

“ Cadence ” and Translating Poetry

Dr. Gamal N. El-Tallawy

-1-

Translation is a rewriting of an original text. Any theory of translation focuses on this process of “ rewriting ”. Translators, exert their efforts to produce or “ create ” the T.L. equivalence to be in a good harmony with the S.L.T. Translating literature, and poetry in particular, is considered the most difficult process because creating a suitable equivalence in poetry needs good knowledge of prosody of both languages (S.L. & T.L.). Poetry depends mainly on certain linguistic structures and images. These linguistic structures include the important essence of poetry; which is the element of music. Music, in its turn, represents the main difference between poetry and prose. If we consider prosody is the study of versification, then “ it has become widely accepted, for instance, that versification is a question of the interplay between two planes of structure : the ideally regular, quasi - mathematical pattern called Metre, and the actual rhythm the language insists on, sometimes called the “prose rhythm”. The difference between the two, as imaginatively left by the poet himself, is expressed by W.B. Yeats ”. (Leech, 1969, P 103). The translator must be accurate of using the pattern

of music, he should translate into S.L. It is difficult to ask all translators to follow this kind of versification, the translator may translate the poem he has, into musical prose. Consequently this study defines - from the very beginning - the kind of music of poetry needed in translating poetry. It is suggested here to use the Poundian term and technique "cadence" instead of versification (metre and rhythm). "Cadence" is a kind of music which may be used according to prosody, or non-metric poetry. Cadence is a music which depends on the loud recitation of poetry and it is one of the characteristics of modernism. Cuddon refers to cadence as :-

It refers to the melodic pattern preceding the end of a sentence, for instance, in an interrogation or an exhortation; and also the rhythm of accented units. In more general terms it refers to the natural rhythm of language, its "inner tune", depending on the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables, so, now, a rising and falling. It is present in prose as well as verse. Almost every writer with any individuality of style at all has particular cadences which are really his own "voice", the inherent and intrinsic melody of linked syllables and words, of phrases, sentences and paragraphs which at once transcends and supports the meaning. (Cuddon, 1979, pp95-96).

This definition of cadence was used by Ezra Pound in his article "A Retrospect" as one characteristic of modernism. (Daivis ed, 1911, p. 287). It is the substitute of the traditional "rhythm" of poetry. This kind of music gives a kind of flexibility to the translator of poetry. Cadence as a modernistic characteristic may be found in poems like those of Pound, Eliot, Cummings and others

and it may be the feature of T.L. language. In other words, the S.L. poem may include cadence or metre, but when it is translated into another language, the translator should follow cadence whatever the kind of music or language of the S.L. is. The kind of music used in translating poetry has a great link with theories of translation. Translators have chosen one of two theories; semantic or communicative. M. Hamed comments on the viewpoint of Newmark saying :-

"..... on the other hand, Newmark (1988, 46) considered the semantic approach as the most suitable one for translating expressive texts, of which dramatical texts and other literary genres are split off. Neither approach is convincing". (Hamed, 1996, p. 34).

It is difficult to agree with Newmark that the semantic approach is the suitable one for translating expressive texts. The context of the expressive texts necessitates its suitable approach; which is here the communicative one because of its flexibility. According to the theory of translation, the translator chooses his kind of language (i.e. Target language). We have two kinds of poetry translation.

The first one prefers to translate poetry into poetry :

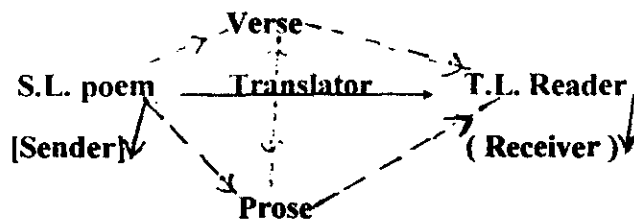
S.L.T. —————> T.L.T.
 (Poetry) (Poetry)

This kind of translation needs translators / poets, because they can master the prosody of both

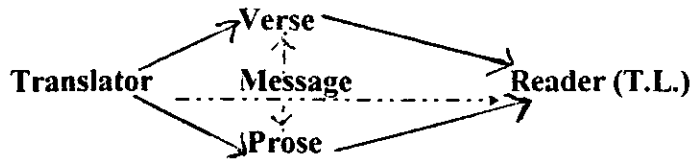
languages S.L. and T.L. But this is a difficult process, because not all the translators can master and experience the prosody of both languages.

