DOI: 10.35923/BAS.30.22

THE (IM)POSSIBILITY OF LITERARY TRANSLATION

FATBARDHA STATOVCI
University of Prishtina

***Abstract**: The problematics of literary translation have generated inconclusive discussions among relevant scholars. The crucial problem posed is the equivocal nature of literature, which complicates the process. Hence, discussing the question of literary translation, Umberto Eco asserts that it never says the same thing as the original. This essay will address the complex issue of literary translation on two levels, theoretical and practical. It deals with aspects like the role of translation in inter-cultural communication between peoples, the role of the translator as an agent enabling this communication, fidelity to the source text, and will finally examine some illustrative examples bound up with the core issue of literary translation.*
***Keywords**: destination language, literary translation, multi-lingualism, source language, Umberto Eco*

1. Introduction

Literary translation is understood as the process enabling the transfer of a text from a source language to a destination language. Usually, the explanation given to the verb 'translate' is: "To turn in writing or speech something from one language into another language, wholly preserving the meaning of the words and phrases". The first question this prompts concerns the extent to which it is possible to 'wholly' preserve a word's meaning when it passes in translation from one language to another, especially when one translates literature. The adverb 'wholly' would imply a perfect translation. But "every sensible and rigorous theory of language shows that a perfect translation is an impossible dream" (Eco 2001: ix). Despite this, Eco emphasizes, people translate. Translation builds a bridge of communication, at the broadest level, between different world cultures, and, at the narrowest, between individuals. Translation, to put it concisely, is a door by which we enter another's cultural conglomerate – we know them, we understand them and we empathize with them. Human thought would be immeasurably impoverished if translation did not exist, because it is impossible to be able to read all of the languages that are spoken. Cultures would pull down their individual shutters, and the kind of vivid communication between them, which translation facilitates and consolidates, would become impossible.

From the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, in the third century BC, to the present day, translation has intensified: people have managed to connect themselves culturally and to exchange personal and collective experiences through translation. It is the translator who enjoys the status of protagonist in this activity – a role Cicero (1949: 365) seems to see as comparable to the writer's, due to the fact that, in his opinion, while translating, it is not necessary "to render word for word" (idem: 365), but instead to preserve "the general style and force of the language"

(ibidem), thus leading to the idea of a re-creation through translation – the agent who makes translation something concrete, who facilitates contact with universal literatures. When we translate, in truth we match ourselves against a universe of signs, while being part of an entirely different universe of signs. Translation is thus a kind of tussle between two systems of signs, and it is the translator who stands in the middle of the arena, making possible the 'transition' from one system to the other. Hence, "the translator must, as a communicator, possess the knowledge and skills that are common to all communicators (this much by definition) but … in two languages (at least)" (Bell 1991: 36).

This is not to diminish literary translation. It has been concluded that "in major cultures too, every new poetic wave has been stimulated by translations" (Krasniqi 2018: 28). In the end, an author is the totality of what s/he reads, and what s/he reads is never limited to texts written only in his/her native language. Furthermore, Lefevere (1984: 97) declares that translation "play[s] a vital part in the evolution of literatures".

It should be emphasized from the very beginning that the challenge of literary translation offers endlessly fertile ground for new research and analysis. In this essay, I shall strive to examine concisely the philosophy of literary translation, swimming in waters both theoretical and practical, depending chiefly on the writers who have themselves written literature and have been preoccupied with the question of literary translation. Particular attention will be devoted to Umberto Eco's *Experiences in Translation*, which attempts to respond to the problematics of literary translation, building on the author's own experience in order to create a new system of thought on the subject.

In this paper, all the quotations taken from the books in Albanian are translated into English by Robert Wilton. Robert Wilton is a British-Kosovan novelist, screenwriter and literary translator. His translations from Albanian into English include the first great Albanian novel, Sterjo Spasse's "Why?", works by Ridvan Dibra, and diverse poetry, including the well-known Albanian poet Millosh Gjergj Nikolla – commonly known as Migjeni.

