

Literary Translation: Old and New Challenges

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Abstract: This paper discusses the main challenges that face literary translation and literary translators. These challenges have been divided into three main categories: Linguistic, cultural, and human. The first type of challenges comes from the nature of the discipline itself since it involves the difficult task of dealing with phonological, syntactic, lexical, semantic, stylistic and pragmatic issues occurring in literary texts whose language is additionally characterized by its linguistic deviation from the norm, especially in its use of figurative language. The second source of challenges stems from the fact that literary translation is primarily concerned with translating culture-bound expressions and concepts which pose one of the most difficult tasks for translators when trying to render them into a foreign language. The third type of challenges is related to the barriers facing literary translation including lack of government funding, poor literary translator training, language and cultural hegemony, cultural insularity and indifference towards translated literature. The discussion focuses on the situation of literary translation in the Arab world and in the English-speaking world with some illustrative examples and statistics.

Introduction

In our modern times literary translation faces various challenges. These challenges can be divided into three main categories: Linguistic, cultural, and human challenges. The aim of this paper is to investigate these three main types of challenges and then look at the prospects for literary translation and literary translators. The first type of challenges (linguistic challenges) comes from the nature of the discipline itself since it involves the difficult task of dealing with phonological, syntactic, lexical, semantic, stylistic and pragmatic issues occurring in literary texts. The second source of challenges (cultural challenges) stems from the fact that literary translation involves translating culture-bound expressions and concepts that constitute serious challenges for the translator. The third type of challenges (human challenges) is related to the situation of the literary translator, the role of publishers and the annual output of literary translations locally and globally. Below is a discussion of the three types of challenges together with a general outlook on the future of literary translation.

1. Linguistic challenges

Of all types of translation, literary translation is perhaps the most demanding and the most difficult. The reason behind this is that the language of literature is different from ordinary language and involves a variety of challenges on the phonological, syntactic, lexical, semantic, stylistic and pragmatic levels. In literary translation, formal and stylistic features become of great significance.

The meaning of a literary text, as formalist critics have shown, is affected by the special organic relationship between the constituent parts, and the parts and the whole. These features are most apparent in the translation of poetic texts and, to some extent, of dramatic texts and even of a wide variety of prose literary texts.

Poetry presents a strong challenge for translators, given the complexity of its formal aspects in addition to its cultural content. Speaking of poetry, T. Savory (1969) writes:

There is rhythm, metrical rhythm; there is emotion, sensuous emotion, there is an increased use of figures of speech and a degree of disregard for conventional word-order; there is imagination, and, above all, there is an ability to see features in an object or a situation another, not a poet, might miss.

(Qtd. in Ilyas, 1989: 74)

Normally, a poet composes his poem while paying attention to word sounds, rhythms, rhymes, stanzaic patterns, visual layout (graphology) and word choice. This selection has great effects on the meaning of the text. Such characteristic literary and linguistic features often defy translation due to the basic differences between different languages. Translation theorists and practitioners have differed about the best method/strategy to use in the translation of poetry. In his *Translating Poetry, Seven Strategies and a Blueprint* (1975) André Lefevere catalogues seven kinds of strategies employed by English translators of Catullus' "Poem 64". These strategies include phonemic, literal, metrical, prosaic, rhymed, blank verse and interpretative translation" (qtd. in Bassnett-McGuire, 1980: 81-82). Lefevere finds these strategies restrictive, distortive, unrepresentative or harmful as each and every one of them tries to emphasize certain aspect/s at the expense of the poem as a whole. Highlighting the difficulties involved in translating several literary devices or stylistic features such as alliteration, allusion, metaphor, parody, pun, rhyme, meter, poetic diction, style, register, jargon, dialect, typography etc., Lefevere argues that in such cases translation loss is inevitable (Lefevere 1992: 16).

