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ŞİİRDE ESİNSEL ÇEVİRİSİNİN SINIRLARI LIMITS OF TRANSCREATING POETRY

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Öz

Şiir çevirisi, diğer edebi dallarda olduğu gibi, şairin ait olduğu dil ve kültüre mensup okuyucular dışında, yeni bir dil ve kültür bağlamı olan okuyucularla tanışmasını sağlar. Bu fonksiyon çevirmenin kaynak metni anlaması ve aktarması dışında kültürler arası iletişimde önemli bir göreve sahip olduğu gerçeğini ortaya koyar. Okuyucunun gözünde şiir çevirisi ustalık isteyen zor bir çabadır; çünkü şiiri çevirebilmek çevirmenin kaynak metin ve hedef metinle ilgili geniş bir bilgi birikimini, farklı çeviri metot ve üsluplarıyla ilgili güvenilir bir deneyim sürecini ve özel bir çeviri yetisine sahip olmasını gerektirir. Kaynak metin, ait olduğu kültürden aldığı düşünsel, dilbilimsel ve kültürel öğelerin yanı sıra, şairin dili kullanmasındaki ustalık ve tercih ettiği kişisel üslubu da içerir. Bu noktadan bakıldığında, şiir çevirisinde benimsenmesi gereken felsefi bir yaklaşımın da gereksinimi kaçınılmaz görünmektedir. Kaynak metnin dilbilimsel, kültürel ve sanatsal değer kaybına uğramaması için çevirmenin sorması gereken soru, 'şair bu deneyimi hedef kültürde en iyi nasıl ifade edilebilir?' sorusudur ve bunu gerçekleştirebilmek için çevirmenin bir tür esinsel çeviriyi yapabilme yetisine sahip olması gerektiği bir gerçektir. Bu makalede metot ve üslup açısından şiir çevirisi irdelenecek ve şiirde esinsel çevirinin sınırları tartışılacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Çeviri, Şiir Çevirisi, Şiirde Esinsel Çeviri, Çeviride Kültürel Bağlam, Şiirde Üslup Çevirisi.

Abstract

Translating poetry, as it is with other genres of literature, lets the poet to be introduced with the readers of a new cultural context other than the readers who belong to the culture of the poet himself. This function proves that the translator has an important role in inter-cultural communication besides the duty of perception and transformation of a source text. Poetry translation is a difficult task that necessitates translator's expertise and a comprehensive knowledge of the source and target culture. The source text is comprised of intellectual, linguistic and cultural aspects of the culture it belongs to, as well as the poet's attainment of using language and his personal style. So, it seems inevitable to have a philosophical receptivity of translating poetry. To avoid linguistic, cultural and artistic loss of value, the question of the translator could be: 'how this particular experience can best be translated into the target culture?' and to be able to do this, the translator needs to have a craft of 'transcreational skill'. This article aims to illustrate the problems of method and style in translating poetry, and discuss the limits of transcreation of poetry.

Keywords: Translation Difficulties, Translating Poetry, Transcreation, Cultural Context, Limits of Transcreational Poetry.

1. Introduction

The two World Wars proved the fall of civilizational norms, religious values and philosophical principles which widened the door to cultural interchange between the peoples of the earth, and that legitimated translation's contribution to cultural and intellectual exchange among the nations willing to share literary and artistic values. This demand promoted the art and expertise of translation as a literary profession to prove its role of maintaining international scholarly communication. Besides, translation became "a means to introduce stylistic innovations into English literature"; (France and Haynes, 2006: 15) for a foreign text was a door to a new culture which had the potential domain of new literary discoveries, and explorations within a foreign cultural context. The social reflections led the translation studies to function as a field of inter-cultural communication; and "the image of the field" was to be "produced in consultation with many leading writers and translators, theorists, and scholars" (Venuti, 2000: 2).