2. Premises of literary translation: "translating means saying almost the same thing"

According to Alexander Fraser Tytler (2007: 9), translation should preserve the ideas of the source text, its style and techniques should correspond to the original, and thus the composition of the original work should be upheld. He accordingly lists three essential laws of translation:

1. Translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work.
2. The style and manner of the translation should be of the same character as that of the original.
3. Translation should have the ease of the original composition.

Jakobson comes to the conclusion that translation should certainly follow the grammar of the destination language. He sees the meaning of each word as a linguistic phenomenon and concludes that it is the signifier, and not the signified, that carries the meaning. For him there are three kinds of translation: intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic – and the essence of them all is that "translation

involves two equivalent messages in two different codes" (Jakobson 1959: 233). C. S. Peirce (1994), on the other hand, sees translation as a kind of interpretation, which leads him to the belief that "the conception of a 'meaning', which is, in its primary acceptation, the translation of a sign into another system of signs, and which, in the acceptation here applicable, is a second assertion from which all that follows from the first assertion equally follows, and vice versa" (Peirce 1994: 1226). Similarly, Gadamer (2004: 386) comes to the conclusion that "every translation is at the same time an interpretation" – an idea discussed by Umberto Eco (2006: 253), who also thinks that "every translation, even the translation of *piove* into *it rains*, is an interpretation" (trans. Robert Wilton). Borges, who declares himself convinced of the beauty of literal translation, gives an interesting definition of translation, seeing it as the generator and illustrator of aesthetic discussion: "Translation … should be intended to illuminate aesthetic discussion" (Borges 1974, Vol. 1: 239,– trans. Robert Wilton) (for more, regarding the literal translation, see also the essay "Word-Music and Translation", Borges 2000: 57-76).

For Eco, writing something theoretical about traductology demands experience in translating. Thus his theoretical saga about traductology is prefaced by his own experience as a translator and as a translated author. Ideally, the legitimacy of the hypotheses proposed by a theorist of traductology is more credible when the theorist has themself been confronted directly with translation, because, in the end, translation is a practical matter. Eco (2006: 296) summarizes his reflections on literary translation in the expression: "translating means saying almost the same thing". The accent is surely on the adverb '*almost*'; the translated work is never equal to the original work. The mission Eco sets out on, before gathering together a set of texts which are the products of a series of conferences, and which he publishes under the title *Experiences in Translation*, is to show that there is no such thing as a perfect translation. Even when a translation is without errors, it is still just *almost* perfect. His own experiences with translation infuse the whole book, and are the basis for his theoretical questions about translation, and, for this reason, Eco sees experience in translation – whether active or passive – as necessary for the establishment of a system of thought on traductology.

In this book, among other things, Eco discusses issues like the cultural differences between languages, the equivalences of meaning in the case of synonyms, the contexts and their correct meaning, the reference, and the profound understanding of text, interpretation and negotiation, intertextual reference, interpretation as it relates to translation, and so on. At the very beginning of his introduction, he asks: *What does translation mean?* (idem: 9). The answer Eco aims to elaborate is that "translation is to say the same thing in another language" (ibidem), but in fact, as he teaches us, it is not, because his experience tells him that translation never says "the same thing" as the original. Eco (2006: 47) comes to the conclusion that translation has to do with "a possible world". Thus we understand that there are two worlds which communicate, but which are nevertheless different to a certain degree, because the second tends to resemble the first, but is not identical to it: "To translate always means to polish and to discard some of the implications of which the original wording is composed. This means that in translation the same thing is never said" (idem: 99 – trans. Robert Wilton). Translation represents a process through which the translated text loses much of the original; translation means the transfer of a text not simply from one language to another, but from one culture to another. He thus instructs the translator not to be afraid of the linguistic rules and cultural elements embodied in the work. In that

case the translator is obliged to know the cultural context of the era in which the author being translated was writing. S/he should capture references carefully, and take special care when translating texts that produce intertextual echoes. In this context, Eco (2006: 239 – trans. Robert Wilton) writes: "Not to understand an erudite or ironic reference is to impoverish the source text. To add an extra reference is to enrich it more than is appropriate. The ideal solution for a translation would be to give, in another language, nothing less and likewise nothing more than what is alluded to in the original".