In her *Translation Studies* (1980) Bassnett-McGuire concurs with Lefevere and attributes the deficiencies of these translation methods to "an overemphasis of one or more element of the poem at the expense of the whole", which results in "unbalanced" translation" (82). She also identifies other translation problems and pitfalls which occur when translating from a period remote in time or from a distant culture. One of these problems is the historical stylistic dimension, i.e. the language and style of the period in which the original work was written. Here, the translator is faced with the difficult decision as to whether to use current language expressions or to try to find the appropriate equivalents in the target language that can recapture the stylistic features of the old source text. She cautions against the use of the second method which she believes often makes the translation further removed from the original. Commenting on a translation of an old text in which the translator tried to keep the formal features of the original, and on another translation in which the translator deviated from the linguistic and formal features of the text, she

observes: "The closer the translation came to trying to recreate linguistic and formal structures of the original, the further removed it became in terms of function. Meanwhile huge deviations of form and language managed to come closer to the original intention" (91). Although she approves of some translation methods such as the use of insertions and additions to clarify archaic or obscure texts, the modernization of the text to accommodate for the needs of contemporary readership, a necessary deviation from the form and language of the original, a good *interpretation* of the original and an appropriate *shaping* of that interpretation, her ultimate conclusion is that "the variations in method do serve to emphasize the point that there is no single *right* way of translating a poem just as there is no single right way of writing one either" (101).

The translator of poetry is also faced with the difficult choice between verse or prose translations. In his article "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation" published in 1959, Roman Jakobson asserted that "poetry by definition is untranslatable" (qtd. in Venuti 2000:118), though he suggested various alternatives to deal with this issue, including approximation and annotation. Poets as important as Dante and Robert Frost also saw that poetry is untranslatable, though others such as Fitzgerald and Pound believed in freedom in translation.

In Eugene Nida's "dynamic" vs. "formal" translation formula, the first method is preferable to the second in translating poetry; the first being directed to the receptor message while the second is directed toward the source message. For Nida, the translator may use prose to translate poetry, but he warns that some poems suffer a great deal when translated into prose. For example, a lyric poem translated as prose is not an adequate equivalent of the original as it loses much of its emotional intensity. ("Principles of Correspondence," in Venuti 2000:127-129). Ideally, the translator should reproduce both form and content of the original artifact, but since form and content can rarely be reproduced in the translated version, form is usually sacrificed for the sake of the content. In other words, meaning or content is given priority over form or style and equivalence of response is preferable to the literalness of form. This preference of method stems from Nida's belief that the purposes of the translation and the receptor of the message or the targeted audience should be given priority. This being the case, Nida expects some degree of adaptation of the original to the target language and culture. He further recognizes that responding to the linguistic and cultural needs of the receptor, adapting the form of the original to suit the requirements of the target language and attempting to achieve a sense of naturalness entail changes in language, form and even content. Consequently, the translator is expected to provide numerous footnotes in order to make the text comprehensible and close to the original (127-129).

Stressing the equal importance of both content and form, Peter Newmark (1988:163-169) argues that "semantic" translation is more appropriate than "communicative" translation for poetry translation. For him, communicative translation attempts to produce on the reader an effect as close as possible to that produced on the reader of the original reader so that readers of the translated text

may not find difficulties in understanding the message of the original text. Semantic translation, by contrast, attempts to reproduce the precise contextual meaning of the original by paying special attention to the aesthetic values and expressive meaning of the source text such as sounds, metaphor, figurative, language, diction style, etc. In his opinion, the semantic method fits the translation of poetry. Highlighting the impossibility of ever achieving a good poetry translation that pays equal attention to both form and content, Newmark observes:

The more important the words and their order in the original, the more closely the original should be translated. Since the genre where words and their order are most important in poetry, you would expect the translation of poetry to be the closest form of translation. Far from it. This is not possible since the language of poetry includes so many additional factors—the kind of poetic form, meter, connotations, rhythm, sound, including rhyme, alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, wordplay, which are missing or not so important in other types of writing. Nevertheless, poetry translation is always worth attempting, and I think the best poetry translations are miracles of closeness. (Qtd. in Anderman and Rogers: 13)

