

РАЗДЕЛ II. СОПОСТАВИТЕЛЬНОЕ ЯЗЫКОЗНАНИЕ
SECTION II. COMPARATIVE LINGUISTICS

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Dr. Sana' Mahmoud Jarrar | POETRY TRANSLATION: ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL PROBLEMS

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Abstract. This paper investigates how could an artistic, cultural, and evasive piece of language like a poem be translated accurately. This paper addresses the intrinsic difficulties of translating poetry from different languages, cultures, and eras. Poetry sparked a dilemma on the practicability of its translation. Whereas some people consider it as a venerable entity, others venture to crush its fortifications! Translation of metaphor has been considered as a prominent problem of poetry translation. This problem stems from the fact that metaphors are affiliated with indirection, which in turn contributes to the difficulty of translation. The possible question arising now is how far can a translator modify the author's metaphorical expressions? It is natural that different languages encompass different cultures behind them. Based on the background of cultural heterogeneity, translators' credence, expertise, and position differ to reflect in the influence of their translated works. Their diverse cultures will affect the text choice and the translation function. This paper shows that if they are prejudiced towards the source culture, their output will be rich in foreign expressions, but if they are prejudiced towards the target culture, the output will be given a local flavor.

Key words: poetry, translation, metaphor, culture, target language.

Introduction

Poetry is one of those subjects that often gets discharged as capricious and trivial. However, poetry is an illuminative tool, and it is a significant art to scrutinize at any epoch. Poetry, to begin with, aims to convey the emotions and match the feelings of listeners or readers. Poetry evokes our deep *being*. It encourages us to vamoose the shielded strategies of the vigilant mind. It is a miraculous art, and always has been -- a making of language magic composed to push us into new lanes and an amplified world. In fact, the translation of poetry needs something more than translating literary works belonging to other genres. Translating metaphors is baffling and somehow detached from literal language. The opponents of poetic translation, such as Widdowson (1975) in his book *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature* assumed that the translation of poetry is extremely difficult because of «the patterning of sound and sense into a single meaning» [p.65]. The translation of poetry is as challenging as it is creative. The factors that influence translation are not only language, but also transmission of cultural beliefs between different countries. Culture plays an important role in translation practice. The primary goal of translation is to recreate the effect of the original poem in the target language (TL) or the

language into which you are translating, and that is very difficult. This is why Umberto Eco (2003) called translation «the art of failure» [p.54]. In short, regarding the problems arising in the course of poetry translation, a literary translator tends to face aesthetic and cultural problems.

Main Text

It is hard to translate metaphors into another language without causing a fair amount of turbulence. Metaphor, the device of language in which a comparison is made between two seemingly extraneous subjects, is a peculiar characteristic of human interaction: «our speech is so riddled with metaphors that we can hardly say a sentence without one» [Matthews, 1979, p. 31]. Metaphors are prevailing in all social activities; in addition to literature, they are used in journalism, politics, law, philosophy, advertisements, and even science and technology. Furthermore, their use is not restrained to the sphere of language but also expands to that of thought and action: «our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature» [Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3].

Rather than being mere accessories of speech, metaphors are regarded as important devices of expression that are used whenever we have strong

emotions to enunciate. Metaphor has also been extensively examined in the arena of translation, where it has been given more or less the same definition. For example, Peter Newmark (1988) defines metaphor as «the application of a word or collocation to what it does not literally denote» (p.104). The subject, however, has proved to be a strenuous one. Many Researches have argued that the source language (SL) image cannot always be maintained in the target language (TL). Diagnosing this trouble, Menachem Dagut (1976) says:

Since a metaphor in the SL is, by definition, a new piece of performance, a semantic novelty, it can clearly have no existing 'equivalence' in the TL: what is unique can have no counterpart. Here the translator's bilingual competence ... is of help to him only in the negative sense of telling him that any equivalence cannot be 'found' but will have to be created. [qtd in Bassnett, 1980, p. 24]

This metaphor-belligerent belief stems from Newmark's (1988) *A Textbook of Translation*. It demonstrates certain irritability with metaphorical language, which one might say is typical of English translation textbooks. He says that while the «central problem of translation is the overall choice of a translation method for a text, the strategy, when once decided upon, informs all the hundreds of smaller decisions necessary to the creation of the new text [Newmark, 1988, p. 104]. For him, it is the translation of metaphor that is «the most important particular problem» [Newmark, 1988, p. 104]. Whether stock or original, metaphor «always involves illusion ... [it is] a kind of deception, often used to conceal an intention» [Newmark, 1988, p. 105].

