

THEORY AND PRACTICE: AN ARMENIAN TRANSLATION OF MAYA ANGELOU'S *STILL I RISE*

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PRESENTED TO THE  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH & COMMUNICATIONS  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ARMENIA  
YEREVAN, ARMENIA



MAY 5, 2017

# INTRODUCTION

The capstone is divided into two parts:

- The first part focuses on the analysis of Maya Angelou's *Still I Rise*
- The second part is a theory-based translation of the same poem, from English into Armenian.



# RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

- The central questions are concentrated on the concept of race, ethnicity in Angelou's poem and how these concepts helped her to create her identity.
- The Armenian translation of an originally English poem can communicate the same meaning/message and create similar impressions among the readers as the original text does.
- Another important research question of this capstone project is the visibility of the translator.
- Translation is an important part of the capstone. Each stanza is translated according to the translation tendencies of Antoine Berman.



# RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

- In the book, *I know why the caged bird sings*, Angelou (1969) writes in the prologue, “If growing up is painful for the Southern Black girl, being aware of her displacement is the rust on the razor that threatens the throat. It is an unnecessary insult.” (Angelou, 1969, p.4).
- Angelou explained that growing up as a black girl was a difficult and painful experience for her.
- Angelou overcame all those obstacles and she grew up as a strong and powerful woman. She not only survived, but also she thrived and became a role model for other women, no matter their race, ethnicity and nationality.



# ANALYSIS

- In her poem, *Still I Rise*, Angelou announced that she was proud of being Black women and she was proud of her history. She also protested against gender inequality.
- In her poem *Still I Rise* she announced that she was ready to accept any criticism towards her but she was powerful and strong enough to resist it.
- She praised Black women for their power to survive like in her poem *Still I Rise* she announced that despite many obstacles, criticism from the society she had survived and even more she became successful woman.



# ANALYSIS

- The second importance of this capstone project is translation of Maya Angelou's *Still I Rise*. Different translation theories and literary analysis are used for translating this poem from English into Armenia
- As Barthes (1977) suggests that the reader plays an important role of interpreting the message of the original text, Schleiermacher also suggests understanding of the text very well in order to translate it.
- For example, “Out of the huts of history's shame I rise up from a past that's rooted in pain I rise I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide, Welling and swelling I bear in the tide. Leaving behind nights of terror and fear I rise”/ Պատմության ամոթալի խրճիթներից դուրս, Ես բարձրանում եմ: Մինչև անցյալ, որ արմատացած է ցավի մեջ, Ես բարձրանում եմ: Սև օվկիանոս եմ ես՝ լայն և ցատկող, Հորալով և փքվելով՝ ես դիմադրում եմ մակընթացի մեջ: Թողնելով անցյալում գիշերվա վախճն ու սարսափը, Ես բարձրանում եմ:”
- These sentences indicate Angelou's history, the past of the slavery that even now follows her, but she is a survivor. She accepts her ethnicity thus shaping her identity and despite everything she rises.



# ANALYSIS

- In the book, *Translation and the trials of the foreign*, Berman (1985) writes about the 12 deforming tendencies that many translators use while doing their translations. During the translation of *Still I Rise* several “deforming tendencies” have been used.
- The first deforming tendency is destruction of rhythms.
- For example, “Does it come as a surprise that I dance like I've got diamonds” and in Armenian it is translated as, “Քեզ զարմացնո՞ւմ է, որ ես պարում եմ սսես ունեմ ադամանդներ”.
- The second deforming tendency is qualitative impoverishment.
- For example, the excerpt from the poem “Cause I walk like I've got oil wells, Pumping in my living room.” and the translation in Armenian is following, “Որովհետև ես քայլում եմ սսես, Ունեմ նավթահանքե՞ր հյուրասենյակում”.
- The original text tells that the narrator has oil wells that pumping in her living room, however in Armenian literal or close translation has not made sense and therefore it was translated as “oil wells” without the verb “pumping”.