As the above discussion has demonstrated, it is difficult to render a poem in the target language without some loss. Generally speaking, a prose translation of a poem does not have the same effect or even the same meaning of a verse translation in the target language, let alone in the same language. Every translation whether in prose or in verse is an approximation of the original; it comes very close to the source text but it cannot be the same. In Arabic, most translations of English poetry are rendered into prose perhaps because a prose translation can capture the meaning of the original poem more than a verse version due to the restrictions imposed on the translator in terms of sound, rhyme, meter, figurative language, etc. A clear proof of this foregone conclusion can be seen in Asfour's discussion of the differences between a verse and a prose translation of Thomas Gray's poem "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard". The researcher shows that "the translation that offers itself as a poem in the target language", i.e. Nazik Al-Malaika's verse version, departs greatly from the original and is, therefore, "unfaithful", whereas the prose version rendered by the researcher-poet sticks fairly closely to the original and is therefore more "faithful" (Asfour 2000:8-9). By the same token, a prose translation of the same poem by Almassiri seems to reinforce this conclusion (online Arabic translation). On comparing the two prose translations with the verse version, we find that the prose versions give a more accurate meaning than that given by the poetry version. Nevertheless, the outcome of these two good prose translations of Gray's masterpiece is not a poem in the target language but an approximated prose version of the original poem.

Additionally, we notice a growing trend on the part of many Arab poetry translators to use free verse form instead of the rhymed traditional/classical Arabic poetry in their rendering of the original poem into the Arabic language. This tendency seems to have emerged as a result of the restrictions imposed on

the translator's freedom by the metrical and rhymed forms of traditional Arabic poetry, especially the "qasida" form which requires a largely consistent meter and an invariably regular rhyme scheme throughout the whole poem. The restrictions of meter and rhyme scheme seem to be the main cause of the departure of many translators worldwide from traditional poetry forms to the more recent forms of free verse and the prose poem which have been in vogue since the turn of the twentieth century. Naturally, the limitations of the traditional forms would compel the translators to resort to various strategies such as omission, addition, insertion, paraphrase, adaptation, elaboration, substitution, change of figurative language and literary devices and various alterations in language and diction. As in the case of prose translations, a free verse translation form may help the translator find more accurate equivalents than those afforded by a rhymed, metrical translation.

The translation of dramatic texts is perhaps as complicated as the translation of poetic texts though it poses a different kind of problems for the translator. Here the questions of pitch, tone, gestures, body language, culture and many others come into play. Dramatic texts are normally meant to be performed rather than read and this entails a special kind of treatment that takes into consideration the audience's or the reader's role or the text's "performability". As Judith A. Inggs explains, "The translator of a dramatic text is generally also obliged to disambiguate not only the words of the play, but the actions, the gestures, and even the attitudes of the characters" (Inggs:34). Moreover, the translation of dramatic texts involves dealing with non-textual features such as tone, register, dialect, style, costume, gesture, body language, dramatic conventions, etc. The translator's task becomes all the more difficult when it comes to the issues of dubbing and subtitling which require correspondence between the text and the extra linguistic effects of sound and gesture.

Different translation theorists and practicing translators have adopted different translation strategies for dealing with dramatic texts: reader-oriented translation, performance-oriented translation, prose translation or a verse translation. Recognizing the special features of dramatic texts and their difference from other types of prose texts, Bassnett-McGuire disapproves of the practice to translate dramatic texts in the same way as prose texts. She argues that in translating a dramatic text it is difficult to separate text from performance. Consequently, the translator must determine which structures are performable and translate them accordingly into the target language, a procedure that would entail making major linguistic and stylistic changes. According to her, the concept *performability/playability* is not something fixed but varies from one period to another (122-123), and so the translator has to consider performability as a variable in dramatic texts translation. In short, the translation of dramatic texts involves not only the linguistic transference from SL to TL but also a transfer of the function of the language utterances in relation to theatrical discourse. All these restrictions make the translation of dramatic texts a very demanding task.

