

Translation of Culture/Culture in Translation: A Postcolonial Perspective

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Abstract

*The postcolonial theory of translation has emerged as a pattern of systems that enables a translator to re-conceptualize and revisit texts and redirect his attention to the dichotomy of Subject/Object relationships far from the hegemonic language of the logocentric Europe. Reproducing a text through rewriting is subjugating it to the will and intention of the local – the margin / the Other. Culture and Translation are two very polemical elements in perpetual tension due to the amount and the degree of reliability of the transfer from the source text to the target. Many studies have been made to find an issue and an adequate theory of translation to transfer the culture of the source to the target smoothly. However, these studies are not as effective as they might be because translation is rather a maneuvering and a biased manipulation of the text, and what is transferred as culture is just what is conceived or rather perceived by the translator whose background is the cornerstone of his rendering. Postcolonial theory has come in recourse to translation: its basic strategy is translation through **dualism** and **alterity**. It is a kind of H. Bhabha's **Third Space** or Bill Ashcroft's **Rewrite**: revisiting the text and its culture through the Other's Eye / "I." But this Rewrite pattern of translation needs more adequate mechanisms to transfer one culture into another language and avoid the constraints imposed by the power of the Subject that hinders the reading, rethinking, and interpreting of the text and is, frequently, hovering around and behind any translation activity.*

Keywords: *Eurocentric logic, otherness, postcolonial studies, postcolonial theory of translation, hegemonic language.*

Introduction

It is commonly acknowledged that postcolonial theory is made to exist in order to re-conceptualize and revisit literary criticism so that to give it further philosophical insights into the manner critics and literary scholars try to redirect their intention and challenge the dichotomy of the Subject / Object relationships

based on the logocentric, hegemonic criticism of Europe. In the words of Radha Chakravarty:

Beyond the conventional binaries of colonizer / colonized, First and Third Worlds, or the global North and South, there lies a spectrum of other issues that postcolonial theory needs to address, if it is to survive as a relevant mode of transformative thought and practice. (2017, p. 39)

The critic Chantal Zabus states that:

Looking at the effects of colonialism in postcolonial texts written not only in English but other world languages in a world where the notion of “one language, one nation” no longer obtains is an urgent task. (2015, p. 01)

Postcolonial theory of translation has come out of the conceptualization of the dialogic tension between colonizer / colonized; Subject / Object, and the like.

Deconstructing and reconstructing a text is, in many instances, a matter of reducing or exaggerating its transfer to the target. Whether colonizing or decolonizing the text, there is, frequently, a personal ideology behind it. No translation is ever innocent. Reproducing the text is, in a postcolonial context, rewriting it, i.e., subjugating it to the will and intention of the translator, who is, subsequently, subject to some sensibilities, such as culture, ideology, and intentionality. Jean-Marc Moura claims that: “It is deemed that the traveler really writes, while the sedentary writer only re-writes and otherwise suffocates among too many texts” (2015, p. 21). But rewriting is transferring a text from one language to another. Such transfer is frequently cultural. Here lies the difficulty in reproducing the culture of the source text in the target. In the words of Dia Sulaibia: “Instead of debating the accuracy of a translation based on linguistic criteria, translators and translation scholars are tending to consider how a text works in its culture, whether SL culture or TL culture” (2012, p. 24).

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No translation is ever possible if language is devoid of its cultural context. Whatever the ingenuity of the translator/writer, who, intentionally or unintentionally, disregards culture, falls into a process of estrangement and cannot manage to reproduce what the text evokes or/and suggests. The translator should know the nation-colonies' cultures before any kind of representation and/or domestication. He has to have a fair knowledge and understanding of “how the formerly colonized perceive themselves, their culture, and their place in the world as far as possible through their own agency, especially through their literature and other creative expression” (Briault-Manus, 2015, p. 48). Translation without

culture seems to be impossible! *BUT*: Which culture do we produce when we translate a text? Is it that of the Subject or that of the Object? Is it that of the Thingifier / Subject or the thingified / Other?

The complexity of translation, then, lies in the dialogical tension between what is in the original source and what is supposed to be in the target. In other words, the translation of an original text could be biased, mainly when it is seen through a Eurocentric “I” – an “I” that considers himself as a Subject and the Other as an Object. Postcolonial studies, along with translation studies, have contested the hegemonic power of the colonizer, who has reduced the Other to an agent who thinks and speaks through the language of the Subject. In his article about African literature and the impact of the English language in shaping thought and culture, Briault-Manus points out that:

Postcolonial studies, focusing mainly on literature in the European languages of imperialist hegemony, has barely contested the anomalous colonialist construct of “African” literature, which reduces over two thousand languages and cultures of that vast continent to what has been conveyed in metropolitan languages for the consumption of Western – and local but Western-educated minority – readerships. (2015, p. 51)

