

## THE LITERARY TRANSLATOR AS A CULTURAL BRIDGE

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### Abstract

Communication occurs within the context of culture or of that complex whole including knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other human capabilities and habit. Thus, proceeding from such an assertion, we will view the literary translator as a social being who plays the role of the simultaneous mediator between two given languages and cultures. We also aim to explain the main reasons why he turns into a (1) “battlefield”; (2) a “participant”; and (3) a fair “judge” of both “linguistic duel” and “cultural duel”, of which the outcome should at least to the protection, if not the freshness and enrichment, of the “combatant” languages and cultures. To accomplish his mission, however, the literary translator needs not only to know the functioning logic of the invisible meanings hiding behind the act of speaking and writing, but also discover the values that have brought about their birth in the source culture. Besides, understanding the image making potential of the interacting semiotic systems would enable him to use suitable linguistic and cultural “clothes” and carry all of these “from one riverbank to the other”, as though he were a bridge.

**Keywords:** *Culture, mission, literary translator, linguistic*

### Introduction

Translation is a special expression of the lecture text. It is an originally defined literary creation, through which it is intended to transmit the content and form of the original text, while preserving its natural meaning and style in the language of translation. Although the translator can use mutual inspiration and variegated language, he can never have the freedom of the author of the original text, because the act of creation is not equally unique in both cultures, in both time and two different people. Consequently, he is forced to investigate a linguistic and cultural environment of the unknown, to open trails to discover the central message and stratified messages, because the capture and decomposition of their core takes it to the reader of the language of translation.

The author of the original text really faces difficulties to naming objects, actions, ideas, and word choice, but, ultimately, he remains the blameless manufacturer of final creative fruit. Meanwhile, the translator does not have this advantage. Rather, in addition to finding ways to overcome and appropriate means to overcome these difficulties, he faces the arduous burden of decision-making in the language of translation, which, in our case, is the Albanian language.

However, in all cases, the translation depends on the accuracy of the basic performance criteria for all interpersonal communication, i.e., respectively the implementation of the principle.

Meanwhile, translation, especially literary translation is very difficult. Consequently, intercultural communication depends on the progress to overcome or not these difficulties. Human communication is the most defining aspect of human interaction. Through culture human learn to recognize their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in relation to their environment. Culture teaches us how to think, how to act and how to communicate. In many aspects, culture and communication are linked together and can be used interchangeably.

As Hall (1983) stated culture hides more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants. When we think about culture it comes into our mind different countries in different geographic positions. For example when we think about Siberia it comes into our mind as a cold and mountainous country whereas when we think about South Arabia it comes into our mind as a hot, desert country. There are many definitions of culture. For example, let us consider the following one (Samovar and Porter, 1997, p.12-1 3)<sup>(2)</sup>: *the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.*

When we think of a culture, we think of the people. Hence, it is important to understand the cultures of people to understand how they communicate. Effective communication with people of different cultures is especially challenging. Cultures provide people with ways of thinking--ways of seeing, hearing, and interpreting the world. Thus the same words can mean different things to people from different cultures, even when they talk the "same" language. When the languages are different, and translation has to be used to communicate, the potential for misunderstandings increases.

## Aim of study

Montaigne (1580) said, "The most universal quality is diversity"<sup>(3)</sup>. Considering the fact that diversity abounds the issue of understanding each other is really important and scaring at the same time. It is a challenging journey because it is bound up with communication and conflict, as misunderstandings and communication can cause conflicts. This is why it is necessary to have effective communication in order to make progress in a conflict.

Hall (1983) writes in the introduction to his book, *The Dance of Life* "to understand each other mean to recognize our thinking and few people are willing to risk such a radical move". Translation has been central to the interpenetration of the global and local communication throughout history. Linguistic, cultural, social and ethical considerations are all intertwined in translation as a bridge between cultures. In this paper we will view the literary translator as a social being who plays the role of the simultaneous mediator between two given languages and cultures. We also aim to explain the main reasons why he turns into a (1) "battlefield"; (2) a "participant"; and (3) a fair "judge" of both "linguistic duel" and "cultural duel", of which the outcome should at least to the protection, if not the freshness and enrichment, of the "combatant" languages and cultures.

