wo*, *Lacul. Brațul. Grabnic se va scutura* (2012); 眠れる美女 *Nemurenu Bijo*, *The House of the Sleeping Beauties*, *Frumoasele adormite* (2006, 2014, 2018); 古都 *Koto*, *The Old Capital*, *Vechiul oraș imperial* (2009, 2015, 2017); 美しさと哀しみと *Utsukushisa to Kanashimi to*, *Beauty and Sadness*, *Frumusețe și întristare* (2000, 2013, 2018); たんぽぽ *Tanpopo*, *Dandelions*, *Păpădiile* (2015, 2018); 掌の小説 *Tenohira no Shōsetsu*, *Palm-of-the-hand-Stories*, *Povestiri de ținut în palmă* (2018). They were translated into Romanian by Anca Focșeneanu, Stanca Cionca, Flavius Florea, George Șipoș, Sorin Mărculescu, Pericle Martinescu, Vasile Spoială.

of Mishima's last day of his life, which dramatizes his existence and his view as well. By inserting the ideas expressed in his last speech and his last words, this text stresses the strong relationship between life and literature in the case of this Japanese author. Another remarkable aspect is the reference to the fact that 4000 copies of his first book were sold in a week (in Mishima 2003), a reference which has the role of attracting the target culture reader.

On the contrary, in the second edition, the Romanian reader can read (on the first cover) Marguerite Yourcenar's words – “A masterpiece of anguish”. They are meant to reinforce the literary value of Mishima's work; more simply, a famous European literary voice regarded one of his novels as “a masterpiece”. As Pascale Casanova puts it, “Translation is therefore an essential measure of the scale and effectiveness of consecration” (167). In this respect, we consider that some paratextual elements such as Yourcenar's words do consecrate Mishima or, to use a verb that frequently appears in Casanova's book *The World Republic of Letters*, they do “legitimize” the literary value of Mishima's novel. Furthermore, by being included on the first cover and not on the fourth one, they draw attention to one of the themes that appear in Mishima's literature and stress the idea of “anguish”, conceivably determining the reader to focus on it. By offering the audience this short text, the publisher tries to (re)confirm (and reconstruct in the Romanian cultural space) the literary fame of this Japanese author. It should be noted that the fourth cover comprises Kawabata's statement with reference to this author's literary genius – “In terms of talent, he is far superior to me” (the fourth cover in Mishima 2015). Importantly enough, this statement is written in bold letters, which unquestionably serve as markers of the weight of Kawabata's words. Moreover, we observe that these blurbs resemble those prefaces written by famous writers who belong to the cultural space in which the literary work is translated (Sapiro, “How Do Literary Works Cross Borders (or Not)?” 399), although in our case the words of writers who belong to other cultural spaces are printed. In the same way, statements (yet not written in bold letters) that belong to the novelist Christopher Isherwood (1904-1986) and to the critic Paul Binding (b. 1943) and quotes from the prestigious *Times Literary Supplement* and *Sunday Times* are printed. Beyond doubt, they considerably contribute to the transplantation of the symbolic capital. Furthermore, by writing

One might say, “Here is a Japanese Gide,”....But no, Mishima is himself – a very Japanese Mishima; lucid in the midst of emotional confusion, funny in the midst of despair, quite without pomposity, sentimentality or self-pity. His book, like no other, has made me

understand a little of how it feels to be Japanese”⁵ (in Romanian on the fourth cover in Mishima 2015),

Isherwood implies this Japanese author’s originality, his distinctiveness. Such a description included on the last cover is actually meant to direct the reader’s attention to some facets of Mishima’s literature, for instance the two paradoxical aspects, “lucid in the midst of emotional confusion, funny in the midst of despair”. Moreover, they construct an image of Mishima – “But no, Mishima is himself – a very Japanese Mishima” – intended to influence the way the Romanian reader perceives his personality and his literature. Apart from this, other words belonging to Yourcenar appear on the fourth cover, which reconfirm the central position of Mishima in Japanese literature. Another part of this blurb is a short description of the subject of this novel, the focus being on the autobiographical dimension. Undoubtedly, in order to attract the reader, this text begins with a presentation of the fact that this novel consecrated the Japanese author at the age of 24 (fourth cover in Mishima 2015), thus highlighting its importance to establishing Mishima’s fame.

Conclusion

As shown in this study, the blurbs of the two Romanian editions have the role of recreating Mishima Yukio’s literary fame. Besides, with regard to the Romanian cultural space, they function to (re)confirm the literary value of his works, in that the statements that belong to Kawabata Yasunari, Marguerite Yourcenar, Christopher Isherwood and Paul Binding, as well as the quotes from *Times Literary Supplement* and *Sunday Times*, act as donors of symbolic capital. The autobiographical content of the novel *Kamen no Kokuhaku* is stressed by means of blurbs that describe this aspect and, moreover, by means of images that depict either an actor’s face or even Saint Sebastian – seemingly visual equivalents of the book’s main character. Additionally, Alterity is emphasized through the first cover of the first Romanian edition. The face of Yooso that appears on it has a powerful impact on the potential reader and, furthermore, marks the cultural difference. At the same time, we could infer that this image, through its otherness, serves as a means of influencing the understanding of the ideas expressed in Mishima’s novel. To put it differently, it “others” the first impression of the reader. Conversely, the image of Saint Sebastian, notwithstanding the fact that it belongs to the European cultural space, introduces the Romanian reader into Mishima’s narrative. For this reason, the cover design of the second edition can be regarded as a way of guiding into Mishima’s literary

⁵ The source of the English version: “Confessions of a Mask (New Directions Paperback)”.

world. Given the above, these paratextual components – the book blurbs and the covers – have a significant role in the reception process, since they are, more or less, the first impression of the reader with regard to the literary work and the cultural context, which is characterized by a noteworthy difference, that is to say, they guide into Otherness.

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