

**Poetry and Comparative Literature,
Metaphorical Consequences in Fatmir
Terziu's Poetry**



**Translation and Cultural
studies**

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Abstract

The importance of two elements, the definition of Poetry and Comparative Albanian Literature and the historical role it has with regard to the Human Sciences and the position of theory in this essentially literary and culturally discipline, are the focus of the huge debate across academics. The present essay accords briefly with the first element, providing metaphorical elements of focus rather than a finished portrait of one of the contemporary poets in Albanian literature, Fatmir Terziu; then, it takes up the significant moments of the theoretical debate in Poetry and Comparative Literature between Literary Studies on the one hand and Translation and Cultural Studies on the other. Specifically apparently takes my mind, where I want to officiate more is a kind of phrase that used comparison, literary figures and in particular metaphor, of speech, expression, grammatical formation, seeing it in detail to Terziu's poems as in Albanian and in English. Subject to which I will refer is the metaphorical process that features in the poetry of Fatmir Terziu in the current approach Albanian into English. Through the comparative scholarly research extending from the 1990's to through first decade of the 21st century, I describe the shifts of focus in literary studies that emerged in the 1990's, and which resulted in the creation of a new, more politicised Cultural Studies and new configurations of main vs. subsidiary between Comparative Literature and the disciplines contiguous to it: Translation and Cultural studies. With these realignments, I argue, Comparative Literature has been faced with the challenge to restructure itself and its agenda. In this, I finally maintain, it gives 21st century lessons to the other Human Sciences on the commensurability of angst, survival and regeneration.

1. Introduction

In his essay *Comparative Literature: Retrospect and Prospect* delivered in "Comparative Literature: Essays in Honour of M.Q. Khan (2000)", Bijay Kumar Das mentions approvingly that "the term Comparative Literature is not easy to define for it involves not one but two literatures at the same time. The task becomes still more difficult when one takes the dimension of Comparative Literature – linguistic and cultural – into consideration." (Das, 2000: 1). According to Das the scope of this literature is broader than the single literatures and even national literatures. I will explain and simplify the term Poetry and Comparative Literature, before I make and in depth study of it at the threshold of a new millennium. I would take advantages of this theory to expand philosophical and cultural entailments of the ecumenist sensibility behind Das's concept of world literature.

He himself enrolls in a utopian logic when he says that the study of other languages and literary traditions enriches the condition of "the international freemasonry of enlightened spirits" characteristic of the Enlightenment, and that "in the life of the mind, as in that of politics, isolationism and nationalist arrogance are the road to brutal ruin" (Das, 2000: 6). Long time ago, before the text of Das appeared in his essay, Jacques Derrida, published "White Mythology: Metaphors in the Texts of Philosophy" which came out in 1972 and in the English translation in 1974. In Derrida's text metaphor is the subject and there is a striking similarity in the arguments marshalled by the eminent theoretician of the centuries.

Ahead of Das's concept and many years after Derrida's essay we still have in mind what Derrida wrote about metaphor and comparativism. Karl S. Y. Kao proposes "comparativism in extremis" where the fiction and reality of comparison would make visible the double bind between ethics and politics. He concludes her essay, however, with a call toward a "comparativism rethought" in the spirit of Goethe, one which might restore the

metaphor to the white mythology of the fetishist and capitalist illogic of 19th century positivism. “ In Goethe’s spirit”, he says, “ we can interminably prepare ourselves to work in the hope of a promise of equivalence to subaltern spaces and times, a hope cradled in despair except when reading flourishes” (Kao, 2003: 97).

The two above texts mark two crucial moments in long period of self-assessment that Poetry and Comparative Literature went through, and at the end of which it re-emerged with undoubtedly the same intrinsic bond to literary studies, the same interdisciplinary and polyphonic perspective; but with a different, highly politicised programme. The many shifts in perspective leading to this renewal did not, however, dismantle the Enlightenment logic within which they were conceived in the first place. While this makes of Goethe’s utopian dream a Romantic constant in a frame of shifting contemporary variables, it also makes of Poetry and Comparative Literature the most humanist of all the human sciences. This paper is concerned with these shifts on two levels: the historical role of Comparative Literature and the position of theory in it function to explore the metaphorical concepts and assumptions of Fatmir Terziu’s work.

2. Why studying poetry and comparative literature

The attentiveness in Poetry and Comparative Literature in this study is well thought-out for those in Albanian cultural and literary studies whose interest in literature and language cultures embraces works in multiple variations.