Here lies the complexity of the matter: the manner to approach the text and the tools (which are almost European) used to approach it! This adapted tool is a façade of a colonial discourse used as a method of interpreting for the sake of translation. This is an ambivalence *per se*. Bill Ashcroft, et al. state that: “Ambivalence also characterizes the way in which colonial discourse relates to the colonized subject, for it may be both exploitative and nurturing, or represent itself as nurturing, at the same time” (2007, p. 10). They further extend that:

The problem for colonial discourse is that it wants to produce compliant subjects who reproduce its assumptions, habits and values – that is, “mimic” the colonizer. But instead it produces ambivalent subjects whose mimicry is never very far from mockery.... The effect of this ambivalence (the simultaneous attraction and repulsion) is to produce a profound disturbance of the authority of colonial discourse. (Ibidem)

In the same vein, Keith Phetlhe acknowledges the impact the colonial discourse has on interpretation as well as on meaning transfer in translation. She points out the importance of not only appropriating the tools used for the discourse but further abrogating and decolonizing it and “cleansing” it of the relics of the West. She says:

Translation must be decolonized as a practice, especially when it is used as a vehicle for cultural productions such as literature and film... It simply refers to challenging and deconstructing the orthodoxy that has established translation as a

practice based on the assumptions of mainstream colonial influences. (2020, pp. 48-49)

In the same context, Ali Ghulam maintains that:

In this system [of Euro-binary logic], the colonizer and the colonized are bound in a relationship that shapes their destinies in a particular way. The power of colonial discourse binds the latter on former's terms and gives license to the former as powerful to organize the social system... It reflects the functioning of power in constructing and maintaining the binary structure in the discourse. (2009, p. 44)

But abrogation and appropriation seem to be backed by ideology. The latter has a hegemonic power over the “Other” in the process of transferring.

Translation as Rewrite, Manipulation and Cultural Transfer

Rewriting an original is a kind of manipulation, which is rooted in the intentionality of the translator and the way he conceives the text to be translated. Furthermore, this rewrite could be conducted by some norms, more than linguistic restriction, so that it becomes a text that adapts with the target needs and cultures. Ghulam states that: “The act of translation is not a transparent process that reflects the socio-cultural realities of source text; rather, it appears to be an activity that represents the source text culture to target text culture.” (2009, p. 59) So, according to Ghulam, translation is supposed to use a strategy that takes into account the social and cultural basics of the target. This fact makes him abrogate and appropriate the source text by contextualizing it within the target space. Ambivalence in the new text makes it hybrid: it is a text whose center is marginalized and restructured around a new pattern imposed by culture, ideology, and the like.

Hybridity is a word coined by Homi Bhabha, which is rather cross-cultural. For Novita Dewi: “Hybridity took to mean cross-cultural exchange and the political implication thereof that characterizes postcolonial literature, and second, the strategy of translating postcolonial literature, mindful of the linguistic, literary, and cultural interface” (2016, p. 70) . But, paradoxically, hybridity gives birth to a third text: a “diasporic” text – a text of intra-texts. In other words, there is no stable source text, and the hybrid is ever anew!

Ashcroft, et al. claim that both the source and the target cultures are in perpetual tension and contending one another within a discourse, which becomes, *de facto*, ambivalent and multilayered. They say:

*The concept is related to **hybridity** because, just as ambivalence “decentres” authority from its position of power, so that authority may also become hybridized*

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when placed in a colonial context in which it finds itself dealing with, and often inflected by, other cultures. (2007, p. 11).

For Shalmalee Palekar, engagement in translation is rather risky since it deconstructs and disrupts the pattern of the text for the sake of transferability. He writes:

It is important to search for the best ways available for deconstructing colonialist and oppressive narratives, and to engage ethically with the subject matter at hand, to show the “infinitely varied inflections of the postcolonial situation”... And it is precisely here that translators can step in / mediate to disrupt homogeneity, to warn against myths of purity, to show origins as always already fissured. (2001, pp. 78-79)

In the above quote, Palekar has proposed some mechanisms that enable the translator transfer the linguistic patterns and the cultural bases. He suggests deconstruction and reconstruction in the engagement of meaning transfer. But, does this method work? There is no certainty because of the intentionality and the bias of the translator in attempting the text.

Postcolonial Theory and Translation: Subject vs. Otherness

The fulcrum around which the postcolonial translation theory revolves is culture. It is the culture that pilots and conducts the text during translation. Sherry Simon claims that: “In fact, the postcolonial condition implies an unceasing flow of cultural traffic, but this flow operates according to different time schemes and achieves differing degrees of equivalence. Detailed studies of specific translating situations provide crucial sites through which to view relations of alterity and to understand their complexity.” (2000, p. 15) In the same vein, Natalie Wilmot and Susanne Tietze point out that: “From a translation perspective, postcolonial approaches have a long tradition of explicitly viewing acts of translation to be exercises of power and which necessarily engage with the politics of representation.” (2021, p. 34) Simon further explains the complexity of translation, pointing out the importance of the new cultural territories and geographies in the act of translation/rewrite. She says:

For translation studies and literary study in general, adopting a postcolonial frame means enlarging the map which has traditionally bound literary and cultural studies. It means moving beyond the boundaries of Europe and North America, and following more expansive itineraries, moving into new territories. But this excursion into new domains of culture – India, Africa, South America, Asia – must take into account the profound scars of colonialism and its sequels, scars which have shaped not only its victims but also its perpetrators. And so ‘we’ must understand our own place on this map. (2000, p. 13)

So, translation via postcolonial theory clashes with the Subject, and its linguistic proponents are deeply rooted in the text! The Other who tries to alter the text with respect to its core and the precepts of the target creates a kind of dialogism which makes the text, either too closer to the “Subject” or too far from “Him”. Here, in both cases, the text is made another text and loses its effectiveness-its own entity. The translator is condemned to be a good negotiator: he tries to demonstrate his ability to respect the core and consciously reshuffles the necessities and requirements of the needs of the target text! This *force des choses* is a kind of re-reading for the sake of rewriting and reproducing what the text is in its colonial context, and what it should be in the context of the postcolonial – the eye / “I” of the Other. In other words, interpreting, for the sake of translating, creates a kind of tension in negotiation, between the Other and the Subject. The text obliges the translator to find a way through this binary, which is the crux of translation.

So, the tension here is between the identity of the Subject and that of the Other; the language of the original and that of the target. Language vehicles culture and ideology; its transfer, thus, is problematic. Susan Bassnett, through the words of Sruthi B. Gupta, claims that:

Non-European nations assert their national identity through literature, long kept at the bay by European theoreticians as “inferior” works... One significant factor which has its influence on the very act of reading, writing, discussing the literature, theory, methodology form a post-colonial space is the concern of production and circulation of “knowledge”. Most of the theories, applications, and methodologies still carry colonial legacies. (2017, p. 391)

Gupta further maintains that: “Post-colonial studies has to go beyond the binary of colonial-post colonial where postcolonial can be a critical contribution to decode neo-colonial manifestations and existing and emerging configurations of power and knowledge within colonial and post colonial.” (2017, pp. 391-92)

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak uses the term “subalternity” as a way to read the text for the sake of translation. The subaltern steps beyond the established methods, which are almost hegemonic and fashioned by the colonial: “The idea of universalism,” Gupta maintains, “can be seen as a crafty way to maintain the supreme position of the west” (2017, p. 393). Identity, in general, is characteristically related to culture and its different layers: tradition, morality and religion. Subsequently, postcolonial production in art, literature and translation is prominently dominated by culture – the culture of the one who produces: the European. Here comes the matter. In the words of Notiva Dewi: “No theoretical concept arising from one culture can be transposed unproblematically to different

cultures without considering the limits of its applicability.” (2016, p. 70) Thus, postcolonial theory, in general, and of translation, in particular, has to subvert and obliquely look and account for textuality and its literary intertwinements.

Cultural identity is the corner-stone in postcolonial theory of translation. Culture indicates the identity of the translator / and his awareness of his community. He looks at the text through this sense of belonging. In the words of J. A. Naudé: “The implication for translation is that cultural words and concepts are utilised in the target text (i.e. the technique of foreignisation) to allow the clear demarcation of each cultural group. The terms *resistancy* and *resistance* are used by Venuti (1995) to refer to the strategy of translating a literary text in such a way that it retains something of its foreignness” (2002, p. 53).

But, if the translator challenges the source text in favour of the new – the target, can we dare say that it is a translation? Naudé maintains that:

A resistive approach to translation in practice may involve either choosing to translate a text that challenges the contemporary canon of foreign literature in the target language, or it may mean that the translator uses unidiomatic expressions and other linguistically and culturally alienating features in the translated text in order to create an impression of foreignness and provide readers of the translation with an alien reading experience. (2002, p. 5)

But biased translation often leads to the misrepresentation of the Other / Orient, the colonized. “Colonizer’s biased translation of the native’s culture,” Pratibha Kumari points out, “did an irreparable damage to the image of the Orient that persisted for long and could not be corrected until recently with the advent of the cultural turn” (2017, p. 162). The interplay of the cultural element in translation dismantles the Eurocentric logic as the only referent and challenges the power relationship between the original text and its translation. Maria Remerios Fernandez Ruiz, et al. state that:

It is increasingly on the local level that differences are articulated, negotiated, contested and defended in relation to the process of history... The usually manifest theory is a kind of rewrite of a classical/ colonial text within a postcolonial pattern in target language, resisting to the colonial power of the text and its layers and presenting its contexts as exploitative and prejudicial. (2019, p. 56)

Ideology comes also into play during the choice of the text and the strategy of reading it. The translator is free to select the text for the sake of publication and the importance of the text for the target audience. Amos Wedhowerti and Brigitta Sita Oentari acknowledge the amount of danger which affects translation. They say:

This ideology might even bring controversy to the product of translation. The translator who is way too faithful to the Target Readers might do harm to the culture and the Source Text itself. The ideology of this faithful translator will put aside the minority culture, all the more the oppressed culture. (2020, p. 227)