Different authors consider translation from an intercultural perspective and who contribute to the idea that the translator has become an intercultural expert who mediates between cultures within a globalized world.

Mayoral et al. (1988) conceive the translation process as a communicative act, and they define the figure of the translator as “*a decoder of the source language as well as an encoder of the target language,*” and at the same time “*a receptor of the message in the source culture as well as a source of the message in the target culture.*”

According to Toury (1995) “*being a translator cannot be reduced to the mere generation of utterances which would be considered ‘translations’ within any of these disciplines.*” He also says that “*Translation activities should rather be regarded as having cultural significance*” and that “*Consequently, ‘translator ship’ amounts first and foremost to being able to play a social role.*”

Culture is a complex collection of experiences that happen in our daily life, such as social structure, traditional customs, history.

Here, we will deal with some of the problems that the translator may face while translating a text from one language to another in the Albanian context. The best illustration of this is the translation into Albanian of “The Waste Land” by T. S. Eliot.

Sometimes the inescapable interpretative nature of literary translation could be attributable to the cultural identity of the translator himself and sometimes it could be the result of the innate cultural dimensions or temper of the recipient language. The problems encountered, solutions arrived at and transcultural evolution affected is illustrated from the (original and translated) texts.

By combining the techniques and strengths of various genres such as the epic, the Georgian and romantic poetry in new ways, *The Waste Land* gives the reader a new experience which captures, *in a new voice*, what the other works could not—the feeling of disillusionment after the war. Eliot creates the new form by using literary allusions which actually make his footnotes part of the poem. The footnotes add substantial meaning through rich, cultural, critical and imagistic connotations.

The poem "The Waste Land" does not simply reflect the historic, social and cultural disorder, plagued by violent forces that operate under the name of modernization. For Elliot, the catastrophe that characterized modernity was not simply reversal, but inevitable and ironic culmination of every order, which was so lovingly celebrated during the last decade of Victoria to the throne. Unlike previous generations, who were witnesses to events such as the Great War, Eliot came to know only that the golden age was in itself a multitude of socio-political absurd axioms and wicked misrepresentations of political past, which in the last example has proven to be built through the worst malevolent bond.

Promulgation of the poem on contemporary social scene of "Burying the Dead" (verses 1-7), "Chess Game" (verses 77-103) and "The Fire Sermon" (Verses 173-181) highlights "negative liberal society ". Compare:

April is the cruellest month, breeding  
*Prilli, muaji më i lig, pjell*  
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
*Pjell jargavanë nga vendi i vdekur, përzien*  
Memory and desire, stirring  
*Kujtesë and dëshirë, me shi*  
Dull roots with spring rain.  
*Pranvere njall rrënje orëvrara.*  
Winter kept us warm, covering  
*Dimri na mbajti ngrohtë, tokën*  
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding  
*E mbuloi me borë harrestare, ushqeu*  
A little life with dried tubers.  
*Pak thërrime jete me zharkë të thatë.*

(“Burying the dead”)

and

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,  
*Ndenjësja ku u ul ajo, si fron i praruar,*  
Glowed on the marble, where the glass  
*Vezullonte mbi mermer, aty ku pasqyra*  
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines  
*E mbajtur me hire, me vile rrushi zbukuruar,*  
From which a golden Cupidon peeped out  
*Nga ku shihte vjedhurazi një Kupidon i artë*  
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)  
*(Një tjetër fshihte sytë pas flatrave të tij)*  
Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra  
*Dyfishonte flakët në qirimbajtëset shtatëshe*  
Reflecting light upon the table as  
*Tek hidhnin dritë mbi tavolinë, kur*  
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,  
*Shkëlqimi i gurëve të saj të çmuar u ngrit ta takonte,*  
From satin cases poured in rich profusion;  
*Nga arkat këllëfmëndafshëta gurgulloi kamja pasanike;*  
In vials of ivory and coloured glass  
*Në shishkat e fildishta ose prej qelqi të zbukuruar*  
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,  
*Pa kapakë pritë kishin zënë parfumet e saj të çuditshme sintetike,*  
Unguent, powdered, or liquid – troubled, confused  
*Të pomadëta, të pudërtat, të lëngëta, të shqetësuara, të ngatërruara*  
And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air  
*And arsyen mbysnin me kundërmime; shpupurit nga ajri*  
That freshened from the window, these ascended  
*Që fllad sillte nga dritarja, ato ngjiteshin,*  
In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,  
*Rrafshonin flakët e zgjatura të qirinjve,*  
Flung their smoke into the laquearia,  
*Flaknин tymin e tyre në lakerie,*

Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.  
*Duke trazuar ojnat në tavanin e varur.*  
Huge sea-wood fed with copper  
*Pyll i pamatë në det, ushqyer me bakër*  
Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,  
*Të blertë të djegur, të portokalltë, në kornizën e gurit me ngjyra,*  
In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.  
*Në dritën e tij të trishtuar notonte delfini i gandndur.*  
Above the antique mantel was displayed  
*Mbi oxhakun antik shfaqej,*  
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene  
*Sikur të ishte dritare sipër skenës së pyllit,*  
The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king  
*Shndërrimi i Filomelës, mundësuar me zor mizor*  
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale  
*Nga një mbret barbar; veç, bilbili aty*  
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice  
*E pushtoi shkretëtirën me zë ngadhënjimtar*  
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,  
*And prapë bërtiti, and prapë bota vijon t'u flasë*  
'Jug Jug' to dirty ears.  
*Veshëve të ndyrë: "Ci-ca, Ci-ca".*

(“Chess Game”)

and

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf  
*Çadra e lumi thyhet; gishtat e fundit të gjethit*  
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind  
*Kapen e mbyten në bregun e lagur. Era*  
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.  
*Kapërcen tokën e murrme, pa u dëgjuar. Ikën nimfat.*  
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.  
*Tamiz i ëmbël, rridh butë e butë, sa ta mbaroj këngën.*  
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,  
*Lumi s'mbart asnje shishe të zbrazur, as mbështjella senduiçi,*  
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends  
*As shami dore të mëndafshta, as kuti kartoni, as bishta cigaresh,*  
Or other testimony of summer nights. Nymphs are departed.  
*As dëshmi të tjera të netëve të verës. Ikën nimfat.*  
And their friends, the loitering heirs of City directors;  
*And miqtë e tyre, trashëgimtarët bredharakë të parisë së Qytetit,*  
Departed, have left no addresses.  
*Ikën, nuk lanë asnje adresë.*

(“The Fire Sermon”)

By comparing the sequences of the above, separated from the first three parts of the poem, in the original language and in Albanian language, the translator concludes that, by sticking to the principle of cultural reconstruction, conveys the essence of the central message, though fragmented, that (a) the author's social criticism was negative feature associated with liberal

morality; (b) "The Waste Land" could not accept pre-liberal codes of human values; and (c), in the same way, could not ethically represent post - liberal arranged ethic, or historical materialism, without relying on historical epistemology.

So, the authority of the poem relies on other grounds, but not in a system of ideas, as the primary form of discourse. It is a new lyric synthesis, an experimental kind of authenticity in a world where sacred cosmologies on one side had fallen prey to astrologers and charlatans; while on the other hand, the cosmology of the daily life had fallen into the hands of undesigned importers. The poem is meant to penetrate below the level of rational consciousness, where conceptual turnover of moral and formative norms have no forming and steering power. Beyond this layer it lied the real story of human nature, where "liberal opinion" is turned into blackness, by obscuring the intersection of the human person and sharing the deeper levels of consciousness. Expressive strength lies in affective and restorative program of the poem, which functions as the conclusion of its "argument".

## Methodology

In order to have a good translation of a literary work, especially a poem, it is important to consider the following questions. Among the authors of a given culture which one do we translate? Who translates and publishes these authors? Who are the readers for whom these translations are made? How are these authors translated? Towards what end are they translated?

There are many scholars that have proposed a number of procedures of translation, but the procedures of translation proposed by Newmark (1988b) have affected me while working with translation.

