

Translation Theory and Practice: Western Armenian Poems

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## **Introduction**

A good translation of poetry is essential to a hungry reader. It is important for poetry lovers, as well as for me to find different translated versions of the same poem. Many people can see no purpose of translating poetry and think that during translation the value of the original poem gets lost, and poetry translation is the wrong side of the tapestry. While, on the other hand, when you translate a poem into another language it becomes more valuable for the readers who are not native speakers, as it opens up new worlds of language for readers, as every good poem does. It revitalizes our daily, cliché-haunted vocabulary and it extends us in the way real travelling does, giving us new sounds, sights and smells.

There are a lot of things that can be lost while doing a translation, such as the meter, the rhyme, form, etc. Sometimes, translating a poem can even become the reason for the loss of the meaning of the original. What really matters in poetry is the combination of the meaning and the artistic characteristics and it is this combination that appeals both to the mind and to the heart of the reader and makes an additional impact on them. A poem can have various translations. When you read several translations of the same poem you start comparing them with each other and with the original poem. And after reading multiple translations of the same poem you choose which one you like the most and which one is the closest to the original poem. But how do you decide it? So what are the key factors of the translations that make an impact on the reader? In fact, translation is a huge study, which contains lots of theories, practice, strategies and techniques that should be considered by translators.

The main purpose of this project is to explore the art of poetry translation through which I show the most important features, theories, problems and strategies on the translations of Western Armenian poetry. There are two main means that have been used in my work: the analysis of the structure – the form, rhyme and rhythm, the image and the

language, predominantly the figurative language, that is expressive means and stylistic devices. I have chosen Western Armenian poems that are my favorite ones, as a less analyzed variety, especially from the point of view of translation.

## Literature Review

Translation is a vital mode of literary communication. It is a bilingual activity that includes lots of developing fields. Translation is a process of contextualizing the essence of the Source Language (SL) text to the reader of the Target Language (TL). It is not simply the imitation of the source language text, but it is a creative process. Although, creativity is one of the most essential criteria during the translation process, it is necessary to follow general rules, theories and strategies for efficient functioning and result. (Shanti, 2008)

Literature represents the desperation, the hope, the joy, the enthusiasm and the apathy of the history of every culture and nation. Besides the heart and soul, the environment, the body and the atmosphere play a big role in and are necessary for the creation of any work of art. Like creative literature, translation is an art, which needs methods in order to be successful and valuable. (Krishnamurthy, 2008)

Poetry translation is a form of art and there are some factors every reader should consider while translating a poem or reading a translated poem. Translating poetry creates a huge connection between the writer and the translator. So, while reading the original poem and the translated version you can find some kind of relationship or some kind of connection between the translator and the writer. The relationship between the writer and the translator is very important and we can say that a translation is a friendship between poets. There should be a connection and mystical union between the writer and the translator, which "*is based on art and love.*" (Barnstone, 2001)

Every book is written with the reader in mind. The author, the translator and the reader are the essential parts for a good translation. At each point – from the text selection, the word choice, phrases and syntactic structure – the translator needs to settle on a legitimate choice and express the intended meaning of the SL message precisely and clearly. The translator needs to decide three things cautiously – what (the choice of the SL), where (the

substance or the content of the SL) and to whom (the readers) – which are extremely relevant for a good translation. A particular type of translation has to be adopted according to the readers who use it for various purposes. Moreover, translator's choice of a methodology is shaped with the readers' requirements. Therefore, the concept of the reader is important in deciding the type of translation.

Translating includes more than just changing each word from the SL into the TL. It is a process during which translators should decode all the functions and facets of the SL into the TL. Language plays a big role in translation. Through language writers express their thoughts, feelings, emotions and in order to keep the meaning of the original text through these thoughts and emotions translators should consider the main aspects of the language: substance (the physical existence of the signs), form (conventional and consistent patterning of the signs), and situation (the context of the signs that gives them meaning). (Krishnamurthy, 2008)

There are various important issues of translating literary texts. As translation is not just data transmission, should translators be considered servants who should only communicate the ideas of the original in another language? Or should they act as co-authors and even add literary, artistic features to the original.