No one way is tolerated, as no many ways are acceptable. In other words, the subversive component of the postcolonial text is a key aspect that must be taken into consideration in order to preserve the text from its “re-colonisation”. Hassan Ou-Hssata claims that:

It is in this type of colonial contexts when translation can be used, both as a colonizing method and a form of resistance by the colonized, so that the translation metaphor is used to better understand colonial power relations, limitations of cultural transfers and the problem of differences and otherness. (2020, p. 6)

So, the postcolonial translation versions in translation cause harm to the text more than its safety and effectiveness. Colonialism has, we might say, gone, but neocolonialism has emerged with new strategies and façades. Translation has become its first victim. Its supremacy on the field is very remarkable in all fields of translation; even the Subject – the Colonizer translates for the other – the Colonized within his source language, preserving, as it were, his European culture in the target language. What the translator, then, is supposed to do is to be aware of his background and the background of the author of the source text. In the process of representation, the latter renders the Other alien and different. In the words of Wedhowerti and Oentari:

Through observing the postcolonial-translation, the awareness towards cultural and historical differences might be promoted and superiority on the European languages and culture might be reduced. By understanding the cross culture, translator will be able to produce an acceptable translation that considers both source background and target background without being disturbed by the superiority and inferiority in colonial practices. (2020, p. 228)

Translation vs. Eurocentric Discourse

The crux of the matter in the process of translation is the nature of truth attained by the dominant power of the language source and its cultural and ideological interlinks. The text mirrors the Colonizer looking at the Colonized as an Inferior Other. This nature of truth tries to make the reader believe in such truth as absolute and right. The role of the translator is to de-colonize the text and look “faithfully” within the language of the stereotyped Other in order to be closer to the reality evidenced in the text. Ghulam maintains that:

It is evident that the west used the process of rewriting as a tool for the representations of Europe’s Others for its cultural dominance. This ideologically

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controlled knowledge constructs the west as civilized and superior but the colonized people as uncivilized and inferior. This body of knowledge (colonial translations) was constructed not only to construct the colonized as peripheral, uncultured, sentimental and monstrous, but it has also been undertaken to make colonizers well aware of the culture of the natives to administer them in a better way. (2009, p. 3)

But, through the linguistic web of the source text, there are many sub-discourses related to the dialogical interplay of the text with intentionality and the strategy of reading. The translator's oblique interpretative investigation tries to rethink and reconceive the "real" image of the colonized through binary opposition. In this context, Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi state that: "Translation does not happen in a vacuum but in a continuum; it is not an isolated act, it is part of an ongoing process of intercultural transfer. Moreover, translation is a highly manipulative activity that involves all kinds of stages in that process of transfer across linguistic and cultural boundaries" (1999, p. 2). Such boundaries are embedded within the postcolonial theory and its philosophical foundation: postcolonialism is a mode of thinking and interpreting through binaries and obliqueness. Alexandra Milostivaya *et al.* point out that:

Post-colonialism is a style of thinking as the colonized and the colonizers, as well as methodological tools for the analysis of post-colonial discourse, its myths and history, language and landscape, "Self and Others". (2018, p. 4)

Such interpretation and rethinking of the text and the cultural regeneration of both the Subject (who becomes only a cultural agent) and the Other (who is no longer another but, likewise, a cultural holder of a community) become the corner stone of translation and rewrite. In this context, the translator is supposed to be multicultural and mastering different languages. Theo Hermans claims that:

The issues of otherness, representation and the rationale of cross-cultural comparison in a postcolonial world reappear throughout the accounts of practices and theorizings that do not match the category "translation" pure and simple. If different cultures are to be understood on their own terms, translating becomes problematic. Negotiating these problems, however, does not necessarily have to aim at assimilating the alien concepts into one's own vocabulary. (2009, p. 104)

Language vehicles culture, and, in turn, it is articulated by the culture it represents. Stirring inside the core of the text needs negotiation in order to transfer the culture of the source to the one of the target. Bassnett claims that: "Any translation process meaning would have to be negotiated. It is in that process of negotiation that the inequalities of power relationships between cultures comes to the fore" (2014, p. 46).

Constraint, imposed by language universalism, is the real dilemma for the translator to transfer and domesticate the cultural context in the target language, mainly when the local does not possess the global. Simon states that:

Postcolonialism is about rethinking the ways in which cultures relate to one another, recognizing their internal differences and also questioning the poles from which and to which cultural products travel. It makes us increasingly aware of the ways in which hybridity has come to complicate relations of exchange and trouble categories of alterity. The poles of Otherness which supported relations of oppression and contestation have been weakened by the fragmentary nature of contemporary cultural identities. (2000, p. 17)