But the other kind of translation is represented by those translators who translate poetry into prose. The problem of this kind of translation lies in the kind of T.L. language used in the outcome translation. This is the essence of this study. It tries to examine the best method of translating poetry. When one reads any poem, he must enjoy the element of music, whatever this music is (rhythm or cadence). It is metric rhythm in traditional poetry and it is cadence in modernistic one.

When the T.L. reader, reads a translated text, then the translator, for him, is the poet . The first writer, then the language (T.L.) for the reader is not the language of the translator, but it is expected to be the language of S.L. writer. Then it is the responsibility of the translator to communicate the poetic text with the T.L. reader.



The language of the translated text (T.L.) either prose or verse is now the only language which is allowed to the reader.



The original poem may be a good one but the role of translation may lead to the lack of one of the poetry features, then the T.L. reader finds the text a bad one and the opposite may be right. One means that the reader may enjoy a poem which is - in origin - a bad one. Then the kind of language of the translator is the important element in translating poetry in particular.

If we agree that the essential difference between prose and verse is music, then one may expect that the element of music is the most important one in translating poetry.

-II-

The aim of this study is to suggest a musical language for translators of poetry. The study never asks the translators of poetry to use T.L. verse. But it rather expects to translate the text into a kind of poetic prose; or a kind of prose charging with cadence. This element of "cadence" enables the reader of T.L. to feel the difference between verse and prose. Newmark said :-

"The poetic or aesthetic function is centred in the sound effect of language". (Newmark, 1988, p. 141).

To deepen this idea Newmark advises translators to ignore this view, asserting the importance of the element of music if it is a minor element in a text. This view asserts the importance of the element of cadence in translating poetry, because music has never been considered a minor element in poetry.

“ The aesthetic function is combined with the expressive function (lyrical poetry of the first person), the informative (narrative poetry of the third person), or the vocative, or transactional (dramatic poetry of the second person). In cases where the poetic function plays a minor part, the translator may have to ignore it ”. (Newmark, 1988, p. 171)

André Lefeveré has adopted the same idea of giving a great interest to the Sound pattern or music of a poem, but he did not ask translators to translate metre and rhythm from the original into target language. He said :-

“ Rhythm is difficult to translate into language with a different vowel and consonant distribution. Meters are not easily transposed from one language to another, certainly not from an Indo - European language to a non-Indo-European language and vice versa ”

Translators who translate with rhyme and meter as their first priority often find themselves neglecting other features of the original ”. (Lefeveré, 1978, P.115).

Then it is not important to follow the different metres and rhythms of both T.L. and S.L. text of poetry. What the study aims at achieving is the kind of language which is charged with music i.e. “ cadence ” of the T.L.T.

This kind of music enables the T.L. readers to understand and enjoy the S.L.T., and at the same time to read it as poetry and not a paraphrase of poetry. It is known that not all the translators can do it successfully. Translation of poetry needs a certain kind of translator. It needs the one who can differentiate, well, between prose and poetry. It needs - also- the one who can discover the priority of " cadence " in some texts over the lexical meaning. As it needs the translator who can grasp the whole meaning of the S.L. poem with its referential themes, and rhetorical devices on one hand, and its musicality on the other.