Translation is a creative process and there should be a reasonable amount of liberty. (Polizotti, 2018) Besides, as far as the translator should recreate what the author has created, the translator should be knowledgeable, flexible, sensitive, tactful and respectful. However, he should have respect not only for the author's work, but also for his own work, because a good translation is a work that has its own merits, and the translator has his own voice. A good translator is the one who finds balance between the original text and its translated version, paying attention to every cultural detail and trying to open a new world in another language. (Jones, 2012)

There are multiple ways to translate poetry: at first, the translator uses the size and combination of rhymes that came to him by chance, with his own vocabulary, often foreign to the author, he either lengthens or shortens the original at his own discretion; it is clear that such a translation can only be called amateur. (Gumilev, 1919)

Another way is when the translator does the same in general, only by giving a theoretical justification for his action; he assures that if the translated poet wrote in the SL, he would have written that way. This method was very common in the eighteenth century. Alexander Pope who translated “Homer” in England used this method and enjoyed extraordinary success. The XIX century rejected this method, but its traces have survived to the present day. And now some people also think that it is possible to replace one size with another, for example, a six-stop pentameter, refuse to rhyme, introduce new images and so on. The spirit must justify everything. So, many poets use the form as the only means to express the spirit. And how is this done?

The first thing that attracts the attention of the reader and, in all likelihood, is the most important, though often unconscious, basis for creating a poem is a thought or, more precisely, an image, because the poet thinks in images. The number of images is limited, prompted by life, and the poet is rarely their creator. Only in his attitude towards them does his personality manifest.

Immediately after the choice of the image, the poet thinks about its development and proportions. Both determine the choice of the number of lines and stanzas. In this the translator is obliged to blindly follow the author. It is impossible to shorten or lengthen a poem without changing its tone at the same time, even if the number of images is saved. Both the briefness and the vagueness of the image are determined by the intention of the author, by the main idea and each extra or missing line changes the degree of its intensity.

As for the stanzas, unlike the others, each of them creates a special train of thought. Even the simplest stanzas as a quatrain or a couplet have their own characteristics, taken into account by the poet, even if unconsciously. In addition, for any serious acquaintance with the poet, it is necessary to know which stanzas he preferred and how he used them. Therefore, the exact preservation of the stanza is one of the responsibilities of the translator.

Each poet has his own vocabulary, often supported by theoretical considerations. There are authors who use words in their literal meaning or on their accuracy or on the simplicity and negligence. In stanzas authors often use parallelisms, repetitions, inverted repetitions, accurate indication of time and place, quotations and other devices to have a powerful impact on the reader. It is recommended to keep all these stylistic devices while doing translations. In addition, many poets pay great attention to the meaning of rhyme. Rhyming words are the first that appear in the poet's mind and constitute the skeleton of the poem: therefore, it is desirable that at least one of the pair of rhymed words coincide with the word at the end of the original line. (Gumilev, 1919)

Rhythm is another important feature of poetry and plays a big role in the stylistic form of the author. Before starting translation of any foreign author, a translator must precisely establish the style of this author for himself, the system of his images, and the rhythm. He should perhaps more often read this author out loud in order to catch the tempo and cadence of his speech, which are so significant not only in poetry, but also in fiction. (Chukovsky, 2001) The translator should pay special attention to the rhythm of the poem, which is quite difficult to transmit. The metre, the rhyme, the stanza and the sound are essential technical parts of the rhythm. The translator should understand every tiny detail such as the type of the metre used in the poem, the length of the lines (whether they are all the same length or not), the type of foot used in each line, the metrical regularity, grammatical divisions (signaled by commas, full stops and so on) that coincide with metrical breaks, the effects that are created

by the chosen metrical form (whether it suggests a particular tone or not), the certain words that can change the tone of the poem and thus the metrical position of it, the rhyme scheme, the internal rhyming that help to enforce a particular rhythm.

From all the above mentioned, it is clear that the translator must be a poet too: he must be a master of both SL and TL; he must understand the style and characteristics of the source writer and at the same time must conform to the aesthetic canons of his own age, he should consider the meaning of the SL text, the linguistic features, the cultural background of both SL and TL readers, the similarity in meaning and style, the distribution of formal and dynamic equivalents and its expected response in the TL. Moreover, he must be a careful researcher and a heartfelt critic who, choosing the most important features of the poem, allows himself, if necessary, to sacrifice the rest. (Shanti, 2008) Reading the poem carefully, feeling it wholly, starting with the minor details, such as the beats, the pauses and perceiving the energy of the poem will help the translator to make something new, to recreate it, but at the same time to keep its meaning, its value so that the reader can notice the only change is the language. (Liddy, 2002)

## Research Questions

The research question section aims to find answers to the questions I consider for a thorough discussion for my capstone project. The main research question is the following:

*What theories should be applied and what features should be kept in poetry translation?*

While translating a poem someone should consider a checklist of things and features the original poem contains. What really matters in poetry is first of all the meaning of it that touches both the hearts and the minds of the readers and makes the reader feel it through the transferred/transmitted emotions. We know that lots of important features can be lost while doing a translation, such as the title, the visual appearance, the speaker, the implied narrator, subject/theme, meter, rhyme, genre, other sound effects, figurative language, cultural and historical context and so on. This is the checklist of the most significant things that should be considered not only for reading and analyzing the poem but also for doing a good translation. Considering all these features helps the translator to become closer to the original poem which itself helps to keep the meaning of it, which means keeping the artistic and also the aesthetic value of the poem. From my main research question, which is quite broad, other questions arise such as:

- *What makes a translation "good" or "bad"?*
- *What should the translator convey: just facts or something more?*
- *Is it better to keep the rhyming or not?*

## **Methodology**

I conducted individual interviews that aimed to discuss the research questions of my capstone project. As I mentioned above, the main research question of my project is to understand what the most significant theories that should be applied are and what features should be kept during poetry translation. For my project I used three specific research methods to study and show my statements.

### **1. Focus group**

For my focus group discussion I chose Western Armenian poems that I am using in my analysis section and asked the participants to translate them into English. The participants know both Western Armenian and English. Before starting the translation process I gave them rules and instructions that included not talking to each other, not asking questions, using a dictionary if needed, etc. The most interesting part came when they finished translating and we started the discussion. We read the translated versions of each participant and compared them to each other. The participants shared their methods of translating the poem, such as what artistic features they focused on and valued more, what specific features they tried to keep, what kind of challenges and difficulties they met and what kind of strategies they used to do the translation.

### **2. Individual interviews**

For my individual discussions I chose people who are related to the field of translation and could provide professional approach to my questions. They are Albert Stepanyan (Doctor of History), Siranush Dvovyan (PhD), Davit Isajanyan (Interpreter, theorist) and Shushan Avagyan (PhD). During the interviews we discussed the research question of my project. We mainly talked about the most important theories of poetry translation, the challenges and problems translators can meet and the strategies they can use

to succeed in translations. From the discussions I led to specific conclusion, considered all the views they shared and used them for my analysis section.

### 3. Written surveys

I gave survey participants several translations of the same poem to read and then asked them about their preferences with the help of different questions. I focused on specific age groups in order to get a more in-depth discussion about why some readers prefer one poetic translation to another and understand what different age groups value more. The main purpose of dividing people into age groups is to show how differently they perceive things and what features they consider primary and more significant in poetry translation.

## Research Findings and Analysis

As far as the main characteristic of poetry is its form, which is mainly based on the rhythmic and phonetic arrangement of the utterance, it is necessary to analyze poems from the point of view of form. The rhythmic aspect of poetry calls forth syntactical and semantic peculiarities. The translator should take these peculiarities of both languages into consideration. Thus, these restrictions are imposed by the rhythmic patterns that are arranged from the point of view of the structure.

Let us have a look at the translation of Vahan Tekeyan's poem "Yearning" (1919) done by Gerald Papasian and John Papasian. (Azadian & Papasian, 2014)

### Փափաք

Անուշ հոգի մը ըլլա՛ր,

Ես այն հոգւոյն սիրահար,

Ան իմ երկինքս ըլլար...

Ես այն հոգին պաշտեի՛,

Ինչպէս երկինքը ծաւի,

Զայն հեռուն պաշտեի:

Ան ցոլանար սրտիս մէջ

Իր լոյսերովը անշէջ,

Ես սուգովէի անոր մեջ...:

Անոյշ հոգի մը միայն...

Ու գրկէի ես անձայն

Զայն հոգիիս մէջ միայն. . .

### **Yearning**

O for a kind soul to love,  
to cherish and fall in love,  
to be my heaven above...

To venerate everyday  
like a sky that's never grey,  
to worship from faraway...

To beam forever and glow  
within my heart full of woe,  
to lose oneself in her flow...

O but for a tender soul  
to softly clasp and cajole  
within my very own soul.

