

Translation's Undetermined Position in the Albanian Language Literary System



Literature

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Abstract

The repertoire of the translated texts in our literary system is an implicit fact that has grown constantly into a doubtless question, by surpassing a couple of times the volume of original literature written in Albanian language. Nonetheless, there hasn't been any alike line up or distinctive separation of translations, even when, after the '90s was widely admitted the existence of traditions, literary movements and schools in the Albanian literature of tradition. On the other hand, there have been isolated cases when, justly, scholars have spoken about a Nolian school of translation or other schools of translation as well. What we are aiming here, is something else, concerning the translation and translation traditions/schools in the Albanian literature. At the moment similar hypothesis or issues are submitted or propounded, (what is really normal and spontaneous), no matter the set aside of arguments, the Gheg school of translation shines bright in its silence and going completely un-mentioned. While the critic and literary studies speak in scientific conferences and meetings about literary schools - referring the original (process of) writing - they have excluded the role and position of translation in the literary polysystem. And this paper aims exactly to explain and straighten out the undefined position of the translations in the literary polysystem of the Albanian literature.

The repertoire of the translated texts in our literary system is a certain fact that has grown constantly, by surpassing several times the volume of original literature written in Albanian. This is a well-known sociological fact, not only for the Albanian culture, but for all the cultures of "small" languages in the quantitative meaning of their speakers. Nonetheless, there hasn't been any distinctive lining or definition of translation, even when after the '90s there has been an obvious statement about the existence of traditions, literary movements and schools in the Albanian literature of tradition.

On the other hand, there have been special cases when there has been a discourse, fairly, about a Nolian school of translation, even though this has been gone mostly as understated, without pushing further in definitions on what is this school about, what kind of principles distinguish it and what similarities these translators/method have under this Nolian translation. But we can understand something from this: Noli, as one of the first strong pioneers of translations in Albanian, has his direct examples through his translated texts or (to be more clear), abridged. Thus, Noli's translations could be perceived in practice, and if these constitute a pattern and further, a school, (with adepts, followers of his tracks), then some postulates could be retrieved, about what artistic, aesthetic or other methodological criteria this school is supported on. What we are sure about, unfortunately, is that F.S. Noli, this special, hard-working and gifted translator, unique for the works and authors translated/abridged in Albanian, hasn't left a single page, a single notebook where he could have reflected on his unique experience of translation. Thus, we don't have any notes about the difficulties, solutions or the nature of translation. And in general, this is a flaw of all our great Albanian translators, except merely a few (Vedat Kokona and especially Arshi Pipa).

Out of any misunderstanding, we do not think that the translation opus of Noli is not a school in itself. On the contrary, it represents some distinguishing and original features, which should be analyzed, defined, represented in a distinct table of values, which we could find as dominant in translations of other translators - adepts of Noli's model of translation/abridge. This way, we could provide truly the contours of a school, and not only Noli's. otherwise, without any distinguished aesthetic and stylistic contour and relief, which makes recognizable the Nolian method of translation among other translators, we could fairly and by rights proclaim the existence of some schools of Albanian translation and a justified one. Why couldn't be a school of its own, just like Noli's, the method of Lasgush Poradeci's translations?

Immediately what we can think about are the closest adepts in stylistics, aesthetics and even in dialect of Poradeci, among which, we could mention Asdreni, Kuteli, Gjergj and Dionis Bubani, Petraq Kolevica etc., all of these with a Lasgushian prevailing: the poetic language of southeastern Tosk language.

But there's something else we're interested here about the translation and the traditions or schools of translation in Albanian literature. At the moment such cases or hypothesis raise (what is most normal and natural), nonetheless the use of arguments, there's one tradition which shines in its non-presence - the Gheg School of Translations. And in fact, not in a single case, even when there has been mention a Nolian school of translations or Petro Zheji school of translation, as well the "Naim Frashëri" school, which is what we consider all the Pleiades of outstanding translators that brought in Albanian the repertoire of world classics in our literature - thus, in no occasion, never has been mentioned the existence of the gheg school(s) of translation! And what we talk about is the existence of a very wide and spread tradition in time and history, which starts with the genesis of the Albanian writing, the configuration of the linguistic features of writing in Albanian, the syntax, forms and genres that started the consolidation of the Albanian literature and writing, with the first authors, with the tradition of translating the holy writings along with the religious terminology and then, with the Albanian renaissance and the peak of the Albanian literature until 1944. Plasari states that "the tendency of treating the Albanian writers within a table - howsoever relative - of values in the Albanian literature historiography, signs of which we distinguish since the '30 with Çabej and his "Elements", would get more emphasized in the '40 by the critic - less remembered nowadays as such - Vedat Kokona in his critic writings "Quo vadis Albanian literature?" published in the "Revista letrare"[Literary review] (1944)".²