The translator of literary prose texts or fiction, the most translated genre worldwide, is also liable to encounter challenging problems. Given the assumption that literary translation applies to all literary genres, it follows that what was said about poetry and drama translations is, by and large, applicable to prose translation in many respects. Contrary to a widely-held belief that a novel's structure is simpler than that of a poem and, consequently, easier to translate, the language of literary prose often poses a real translation problem. Prose narrative texts, as Roman Jakobson had shown, are dominated by metonymy in the same way that poetry is dominated by metaphor (qtd.in Lodge 1993: 57). In modernist and postmodernist narratives in particular, language is often of utmost importance. Sometimes, the language of a modern novel incorporates features usually associated with poetry. Some modern novels like those of Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence, for example, draw upon the use of imagery, symbol and figurative language as much as proper poems do. In such novels, image, symbol and rhythm are often used as a source of cohesion and sound-sense connections, suggesting thereby some of the novel's major themes (Traugott and Pratt, 1980: 79). The use of literary and stylistic devices in such texts cannot be ignored by the literary translator who is looking for a plausible equivalence between the two texts. Moreover, the translator has to take into consideration the organic relationship between form and content, the parts and the total structure as well as the function of the stylistic and literary devices used in narrative texts.

The playfulness of language in postmodern novel and the employment of ambiguity, irony, play on words, pastiche and many other culture-specific literary devices pose further problems for the translator, especially when combined with the problem of intercultural transference. Some works, like those of Samuel Beckett and Thomas Pynchon are difficult to comprehend even by the native reader, and some others such as those of Kurt Vonnegut, John Barth and John Fowles are replete with four-letter words and obscene language and consequently form yet more problems for the translator. Even more, most Western postmodern novels employ metafiction and combine multiple and cultural elements including subjects and genres still deemed unfit for literature in many other literatures and cultures. Furthermore, novels and short stories often contain dialects and neologisms which form a real difficulty for the translator. Here, the translator has to choose the most appropriate dialect into which he can render the source text and to decide on which type of translation to be used: literal, functional, formal, ideational, etc.

For an Arab translator, the translation of dialect becomes all the more difficult as he is faced with the problem of choosing a dialect among the various dialects of the Arabic language. A translator is originally required to reproduce the stylistic features of the original as much as possible for these constitute an essential component of the meaning. If the translator changes the style or the language, this may result in distorting the original message of the source text. Looking at Arabic prose translations of English language literature, we find that in translating dialect, translators choose either to ignore dialect altogether and

instead render it in formal /standard language or to translate it by using equivalent dialect in the target language. Obviously, the first choice, though easier and perhaps more convenient, is not the appropriate choice, for it would result in the loss of a great part of the meaning. However, there is no equivalent single way of translating dialect, especially when the target language, like Arabic, has more than one geographic, regional or socioeconomic dialect. A good case in point is the translation of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* by Ihsan Abbas, a renowned Arabic language and literature scholar in the Arab world. Here, the translator uses equivalent dialect in the Arabic version. However, he opts for the Egyptian dialect rather than any other Arab dialect perhaps because this dialect is the most widespread and consequently the most intelligible dialect for the general Arab readership. As the translator's native dialect is not Egyptian but Palestinian, the translation version may not always sound quite authentic and therefore not quite equivalent or faithful.

Conversely, an Egyptian translator, Mohammad Ibrahim Zaki, translated the dialect in Thomas Hardy's novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* by using standard Arabic. One of the main drawbacks of this kind of translation is the loss of the real identity and the characteristic features of the speakers. A dialect may create a certain feeling or notion about the characters and the theme/s for the readers of the original text that is not quite possible to get across to readers of the translated text if the dialect is translated by standard language. A similar example to the above mentioned one is Lama Wannus's translation of D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. In her translation of this novel, the Midlands dialect is rendered through standard Arabic. In the original, dialect is part of characterization; it suggests the identity, the true nature and the cultural and social background of the speaker. Consequently, this kind of translation technique will be unsuccessful and possibly even confusing if readers don't understand what is meant or implied by the choice of dialect.

2. Cultural challenges

Though traditional literary translation theorists centered their translation criticism and evaluation on the basis of a direct and faithful correspondence between the source text and the target text, recent developments in this area indicate a further movement from the traditional emphasis on rendering the formal aspects of the original to a concentration on the translated text in the target language. As Suh points out, "Before the mid-1970s translation criticism ... proceeded from the assumption that the target text should reproduce the source text, and deviations from the original were inexcusable" (Suh 2002:51). In the traditional linguistically-oriented approach, scholars considered literary translation as a process of textual transfer that should grasp the syntactic, lexical, stylistic and pragmatic aspects of the texts in question and on the comparison between the source text and the target text. In the new trend, however, there is a movement away from comparative textual analysis and evaluative criticism towards the acceptance of the target text as a product in its own right. Consequently, translations are set within the context of their receiving cultures

and the focus therefore is on cultural interchange. This shift of emphasis has resulted in a shift in the challenges that literary translators face. Instead of being constrained with linguistic and stylistic problems, now translators are faced with new, sometimes additional, challenges emanating from the ideological and cultural values and norms of the target culture/s.