As for the number of the stanzas and the lines in each stanza, the translator maintained the exact structure of the original. This is generally done so by good translators who try to remain true to the author and stick to the original. Otherwise, the distortion of the original poem would set the original and the translation completely apart from each other. From the point of view of the rhythmic pattern and the rhyme, the translator has achieved his

purpose quite well. As a result, we see almost an identical rhythmic pattern with almost the same number of rhyming words from the point of view of their repetition at the end of each line in both languages in the first stanza (“ըլլար”, “սիրահար”, “ըլլար” – “to love”, “in love”, “above”) and the last stanza (“միայն”, “սնձայն”, “միայն” – “soul”, “cajole”, “soul”). Though the translator did not preserve the repetitious words in the second (“սպառնալի”) and the third stanzas (“մէջ”), he preserved the rhyming patterns of the stanzas – (“everyday”, “never grey”, “faraway”) and (“glow”, “woe”, “flow”).

Another important feature of the translation of this poem is the use of the Infinitive structure in the translation instead of the Conditional Mood in Armenian. The poem in Armenian is written as an imaginary, unreal dream, and one would expect to see conditional clauses, such as “I wish”, if we mean a very accurate translation. However, the use of the Infinitive can be justified because of the purpose the Infinitive generally expresses. A purpose, expressed by the Infinitive in English has become a reasonable substitute of a dream, expressed by the Conditional Mood in Armenian. Another translator might offer: “I wish there were...” or “I would love...”, “it would become...”, but this text is not a piece of prose that presupposes more accuracy rather than artistry.

What really matters in the translation of poetry is the imagery. Otherwise stated, it is the images that appear in the minds of readers who are not native speakers, but expect to read a poem and not just a text with only some meaning, some content. The images are the ‘soul’ of poems. Though some translation theorists consider it a part of the form of a poem, an image is the picture created by the author with the help of words, structures, stylistic devices and expressive means. Thus, an image is constituted by formal structural patterns and language means in order to convey the thoughts and emotions of the author. The translator of this poem managed to create the image of an ephemeral object of worship, somebody divine to love, but it is just a wish, a dream, so far unreal, who would become his “heaven above”,

“like a sky that’s never grey”, but who would eventually “cajole within my very own soul”. All the images connected with ‘heaven’ and the ‘soul’ that symbolize love are conveyed with the help of similar vocabulary (“Երկինքը” = “my heaven above”, “Զայն հեռուէն պաշտէի” = “to worship from faraway...”, “ցոլանար սրտիս վեջ” = “to beam forever and glow”), that is the reason why the image of love and a heavenly lady that embodies and personifies love are very similar both in the original and the translation.

Another extremely important aspect of translation is the problem of the choice of vocabulary and stylistic devices by the translator. This is difficult not from the point of view of direct or nominative meaning, but it is difficult particularly from the point of view of figurative, metaphorical meaning, which is the transference of meaning from one word to another. From this point of view, the original poem sounds a little bit more pessimistic and sad, whereas the translation seems to express more hope. For example, in the first stanza Tekeyan writes “հոգւոյն սիրահար” which means ‘to be in love with the soul’ and this expresses a really tender feeling, while the translator uses “to cherish”, which means – ‘love, protect and care for somebody lovingly’, which, as compared to the Armenian language, seems to emphasize the physical, non-spiritual side of love. Another example of this can be seen in the last stanza; “զրկէի ես անձայն” – is translated into “to softly clasp”. Here the author adds the word softly in order to convey the idea of a more tender action – “զրկէի”. Without the adverb “softly”, the verb to clasp, which means ‘grasp tightly with one’s hand’ would sound like a quite physical action. The verb to “cajole” is another example to show the difference between ‘the spiritual, the ephemeral’ in Armenian versus ‘the physical, the earthly’ in English in the last stanza, though the last line “within my very own soul” – “Զայն հոգիիս վեջ սիւսյն” saves the situation, because it emphasizes the ‘soul’.

The poem “Առկայծ ճրագ” by Daniel Varouzhan is interesting from the point of view of expressing the features of cultural context through translation done by Aram Tolegian. (Tolegian, 1979)

### **Առկայծ ճրագ**

Յաղթանակի գիշերն է այս տօնական.-

Հա՛րս, եղ լեցուր ճրագին:

Պիտի դառնայ կռիւէն տղաս յաղթական.-

Հա՛րս, քիթը առ պատրոյգին:

Սայլ մը կեցաւ դրան առջեւ, հորին քով.-

Հա՛րս, վառէ՛ լոյսը ճրագին:

Տղաս կու գայ ճակատն հպարտ դափնիով.-

Հա՛րս, բե՛ր ճրագը շեմին:

Բայց... սայլին վրայ արի՞ւն եւ սո՞ւգ բեռներ են...