- *Transference*: it is the process of transferring an SL word to a TL text. It includes transliteration.
- *Naturalization*: it adapts the SL word first to the normal pronunciation, then to the normal morphology of the TL.
- *Cultural equivalent*: it means replacing a cultural word in the SL with a TL one. however, "they are not accurate"
- *Functional equivalent*: it requires the use of a culture-neutral word.
- *Descriptive equivalent*: in this procedure the meaning of the CBT is explained in several words.
- *Componential analysis*: it means "comparing an SL word with a TL word which has a similar meaning but is not an obvious one-to-one equivalent, by demonstrating first their common and then their differing sense components."
- *Synonymy*: it is a "near TL equivalent." Here economy trumps accuracy.
- *Through-translation*: it is the literal translation of common collocations, names of organizations and components of compounds. It can also be called: calque or loan translation.
- *Shifts or transpositions*: it involves a change in the grammar from SL to TL, for instance, (i) change from singular to plural, (ii) the change required when a specific SL structure does not exist in the TL, (iii) change of an SL verb to a TL word, change of an SL noun group to a TL noun and so forth.

- *Modulation*: it occurs when the translator reproduces the message of the original text in the TL text in conformity with the current norms of the TL, since the SL and the TL may appear dissimilar in terms of perspective.
- *Recognized translation*: it occurs when the translator "normally uses the official or the generally accepted translation of any institutional term".
- *Compensation*: it occurs when loss of meaning in one part of a sentence is compensated in another part.
- *Paraphrase*: in this procedure the meaning of the CBT is explained. Here the explanation is much more detailed than that of *descriptive equivalent*.
- *Couplets*: it occurs when the translator combines two different procedures.
- *Notes*: notes are additional information in a translation.

## Discussion

The translator is the cultural bridge of two languages and to have a good translation of two languages of two different cultures it is important to know the role of the translator as a decoder/encoder and as a receptor/sender, the translator's bilingual ability and bicultural vision, the translator's responsibility to accept or to reject translating a work of a different culture from his own language as well as he/she must interpret accurately not only semantic information, but also inherent cultural codes.

## Conclusions

There are many strategies that translators use while translating a literary work. Translators face challenges while translating a work from a different culture of their own language. Cultural transfer requires a multi-pronged approach. It is concerned with the author's relationship to his subject matter and with the author's relationship to his reader. These should be reflected in a good translation. The translator has the duty to transmit this special cultural quality from one language to another.

There are many translations that tend to serve as a substitute to the original but this imposes a heavy responsibility on the translator. It is not sufficient only to know a foreign language, its vocabulary, and grammar. These elements do not make a translator competent. The translator should be familiar with his/her culture, and must be aware of the source-language culture before attempting to build any bridge between them. Translation is a challenging work and it is needed inspiration or at least appreciation, to target-language readers.

## Recommendations

Students today learn English since primary school and everybody who passes through higher education needs to have knowledge on English. But, it does not mean that if someone has been translating for many years he/she can translate into English or vice - versa. The translator needs to have a living relationship, a direct engagement, with that particular style of writing. If someone is used to writing only academic or journalistic prose in English, it does not mean that he or she will excel in translating poetry, fiction, or drama into English. The translator must understand literary craftsmanship in that particular genre of writing. It can be emphasized that translators must be both bilingual and bicultural if not multicultural.

Good translations are read by their contemporaries through prior knowledge of the original, but displacements are punished by subsequent generations, as kidnapping or removal of something from the original author, acquire and perform many different functions in the areas of intellectual and cultured readers of translators themselves. Consequently, I believe that the following general rules help the translator that translates literally works.

- i. The translator should not "try" to translate word for word; phrase or sentence, but "always" should "conquer" 'his work'. So, the translator must treat the work as an integral unit and to translate parts, making him the question "what is the meaning of the total that he must translate?"
- ii. The translator should translate idiom for idiom 'and idioms of unique nature require translation into another form, different from the original.'
- iii. The translator must translate the 'intended purpose', keeping in mind that "the goal of a phrase in one language can be less or more emphatic than the form of expression. In some cases, the load of the phrase in the source language is stronger or weaker than word for word translation. During translation of "intent", it is often necessary to add words that are not in the original text, "to coincide with the idiom of someone else's native language."
- iv. The translator must show special attention to those words or structures that may appear to match the source language, in the language of translation, but, in fact, do not match.
- v. The translator must 'turn boldly', because the essence of translation is' the resurrection of an alien thing in a native body.

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