At the beginning of twentieth century, we see "cultural commentators turn their attention to theorizing about language and translation" (Monk, 1999: 17). The two World Wars even forced a demand for 'machine translation'; "a digital computing machine having the necessary storage capacity" which "could make a dictionary translation;" "a word-by-word translation of scientific material" (Locke, 1955: 2). In 1949, "the possibility of automatic translation was immediately kindled all over the U.S.A. and active research projects were started in universities" (4). And today "information distribution via translation relies heavily on new technologies that promote a worldwide translation industry" (House, 2016: i).

"The 'descriptive' and 'systemic' perspective on translation and on studying translation was prepared in the 1960s, developed in the 1970s, propagated in the 1980s, and consolidated, expanded and

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overhauled in the 1990s" (Hermans, 2009: 9). Dating from early 1970s, the most common terms used are 'descriptive,' 'empirical,' or 'target-oriented' studies; that approached translation as a vital part of cultural history. In 1972, James Holmes proposed translation studies as a scholarly preoccupation, whether theoretical, empirical or applied with any and all aspects of translation; which was later labeled as 'polysystem-approach' by Itamar Even-Zohar. Zohar, as one of the first modern translation theorists, "focused on the life of a translated work within its new literature rather than on issues of linguistic equivalence" (8). He argued that "translation is a literary rather than linguistic phenomenon, governed by a nexus of historical-cultural circumstances and relations rather than by language compatibility" (Annmarie Drury, 2015: 9). Besides Zohar's approach, the term 'manipulation group' or 'manipulation school' was also used, referring to an evaluation that "all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose" (Hermans, 2014:11).

Eugene A. Nida is another important name in translation studies who argues that professional translators and interpreters "have little or no use for the various theories of translation, such as; linguistic, sociolinguistic, communicative, free, literal, hermeneutic, semiotic, relevant, skopos, Marxist, transformational, and even gender" (Nida, 2001: 1). Instead, Nida proposes, "faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance" as three aspects of "additive factors of translation; first faithful equivalence in meaning, second, expressive clarity of form, and third, attractive elegance that makes a text a pleasure to read" (1). Lawrence Venuti, in *The Translator's Invisibility* (2008) discusses the "fluency" of translation as one of the prior aspects "judged as a criterion" for the translations of fiction as "the most translated genre worldwide", (Venuti, 2008: 2) underlining the reader's quest for 'smooth and easy reading' of the new text. 'Equivalence,' 'closeness' and 'sameness' are among other labels to describe the formal and contextual loyalty of target text. "Formal equivalence refers to grammatical domain, while the dynamic equivalence takes the text as a whole" (Herman 2014: 11). The focus is on 'closeness' to the original in general; while 'equivalence' has been split up into functional, stylistic, semantic, formal or grammatical, statistical and textual subtypes" (12). 'Sameness,' a kind of stylistic-semantic equivalence, is also assumed as a descriptive feature for literary translation. More derivative concepts of 'equivalence' such as, 'matching,' 'family resemblance' and 'similarity' (Holmes, 1988) are proposed to be considered among translating priorities, but "a translation is, or must be, equivalent to the source, in some sense at least" (Chesterman, 1997: 9).

Comprehension and interpretation stand as the key mastering activities for translator before transferring and formulating a new text. The prior element to be transferred, especially for poetry, seems to be 'the meaning'; because, when the denotation and connotations of the meaning are lost or weakened, no matter how equal, or close the stylistic language is, the target text turns out to be a 'new text' of the translator, rather than a translated target text.

2. Transcreating Poetry

Transcreation can be defined as "an aesthetic re-interpretation of the original work suited to a new target-language audience" (Hermans, 2014: V.I. 237). But it has a "higher artistic recreation" and "a nobler aim than the common craftsmanship" (Lefevere, 1992: 17). Here, the primary impact is on 'reinterpretation' or 'recreation' which connotes more than its transferring function and "is performed with suitable interpolations, explanations, expansions, summaries and innovations in style and technique" (Hermans, 2014: V.I. 237). It is obvious that 'aesthetic' and 'new audience' are closely related aspects that imply the importance of the translator's craft on behalf of the new readers; for one of poetry readers' expectations is pleasure and enjoyment, they read poetry because they appreciate to share the poet's experience or whatever is meant to be shared by the poet. The translators of poetry "try to recast the original in terms of the poetics of their own culture, simply to make it pleasing to the new audience and, in doing so, to ensure that the translation will actually be read" (Lefevere, 1992: 26). In a way, the target text is created from 'rebirth of the original work,' which "may assume a form different from that of the original in accordance with changing circumstances and the translator's interpretation" (Hermans, 2014, 236). But while composing the new text the translator "should link and arrange words with such sweetness that the soul is satisfied and the ears are pleased" (Lefevere 1992: 27).