# ANALYSIS

- The next important theory is about the invisibility of the translator which is formulated by Lawrence Venuti. According to Venuti, the translators are invisible and that is what the readers want. In his book, *The translator's invisibility*, he states, “The translation is not in fact a translation but the “original”” (Venuti,1994,p. 1).
- During the translation of Angelou’s *Still I Rise*, there were some words that could be erased or literally translated from English into Armenian, but the decision has made to keep it as it will highlight the importance of that word.
- Vladimir Nabokov and Ezra Pound suggested to be visible as a translator. According to them, the good translation should not always be smooth but instead it should sound as a translation.
- In contrast, Gregory Rabassa insisted that the good translation should be smooth and should stay close to the original text.
- An Armenian translation of the *Still I Rise* is a combination of these theories. It is a translation that mostly stays loyal to the original text, however the translator added some punctuations, changed the places of the words.



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# APPENDIX

Մայա Անջելու  
Ես միևնույն է բարձրանում եմ

Դու կարող ես ինձ գրել պատմության էջերում,  
Քո դառը, աղավաղված ստերով:  
Ու կարող ես մտցնել ինձ ցեղը, միևնույն է,  
Ես կբարձրանամ որպես փոշի:

Իմ հանդգնությունը վշտացնո՞ւմ է քեզ,  
Ինչու՞ ես պաշարված մոայությունմբ,  
Որովհետև ես քայլում եմ ասես  
Ունեմ նավթահանքե՞ր հյուրասենյակումս:

Որպես լուսիններ և արևներ,  
Որպես վեր ձգտող հույսեր,  
Մակընթացի հաստատ ջիթով,  
Ես միևնույն է կբարձրանամ վեր:

Ուզում էիր տեսնել ինձ կտորվա՞ծ  
Գուլիք կա՞խ և աչքերը ցա՞ծ,  
Արցունքի պես ուսերս ընկած,  
Հոգևոր ճիչերիցս թուլացած:

Գոռոզությունս է քեզ վիրավորում  
Այդքան ծանր մի տար,  
Որովհետև ես ծիծաղում եմ ասես ունեմ  
ոսկու հանքեր տան բակումս:

Դու կարող ես քո խոսքերով կրակել ինձ վրա,  
Դու կարող ես քո աչքերով ինձ վիրավորել,  
Դու կարող ես ատելությամբ քո ինձ սպանել,  
Բայց միևնույն է, ես կբարձրանամ որպես օդ:

Իմ սեքսուալությունը վշտացնո՞ւմ է քեզ,  
Քեզ զարմացնո՞ւմ է, որ ես պարում եմ  
ասես ունեմ ադամանդներ  
Ազդրերիս արանքում:

Պատմության ամոթալի խրճիթներից դուրս,  
Ես բարձրանում եմ:  
Միևնև անցյալ, որ արմատացած է ցավի մեջ,  
Ես բարձրանում եմ:  
Սև օվկիանոս եմ ես ՝ լայն և ցատկող,  
Հորպով և փքվելով՝ ես դիմադրում եմ մակընթացի մեջ:  
Թողնելով անցյալում գիշերվա վախն ու սարսափը,  
Ես բարձրանում եմ:  
Լուսաբացին, որն ապշեցնող պարզ է,  
Ես բարձրանում եմ:  
Բերելով նվերները, որ իմ նախնիներն են տվել,  
Ես եմ անուրջն ու հույսը ստրուկի:  
Ես բարձրանում եմ:  
Բարձրանում եմ:  
Բարձրանում եմ:

Maya Angelou  
Still I Rise

You may write me down in history  
With your bitter, twisted lies,  
You may trod me in the very dirt  
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?  
Why are you beset with gloom?  
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells  
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,  
With the certainty of tides,  
Just like hopes springing high,  
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?  
Bowed head and lowered eyes?  
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.  
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?  
Don't you take it awful hard  
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines  
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,  
You may cut me with your eyes,  
You may kill me with your hatefulness,  
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?  
Does it come as a surprise  
That I dance like I've got diamonds  
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame  
I rise  
Up from a past that's rooted in pain  
I rise  
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.  
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise.  
I rise.  
I rise.