So, postcolonial theory of translation is essentially based on intercultural exchange and negotiation. Subsequently, in Simon's words: "Translation then is not simply a mode of linguistic transfer but a translangual practice, a writing across languages" (2000, p. 28). Translation, therefore, should not be considered as disorientating, predatory, exploitative, risky and "estranged," but, rather, a kind of challenge for resisting the temptation of the Subject's language and his culture being aware of local / national cultural transgression. Michael Cronin points out that: "Less account has been taken of *translation as resistance* – the ways in which originals can be manipulated, invented or substituted, or the status of the original subverted in order to frustrate the intelligence-gathering activities of the Imperial Agent." (2000, p. 35) This position goes in pace with the response of Alexandra Milostivaya, et al. to translation and the clash of languages, mainly those which do not have the same roots, as Arabic, Anglo-Saxon and Latin. They say: "Colonial and post-colonial processes move and mix the languages of the nations that, in one way or another, affect translatology." (2017, p. 182)

Though the Third Space of H. Bhabha could be a solution for translation, because it is a kind of reconciliation between two cultures, a by-product of a cultural space that unites a world of in-between, it is, nonetheless, very paradoxical and, further, a leap in the dark. This Third Space gives birth to another one (Fourth Space), which is that of the translator, the author of another text with specific cultural perceptions, which are different from that of the original and that of the target. It becomes another creation, less representative of the local and global cultures, more private and very personal: it is a metaphoric world of the translator. In the words of Milostivaya, et al.:

Translatology is no longer seen as the language transformations but the struggle for a new cultural identity... However, the wording of cultural translation refers not only to literary translation that includes two texts in two different languages but also for data transfer term it touches the process and conditions of human migration. A mixture of

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cultures is possible in active migration conditions, which in consequence leads to a change of a language as a reflection of reality. (Ibidem)

So, the new text, in this Fourth Space, is culturally different from the Source Language Text (SLT) and the Target Language Text (TLT). Though it uses some cultural elements from both texts, it, nonetheless, metaphorizes them and makes them a means of representation that could exceed the cultural facts. In other words, cultural elements are not used as facts, but, rather, as symbols that step beyond their common representation.

Postcolonial Theory of Translation and the Translator's Dilemma

Writers transpose culture via language. The text is culturally multi-layered and multi-linguaged: it is, frequently, intertextual. The translator's role is to decode such transposition and metaphorical codes in order to find out the suggested culture(s) the text enfolds. Maria Tymoczko points out that "In the dialectic between source and target cultures the translator is not neutral, but rather engaged in what is at the very least a "symbolic" struggle, that is, a struggle for symbols... Translation becomes a tool of which both oppressor and oppressed can make use" (2000, pp. 255-257). In the same vein, Bassnett maintains that the oppressor via his cultural superiority has undermined others' cultures, and the translators are constrained to look at the text through such superiority. She says:

Translation has been at the heart of the colonial encounter, and has been used in all kinds of ways to establish and perpetuate the superiority of some cultures over others. But now, with increasing awareness of the unequal power relations involved in the transfer of texts across cultures, we are in a position to rethink both the history of translation and its contemporary practice. (2014, p. 16)

The Fourth Space in translation, within the context of postcolonial theory, is the subsequent by-product of the Third Space. In this Fourth Space, the translator, rather, reproduces a metaphorical text, whose roots are both of the source and target cultures: that of the Subject and that of the Other. It generates more signifieds out of one signifier. In this context, Tymoczko underlines the importance of metaphor in translating a text since the latter's language is almost suggestive. She writes:

The penchant for metaphorical speech about post-colonial literature suggests that critics view it as a new literary phenomenon about which we do not as yet know how to speak directly, a type of writing for which we do not as yet have an adequate vocabulary. Because metaphoric speech is cognitively pervasive, a normally harmless and time-honoured linguistic practice, the approach could be extended; metaphors are to hand. (2000, p. 19)

In other words, translation invokes a kind of interpretive activity associated with the suggestiveness of words and expressions the text is composed of. The meaning we get is, frequently, beyond what the writer wants to communicate: the text evokes meanings, which could signify what the reader/translator is intending to find out through his reading. The translator is not the author of the source text; yet, while interpreting for the sake of translation, many layers of meanings come into play. Subsequently, he becomes, in turn, an author of a new text, whose background is the source text and some ingredients of the target culture. Tymoczko maintains that: “The culture or tradition of a post-colonial writer acts as a metatext which is rewritten – explicitly and implicitly, as both background and foreground – in the act of literary creation. The task of the interlingual translator has much in common with the task of the post-colonial writer; where one has a text, however, the other has the metatext of culture itself” (2000, p. 20). In other words, being far from the center, things fall apart because the translator faces a real dilemma: to be truthful to the text, and, at the same time, to reproduce the source thoroughly into the target. So, the only escape from this constraining situation is to use metaphor: the translator suggests and evokes more than says or tells. In the words of Tymoczko:

The two types of textual production [the source text and the translated] converge in many respects; as the metaphor of translation suggests, the transmission of elements from one culture to another across a cultural and/or linguistic gap is a central concern of both these types of intercultural writing and similar constraints on the process of relocation affect both types of texts. (2000, p. 22)