We will constantly highlight the fact that the belonging of a writer or group of writers in a tradition or literary school, goes organically along with the belonging of his or their translations as an unaltered part of the literary subsystem. This is logical and expresses the organic, stylistic and aesthetic unity of every writer, without finding necessary to forge or armor this truth with an enriched theoretic arsenal, which never lacks as an illustration. Let's mention exactly this case, especially in translation, as a functional and encouraging part of the literary polysystem, the theory of the Tel-Aviv school of Even-Zohar, in which we encounter a very important phenomena, that based on his idea, identifies the translated literature in the inner part of a polysystem given as "bearer of a primary activity, concerning its innovation".³

This means "to acknowledge to the translated literature an active direct role for the patternisation of polysystem's center, through the capability for interaction with the tradition belonging to that literary system, to intervene upon it, by proposing new literary patterns."⁴

The translated literature serves a role of first hand, when verified under special conditions of the polysystem. It "has the attribute of influence on the recipient system". Plasari, in the paper we are referring to, when reflecting over the existence of "Two Literary Shkodran Schools" of Koliqi, does several important incursions, often by doubting in the criteria or by testing "the firmness" of these criteria. Further, Plasari distinguishes these two attitudes (i.e. of Shkodran schools): one toward the old literature in general and one toward a narrower literary tradition, attitudes that, according to Plasari, "after the Romanticism are crystallized

² Plasari, Aurel, "Traditë letrare, historizëm, estetizëm", in "Studime albanologjike" II, 2008/2, p. 12. Faculty of History and Philology, Department of Literature, Tirana 2008.

³ Even Zohar, The position of translated literature within the literary polysystem. Polysystem Studies, në Poetics Today, International Journal for Theory and Analysis of Literature and Communications, Volume 11, number 1 (1990), f. 46, in: "Gjika, Eldon, Sprovë sintetizuese mbi sistemin letrar të shqipës në vitet 90-të", Përpjekja review, no 21, f. 59, Tirana 2005.

⁴ Plasari Aurel, idem, p. 13.

in historicism and aestheticism”⁵, where the edgy historicism leads in “bibliophilia or bibliomania”, while the edgy aestheticism leads in “exegesis for the sake of exegesis”.⁶

To define the literary and cultural work written in Gheg dialect as a tradition, still nothing has been said, since it cannot be defined within the frame of time from the Independence until the rise of the communist dictatorship. The historicism criterion for this repertoire of texts would help us to see clearly into the genesis of patterns where starts one of the most powerful paradigms that mark the beginning of the Albanian writing and literature or better said, with the roots of that school which, in his classifying sketch, Sabri Hamiti calls the philo-biblical school: “In this literary school, the Albanian literary text is in fact, the derivative of the biblical text, which is universal, thus the characteristic nomination philo-biblical. Nevertheless, the literary texts usually are included in the Christian doctrinal books, by creating another performance of the doctrine. The author is signed, but his status changes from the translator to the re-creator and the creator”.⁷

Thus, the criterion of historicism helps us to grasp in all the coherence and incoherence of evolutions, all the paradigm from its genesis, to the consolidation and until the perfection of the writing in Gheg dialect, when it gains capabilities to perform important and complicated linguistic and stylistic tasks and operations that, by rule, are the original literary work and the translation of the most important literary experiences from the antiquity and hence. What is a criterion about the literary schools (be it the philo-biblical school, according to Hamiti, or the Jesuit or Franciscan school according to Koliqi) is valuable even for the original works, forms and genres of original literary works, meaning, for the poetics of the original literary works. Meanwhile, the language of translation erases these differences and, at least, if not entirely, in most cases, it (the translation language) will follow its own experience of previous tradition, by being projected in the while in a future perspective, all along in a permanent evolution.