The translator is – or, in the final reckoning, should be – an excellent reader of the literary work, and as such, should also know the cultural identity of the author s/he is translating, should understand the allusions in the texts, its pitfalls, so as to avoid any misunderstandings and consequently translate incorrectly. Eco demands that the translator preserve the text's context, because words always take on a semantic weight according to the context in which they are used; he sees this as the principal obligation in the translation process. Eco perceives linguistic systems as comparable and concludes that "incidental misunderstandings can be resolved when texts are translated in the light of context and with reference to the world about which the text in question is speaking" (idem: 51). It is therefore the duty of the translator "to negotiate with the fantasies of an author now long-lost and yet powerfully present in the source text, and with the as-yet undefined figure of the reader for whom they are translating" (idem: 370).

In conclusion, Tytler (2007) insists that the source text should be respected, its composition and authenticity of style maintained; Jakobson (1959) asserts that the intended linguistic structure be protected; Eco (2006) sets out his theory of translation along more or less the same lines, insisting that the duty of the translator is – as much as the restrictions of the target language allow – to remain true to the original, guarding fanatically the context of the source text, which should remain powerfully ever-present throughout the translation process. In essence, Eco's theory of translation matches that of C. S. Peirce (1994), who sees translation as interpretation – a similarly approach to that of Gadamer's (2004), for whom translation is an interpretation, a kind of hermeneutic dialogue. In general, for Eco (2006), a translation can never manage to say the same thing as the original; accordingly, the principal notion that emerges from Eco's attempt at a definition of translation – and that forms the title of his book, indeed – is that to translate means to say almost the same thing. Here undoubtedly the emphasis is on the 'almost': it is never exactly the same. Eco's attitude to translation appears reasonable and justifiable, bearing in mind the particularly complex nature of the translation process, comprising as it does communication between two languages – and, beyond that, between two different cultures, with the translator in the position of literary intermediary making the communication possible. In truth, when we translate, we never say the same thing; the translated text, passing through the finest sieve of adjustments and transformations, does not maintain – and cannot maintain – all the finesse of the source.

3. The (im)possibility of literary translation

One of the notes with which Milan Kundera accompanies his masterpiece *The Joke*, referring to the book's publication in Paris, is the mention of a comment made by Alain Finkielkraut, who interviewed the author in 1979 for *Corriere Della Sera* and, among other things, observed that, in contrast to his other works,

a baroque and ornamental style is apparent in *The Joke*. The question he puts to the author is simple: why did this happen? Faced with this question, Kundera becomes alarmed and begins immediately to read the novel in French. He says: "Up to that point it hadn't occurred to me to check the translations that were done for me; today, unfortunately, I devote almost more time to this Sisyphean task than to writing itself" (Kundera 2014: 364 – trans. Robert Wilton). Kundera notes how, in the second quarter of the novel and thereafter, his translator had allowed himself to re-write it, radically changing words and sentences and putting in innumberable metaphors which he had devised himself. The translator had even changed the people's characters, deviating entirely from those created by Kundera. This prompted Kundera to undertake a translation together with Claude Courtot, but this version didn't satisfy him either, because he didn't know French satisfactorily and Courtot didn't know Czech and had only adapted the text where he was told to. This caused many inaccuracies. Eco firmly believes that the translator should not dare allow himself to 'improve' the author's vocabulary. Kundera is a typical case where the translator has in some way taken the author's place, "improving" his vocabulary. Translating, to Eco, means respecting what the author said, staying true to his/her words and not giving oneself the license to 'beautify' or alter the text.

The impossibility of literary translation is also a topic for the Argentinian writer Ernesto Sabato, who forcefully denies the possibility of doing literary translation. He sees the translation of a literary text from one language into another as a "melancholy and ineffectual" undertaking (Sabato 2011: 61). Sabato believes that the translation of even a single word, its transfer from one language into another implies a process of transformation, as the word thus takes on other distinctive characteristics. For him, the over-arching harmonics of each word, springing originally from the history of the people who coined it, from its etymology, from the books and psychology of those people, cannot be transferred into another language; these things form a unity, and are untranslatable. He more or less asserts that the suggestions imparted by a particular word can never be understood in the same way by two people who speak two different languages and, moreover, belong to two different cultures (idem: 61-62). This is because each word in a language is "essentially a cultural memory in which the historical experience of the society is embedded" (Talgeri and Verma 1988: 3).