Newmark (1988) recommends seven strategies to translate metaphors in general. The first strategy is replicating the same image in the TL if the image has similar prevalence in the target language. This strategy is frequently used for one-word metaphor, e.g. *ray of hope*. The second strategy is substituting images in the SL with typical TL images within the restraints of TL cultures. The next strategy is translating a metaphor by a simile, maintaining the image in the SL. This strategy can be used to alter any kind of metaphor. And the remainder of the strategies such as, translating metaphor into simile plus sense, communing metaphor into sense, omitting insignificant metaphor, and translating metaphor with some metaphors combined with sense, are not regarded suitable for poetry translation [pp. 88-91]. Condemning the previous view, Snell-Hornby (1988-1995) argues that «the translation of metaphor cannot

be decided by a set of abstract rules, but must depend on the structure and function of the particular metaphor within the context concerned» [p. 58].

The account about metaphor – which it is a relationship of affinity and a resemblance between two things – is often misconceived to reveal that the central objective of a metaphorical expression is to demonstrate precedent similarities between the segments of that expression. Nevertheless, this is not what always happens as «metaphor can be used to serve other purposes» [Ali, 1998, p. 78]. Some writers go even so far as to deny that metaphors are comparisons, and that they simply record precedent similarities. There are situations, it is argued, where metaphors engender similarities rather than register preexistent similarities [Kittay, 1987, p. 17]. A proof for this argument can be found in the translation of the following lines from a poem entitled «Rain Song»:

عيناكِ غابتا نخيلِ ساعةِ السحر
أو شرفتانِ راحِ ينأى عنهُما القمر
عيناكِ حينَ تبسمانِ تُورقُ الكروم
وترقصُ الأضواءُ.. كالأقمارِ في نهر
يرجُهُ المجدافُ وَهنا ساعةُ السحر
كأنما تنبضُ في غوريهما النجوم

[Al -Sayyaab ,1971, P. 474].

Your eyes are two palm tree forests in early light,
Or two balconies from which the moonlight
recedes

When they smile, your eyes, the vines put forth their
leaves,

And lights dance like moons in a river
Rippled by the blade of an oar at break of day;
As if stars were throbbing in the depths of them
«[Jayyusi, 1987, p. 427].

Clearly, there seems to be no place here for the conventional view that metaphor is constructed between two dissimilar things that actually have something in common. In the previous metaphor, it would be futile to look for plain affinity between the object, «eyes» and the image, «two palm tree forests» «[line 1] and «two balconies»[line 2].

When translation is implemented, not only artistic aspects are involved, but cultural scope is very much momentous. Language and culture are in bilaterally influential affiliation. In fact, translation is the transference between two cultures that may be akin on one hand and different on another. Translatability, as an overlapping characteristic of language, demands that «what has been said or written in one language can be said or written in another» [Lyons, 1981, p.305]. However, language is not a vocal or written procedure that is practiced in isolation from cultural and environmental factors.

For example, when translating Shakespeare's sonnet «Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?» into Arabic, the translator endeavors to evade the comparison to a summer's day by substituting it with «summer purlieu». For English readers, a summer's day represents pleasant weather and the termination of a chilly season. For the Arabic reader, the tale is totally the opposite. Images of the warmest and hardest days of the year are associated with the summer. Consequently, maintaining the same image does not deliver the same feeling to the target audience. To overcome this cultural disparity, the translator has utilized «summer purlieu» to deliver the same emotions of the source text because summer resorts in Arabic culture have a sense of the charm of nature, mild breezes and nice weather. Therefore, the duty of a translator of poetry is not confined to delivering the meanings of words and connecting the reader to the same thing the SL poet alludes to, it also involves delivering the signification and generating the same influence as the SL.