Any translation has its own author, who recreates a text through manipulation of its specificities: its culture and linguistic patterns. So, the translator is somewhere in his work as the writer is in the original text! Rendering a text, then, creates tension between the translator, who claims his product, and the source writer, who is somewhere in the text, yet, marginalized by the rewriting of the text! Dia Sulaibi points out that:

So long that translation is a cultural event, the translator can become a true author, since he has final authority in determining the subject’s meaning in the final version – the TL text – and eventually the TL culture, as well as the original version – the SL text – and eventually the SL culture. (2012, p. 15)

Translation is, frequently, not transparent and further not innocent; it is connected with power operations, which, subsequently, affect the relationship between the text as a source and the text as a target. Such relationship is dialogically related to the nature of the “metropolis” power and its hegemonic dominating language. Jenny Williams states that:

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The colonial power exercises its authority through its own language, and translation becomes a necessity for both the colonizers, in order to impose their will, and for the colonized, in order to understand their new masters and to negotiate the relationship with them. In fact, the translation traffic in the era of empire tends to be in one direction – from the language of the colonizer to the colonized. (2013, p. 56)

Postcolonial theory of translation, then, is a kind of rewrite, a reproduction of the culture of the “colony” via its own language. In the words of Bassett:

The very idea of “writing back” implies a conscious challenge to a dominant power: emergent literatures reclaim colonial languages, reshaping their own versions of those languages and acknowledging the simultaneous presence of other, indigenous languages. Implicit here, however, is the idea of the colony as a translation. For if the colonizing power is the source, the original from which the colony derives, then that colony is de facto a version of the original, a copy, a translation. And the question then becomes how to break the circle that deems a translation to be inferior to its original. (2014, p. 50)

In the same vein, Cristina Sanchez-Martin acknowledges the fact that translation must be manipulative in the sense that the culture of the source and that of the target, in most cases, mainly when domestication is used, are not the same. She says:

The notion of “translation as manipulation” extends the trope of appropriation. Translation [is an act of] rewriting and thus manipulation of an original piece, and hence of its culture. (2017, p. 1)

While Sanchez-Martin adopts manipulation as a tool for translation, Tarek Shamma is in favour of the notion of binary opposition between cultures in translation. According to him, there is no difficulty in translating cultures that are similar. He writes:

The (post)colonial situation is not a unique mode of linguistic or cultural interaction, but one where relations that could otherwise be occulted are crystallized and brought into focus. Yet, it is not difficult to cite many examples where power relations are not the defining element, especially between those cultures that are more or less “similar,” those where there is no recent history of political or military confrontations, or in situations where the power balance does not seem to be dramatically skewed. (2009, p. 187)

But it seems that Shamma has underestimated the commitment of the translator / writer. The postcolonial is a committed “agent” who tries obliquely to find out what the “metropolis” writer hides within the core of the text. Furthermore, the target language that has a specific culture, which is unfamiliar to the source text, creates tension in the process of transfer.

The Fourth Space and the Matter of Cultural Representation

The power relations between the source and the target during the process of transfer create a kind of tension between what the text is in the source and what is supposed to be in the target. Frequently, the translator tries to solve the disparity and constraints via an imaginative heuristic space that is commonly called the Fourth Space. The existence of Four Space in the postcolonial literary transfer is defined by Maria Ruiz, et al. as follows:

[It is] a holistic view of the complex interplay of all agents involved in the reception process... While Bhabha's third space is related to identity, the fourth space is associated with interpretation and representation. The fourth space is an epistemological metaphor located in the postcolonial global imaginary, which represents a country or society with a very limited connection to or experience in a given colonial situation. (2019, p. 61)

The Fourth Space avoids labeling and stereotyping and softens the tension that exists in the source text and the basics of target one. But, can the translator do it without any partiality? So, translation seems to be an illusion because it does not transpose the author's intentionality into the target. In the words of Lawrence Venuti: "The illusion of transparency is an effect of fluent discourse, of the translator's effort to insure easy readability by adhering to current usage, maintaining continuous syntax, fixing a precise meaning. What is so remarkable here is that this illusory effect conceals" (1995, p. 8). This illusory Fourth Space, which, rather, steps beyond the two worlds (The Orient and The West) and overpasses reconciliation avoiding any tension with the Third Space of Bhabha, is generally a space based on imagination and a perception of world beyond tensions and contentions. Eimma Chebinou, in her thesis dissertation about Francophone literature, maintains that the Fourth Space is a necessity for writers to produce their own worlds, which is hovering around their artistic creations. In her study of the novels of the Algerian Leila Sebbbar *Shérazade: 17 ans, brune, frisée, les yeux verts*, of the French Jaqueline Manicom *Mon examen de blanc*, and of the Senegalese Ken Bugul *Le baobab du fou*, she acknowledges that the Fourth Space is neither Algeria, nor France, nor even the hybridity represented in the Third Space, but it is only imaginary. ["Le quatrième espace n'est ni l'Algérie, ni la France, ni la mixité qui représenterait un troisième espace mais un espace imaginaire]" (2015, p. 58). In fictional writing, translation leans more to the Fourth Space, where a world in this world is created. It is a space, which is not forced within Bhabha's Third Space to mix up or represent other's culture to the target in a very faithful way, but, rather, a space where the cultural textuality is metaphorized within a new texture.