Whether the translation of a literary text is source-text or target-text oriented, the translator is faced with innumerable problems trying to transfer the spatial and the temporal aspects of the setting, the relations of the characters with one another and all sorts of linguistic and paralinguistic information. Whatever type of literary translation may be, the new approach compels the translator to take into consideration the various elements to be transferred to the target text and target audience/culture. However, this process itself may prove to be inhibiting for the translator as ideological, cultural and political factors will necessarily come into play.

The main advocates of this target text/culture and reception-oriented approach such as Hans J. Vermeer (1989); Peter Newmark (1988); Basil Hatim and Ian Mason (1990); Susan Bassnett-McGuire (1980); André Lefevere (1992); Mona Baker (1992) and Mary Snell-Hornby (1988) have opposed the view that translation merely takes place between languages. Rather, they viewed translation as a cross-cultural transfer. Indeed, some theorists, like Vermeer, have gone to the extent of requiring that a translator should not only be bilingual, but above all bicultural" (Snell-Hornby: 54). Obviously, this adds further burden to the already difficult task of the literary translator. More specifically, literature often contains texts which are full of humor, puns, maxims, proverbs, idioms and fixed expressions which are culture-bound and therefore cannot be rendered easily into the target language. A translator, therefore, has to be aware of the cultural norms, beliefs, morals and the ideologies of the cultures into or out of which he is translating.

The role of culture is also apparent on another level. In our postmodern era, translation has become closely linked to the balance of power between different countries or, more specifically, between different cultures. The French Psychologist Jacques Lacan identifies four discourses which he calls: Master, University, Hysteric and Analyst and explains how these are related dynamically to one another. While the discourse of the Master represents struggle for mastery/ domination, the discourse of the Hysteric embodies resistance to the prevailing Master discourse and the discourse of the Analyst stands for deliberate subversion of the prevailing Master discourse (Lacan "Four Discourses"). The French scholar Michel Foucault also discusses through his works the power of discourse which results in an imbalance of power relations, creating notions of the "subject" who wields power and the "other" who is seen as alien or stranger and who is generally a threat to the interests and security of the subject. (Peck and Coyle 1993: 142-143).

Since the translation of culture involves some kind of intercultural communication or transference, it is bound to engage the participants in a kind of power struggle that would eventually determine the side whose cultural

discourse should prevail. In the new approaches, literary translation is concerned with such postmodernist issues as power relations, national identity and the inequality between cultures, races, languages and peoples. The assumption is that the relations between different cultures can hardly be conducted on equal terms and languages are hierarchically and not equally related. Such theories view translation challenges from new and different perspectives for they are different from the theories with a linguistic base. Instead of focusing on the linguistic choices available to the translator, they concentrate on the cultural, political social and historical factors affecting the production and translation of literary texts.

The issue of power struggle has been recognized in intercultural translation for a long time, but it came to the fore with the publication of Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (1978) which contended that the relationship between the East and the West has been viewed by Westerners as a discourse between a dominant culture and a subservient culture. Drawing upon Lacan and Foucault, Said argues that the relationship between the West and the East has been circulated by Western scholars as that between rational, active and honest Occidentals and irrational, lazy and deceitful Orientals. He also shows how this view has affected Western translations of Oriental works. For instance, he gives a brief account of Silvestre de Sacy's concept of translating Arabic poetry into foreign European languages:

Sacy defended the utility and interest of such things as Arabic poetry, but what he was really saying was that Arabic poetry had to be properly transformed by the Orientalist before it could begin to be appreciated. Arabic poetry was produced by a completely strange (to Europeans) people, under hugely different climate, social and historical conditions from those a European knows; in addition, such poetry as this was nourished by 'opinions, beliefs, superstitions which we can acquire only after long and painful study' (Said: 128).