No one can deny that the cultural scope is important during translation because the translator is affected by his/her own cultural ideology. Basil Hatim and Ian Mayson (1997) define ideology as «the tacit assumptions, beliefs and value systems which are shared collectively by social groups» [p. 144]. Translator visibility differs according to the «the extent to which translators intervene in the transfer process, feeding their own knowledge and beliefs into their processing of a text» [Hatim & Mayson, 1997, p.147]. The influence of the translators' intervention starts with the selection of the text. Text selection will rely on two elements: how they view the source culture, and the influence they want to create by this selection. For example, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Al- Khayyam* was selected by Edward Fitzgerald to demonstrate his discernment of how defective the Persian poetic tradition was. The *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* is among the few literary canons that has been translated into most languages. The most eminent translation of the *Rubaiyat* from Farsi into English was performed in 1859 by Fitzgerald. According to Farzaneh Farahzad (2006), it is hard to track and match the original *Rubaiyat* to the translated version. The eastern literature translated into western languages has somewhat been molded differently. It might be done deliberately or accidentally . In any case, the images of eastern noble literature depicted in the western's mind are somewhat divergent from reality. They know Khayyam as they like to be not as he is really. The Western world's knowledge of Omar is restricted to liquor, females and song. This is different from Omar's real character that was and still can be an epitome for a vigorous, joyous and reasonable

lifestyle [pp. 44-52]. The mission of translation in this arena is significant. Fitzgerald published his translation of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* in 1859. The title *Rubaiyat* is simply the plural of *rubai*, a 4-line verse. The verses were originally composed in Persian and were publicly attributed to Omar Khayyam (1048-1131). Rather than being a strict translation, Fitzgerald's rendition demonstrates his own concerns and portrays a day in the life of a poet. Saeedpoor (2001) state: «Many of his quatrains do not correspond with anyone of the Rubai's and cannot be identified with it» [qtd in Asadi Kangarloo, 2003–2008, par.9]. So, the translator's ideology is behind the creation of a TL that demanded many characteristics of the SL.

Over the last two decades or so, many translators have emphasized that translation should entail sabotage of cultural customs, especially those stemming from the so-called third world. This is more ideologically related to post-colonial agendas. Susan Bassnett (1998) appropriately believes that such a translation enterprise always prefers the target readers so much so that the source text, its culture and readers become trifling. It is noticed in the history of relations between East and West. Bassnett (1998) writes:

This tendency in English began to develop in the nineteenth century and accelerated with the translation of texts from non-European languages, from literatures that, as Edward Fitzgerald remarked in his infamous comment on the liberties he had allowed himself to take with his version of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, 'really need a little art to shape them'. Currently, reaction in the post-colonial world to the colonizing impact of translation is so strongly felt that there are those who argue that western cultures, particularly English speaking ones, should NOT translate other literatures at all. [p.78]

It is true that a speaker of one language can obtain any language, but the command of language cannot be attained without being penetrated into the culture of the second language. All translators are bilingualists but their linguistic abilities vary from their first to their second language. Not only do their linguistic abilities vary between the two languages, but also their level of cultural familiarity. For example, if bilingualists, or more particularly translators, are capable to talk about the same thing using two various languages, there will be no translation complexities. However, translators are more adept when translating into their maternal language because they are «responsible for the integrity of both the cultures to which they belong and the texts they translate» [Lefevere, 1992, p.5]. Taking this notion into account, it is urged to

translate into the maternal language rather than into the second language because translators are accustomed to their original culture, which have an influence on the receiving the translation in the target culture. Consequently, the cultural scope is important during translation because the translator is affected by his/her own culture.

Conclusion

In conclusion, poetry translation is a difficult task. Poetry translation is a subdivision of translation that has a very important position in literary translation. Aside from the regular translation rules which poetry translation should abide by, some other observations shall be taken into account when translating poetry. Poems are of some various characteristics from other literary genres, which consequently demand additional attentiveness in translation. From time to time, poets confuse the readers with the most offbeat structures, difficult collocations and sometimes even dare to deviate from syntax to achieve their planned purposes. Metaphor is one of the poetic devices that contribute to much experimentation. The mission becomes harder if there is a linguistic and cultural gap between the Source Language (SL) and the Target Language (TL). Despite the strenuous task involved in poetry translation, it is not an art destined to downfall. According to Craig Raine (1994), «Translation, like politics, is the art of the possible – with all the inevitable compromise implicit in that parallel with politics» [par.1].

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