Convinced of the impossibility of literary translation, Sabato writes:

> The only possible translations are those in science, because their expressions are logical and their words univocal. The theorem that "heat causes bodies to expand" can be translated into any language without losing its meaning. In contrast to this, literary translations are a fumbling effort to interpret a message of equivocal signs by means of a group of equivocal signs. Just as the same musical note sounds different on different instruments, the same word produces different resonances in moving from one language to another" (Sabato 2011: 62 – trans. Robert Wilton).

In a dialogue between Sabato and J. L. Borges, one of the prominent themes is the issue of translation. At one point Sabato mentions the translation of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* – about which Borges says, apparently in jest, that his mother had translated it and he himself had only helped; Sabato notes that he had found a Borgesian element in the translation, a certain "something" that was uniquely characteristic of Borges. The point Sabato is trying to make is that an author should be translated by an impersonal translator, who should not be seen within the translated text, as Borges could be seen (for more, see: *Diálogos Borges Sabato*,

Compaginados por Orlando Barone, 1996). For this reason, he concludes that "the only version faithful to Virginia Woolf would be one produced by Virginia Woolf. From English into English" (Sabato 2011: 63 – trans. Robert Wilton).

"Poetry is what gets lost in translation", declared poet Robert Frost (1964: 18). When it comes to poetry, Jakobson (1959: 238) is of the same mind – he sees poetry as untranslatable. Nor does Eco exclude the impossibility of translating poetry. He sees it as the most difficult genre to translate, because it "manifests as a series of restrictions in linear form that define the content, rather than the reverse as is the case with texts of referential intent. Thus poetic translations frequently attempt a fundamental re-writing, as a kind of challenge to the original text to recreate it in another form and with different substance (while attempting to remain faithful not word-by-word but according to an inspirational principle, the definition of which varies, it seems to me, with the translator's critical interpretation)" (Eco 2006: 314 – trans. Robert Wilton). The pages of his book on theoretical premises incorporate examples of the insuperable difficulty of translating poets like T. S. Eliot, E. A. Poe, Dante and Montale.

This leads towards the idea that an optimal interchangeability is impossible in the translation of literary texts. For Eco, it is only valid for simple texts such as "a weather bulletin or a stock market report" (idem: 72 – trans. Robert Wilton). When it comes to fidelity to the original and the liberty which a translator may take when dealing with the difficulties of the source text, Eco suggests that this challenging process could be seen as a negotiation between parties, in which the translator and the work have the crucial roles (among the other parties to the process, Eco sees the figure of the empirical author, the culture in which the text was created and, later on, the translated text, and sometimes even the publishing industry). This process, firmly grounded in what Eco defines as *negotiation*, is a painful compromise, in which the biggest loser is the original work:

> … negotiation is a process on the basis of which, precisely in order to gain something, something is given up and in the end the parties should leave the business with a justified and mutual sense of satisfaction in the golden rule which says we can't have everything (Eco 2006: 19 – trans. Robert Wilton).

So in translation, something is always "lost" – a loss that takes the form of a tacit agreement between the negotiating parties in the translation process – but if the loss has a limited weight within the totality of the book, then Eco considers it pardonable. Being a translated author who collaborates with his translators, Eco recounts how he has given them permission to set aside the word-for-word meaning of the original text in a manner that preserves its deeper meaning. And setting aside the word-for-word meaning of the original text in order to preserve the deepest meaning of the text is unavoidable in any translation. To demonstrate that something must always be sacrificed in the translation process, Eco gives many examples from the translations of his works: he gives the Italian version, and then translations in English, German and French. When it comes to fidelity to the original text, Eco writes:

> This so-called 'fidelity' in translation should not become the only criterion of acceptable translation… Fidelity is more an inclination to believe that translation is always possible, if the source text is interpreted by means of an enthusiastic collaboration; it is a commitment to identify what for us is the deeper meaning of the text, and the ability in every case to negotiate what seems to us the truest solution (Eco 2006: 290 – trans. Robert Wilton).