For Said, in translating Arabic poetry, Sacy believed that it should not be taken in whole, but in fragments, extracts that are further explicated and annotated before they can be appreciated by the Western reader.

Lacan's notions, Foucault's ideas and Said's views have been utilized by some translation theorists to underscore the ideologies that control transcultural translation and the hegemony of the West in transcultural translations worldwide. For instance, Lawrence Venuti (1998) points out that the history of translation shows that Western translations of other literatures have been dominated by what he calls the "domesticating method" rather than the "foreignizing method". Deriving his new terminology and concepts from the ancient German Linguist Schleiermacher, Venuti argues that the "domesticating" method depends on bringing the foreign culture closer to the reader in the target culture while the "foreignizing" method depends on taking the reader over to the target culture and making him feel the linguistic and the cultural differences. While the first method relies on what he calls "fluent translation" that leaves the text free of the slightest trace of translation and is read as if it had been written by the original

author in the target language, the second method, by contrast, tries to resist any ethnocentrism, racism and culture narcissism. Venuti himself favors the foreignizing method asserting that the domestication of other cultures has resulted in depriving them of their distinct voice for the sake of naturalizing or normalizing them in the target culture besides producing the linguistic and cultural hegemony of English in the translation arena. (1998: 306). Venuti further illustrates the impact of such strategies on the translation practice and output. Impacted by cultural hegemony and the subversion of some ideologies, certain works are included in and others are excluded from the translation enterprise simply because they conform to or deviate from the norms of the target culture.

3. Human challenges

The third source of challenges facing literary translation and translators stems from what can be called the human factor, including such matters as publication problems, lack of financial support on the part of governments for the translation and publication of literary works, low payments for literary translators, lack of professional translator training, refrain of some countries to introduce translations of foreign literatures into their own language and the reluctance of some publishers to publish literature translations. Naturally, these problems occur on both the local and the international levels. In the Arab world, for instance, many publishers are often uneager to publish literary translations. Most Arab governments also do not have plans for promoting the translation of Arabic literature or the literature of their own country into other languages and are often unprepared to sponsor the translation of literature into and out of Arabic. Translators often work on their own initiative and there is no concerted translation policy among different Arab countries. Various translation versions of the same work may appear in different Arab countries, suggesting thereby that translators and policymakers often work in isolation.

Nowadays, the quantity of non-literary translations worldwide far exceeds that of literary translations. Literary readership is faltering down because of the drop in the financial income of many people or because of the competition of electronically-produced reading materials and translations. The internet has led many people to read some classics or download them at their own convenience. However, online matter can have positive and negative effects at the same time. Though it may reduce the demand for paper translated books, it may also be used to promote some translations. In the Arab world, such factors and others have led to drastic reductions in the number of translated and published works and ultimately to the closure of some libraries and bookshops in many Arab countries to be replaced by restaurants, coffee shops, internet cafés and the like. According to some online statistics, the average annual number of books translated into Arabic from all languages is less than 400 books ("A Note on Arabic Literacy and Translation" 2009), a really surprising figure for a population of around 400,000,000 people.

On the other hand, the translation of Arabic literature into Western literatures (European and American) is no better. In an online article, Peter Ripken points to the scarcity of translated Arab authors into European languages: "In a world in which translations of literary works are becoming more and more important for the understanding of other cultures, there are distinct gaps in most European book markets when it comes to creative writing from other countries. This is particularly true of literature from the Arab World". Though Arabic embraces one of the world's richest literatures, the translations of Arabic literature into other languages, particularly English, are quite meager and limited. Only some Arab writers or works have been accepted for translation into English. True, the works of Naguib Mahfouz, Tayeb Saleh, Abdel-Rahman Muneif, Han al-Sheikh, Ghassan Kanafani, Gamal Al-Ghitani and several others have been translated into English but we should remember that these writers have been translated not necessarily on their outstanding literary merits, though this may be the case, but primarily on the basis of their appeal to the Western readership and their conformity to Western value system, providing the Western readers with what they expect and like.