The tendency to consider the writers belonging in a certain school (Koliqi) or circles (Çabej) continues up to 1944, without mentioning the classifications of post 1990 of Sabri Hamiti. The most determined in this tendency is Ernest Koliqi, which, since in his first attempt, in his work “Shkrimtarë shqiptarë (I-II, Tiranë 1941) [Albanian Writers, I-II, Tirana, 1944], includes Franciscan writers, such as: Leonardo de Martini, Pashk Bardhi, Gjergj Fishta, Shtjefën Gjeçovi, Vinçenc Prenushi, Marin Sirdani, Anton Harapi, Justin Rrota (without accidentally including the other Franciscan Bernardin Palaj). After 10 years, Koliqi attempts for a second time the classification of Gheg writers into two schools. Thus, in his study “Two literary Shkodran schools”, published in parts in the immigration notebook L’Albanie libre (1954-1961), Koliqi considers, apart the “Jesuit literary school” even the “Franciscan literary school”. Koliqi called the first as “a coquette flower of greenhouse”, while the second as “a modest flower by the road”. That’s how Koliqi describes the Jesuit school in his scholar sketch:

*“The school of Jesuits brought in the national literature the discipline of art, the cult of shape, the need for rare and precious words in old texts and dictionaries. In selecting the contents it was inspired from high moral and civic principles and from the ideals of the classic beauty”.*⁸

As a schoolmaster and pattern of this school, Koliqi distinguishes Father Anton Xanoni, which gave to this school its essence, the style and the principles. “The theoretician of the Literary School of Jesuits was father Anton Xanoni. He left behind a small work entitled “Prisí në lámë të letratyres” [“Introduction in the field of

⁵ Ibidem, p. 15

⁶ Ibidem, p. 15

⁷ Hamiti, Sabri, “Shkollat letrare shqipe”

⁸ Koliqi, Ernest, Vepra 5, Dy shkolla letrare shkodrane, p. 64-65, Prishtinë 2003.

Literature"], where he collects the main and most important steps to be followed to write properly and gracefully”.⁹

According to Koliqi, Xanoni was the master with a great culture, and with a fine artistic taste. He adhered to a few clear and definite rules and that “the purism in the style could go far until fanatics.”¹⁰ And, as Koliqi adds by explaining, the merit of Xanoni doesn't stand in any certain work as a grafting proof of elegant classic forms into Albanian, but for the fact that due to him the adepts of his theories brought forward the artistic perfection. Among Xanoni's followers Koliqi numbers Ndre Mjeda, Luigj Gurakuqi, Lazër Shantoja, Ndre Zadeja and mentions that “the influx of his teachings isn't extinguished yet and is still manifested in the newest generation of our writers, such as Anton Logoreci, Frano Alkaj, Henrik Laca, Pashko Gjeçi, etc”.¹¹

Let's observe that, with no exclusion, all the mentioned authors by Koliqi as adepts of the master of Jesuit School, partly by excluding Gurakuqi, are all distinct translators, while the newest generations, partly excluding Logoreci, are basic personalities of translation in Gheg dialect, translators of monumental works of Antiquity and the late classics (Dante, Schiller, Goethe). Nonetheless, even when Koliqi wants to retrieve from Xanoni a pattern of elegance and stylistic purity of Xanoni's writing, he takes as example his decisive contribution in the Albanian prosody, the free iambic... in his translation of the first eclogue from the Bucolics of Virgil. When talking about these two schools, Koliqi specifies that:

“The Franciscan School opened to our literature the doors of our folklore. It gifted this literature the essence of the Albanian pride, the language of manly and noblemen sensations of mountains. It released the literary substance from the life of the whole Albania, especially from the one of the most humble people and less influenced from the outer and foreign influxes”¹²

But the language of translation is more stubborn to be included in stylistic distinctions, because it has to do with the linguistic horizon of its recipient, never mind the styles and individual aesthetics. For the Gheg paradigm this language was, as it used to be, the same as Buzuku's, Budi's, Bogdani's, etc., by gaining through the centuries the features of a Gheg language more concentrated in the literary variant of Shkodra, especially the Gheg Shkodran dialect of Engjëll Radoja's translations (re-translations of the acts of “Kuvendi i Arbnit” [Arber Convention]) in the mid XIX century. The variations of this Gheg speaking aren't huge between the Gheg authors, which, even though in most cases weren't from Shkodra region, were resident in this city. But the literary Gheg speaking of Shkodra gains homogenic features along the XIX century, as is warned in some epistolary texts and especially in the re-translation of father Radoja of the Acts of Arber Convention and gets consolidated from poets such as father Leonardo de Martino, Pjetër Zarishi and father Anton Xanoni, to rule by the end of XX century and the beginning of the XX century with the peak of the original and translation works of Mjeda and Fishta. Only after this peak and the increase of the original literary and translation works there is an outlining of tendencies that later would be taken into examination and will try to define the critic of '20-'30 of the last century.

⁹ Ibidem p.24.

¹⁰ Ibidem p.24.

¹¹ Ibidem p.25.

¹² Koliqi, Ernest, Vepra 5, Fryti i dy shkollave letrare shkodrane, p. 64-65, Faik Konica, Prishtinë 2003.