Հա՛րս, ճրագդ ասդի՛ն երկարէ:

Հերոս տղաս հոն զարնուա՛ծ է սրտէն.-

Ա՛խ, հարս, ճրագդ մարէ՛ ...

### **The Flickering Lamp**

This is a night for feast and triumph

Pour oil into the lamp, O Bride,

My boy returns a victor from war –

Trim well, trim well the wick, O bride.

A wagon stops before the door, beside the well,

Light up, light up the lamp, O Bride.

My boy returns, bay leaves on his brow –

Bring up, bring up the lamp, O Bride.

Lo – with grief and blood the wagon’s laden –

Hold up, hold up the lamp, O Bride.

Here lies my valiant son shot through the heart –

Oh . . . snuff out, snuff out the lamp, O Bride.

First let us have a look at the translation of the first line – “This is a night for feast and triumph” – where “Յաղթանակի գիշերն է այս տոնական” acquires an additional extralinguistic connotation, as it symbolizes the spirit of the Armenian soldier who fought against the enemy and is allegedly coming back home. However, in the English translation we can see that the translator added one more word – “a night for feast and triumph” which can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, from the point of view of the nominative meaning of the word “feast” – ‘a special meal with very good food or a large meal for many people’ - illustrates the tradition of celebrating a victory in many cultures (including the Armenian culture with a feast. The word “feast” seems appropriate here because of the tradition. Besides, the other meanings of the word – ‘something that is very enjoyable to see’, or ‘a day on which a religious event or person is remembered and celebrated’ point out the solemnity of an exceptionally important event – a victory as well. However, in this context

the first line in the original sounds more solemn and elevated than in the translation because of the use of the word “feast”. Though , ‘Յաղթանակի գիշերն է այս տօնական’ sounds more spiritual and less materialistic, the word “feast” together with the word “triumph” makes the meaning of “Յաղթանակի գիշերն է այս տօնական” complete: a “triumph” cannot be complete without a feast – and it is part of the culture anyway.

However, this poem is important because of the image, which turns into an allegory and eventually into a symbol, and it is the image of the “flickering lamp”. To appreciate the quality of the translation, it is important to compare the translation of this “lamp” symbolizing ‘life’. Though “Առկայծ ճրագ” in Armenian makes the reader forebode disaster, its translation into “Flickering lamp” conveys the meaning of “Առկայծ ճրագ” masterfully, especially if we look at the repetition of the word “հարս” – “O Bride”, written with a capital letter and symbolizing the beginning of life, as it is the bride who would give birth to the children of the “victor” son – “տղասս յաղթական”. From the point of view of cultural context it is also important to compare the concepts and words “սուգ” and “grief”. Of course in both languages they mean ‘great sadness’, but the Armenian word ‘սուգ’ implies refusal, denial of life both inwardly and outwardly; whereas the English word ‘grief’ presupposes mostly an innermost, deeply hidden feeling of intense sorrow in a reserved way - a typical feature of the English-speaking people. However, it is not a matter of ‘less’ or ‘more’; it is a matter of ‘how’ different cultures react to intense emotions.

The last stanza puts an end to the “առկայծ ճրագ” the “flickering lamp” and the exact translation of “հերոս տղասս հոն զարնուս՝ ծ է սրտէն” into “my valiant son shot through the heart” is perceived exactly the same way because of the accurate translation of the last part of the poem.

One of the ways of assessing the talent of the translator and the success of a good translation is the analysis of the language use, particularly the use of expressive means and stylistic devices. A good example is the translation of the poem “Ինչն ՚” written by Rouben Sevak done by Aram Tolegian (Tolegian, 1979).

### Ինչն ՚

Ինչն ՚, ինչն ՚ զիս սիրեցիր,  
Փոքրիկ աղջիկ, քեզի մե՛ղք էր.  
Փոքրիկ ծոցիդ թիթե՛ն պետք էր.  
Դուն ծեր արծի՛ւ մը բանտեցիր...  
  
Կապոյտ աչուիդ երբ որ բացիր,  
Կապո՛յտ աղջիկ՝ պլպուլն ե՛րգ էր.  
Քե՛զ ալ սիրոյ մրմո՛ւնջ պետք էր,  
Դուն գուժկան մոռ՛ւնչըս ընտրեցիր...  
  