Poetry is a language "that always means more" and is a stylistic structure "in which every component element - word and word order, sound and pause, image and echo - is significant" (Shira Wolosky, 2001: 3), not forgetting personal codes of the poet himself. Translating poetry is a "literary translation" of which, Jean Boase-Boier argues, "must involve a careful stylistic analysis of the source text because it is not a transference merely of sense, but also of style," which in fact "often cannot be separated in a literary text" (Boier, 1994: 1). Boier also underlines that "this is particularly true of poetry, and it must be an integral part of the translation" (1). That means "the translator should know the language of the author he translates to perfection and that he should have achieved the same excellence in the language he wants to translate into" (Lefevere, 1992: 27).

The basic task of poetry translator, from readers' point of view, is that he/she "has to understand a poem written in one language, and rewrite it in another language" (R. Jones, 2011: 1). But "not all languages seem to have been created equal. Some languages enjoy a more prestigious status than others," (Lefevere, 1992: 1) and "the problem of translation between non-related languages is clearly one of the most crucial" (Bassnett, 2002: 21). 'Understanding' a poem denotes a detailed examination of stylistic analysis by which the translator enters into the world created by the poet of the source text. But the translated text may not contain all the particular stylistic figures, or the original figures may not be used in the same order or manner as they are used in the source text. In case, the target language does not have figures corresponding with those of the original, the translator's craft of 'transcreating' comes into play, which means that other appropriate transferring devices of the target language may be used. This reminds us the fact that the more the source and target languages have similarities in stylistic structure the easier the task of transferring is. To get the literal meaning of a poem is only one of the components of understanding; for poetry is "a kind of language that says more and says it more intensely than does the ordinary language" (Perrine, 1993: 546). 'Saying more' and 'intensifying' should be adaptable to the lexical, semantic and musical structure of a poem, but the translator "should not enter into slavery to the point of rendering word for word" (Lefevere 1992: 27).

The poetry translator has a difficult task to face which is to break the myth of untranslatability of poetry. Gopinatan evaluates poetry translation as "a holistic approach in which a range of techniques including elaboration, interpolation, explaining the cultural value of the original text, image change, image recreation, translative explanation and elucidation, are all possible" (Hermans, 2014: 137). For an average source text translation, the translator might feel more independent and relaxed than poetry translator who has a "mediatory" role where he "sees him - or herself as providing a point of access or entry to the work in question for readers who do not know the source language" (247-248). So, the translator virtually "enters into the soul of the original author and, regenerating the original work, becomes its re-creator" (137).

Besides the literal recreation of the source text, the craft of transferring the meaning is one of the vital features of intuitive process of poetry translation. Because, an intuitive approach to translation of poetry will not allow a mechanical type of transferring which hinders the reasons for readers' sharing the new poem. The physical transferring stands for scientific study of the source text, while the intuitive search of meaning represents the re-creating process of translation. These two integrated levels of translation contribute the recreation of a new text without literary and artistic loss of value; which proves the translator's craft for the best possible transference. The readers are introduced with a complete text with all co-notated meanings. So, the "translation becomes more communicative, especially when the higher meaning of the text is significant" (240), and "the process of translation can be understood as being linguistic, intellectual and intuitive at the same time" (241). "The creative and mediatory functions are best seen as notional opposites defining a spectrum of interpenetration between 'original' and 'translated' texts. Any work of translation locates itself somewhere along this scale" (247-248).