Thus, most of the translation work in the West is carried out on an exclusion and inclusion basis. Edward Said had underscored the neglect of Arabic literature in the West, particularly in the US. In *Orientalism* as well as in many of his subsequent books and studies, Said had spoken of a prevalent attitude in the Anglo-Saxon world to view with caution the literatures of other cultures and Arabic literature is no exception. Even more, Said asserts that modern American social-science scholars are not interested in literature or literary translations: "You can read through reams of expert writing on the modern East and never encounter a single reference to literature" (Said: 291).

Although literature should know no frontiers, the English-speaking world is still skeptical about translations from other cultures and literatures. Asserting that "circulation among different languages via translation is the very lifeblood of literature", Esther Allen, the editor of the "PEN/IRL Report on the International Situation of Literary Translation" (2007), argues that though English is the global lingua franca, "the English-speaking countries remain inhospitable to translations into English from other languages" (12-13). She further adds that according to current statistics, the total number of translated books into English in English-speaking countries is on average about 2% of all books published each year and the majority of these translated books are non-fiction and that in flourishing literary cultures such as Argentina, less than one percent of the living writers will see their works translated into English (13). In light of these statistics, it is necessary that the English-speaking cultures should open themselves and increase the number of translations into English if they want to create a real bridge between literatures. By the same token, in her article, "Literary Translation: The International Panorama," Simona Skravec also notes that "there are few translated works in the United States. In the UK, the most optimistic statistics indicate 6% of books are translations but this includes technical and non-fiction translations. Literary translation makes only

2% of total output. In Australia things are even worse Fewer than half a dozen books are translated each year" (38).

There is no doubt that publishers around the world exert great influence over literary translation policies. In recent years, even some university presses, which had been among the best sources of translations in literature, have begun to cut down on the literary translations they publish. Apparently, there is a deeply entrenched tendency within many sectors of the Western publishing industry to view literary translations as unsaleable or unprofitable. Hence, it is not surprising that technical translation and many other types of translation far exceed literary translation not only in financial revenue but also in volume.

On the whole, literary translation is now somewhat marginal. Publishers often focus on the best-sellers. Only when the works are those of Nobel Prize winners or famous writers whose works have become best-sellers are publishers ready to spend money on translations. In many cases, the translations are not carried out on the basis of great literary merits. The translated works are often detective stories, science fiction material or works of a sensual nature.

Sometimes the problem lies with the literary translations and the literary translators themselves. The language and style of some translations are sometimes flawed. Often, there is dearth of competent translators and high-quality translations. An important question that should be raised here is: How far are literary translators properly prepared or trained for their profession? Translation as a profession is generally underestimated and some translators do not have the necessary professional and academic training. Such a factor is bound to have a negative impact on the quality of professional literary translations. Besides the adequate and sound handling of the linguistic, the extralinguistic and the cultural aspects of both the SL and the TL text, the translator's skill, his/her wide cultural background and specialized training and the human factors surrounding and affecting the translation commission play an important role in determining the quality and the nature of the final translation product. A literary translator needs to have a very good knowledge of two or more languages and cultures in addition to a good literary experience and even a talent for creative writing.

Literary translation, just like other types of translation, has suffered on both the professional and the academic levels. As a form of literary scholarship, translation has been devalued in most parts of the world; translators are often poorly paid and their work is not duly appreciated. Many universities do not consider translation as a full-fledged academic discipline. Faculty members are often inhibited by the fact that their research work submitted for promotion should not include more than one work which should fall within the narrow specialization of the faculty member. A university professor, therefore, finds it much more rewarding financially to teach rather than to practice translation. The situation is common in the English-speaking countries, particularly in the US, as well as in Arab countries. According to Allen (2006), many American universities do not view translation as a serious academic endeavor when career achievements are being evaluated (15).