The question of fidelity to the original in other cases – for example in film - does not provoke the same discussion as fidelity in the translation of a literary work. This is perhaps because there is a transition from one material (literature) to another (film) and the departure from the original does not have the same weight. Although the transfer from page to screen is a kind of translation, in most cases it takes the book in a different direction. The film *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, for example, based on a story of the same name by F. S. Fitzgerald (2007), drops many of the mutations and what is really left of the story is the principal motif, which supports the structure of the film.

4. Examples of literary translation: the attempt to match the source text and the failure to do so

"The key problem that emerges during translation is undoubtedly the translated text having to conjure the same effect that the original conjures" (Eco 2006: 85). According to Eco, the translator should manage to revive the effect of the original, to preserve its rhythm, and this is the most fundamental thing when it comes to translation. He thus concludes that "translation is a strategy that aims to produce, in a different language, the same effect as the source text" (idem: 313). Achieving the full effect which the author desired to arouse in each reader (including readers from other cultures) is sometimes wholly impossible in translation. In this section I will list some examples related to the attempt of matching the source text and the failure to do so.

(1) When I was translating the best-selling poetry collection by Rupi Kaur, *The Sun and Her Flowers*, I was confronted with a problem, which in the end obliged me to leave the title in its original language, English, because it was a necessary means of ensuring that it put across the message intended by the author, without impairing its meaning. The author had chosen the pronominal adjective *her* to refer to the sun, which the English language allows, because 'sun' is gender-neutral, so either *her* and *his* is permissible. The author, undoubtedly a feminist voice, had made her choice precisely on this basis – and such was the conclusion that came from a reading of the book. In the Albanian language, however, the sun is a noun of the masculine gender and so it can never be referred to with the help of a feminine pronominal adjective. Thus, to preserve the title's meaning, I chose not to translate it at all and leave it in the original.

(2) One English translation of Ernesto Sabato's novel *The Tunnel* changes its title to *The Outsider* (Sabato 1950) – the same as the famous novel by A. Camus (Camus 1961). Such a direct interference with something as essential as the title should not be permissible. This rendition of the title is of course based on the characteristics and personality of the protagonist, who feels alienated from society and revolted by it. But Sabato's title binds the novel to the essence of the idea that the text impresses on the reader – the idea of a person who lives isolated in his tunnel, in his own world, far from the outside world – and is perfectly easy to translate into any language. In the same work, to represent the terror that has engulfed the world, the author uses a telling example. He relates that in a concentration camp, a former pianist, who had complained of hunger, is forced to eat a sewer rat. In a 2004 translation of *The Tunnel* into Albanian (Sabato 2004), we read that he is forced to eat a mouse. Sabato was surely able to make a distinction between a mouse (*ratón*) and a rat (*rata*) of the sewer, and chose the

latter deliberately in order to make his point with greater dramatic effect. In this case, the effect of the original is lost, as the translation is no longer faithful to the author's words. Likewise, the author's epigraph on the novel is "*...en todo caso, había un solo túnel, oscuro y solitario: el mío*" – (Sabato 2006) – which the same Albanian translation renders as "*…sidoqoftë, ekzistonte një tunel, në s'kishte tjetër, i errët dhe vetmitar, tuneli im*" ["*…in any case, there was a tunnel, nothing else, dark and lonely, my tunnel*" – trans. Robert Wilton]. It is obvious that the harmony of the epigraph has been marred by the addition of words which the author did not write – the phrase "në s'kishte tjetër" ["nothing else"], while Sabato simply says: *"...sidoqoftë, ekzistonte vetëm një tunel, i errët dhe i vetmuar: i imi"* [*at any rate, there was only a single tunnel, dark and lonely: my own* – trans. Robert Wilton] (Sabato 2018). The same 2006 translation makes the protagonist, Juan Pablo Castel, be 32 years old, when in fact he is 38 (and it is noteworthy that the novel was first published in 1948, when Sabato was nearly 38).