To make it more concrete and apprehensible, it would be practical to exemplify it with a metaphor of 'building' and re-building' a house: when a poet gets the inspiration for a poem to exist, he/she attempts to build a house; to furnish and fix the necessary equipments so that what comes into being be called a house, his house, or his work of art. The craft and experience of the builder, and the quality and style and the material used, as well as its cohesion with its native cultural context externalize the aspects of its artistic value. The visitors will be pleased to visit this house because the architecture, design, furnishing, colors and all other components that make it special, will make them share a unique intensity of the builder's experience. The translator undertakes the job of rebuilding it with new materials which necessitates several crafts: firstly, the re-builder will be a builder himself who has a comprehensive knowledge of the architecture, design and decoration of both the original and the new house. Secondly, he must have the expertise of how to rebuild it with foreign material. And thirdly, he must build such a new house that the visitors of the new culture will feel the same pleasure and intensity of sharing the meaning of the new builder's experience. But here the crucial point is that the newly built house must not be a house which makes the visitors feel as if they are visiting a different one; in other words, the new builder must know his/her limits. For some visitors the new house might seem and taste better or worse; in both cases the new house cannot be considered as the translation of the source text.

Here some sample source poems are chosen both from English to Turkish and Turkish to English to illustrate the heaviness and intensity of meaning implied by the dense language used. The first lines are from "I am a Little World" By John Donne (1573-1631) which summarize the creation of human being both in physical and spiritual/divine content:

I am a little world made cunningly
Of elements and an angelic sprite, (Robbins, 2010: 533)

The key expression for the translator is "I am a little world" whose equivalence would be "Ben küçük bir dünyayım" in Turkish: which metaphorically imply that human being is a living 'micro world', that connotes a second deep meaning; as a 'micro world' human being is a tiny part of the 'macro cosmic' structure of the universe. The passive structure of the sentence implies the existence of a subject, a power which human being is made by, and the verb "made" stands for the verb "created" more than denoting the 'making' of a simple thing, while the adverb "cunningly" empowers the deep meaning of creation; conveying a craftsmanship fulfilled with a 'shrewd' purpose and made with ingenuity. The second line informs us about the material human being is made of; for Donne they are "elements" and "an angelic sprite": where we get the meaning that human being is bodily created with "elements" but also carries "an angelic sprite" which gives him a 'humane' feature that makes him a meaningful being more than a body.

By getting to know the literary structure and semantic denoting meanings of the source text, the translator passes into the process of transforming the language and meaning. An intuitive approach to the translation of the source text would necessitate having a comprehensive knowledge about John Donne, his craft of poetry, and especially his philosophy of life; which comprises his approach to the aim of creation and the communication between the creator and human being. This information will give the translator the opportunity to feel in the original 'poet's shoes' during the process of transfer. But the vital communication between the original poet and the translator must not be weakened or lost; in case, the intuitive freedom might cause a completely new or loosely loyal text be created.

A literally and semantically equivalent translation of Donne's lines into Turkish would be as follows:

Ben elementlerden ve meleklere özgü bir ruhtan
Fettan yaratılmış küçük bir dünyayım. (Translation 1)

And an alternative and more independent translation could bring the following changes and the text will turn into a form as follows:

Ben topraktan ve ilahi bir nefesten
Maharetle yaratılmış küçük bir dünyayım. (Translation 2)

The intuitive translation should have a reasonable limit that will not spoil the original meaning or turn it into a completely new text. The literal and semantic transference should have an equivalent meaning of the source text as pure as possible. Re-translating the new text into the original/source text could function as a 'checking-scale' of the equivalence and loyalty of the source text, which is as follows:

I am a little world ingeniously made
Of soil and a divine breath,

In the first line of second translation instead of "elements" 'soil' / 'toprak' is used; which is not used in the original text, so it would not be appropriate to use it in the new text as used in the second translation, and what is more, "elements" imply a 'purer' substance than 'soil', and still stands as a metaphorical word for the soil. In the first line of the second translation "ilahi bir nefes" (a divine breath) is used as the translation of "an angelic sprite" which recalls a meaning that the creator has put a breath of himself into the body of human being; and this brings a higher level to "an angelic spirit" which only denotes that the human body has a soul like that of angels. And the adverb "ingeniously" does not give the exact connotations of "cunningly" which implies a skill of creating in a shrewd or sly manner.