The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam is the first illustrative example of the difficulty in translating texts, which are not “metropolitan”: a text that belongs to an Other who is “regressive” and “uncivilized”, regardless of the glory of his past. It shows the tension and clash existing between two cultures and two geographical spaces, which are dissimilar in many instances. Supremacy of power has come into play: all what is not European is deemed to be inferior even if this non-European has a very rich past. The Quatrains of Khayyam has been translated via Eurocentric philosophy, which manifests itself through the supremacy of European language over the rest of the world. *The Rubaiyyat* has become famous due to the translations of Edward Fitzgerald and John Pasha. It has become a good art when it has been translated. It has been remolded and reworked artistically so that it fits the hegemonic culture: the European! In the words of Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi: “*The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* could accuse the Persians of artistic incompetence and suggest that their poetry became art only when translated into English” (1999, p. 6). Bassnett and Trivedi go further pointing out the priori assumption, which asserts that “Translation was a means both of containing the artistic achievements of writers in other languages and of asserting the supremacy of the dominant, European culture” (*Ibidem*).

The translation of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* by Edward Fitzgerald (1857-59) into English is very problematic. It does not “faithfully” transfer Khayyam’s thoughts into English: “The problem seems to be a question of meaning and how does the translator render the quatrains’ expressions and words into English” (Bouregbi, 2016, p. 15). As acknowledged by C. Eliot Norton in a comment on the translation, there seems to be a new creative work of art than translation. Fitzgerald has rendered “the Persian artistic incompetence” into art. Norton writes:

He [Fitzgerald] is to be called – translator – only in default of a better word, one which should express the poetic transfusion of a poetic spirit from one language to another, and the representation of the ideas and images of the original in a form not altogether diverse from their own, but perfectly adopted to the new conditions of time, place, custom, and the habit of the mind in which they appear. (1869, pp. 575-576)

Furthermore, and with grandiloquent words, the critic reviewer of *Lippincott’s Magazine*, Edward Hall points out the element of adaptation of the other culture and beliefs in English and praises the skill and the manner Fitzgerald adapts what is not English, so that it fits the taste of the English. He writes: “He [Fitzgerald] has gone far to prove that the acceptableness among us of Oriental

poetry may depend very largely on the skill with which it is transplanted into our language” (1875, p. 261).

Contrariwise, some other critics have put in doubt such a transfer. What Fitzgerald has done is only reproducing his personal understanding and interpretation of Omar Khayyam and matching it with what goes with culture, rather than the quatrains themselves. He has even adopted a meter which is not Persian. Speaking of faithfulness to the text, the critic Edward Heron-Allen maintains that in Fitzgerald’s translation the first stanza of the quatrain is his own—not of Khayyam! (1899, p. 5). Fitzgerald, himself, in a letter to Mrs Cowell in 1867, acknowledged that he did not respect the whole quatrains; he has, instead, mashed and fused many verses together to render some meanings understandable culturally in England. He wrote: “You know I have translated none literally, and have generally mashed up two-or more-into one” (Qtd in Terhume, 1947, p. 229). So, as it is noticeable, the Orient is translated in the image of the West—the cultural referent. In other words, translation is identified as “the founding concept of empire” (Cheyfitz, 1991, p. 120).

Another example suggested by Cristina Sanchez-Martin is very illustrative. Sanchez-Martin discusses the meaning of the words “choice” in M. Kathleen de Onis when discussing reproductive rights in the USA. De Onis contends that this word fails to represent the Spanish-speaking Latinas because it does not hold the same meaning in their tradition and everyday use. She claims that words:

created from a monolingual English perspective do not align with the identities of diverse cultural groups... [The word “Choice”] does not reflect the complexity of the situations in which many Latinas have to make decisions regarding their reproductive health, since it does not take into consideration aspects such as socioeconomic status and cultural values and is associated with privilege. (2017, p. 03)

So, linguistic and cultural ambiguity could not enable the word selected to convey the meaning needs in a community, which has different beliefs and traditions. That is, imposing such word on the Latinas is, purposefully, hegemonic and ideological.

Another illustrative example is that of Khetam Shraideh. In his article “Postcolonial Translation Studies: The Translator’s Apolitical Impartiality in *Men in the Sun*,” Shraideh tries to discuss the impact of transferring the short story (رجال في الشمس) of the Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani into English by Hilary Kilpatrick (“Men in the Sun”). He has noticed that the translator, frequently, fails to reproduce the meaning of the text. In order to solve the problem of ambiguity, Kilpatrick uses footnotes for clarification. Here lies the problem! Does the reader concentrate on the text and its insinuation, or does he look for footnotes?