Different problems should face this translation, concerning the element of ' cadence ". How could the translator communicate the T.L. readers with the kind of musicality of the S.L.T. ? It is said, previously, that this kind of translation needs a certain translator. It is the one who can make his strategy of translating on condition that he should not forget any of the elements of poetry and translation as well. For instance, he should begin to decide what kind of cadence to judge, from the very beginning , the kind of similarity or difference between the cadence of S.L.T. and T.L.T. and to decide if it is available to find the accurate T.L. equivalence. In this case, the translator is lucky enough to find such equivalence.

But if there is a difference (N.B. in most cases there are many differences) the translator should choose the kind of cadence he should use in

T.L.T., either it is similar to the same cadence of S.L.T. or different. For example one finds a poet repeats a certain sound in one verse for certain poetic and thematic purpose. The question now is : What kind of music the translator should translate? Is it the same sound of S.L.T. or new one which is suitable to T.L.T. ? The answer is not one substitute because the translator may find in T.L.T. the same sound but a different meaning. Another answer is that the translator neglects the same sound of S.L.T. and finds a new one which is suitable to the T.L.T. A third answer lies in neglecting this alliteration either completely or partially. one can not judge which one is the best, because it depends on the kind of S.L.T. itself and the priority of music or meaning, and this is the process of the translator and his strategy. One may agree that this kind of translation needs a kind of taste, and not only pure tonic principles.

Ex. In one of Shakespearean sonnets, he repeated the sound " R " six times to deepen the idea of the attractive colour of the lips of the beloved, in his sonnet " My Mistress' Eyes ", he said :-

" My Mistress's eyes are nothing like the sun;

coral is far more red than her lips' red ".
(Shakespeare, 1975, P. 521).

It is translated by Badr Tawfik as follows :-

(عينا معشوقتي لا تشبهان الشمس)

(المرجان أشد احمراراً من شفتيها). (Tawfik : 1988, P. 156)

In his translation , Tawfik reduces the repetition of the six (R)s sounds into three times only in Arabic. It is noted also that he depends on the repetition of the same sound of English (R) to be the Arabic (ر) sound. This kind of translating alliteration is not suitable in giving the complete significance of the S.L.T. alliteration and its referential themes. one assumes that the reader of the T.L.T. of Shakespeare does not know English, then the meaning (music here is a part of the meaning, or at least it supports the meaning) is incomplete, it lacks the poetic, or rather the musical effect. This kind of defect in translating the cadence is a dominant one in Tawfik's translation of *The Complete Sonnets of Shakespeare* . (Tawfik, 1988).

This lack of cadence is not concerned with alliteration only, but it is permeated through the different aspects of cadence in the translation of Badr Tawfik. It is known that the sonnet of Shakespeare has a certain form of rhyme which is : A - B - A - B, C - D - C - D, E - F - E - F, G - G. But Badr Tawfik neglects the translation of the rhyme completely. Really, one never asks a translator to translate the rhyme and rhythm, but to find a kind of cadence which may be considered as a substitute to the original elements of music, to feel that the translated text is poetry and not prose. To illustrate

this one may refer to some extracts of Tawfik's translation. In sonnet one, Shakespeare said :-

*" From fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby beauty's rose might never die,
But as the ripper should by time decrease, "*

Tawfik translates it as follows :-

نحن نبغى المزيد من أحلى الكائنات،
كيلا تموت وردة الجمال أبداً ،
فمثلما يزوي من اكتملت حياته بانقضاء السنوات ."

(Tawfik, 1988, p. 77).

What is the kind of cadence in his translation?, the third line in particular lacks the good structure of Arabic verse and prose alike.

If one reads the following lines of the poem and Tawfik's translation, one finds a bad equivalence :-

*"But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,
Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substained
fuel "*

The translation is :-

(أما وأنت مشدود إلى ذات عينيك الوضائتين

تغذي شعلة ضونهما بوقود من صميم نفسك .

(Tawfik, 1988, p. 17).