The situation of the literary translator, like that of all translators, is further complicated by what Venuti calls "the ambiguous and unfavorable legal status of translation, both in copyright law and in actual contractual arrangements" (Venuti 1995: 8). This problem is further compounded by what Venuti terms the translator's "invisibility" which leaves no room for any trace of the translator's personal or original contribution. The translator's role is invariably subsidiary to that of the author and/or the publisher in controlling the translation. The literary translator, like his fellows in other types of translation, is often excluded from any rights in the translation work; hence, his "invisibility" and consequent obscurity. Literary translators suffer the most from this situation as their work is concerned with the translation of texts that have cultural values which are often submitted to rigorous domesticating screening perhaps more than other types of texts, thus substantially reducing the total number of literary translations.

Having said that, it is fair to add that the situation is not as bad as it may first appear. For example, in an article published by Peter Clerk on the British Council website, the writer tries to refute what he views as Edward Said's complaint of a "tacit conspiracy against Arab literature in translation", and argues that some writings of contemporary Arab writers such as those of Naguib Mahfouz, Tayyeb Saleh, and Hanan Al-Sheikh have been accepted as part of the canon of international literature and have been regularly published by mainstream Western publishers. He even claims that *The Cairo Trilogy* of the Egyptian laureate Naguib Mahfouz has sold more copies in English than the whole of Mahfouz's work in Arabic. The writer adds that the American University in Cairo Press has now published the whole works of Naguib Mahfouz and that there are great possibilities for expansion there. He further tells us that: "each year from the 90s onwards, 20 or more works of contemporary Arab literature are published in English – in the United States, the United Kingdom and Egypt". Clerk also discloses that the Project for the Translation of Arabic (PROTA) initiated by Salma Khadra Jayyusi in the 1970s has sponsored 20 or more volumes of Arabic in translation including several huge anthologies of contemporary Arabic literature by Columbia University Press in 2005 and that nearly 300 contemporary Arab authors have seen their work in English. ("Arab Literature in Translation"). To all this may be added the launching of the Banipal Prize for Translation, a pioneering project that would bolster the situation of literary translation in the Arab world.

Moreover, we occasionally hear some voices trying to promote intercultural translations into English and other languages. For example, in its 2007 Report on the International Situation of Literary Translation, the International PEN asserts that it is "committed to an understanding of translation wherein all literatures, no matter how they are defined or what their place may be in any description of a globalized world, enrich one another" (Grusa "Translation and Linguistic Rights:5).

On another level, The functionalist and communicative translation approaches advanced by the German translation theorists in the 1970s and 1980s have contributed a great deal to literary translation since they moved translation

from being a linguistic phenomenon to an act of intercultural communication (Munday 2001:72-74). Skopos theory as advanced by Reiss and Vermeer also links the translation strategy to the function of the TT in the target culture. The advantage of such a method is that it allows the translator to translate in accordance with the requirements of the target text and the commission which is given to the translator. In other words, this method is flexible enough to allow the literary translator almost a free hand in communicating the literary text to the target readership and to make the necessary decisions, a clear advancement on the old strictly linguistic approach and the domesticating method that Venuti considers mainly responsible for the translator's invisibility and the scarcity of literary translations.

There are also new departures in the conception and application of literary translation. Nowadays literary translation is practiced in different ways than those used in the past. Literary translators are no longer men of letters or professional writers or literary critics to whom literature is a profession and translating out of or into another language is a means of enhancing the target language and culture. Literary translation now, like other types of translation, is carried out by translators who are contracted to work on assignments given to them by publishers or institutions instead of taking upon themselves the responsibility of introducing new works and authors. It is also a profession that requires proper linguistic training and adequate cultural orientation. However, by modern standards, linguistic competence and cultural competence are two fundamental prerequisites for the translation profession and critics. Furthermore, many translation centers and translation programs at different universities teach literary translation to their would-be literary translators. Thus, the prospects for literary translation are somewhat promising and pointing to a possible change in the general attitude towards this hitherto underestimated profession.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to identify potential sources of challenges to literary translation, old and new, ranging from linguistic and cultural issues to human-connected issues. Literary translation is one of the most rigorous and most demanding categories of translation. Each literary genre has its own particular problems. Linguistic complexity, cultural untranslatability and human interference pose great difficulties in the translation process. By and large, the international market, contrary to some views, is getting more favorable for the reception of translations from other languages. Given the many challenges and obstacles facing literary translation, it is imperative to take the necessary steps to improve the situation for both literary translation and literary translators.

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