The second example is a stanza by Pir Sultan Abdal (1480-1550)

"Gel Benin Sarı Tamburam"
Gel benim san tamburam
Sen ne için inilersin
İçim oyuk derdim büyük
Ben anuçin inilerim (Gölpınarlı, 1969: 43)

...

A literally and semantically equivalent English translation of Abdal's stanza into English could be as follows:

"Come my Yellow Tambura"
Come my yellow tambura
Why are you wailing
I am hollowed and have a big throe
That's why I am wailing

...

Obviously, there is a dialogue between the owner and his instrument, "tanbura", a stringed instrument in Turkish music culture; as in many other cultures, it is believed that the owner and his instrument have a live relationship of communicating with each other. Here the poet personifies his instrument and has a dialogue with it. The starting imperative verb "come" gives a sense of calling someone

like a child, who has a trouble or is in pain, and the caller has a role of an attempt to mollify him - the wailing instrument. So we can easily deduce that the verb "come" is not a casually chosen word. The adjective of color "yellow" is to define the instrument as having a color of wood, mostly from mulberry tree; but at the same time the yellow color metaphorically connotes the color of someone who is ill and pale. To prefer 'gold' instead of 'yellow' for instance, could cause an ambiguity of meaning connoting that the instrument is made of gold. Another key word for the translator is "inilemek", the suffering sound of the instrument; the best word to match is to be found by personifying the instrument; for which "wailing" stands as an appropriate verb in English. In the third line we hear the answer for the owner's question; "içim oyuk": which denotes, 'the inside of my body is hollowed,' connoting that 'it is created with a simple nature and has nothing within its body': here, the reader is informed about the structure of the musical instrument 'tanbura', which is made by carving and hollowing a timber and by doing so, brought to an appropriate shape with a craft of expertise, to produce a unique sound of its own. So, the translation of "içim oyuk" must match with the meaning that 'naturally I am created with a simple body that has nothing inside'. A "but" phrase is automatically expected by the owner; and that is "derdim büyük": which denotes that it has a big problem to solve, a heavy responsibility to undertake or a difficult examination to face with. And in the last line the 'tanbura' says "that's why I am wailing" giving an explicit answer to his owner. When considered metaphorically, the poet is having a dialogue with a friend - who has a hollowed body but a big responsibility - which he shares his questions about life and creation, and gets Socratic answers. Like P. S. Abdal, P. B. Shelley, in his "Defence of Poetry," "likens man to an aeolian lyre," and proposes that "there is a principle within the human being ...which acts otherwise than in the lyre, and produces not melody, alone, but harmony" (Ferber M., 1999: 8). Mastering the literary and semantic aspects of the source text the intuitive translator must transcreate a new text with such a language that will contain nothing more and nothing less than the source text conveys.

The next stanza to examine is by Emily Dickinson (1830-1886), where she discusses the points that make human life meaningful:

VI

IF I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain, Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again, I shall not live in vain. (Wetzsteon, 2003: 49)

...

A literally and semantically equivalent Turkish translation of Dickinson's poem into English could be as follows:

VI

Eğer bir kalbin kırılmasına engel olabilirim,
Boşa yaşamıyorum demektir;
Eğer bir canın ağrısını azaltabilir,
Ya da bir ağrıyı dindirebilirim. Veya baygın bir nar bülbülüne yardım edip
Tekrar yuvasına bırakabilirsem, boşa yaşamıyorum demektir.

...

As in other examples above, a deep meaning is given with simple literary structure, so the translator does not have to play with words or try to transfer the source text with a more elaborate language. It is crystal clear as it is in Yunus Emre's lyrics:

Yunus Emre

...

Bir kez gönül yıktın ise
Bu kıldığın namaz değil
Yetmiş iki millet dahi
Elin yüzün yumaz değil (Eyüpoğlu, 1966: 29)

...