Ես կ՛երթամ մի՛շտ, անձայրածի՛ր  
Դամբաններ են ոտքիս հետքե՛ր,  
Քեզ սիրոյ մեղմ սի՛ւք մը պետք էր,  
Դուն փոթորկի՛ն կուրծքդ բացիր...  
  
Կ՛այրի՛ն աչերըդ սեւածիր,  
Պիտի մեռնի՛ս, այդպէս մ՛ե՛րգեր,

Քեզի փոքրիկ սեր մը պէտք էր,  
Դուն Սէր-Աստուա՛ծը սիրեցիր...

**Why?**

Why, why did you fall in love with me?  
Pity on you, little girl,  
Your little heart is a size for a butterfly,  
But you've imprisoned an ancient eagle there...

When you opened your blue eyes,  
Blue girl, a bulbul's song was there;  
You needed to hear a whisper of love,  
You listened to my baleful groan.

I'm always wandering, the traces  
Of my feet go past endless tombs;  
You needed soft love to cover your heart,  
But you bared it to the storm...

Your eyes are dark with a certain fire,  
Don't sing in that way, or you'll surely die;  
You needed to love a little love,  
You loved the very Love-god himself...

The poem is full of stylistic devices, such as metaphor, metonymy, epithet, hyperbole, as well as such expressive means as repetition, contrast. It is particularly interesting to see how all these stylistic means have been translated into English because whether they have been kept or not will help the reader understand and appreciate the poem better.

The accurate translation of repetitions, such as the question “իւն ՚” – “why?”, which is also the title of the poem, shows that the author is under a strong emotion, i. e. it shows the state of mind of the author, appeals not only to the feelings of the reader but also to the mind. However, this question is rhetorical and hence, is like a statement. The repetition of the word “փոքրիկ”, translated as “little girl” and “your little heart” make it clear that the poem is about an immature lady. Besides this not very complicated piece, it is the contrast between the “փոքրիկ աղջիկ” – “little girl” and “ծեր արծիւ” – “an ancient eagle”. Another successful translation is that of the contrast “Փոքրիկ ծոցիդ թիթեռ պէտք էր”, “Դուն ծեր արծիւ մը բանտեցիր...” – “you’ve imprisoned an ancient eagle” does not seem quite successful, because the rhyme is not kept. Besides, the length of that line in English makes it look like just a statement, lacking any poetic touch, so it sounds like a piece of prose. The rhythm in the original is well balanced, as different from the translation with an unbalanced structure of sentences.

However, the advantage of this translation is the use of the metaphor and hyperbole, based on contrast. “ծեր արծիւ” is translated into “an ancient eagle”, which is quite accurate. “սիրոյ մեղմ սիւք” is translated as “soft love”, which is quite unsuccessful, as the translator could not think of a way of expressing it with the help of a metaphor. The hyperbole “Մէր-Աստուած” is translated literally into “Love-god”. The original and the translation of this coinage are identical. It is interesting to note that the English word is a copy of the original

word; they are the same structurally and stylistically. Another metaphor that is also a hyperbole is translated literally, i.e. accurately – “փոթորիկ” – “a storm”.

The translation of this poem is a good example of a less artistic translation because of the distortion of the structure, as well as the rhyme.

The translation of Bedros Tourian’s poem “Իմ մահը” (1871) – “My death” done by Aram Tolegian (Tolegian, 1979) illustrates a lot of strategies used by the translator in general, as well as from the point of view of the features, particularly syntactic features of Western Armenian.

### **Իմ մահը**

Եթէ տժգոյն մահու հրէշտակ

Անհուն ժպտով մ'իջնէ իմ դէմ

Շոգիւնան ցաւքս ու հոգիս,

Գիտցէ՛ք որ դեռ կենդանի եմ:

Եթէ սնարքս ի՛մ տիպար՝

Մում մը վտիտ ու մահադէմ

Ո՛հ, նշուլէ ցուրտ ճառագայթ,

Գիտցէ՛ք, որ դեռ կենդանի եմ:

Եթէ ճակտովս արտօսրագո՞ծ՝

Զիս պատանի մէջ ցուրտ զերթ վեմ

Փաթթեն, դնեն սեւ դագաղը,

Գիտցե՛ք, որ դեռ կենդանի եմ:

Եթէ հնչէ տխուր կոչնակ,  
Թրթռուն ծիղաղն մահու դժիւեմ,  
Դագաղս առնէ իր յամր քայլ,

Գիտցե՛ք որ դեռ կենդանի եմ:

Եթէ մարդիկն այն մահերգակ,  
Որք սեւ ունին եւ խոժոր դեմ,  
Համասփռեն խունկ ու աղօթք,

Գիտցե՛ք, որ դեռ կենդանի եմ:

Եթ՛ յարդարեն իմ հողակոյտ,  
Եւ հեծեճմամբ ու սգալէն  
Իմ սիրելիքը բաժնուին,

Գիտցե՛ք, որ դեռ կենդանի եմ:

Իսկ աննշան եթէ մնայ  
Երկրի մէկ խորշն հողակոյտն իմ,  
Եւ յիշատա՛կս ալ թառամի,  
Ա՛հ, այն ատե՛ն ես կը մեռնիմ:

Firstly, the syntactic structure of Western Armenian sentence is different in terms of the word order: in English the word order is direct in affirmative sentences, whereas in Western Armenian there is more freedom – you can use the verb at the beginning of a sentence. For example, at the beginning of the first stanza in the first two lines we can see the direct order in Armenian (“Եթէ ւժգոյն մահու հրեշտակ”, / “Անհուն ժպտով միջնէ իմ դէմ”), but in the next two lines we see indirect word order with the verb at the beginning of the statement and then the subject of the sentence. (“Շոգիման ցաւքս ու հոգիս”, / “Գիտցէք որ դէռ կենդանի եմ”) Yet, in the English translation we can see the direct order, which is typical of the English affirmative sentence structure:

When the pallid angel of death  
Comes to me with his impenetrable smile,  
And my pain begins to dissolve, my soul,  
Know that I'm still alive.

However, an important characteristic should be mentioned and clarified – the sentence structure in poetry, where from the structural point of view the main feature is the rhythmical arrangement of compositional patterns. This imposes its rules on poems: on the line, on the metre, the character and number of syllables, and a good translator should find a way not to change the rhythm much. If the SL and TL have different syntactic sentence structures, the translator should at least try to maintain the rhythm of the original. In this poem, though the sentence structures are different and though the translator had to stick to the rules of syntax in English, he managed to preserve the rhythm of the verse with the help of the metre – the number of syllables and stress that are well-balanced in the translation.

Another interesting solution in the translation is the substitute of ‘եթե’ (‘if’) by ‘when’. These two conjunctions, though similar grammatically, are different semantically: ‘if’ expresses more doubt, whereas ‘when’ presupposes the time of an event. The translator’s choice of ‘when’ expresses more certainty than the more tentative ‘եթե’ (if) in Armenian. Thus, the translator makes the main idea of the poem – the eternity, the author’s immortality in the minds of people quite certain, meaning that his immortality is a matter of time rather than a matter of condition and is not doubtful.

The main advantage of the translation of this poem is the closeness of the original and its translation. The translator managed to keep the form, including the rhythm, which is not very strict in both languages, and the rhyme. All the repetitions were translated closely to the original: the repetition shows the state of mind of the author and enhances the strong emotions that the author wants to convey to the reader. Thus, the repetition of the last line at the end of each stanza “Գիտցեք, որ դեռ կենդանի եմ”, “Know that I’m still alive” is the crucial idea of the poem and is successfully communicated to the reader with the help of the use of the imperative clause in both languages. In fact, the author’s yearning to stay alive forever is quite obvious because of the emphasis of this idea with the use of climax – gradual increase in emotional tension and no solution till the last stanza. This is well conveyed in the translation: the emotional tension grows from stanza to stanza and the reader can see all the stages of death:

1<sup>st</sup> stanza:

When the pallid angel of death  
Comes to me with his impenetrable smile,  
And my pain begins to dissolve, my soul  
Know that I’m still alive.

- *The stage of premonition of death*

2<sup>nd</sup> stanza:

When shining down from the head of my bed  
A dim small candle lights my dying face,  
And gives off only a bitter cold ray,  
Know that I'm still alive.

- *The last breath*

3<sup>rd</sup> stanza:

When, all wrapped, I am placed in a dark coffin  
And I lie in my layered shroud, a cold stone,  
My brow now tearless and sanctified,  
Know that I'm still alive.

- *The dead person being placed in a coffin*

4<sup>th</sup> stanza:

When the peal of the iron bell  
Causes a smile on the face of death,  
And my coffin makes its silent way,  
Know that I'm still alive.

- *Closing the coffin to inter it*

5<sup>th</sup> stanza:

When those men who chant the deathsongs,  
Who wear black, and have harsh lines in their faces  
Give prayers and spread incense all around,  
Know that I'm still alive.