Furthermore, footnoting is a clever way to conduct the reader to the intention of the translator more than the text itself. This recourse to footnoting shows the impact that the hegemonic power (the Eurologic) has on the translator. The text is made to be seen through an English Eye “I”. In page 55 of the translated text, she has used footnotes in order to explain the signification of the term “Hatim”. She writes: “Hatim, of the Bedouin tribe Taiy, is proverbial among the Arabs for his limitless generosity and hospitality” (1999, p. 55).

Kanafani is a committed writer, who belongs to the left wing of Palestinian Organization for the Independence of Palestine: he was the spokesman of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). In one way or another, his stories are supposed to be coloured with his political commitment and ideology. Here lies the matter for Kilpatrick. She is constrained to locate the short story in its social and political background of the author. Shraideh maintains that:

Due to the political thematic scheme of the novella [“Men in the Sun”], every part holds several shades of meanings other than the surface meaning... Accordingly, to capture all the shades of meaning, we need to go beyond the textual level and contextualize the novella in its historical and political settings. (2018, p. 116)

But Shraideh has laid us astray when he tries to explain a word, which is absent in the original text. The word is ‘غراب’ (“ghurab” / crow), but in the original there is only (‘طائر أسود’ “black bird”). Though it could insinuate to “ghurab”, it does not, in any way, mean “crow”. Kanafani has used the word “black” and “black bird”, not “blackbird” as wrongly quoted by Shraideh in his article (*Ibidem*). The use of “black bird” is a motif that unites the different parts of novella so that it becomes a whole.

“Black bird” (two words) and “blackbird” (one word) are two different terms that have different significations: the former means any bird which is black, and it could be “the crow” as it could be another bird, whereas the latter is a special kind of bird:

A New World songbird with a strong pointed bill. The male has black plumage that is iridescent or has patches of red or yellow... Crows, ravens, and blackbirds are all members of the same order, but crows and ravens are in a different family than are blackbirds. To make things more confusing, not all blackbirds are black. The blackbird family includes the Red-Winged Blackbird, Yellow-Headed Blackbird, Brown-Headed Cowbird, Bobolinks, Meadowlarks, Orioles, Grackles, and other birds with “blackbird” in their name. (Cokatoo Creations)

So, the word is suggestive, and it could mean many things. The translation of Kilpatrick, then, is right and fits the context of the story. In other words, Kanafani

does not, probably, mean 'غراب' ("ghurab" / crow) but he, suggestively, insinuates to it for the sake of metaphor.

Kanafani has used 'طائر أسود' (black bird) in many instances:

وكان ثمة طائر أسود يخلق عاليا وحيدا" (ص 8).
"والسما تتهج و الطائر الأسود ما زال يحوم على غير هدى" (ص 14-15).

Kilpatrick's translation seems to be acceptable:

"...there was a **black bird** circling high up, alone and aimless" ("Men in the Sun," 1999, p. 22) and "...and still the **black bird** is still circling aimlessly ("Men in the Sun," 1999, p. 25).

What we notice in this article is that Shraideh has neglected the suggestiveness of Arabic and the texture of the source text: it could mean "ghurab / crow", but it does not only mean this! Kanafani has evoked the idea of **blackness** and the **black bird**, probably, to reveal something to the reader! The term "black bird" / "طائر أسود" does not have a cultural background to translate it; it can rather be understood as a metaphorical stance to suggest something evoked by this **colour** and this **black bird**. This can be considered as a Fourth Space. In other words, it is not a matter of appropriation and abrogation, a matter of cultural transfer; the term is more suggestive and seems to be the key motif of the short story.

These three illustrative instances have shown that the significance and contribution of the postcolonial theory of translation is very important in the domain of translation; yet, it faces many obstacles. We still have the empowerment of the hegemonic culture of the referent, on the one side, and the challenging other, who wants to abrogate and subvert the text's culture so that it fits his space – his intentionality, his fourth space, on the other. As noticed in the examples above, there is a challenge in the conceptualization and choice of words that fit the transfer. The process of translation can reduce or exaggerate in the process of transfer.

Conclusion

Post-colonial theory of translation has come into existence in order to revise the relationships existing between Eurocentric Subject and the stereotyped Other: between the dominating power of the language source and what it holds as a hegemonic culture and the marginalized one. It comes to put in doubt the existing parameters, which serve as referent for any act of translation. In other words, it has come to rewrite through the Other "I" what has already been furnished as culture in the source text. Being so, the translator avoids the hegemonic normative

standards and makes of the text an autonomous being, whose source is negotiated for the sake of reconciliation. The translator should master and maintain his skill as an academic agent, who tries to comply with the material of the source text: no distortion is ever allowed in the process of transfer. No loss of information, no use of unrelated words and expression, and, further, no context alterations are permitted. Contrariwise, the translated text becomes an ideological/cultural denial of the source.

In the above-discussed illustrations, what is commonly noticed is the attempt to render meanings of the original. This process has become very constraining due to the impact of the priori assumption the translator has in his mind: the target text is biased. Translation from the source to the target seems to be more, or less, than what the text is. Political beliefs, cultural biases, and intentionality have become tools to use in the interpretation of the source text; thus, pertinence in negotiation waters down.

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