A fundamental research of poetry and comparative literature is to cultivate reading across linguistic boundaries in order to highlight everything that the exclusive focus on a well-known poet and writer from the academic field in UK literature tends to obscure. Studying Fatmir Terziu’s literature permanently meant picking an academic angle that reflects the nation cultural dimensions on a basically traditional model. Literary and culturally studies each focus on the canons of their respective national traditions. But literature and readers have both always ranged outside the boundaries of one national language. Albanian literature is brimming with the influences of English and Italian and Greek and other literature and so on. And even writers who knew nothing of one another may show fascinating similarities and differences; a poem by Fatmir Terziu and a poem by Emily Dickinson throw each other into startling relief.

Traditionally, too, Albanian and other Balkan literatures (when they were studied at all) were long relegated to the rubric of comparative literature. The Albanian literatures were understood as both aesthetically autonomous and expressive of the “national genius,” while texts from the non-West were read more from an ethnographic, historical, or anthropological perspective than as works of literature in their own right. The field of poetry and comparative literature also endeavours, then, to overcome this division between “the West” and “the Albanian literature” by combining the formal rigor of Western literary studies with the interdisciplinary reach of area studies.

Researchers of Poetry and comparative literature trace the transformations and travels of literary genres and texts across time and space. They explore the connections of literature with history, philosophy, politics, and literary theory. And they study the intersections of literature with other cultural forms such as film, drama, the visual arts, music, and new media. In our increasingly globalized age, translation studies are also an important part of the comparative approach to literature. It’s surprisingly tricky to say that even a single sentence in one language is truly “equivalent” to its translation in another language; in what sense, then, can we really translate the complexity and nuance of poems? And yet we all depend on translations sooner or later. Literary translations

also have their own kind of history and even politics. Why do some texts get translated and others not, for example? And how have the practice and theory of translation changed over time?

At the core of the concentration in Terziu's poetry and comparative literature are findings introducing Albanian literary traditions in comparative perspective. These outcomes introduce elements to the global diversity of literary forms and genres while acquainting them with the methods of comparative literary study. After or in tandem with the introductory examples, this research tries to put together a channel of study that best suits researcher's interests and goals. This will include advanced Terziu's work in at least one foreign language and its creative work. One attractive aspect of the Poetry and Comparative Literature major is its flexibility. In close consultation with Terziu's poetry I will expand the research to focus on anything from the modernist poetry to Romantic poetry, postmodern literature, or Albanian epics. At the same time I will have the opportunity to take advantages of Terziu's published and translated work in English language.

An absorption in Poetry and Comparative Literature is an excellent foundation for further work at all levels of literary and cultural field. It also prepares researchers to effort in any field where critical thinking, strong writing skills and foreign-language competence and a sophisticated understanding of cultural difference and diversity are called for.

3. Perception, contemporary problems and imaginary language

Fatmir Terziu is contemporary poet and writer from the academic field in UK and Albanian background, whose use of metaphor is fundamental to the structure of his poetry. I will closely examine poet's characteristics use of metaphor and the function it fulfils in his work, especially in poetry like *STILETTOS* that were published in *Ann Arbor Review* (USA) and other poems that appeared in "*The Galway Review*" Magazine published in Ireland.

In this section, after summarising the function of metaphor in the Terziu's work (the substance in brief of the subsequent sections), I concentrate upon Terziu's comparative literature, on what his practices and his theories have in common with other contemporary problems and literary translations from Albanian in English language. I find in perception a source and common denominator for its shared ideas. Specifically, I see his emphasis upon metaphor is a structuring element in poetry as a means by which he has dealt with the problems raised by Poetry and Comparative Literature aesthetic, which is at least in part his own.

Metaphor functions in Terziu's poetry as the linguistic embodiment of the perception and function of the real. The perception and function of the real, for Terziu, is that power which mediates between the mind and the world, in most parts this world is divided between Albania and the rest of his lands that he takes a journey. It liberates both words and objects by transposing them into the medium of fancy. Terziu uses metaphor to define the relations that exist between the particular forms and objects in the world. He views these relations in terms of dualities (Albania and United Kingdom), so that metaphor's primary function is to suggest the nature of dualities and, specifically, to conjoin their elements: to bring them together as closely as possible for the purpose of the perception, can accomplish this movement toward unity, toward the reparation of what Terziu sees as the essentially divorced of modern Albanian life.

In his 1990-s poetry Terziu uses metaphor in this way to render fully the complexities inherent in a moment of perception and change of the political system in Albania, were he used to be a journalist. Later he applies new insight to his use of metaphor and comes to see that art, which presents functions elevated by the

action of the perception to a form of truth unavailable to their original meaning, is what we mean when we use the term *reality*.