- *The mourners singing deathsongs and praying*

6<sup>th</sup> stanza

When they have trimmed my earthly grave,  
And, sobbing and grieving,  
Turned homeward my family and friends,  
Know that I'm still alive.

- *The dead person is in his grave*

While the first 6 stanzas are about the stages of death, yet they express the author's desire to stay alive after death. The 7<sup>th</sup> stanza is different: it is about being dead indeed and being forgotten:

But if my grave remains unmarked  
In a corner of the earth,  
And remembrance of me fades away,  
Ah, know then that I am dead.

The use of suspense expresses the growth of the upcoming tragedy (the poet died at 20) and the use of the parallel constructions help the translator to stay true to the original and transfer the main meaning and what is more important, he does it by successfully creating the image of death in English. However, the last stanza changes the idea of the poem and with the help of contrast introduces the image of oblivion that is unavoidable unless one stays in the minds and hearts of people and is remembered by them. The similarity of the poem and its translation is achieved due to the translator's loyalty to the original. However, not only the translator's talent, but also the original text plays a big role in translation. I mean to say that a lot depends on the author's style and use of different means: structural, formal, linguistic and stylistic.

In this poem the translator has very successfully used the personification of death created by Bedros Tourian – “a smile on the face of death”, “the pallid angel of death”, “my coffin makes its silent way”. The use of the oxymoron (“a smile on the face of death” and “the pallid angel of death”), in which the meaning of the words clash (for example, ‘smile’ and ‘death’ do not combine in real life, ‘angel’ and ‘death’ are completely incompatible and the metaphorical use of the ‘coffin making its way’ to the grave, as if it were a living person), are very important lexical and stylistic expressive means that hugely contribute to the understanding of this poem in the translation

Recreation is one of the most important features for poetry translation. As recreating a poem is quite general understanding, translators should know that during the recreation process they should also consider various factors. The first one is to preserve the stylistics (context, cognition, discourse, history, etc.) of the original text. The second is that during the recreation process the translator should consider what the understandings, knowledge and self-determination of the author are, that is to know about the connection between the author and his text. (Stepanyan, 2019)

One of the most important theories of doing poetry translation is conveying the image. The task of the poet is to create new forms and the translator may choose to import that form into the target culture. Formal features are the most important features of translating poetry. However, when you translate poetry you can never translate everything. You mostly focus on specific features of that piece of poetry, such as the meaning, the form, the language, the image, the impact, etc. And one of the strategies to convey everything of the poem is to provide several translations of the same poem and to focus on individual features. (Isajanyan, 2019)

Based on the results of my focus group discussion I found that the majority of the participants used the theory of conveying the whole thought and the image of the source text.

During the translation they had some difficulties regarding the rhyme and the word equivalence, which is a quite common problem among translators. Every language has cultural concepts and words that are untranslatable and do not have the equivalent word in the target language. The only strategy for it is to leave the word the same and explain it in a footnote, because you can't explain any cultural concept or word immediately in the poem, as you would do it in another genre such as in prose, in fiction, in academic writings or in oral interpretation. Another main issue during poetry translation is keeping the rhyme. However, in some cases even if the original poem is written in rhyme, it is not necessary to keep it during the translation. Keeping the rhyme is a desirable thing, but it is also related to the style of the translator. If the translator is able to transmit the whole meaning, the thinking mood, the emotions and feelings of the author and poem then it is not necessary to focus on the rhyming feature, as very often when you focus on rhyming, some boundaries are being made in terms of limitation of recreation and reproduction of values and other important features suffer because of it.

The results of the written surveys show that younger readers between the ages of 6 – 10 prefer poems that contain rhyming, that are more musical or melodic, poems that contain different characters, etc. Whereas, the answers of older readers over 18 are quite different, because they see and consider more features while reading poetry, such as the figurative language, the historical context, the vocabulary, the genre, the ideological meaning of it, etc. Thus, their perception of a poem involves a lot of additional things besides the simple rhyme and rhythm of a poem that make a poem similar to a simple piece of music; after all these simple features give poetry musicality and make it sound like a melody, hence, make it so understandable to younger and inexperienced readers.

All my findings and analysis state that you can never translate everything in poetry. As the task of the translator is not just changing the words from one language to another,

considering all the features of the source language and recreating them into the target language, I think it would be better to do several translations of the same poem showing a different characteristic in each of them. It would definitely help the reader to be closer to the original poem and to the author.

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