If you have broken a heart once
What you perform is not a prayer
Even seventy two nations
Cannot wash your hands and face

As Chesterman argues, "every translation task sets its own profile of "equivalence priorities""; the process of translating poetry initiates with "highlighting semantic closeness" as well as "prioritizing stylistic similarity" to prevent the loss of meaning. (Chesterman, 1997: 69) To assess an appropriate comprehensive

transfer is to be able to comprehend the meaning of the source text by examining it with its all formal, stylistic and semantic components; in other words there must be a challenge of achieving the philosophy within the deep meaning intuitively. In Yunus Emre's poem, the first line sets a key reason for the next three lines of results; from the translation of the first line the reader must be able to understand that 'it is vital for a human being to be careful and not to break the heart of any other human being even once'. In the second line a deep philosophical ideal is conveyed metaphorically; which implies that the ritual praying performances become meaningless if a believer breaks a heart. And the last two lines enforce the seriousness of breaking a heart in such a way that the message is given in the best words possible.

In the first line of Dickinson, the first person pronoun 'I' stands as the symbol of the poet's confession. It is not a general advice to the reader, so, must be translated in such stylistic form that will not cause of a loss of meaning. The second line is originally in 'simple future', but for the new text I have preferred 'present continuous' which reflects the meaning better in the target language. The 'appropriate overall profile' is valid for both lexical and literary domain of both texts. In Dickinson's case, the translator has to assess the philosophical ideal of the poet and be able to understand it by the lyrics she has chosen to reflect. Although the meaning to be transferred does not have to be a philosophical ideal, but depending on the purpose of the poetry, the 'prioritizing criteria' is an important part of the translation process of poetry.

Conclusion

As a general principle, poetry translators are "the artisans, the demiurges and the manufacturers of equivalents," (Knox, 2004: 113) and those who do their jobs faithfully, righteously, and with the awareness of 'their limits' are able to produce "a fraternal unexpected twin by the side of the original, a new visual or written text born of artistic parthenogenesis" (Tanis, 2004: 131). But "in addition to the difficulties involved in accounting for content and form, sounds and associations, the translator of poetry is also often expected to produce a text that will function as a poem in the target language" (Baker, 2001: 171). Awareness of limits is vital while considering the fact that the translator reaches vast audiences who read the translated text because they are unable to read it in the original; for the target translations, "determine the impression those readers will form" for the writer of the original text. (Hermans, 1999: 1) Clare Cavanagh argues that "losing things is what translators do best," (Cavanagh, 2003: 245) so, the awareness of limits could prevent the translator from creating an unjust or false impression on the new readers of the new work of art. This concept is specifically valid for poetry, for poetry has a special usage of language that intensifies the tones of verbal harmony, semantic connotations and musical accord of rhyme, rhythm, assonances and alliterations. A degradation or loss of literal meaning might cause irreparable impressions by new readers on behalf of the original writer; as a vital component, literal faithfulness can also prevent the loss of semantic connotations. As mentioned above, in poetry, the re-translation of the target text into the original language might function as a 'checking-scale' to evaluate the 'equivalence' of translations.

The untranslatable myth of poetry reminds us that "it is impossible to translate poetry perfectly;" (245) which is a discouraging attempt for the poetry translators, and enforces the "debates whether translations can ever capture the essence of their originals" (Monk, 1999: 17). But "the translation theory itself has been shaped in recent years by linguistic, cultural studies, contrastive textology and other related disciplines" (Helen, 2003: 108). The innovative developments in translation theory have underlined the fact that the language cannot be considered separate from its cultural context, because language is "the heart within the body of culture," and "the interaction between the two that results in the continuation of life-energy" (Bassnett, 2002: 22). This approach is closely related with the idea that language and cultural acquisition of both the source and target text is an inevitable aspect of mastering issue for the translator. For poetry translation we might add a third; which is getting a comprehensive knowledge about the private style, language and philosophy of the original writer. This study will unquestionably contribute the translator's target of creating the best possible way of reproducing the linguistic, cognitive, syntactical, semantic, and musical material in the target language. In other words, the new text must 'form a poem,' 'sound a poem' and 'mean what was meant' by the source poem.

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