Josephine Miles, describing the meaning reality and vocabulary in modern poetry, comes to the heart of the issue: “In all these versions of the natural world, things mean or be not in themselves but as objects which are under pressure from meanings beyond them” (Miles, 1965: viii). In the same way a well-known Albanian poet, Agim Shehu, states that “Fatmir Terziu, is a poet and in publicity work Terziu is a true Garcia Lorca (Federico Garcia Lorca is one of the most important Spanish poets and dramatists of the twentieth century). According to Shehu, the “First impression is that you are dealing with a pen that is everywhere a poet of high valuation. Fatmir Terziu is a poet, where thought and feeling conveyed through images ...” (Shehu, 2008: 35). The following is extract from Terziu’s poem *STILETTOS*, which indicates several linguistic possibilities available to a poet with which to create an image:

How I would have liked to have learned the language of stilettos
 Mornings,
 noon,
 Evenings
 Mondays,
 Fridays...
 and especially Sundays
 If only I knew their language
 They have a melody in their rhythm
 They float slightly off the ground
 And then as nails they attack the floor
 Stabbing as deep as the veins, the arteries
 Ah, I didn't learn their language, for God's sake!

Long stilettos, short and small ones
 They all have a unique language
 Stepping on concrete, dry earth, or sandy ground
 The stilettos continue their typical movement,
 The type of stilettos that only God knows how He made them
 Multiply in number everyday like a species of mice.

I know that the stilettos belong to the women
 So to understand their language care in needed
 Stilettos are just as strong and durable
 When holding delicate feet,
 Or when like bottles the feet weigh down on them.

For a long time I have wanted to learn the language of stilettos
 Even though I do not understand a single stroke in the dictionary
 For a while I have wanted to learn something
 Since I was a boy,
 Since I was young...
 And even now that my eyes twinkle upon them.

Oh, how stilettos wake up something in me
 And you should know it is not a secret
 Without stilettos it seems as if the river will takes us
 And the earth will decay us quicker...

Stilettos have an amazing language
 They break stones and wood beneath them
 But I do not know if when old women wear them,
 Do they cause the same fuss?

Further, as an aesthetic movement, we need to clarify that poems in which there also exist stanzas and statements that create phenomenal images are important to be functioned to present an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time, as is the presence and linguistic function of the following poems:

The church of the eyes

Those just out of the egg,
 The confused yellowings
 Open their wings, take an unreasoned stance,
 Only their mothers understand them.

They open their light wings
 Over fleshy bodies, carefully breathing.
 Pressed against the blossoming buds,
 The rose petals
 Guarded by the thorns.

The aroma of the flowers, the varied colours, everything
 Embraces the reason of love in the church of the eyes;
 the prayers have started.

In the garden, the last preparations are performed
 By all the living things,
 It is the time of multiplications
 And love has raised its head.

Over newly blossomed roses
 Where the buds shade the egg hatchlings
 A snake slithers towards the nest
 Aiming to end
 the newly born dreams.

The thorns are privy to the wrath of the sun,
 Bringing from above the whole curse of the sky.
 The feast restarts soon,
 When the snake fleetingly burns in flame.

Delirium

I would have wanted for us to iron our thoughts together,
 When the rebelling angels catwalk amongst the icy clouds,
 whilst promoting the required fashion,
 as they give in to lust,
 I would have desired to have been within the existence of the word
 Where the Earth holds us in her soul,
 Where the sun and rain have fed everything:
 centuries, years, months, days,
 the trees of the erased goodness,
 and love is transformed
 into a house where spiders are entertained
 whilst being anointed with an orgasm.
 But you were, and I think you felt, bad,
 You pushed me away slowly and slightly every day.
 The collected thoughts of your pockets,
 Under the force of the unremembered word,
 The hope of life evaporated,
 The noisy offices had no order,
 because some breathing occurs that is stifled
 by the evil of the world,
 and some expensive thoughts are not just
 for the eyes of the World...
 Ah, even you had become privy with the officials,
 Orphaned thoughts crawled from plaza to plaza,
 Saying that someone had left your rope outside,
 As he wanted everything to go sour...

Advert for the Father-land

What could I tell a Londoner about the Fatherland? The adverts
 Are copies of the unscrupulous inscriptions in tombstones,
 Just as we are copies of the bestial goods,
 Of our egoistic laughable thoughts,
 Like fortune-telling using broken coffee-cups
 which contain pieces of the phantasmagoric fates of our fear,
 The yellow pages of history.
 What could I draw to the attention of a Londoner,
 The early flight of the sleeping thoughts,
 I pity the forgotten contemplation,
 I fear the future views,
 The never-formed ideas stir my soul,
 Six hundred years have I been drinking from the sea of thought.

I shrink in spirit, shy away from walking the streets,
 Hide amongst the whispers,
 The adverts of the land, adverts for the Father-land,
 Advice about unbrushed teeth,
 Instructions about uncut nails,
 Adverts for baby nappies, adverts for Mercedes,
 Adverts for slimming pills, packets for slimming belts,
 What could I say about the Fatherland to a Londoner...

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