Can we consider the phrase " أما وأنت " poetic expression ? What does he mean by " ذات عينيك " it lacks musicality completely, can one translate Shakespeare's " with self- substantial fuel" to " صميم نفسك " Is there any cadence here? Can we consider the Arabic phrase " صميم نفسك " a poetic phrase?

Even when Twafik depends on a kind of external and vivid music, he fails in his translation. In some sonnets, Shakespeare concludes his sonnet with his common couplet. This couplet is easily translated by any translator, in particular when the translator gives himself a complete freedom - as Tawfik did - to choose any sound to be the equivalent couplet in T.L.T. and not to repeat the same S.L.T sound.

The last two lines are :-

" Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee".

The translation is :-

" فتأسف لهذا العالم ، أو حيثما يكون هذا الفاتك،
الذي يلتهم حق الدنيا فيما بين حياتك ومماتك ."

(Tawfik, 1988, p. 17).

He chooses the word 'الغـلـتـانـك' to be the translation of the word "glutton", he does not use the sound (i:) as it is in S.L.T. (lee & thee) he uses the sound (c) in Arabic, but he couldn't use it correctly, because he ends the sonnet by the phrase 'ماتك' but it is not the last word in S.L.T., and it has a profound significance to end the sonnet with "thee" and not "thy grave", because the connotation of "thee" is more comprehensive than "thy grave" which is just a place of "them" and also it is a limited and temporal place.

The translation of Shakespeare's sonnets by Badr Tawfik lacks this kind of cadence, therefore it is not a good translation of poetry. In each T.L.T. of the previous sonnets, one finds different faults of translation concerning the element of musicality in particular. This leads the T.L. reader to read the sonnets as bad prose and not Shakespearean poetry.

-III-

The importance of using a kind of cadence in translating poetry does not mean the opposite point of view, by which, one means the interest in cadence means negligence the other elements of the S.T.L. poem.

When one criticizes the methods of Tawfik's translation of Shakespeare, one criticizes and refuses the other method of Mohammed Rakha in

translating FitzGerald's Robayyat. After reading this translation one concludes the strategy of Rakha is as follows :-

1- He translates the S.L.T. English into colloquial T.L.T. Arabic, or what is called in Arabic poetry "Zajal".

2- He does not translate the Robayyat as they were written by the Victorian poet FitzGerald nor as the Persian poet Omar Al-Khayyam did.

3- He depends on the text of FitzGerald.

4- He never translates each Robayya as it is but he gets the meaning and writes a new one.

5- His main concern is "cadence", but he does not neglect any kind of music. He rather re-writes or re-composes a new poetry according to Arabic prosody.

It is clear from this strategy of Rakha's translation that his interest in music leads him to neglect the S.L.T., to attract the T.L.T. reader with a kind of music, they are familiar with. When one compares the original text S.L.T. of FitzGerald with the product of Rakha, one finds no similarity at all, except the form of Robayyat and their themes.

Rakha was preceded by numerous translators of Robayyat, and Tawfik himself is one of those translators of Rakha saying : " I believe that the translation of Mr. Mohammed Rakha is a distinguished one among the other translations of Robayyat". (Rakha,1994, p.3).

One assumes that what Hakky means by his appreciation is the use vernacular language.

But Ezz El-Din Ismail introduces this translation, and his comments on some mistakes saying :-

" MR.Rakha neglects sometimes some parts of the Robayya to explain one part only of it, so the new product is different completely from the original text . He also adds some parts which are not found in the original text to keep the context of music ". (Rakha, 1994, p. 4).

Rakha is an extremist example of using "cadence ", because his interest in musicality leads him to neglect some parts of the S.L.T. This is what the study referred to in its first pages. One means that to keep in touch with music and to keep all the elements of T.L.T. at one and the same time. Music leads to a bad kind of translation. Music only is not all the parts of poetry. Rakha' interest in music leads him to neglect most of these parts of poetry.

e.g. :-

رمضان على الباب فضله م الزمن يومين وحيرم
العاشقين من شرب كاس واتنين
امالي وشبعني منها قبل ما يبجي عشان اكون منتشي
طول ما الهلال في العين ."

(Rakha, 1994, p. 63).

This Robayya has no existence in FitzGerald's text, but there is just a reference to Ramadan in more than one Robayya. It is important also to refer

culture which are dominant in the text of FitzGerald.

One believes that his interest in T.L.T. music and principles of Zajal, in particular, which led Rakha to translate Robayyat in such a manner. It is not exaggeration to say that what one reads by Rakha is not a translation of FitzGerald but it is his own composition. Then it is a risk to consider these Robayyat a kind of translation.

To conclude this study, one comes to the conclusion that translating poetry needs a kind of cadence to make it readable as poetry for T.L.T. readers. But cadence itself is not the only element in translating poetry. Cadence must make a kind of harmony with other elements of poetry. The translator is the one who could do this harmony between S.L.T. and T.L.T. because the translation of T.L.T. readers represents the original writer himself. The two examples of Badr Tawfik and Mohammed Rakha are considered bad examples of translating poetry. The first (i.e. Tawfik) neglected cadence completely meanwhile the second (i.e. Mohammed Rakha) neglected the other elements of S.L.T. poetry to give accurate cadence according to T.L.T. music of poetry. But there are other good examples of translating poetry using adequate cadence such as : Mohammed Enani in his translation examples of Imagist Poetry, and four Tragedies of Shakespeare. Faek Matta in his translation of Eliot's poetry, Abd El-Ghaffar Mekkawy in his translation from English and German poetry, and others.

to the lack of the referential Persian history and culture which are dominant in the text of FitzGerald.

One believes that his interest in T.L.T. music and principles of Zajal, in particular, which led Rakha to translate Robayyat in such a manner. It is not exaggeration to say that what one reads by Rakha is not a translation of FitzGerald but it is his own composition. Then it is a risk to consider these Robayyat a kind of translation.

To conclude this study, one comes to the conclusion that translating poetry needs a kind of cadence to make it readable as poetry for T.L.T. readers. But cadence itself is not the only element in translating poetry. Cadence must make a kind of harmony with other elements of poetry. The translator is the one who could do this harmony between S.L.T. and T.L.T. because the translation of T.L.T. readers represents the original writer himself. The two examples of Badr Tawfik and Mohammed Rakha are considered bad examples of translating poetry. The first (i.e. Tawfik) neglected cadence completely meanwhile the second (i.e. Mohammed Rakha) neglected the other elements of S.L.T. poetry to give accurate cadence according to T.L.T. music of poetry. But there are other good examples of translating poetry using adequate cadence such as : Mohammed Enani in his translation examples of Imagist Poetry, and four Tragedies of Shakespeare. Faek Matta in his translation of Eliot's poetry, Abd El-Ghaffar

Mekkawy in his translation from English and German poetry, and others.

Abbreviations

S. L. :	Source Language.
S. L. T.	Source Language Text.
T. L.	Target Language.
T. L. T.	Target Language Text.

Works Cited



- 1- Cuddon, J.A., *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Penguin Books, New York, 1979.
- 2- Davis, Robert Con., & *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, Gramercy Books, New York, 1975.
- 3- FitzGerald, Edward., *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayam*, Dover Publications, Inc, New York, 1990
- 4- Hamed, Mohammed., *Translating Drama, A Linguistic Approach*, MA Thesis, Ein Shams University, 1996.
(Manuscript).
- 5- Leech, Geoffrey N., *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, Longman, London, 1977.
- 6- Levfeveré, André., *Translating Literature*, VanGorcum, Amestrdam, 1978.
- 7- Newmark, Peter., *Approaches to Translation*, Pergamon Press, Oxofrd, 1986.
- 8- Rakha, Mohammed., *Robayyat Al- Khayyam*, Alexandria, 1994
- 9- Shakespeare, William., *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, Gramercy Books, New York, 1975.