(3) There is a moment in the film *Midnight in Paris*, when the main character is talking to his lover and mentions that James Joyce enjoyed eating hotdogs. In the (anonymous) translation into Albanian, this became "James Joyce enjoyed eating cooked dogs". The English version is talking about a regular snack, while the Albanian is talking about animals and how Joyce liked to eat them. It is just one extreme case in which translation fails to put across the message and moreover makes the sentence hilarious.

(4) In the Albanian translation of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" by Fan Stilian Noli – one of the most prominent translators of his day – distinct shortcomings are apparent, which testify to a certain constraint in the process of literary translation. They include: fundamental changes to the poem's structure; a complete change of metre (the original metre is not maintained at all); a lack of faithfulness to the source text; and changes – paraphrasing – of words or phrases that could easily have been carried over into the Albanian, but were often adjusted to maintain the rhyme scheme. For example, in the English original, we have the line:

> "Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December" (Poe 2013: 639)

which comes into the Albanian as:

> "Ah, e mbaj në mend fort mirë,
> Ishte dimër i ftohtë i ngrirë" (Noli 2000: 103).

(A literal re-translation of the Albanian would be "Ah, I very well recall/It was a cold frosty winter" – trans. Robert Wilton) Besides the splitting of the sixteen-syllable line into two lines of eight syllables each, thus breaking the poem's metre, we can see here that the translator drops the December for winter, and renders its bleakness as cold and frosty. In translating "The Raven" entirely in octameter, Noli gives it a rhythm – a musicality that the original does not possess. The rapid rhythm dictated by reading the eight-syllable line loses the effect Poe created, which puts the reader in a kind of mysterious atmosphere, a certain slowness that strives to represent the confusion and surprise appropriate to the situation described. In its Albanian version, "The Raven" is read quickly because of its metre, and takes on a rather rousing tone – which might be related to the fact that in his own poetry Noli usually wrote with distinct musicality and a rousing tone. The somewhat gothic atmosphere created in the original fails to be rendered in the

Albanian version. The line "And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain" (Poe 2013: 639), which in a roundabout manner hints at a gothic aspect, is translated into Albanian entirely stripped of this complexion: "Era frynte që përjashta / Rrihte perdet e mëndafshta" (Noli 2000: 104) – literally "The wind blew from outside/Rattling the silken curtains" – trans. Robert Wilton). A line built on repetition, to further emphasize the text's poetic idea, loses this feature in Albanian: the stylistic figure of repetition is gone, replaced by two new adjectives (black, lost) modifying the noun Raven, which do not occur in the original at all:

> "And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting" (Poe 2013: 641)
>
> "Edhe Korbi i zi i humbur
> Qëndron edhe i patundur" (Noli 2000: 110: "And the Raven black and lost/Yet remains unmoving" – trans. Robert Wilton).

These are just some examples reflecting the translator's unfaithfulness to the source text, which has the consequence of rendering the original fundamentally different in the translation.

Such unfaithfulness is also seen in other translations by the same hand. There is, for example, the case of Shakespeare's "Hamlet", where the English lines are:

> "Doubt thou the stars are fire;
> Doubt that the sun doth move;
> Doubt truth to be a liar;
> But never doubt I love." (Shakespeare 1999: II, 2, 116-119);

while in the Albanian translation one comes across unfaithfulness to the original again, and as a result, the authentic spirit of the verse is lost:

> "Thuaj yjet s'janë zjarr,
> Thuaj dielli u shua,
> Thuaj jeta është varr,
> Po mos thuaj që s'të dua." (Noli 2000: 87)

(Literally "Say the stars are not fire,/ Say the sun is extinguished,/ Say life is a grave / But never say I do not love you" – trans. Robert Wilton). Besides shifting positive assertions to negative ones, there are fundamental alterations of the lines "Doubt that the sun doth move" and "Doubt truth to be a liar", which go beyond paraphrase, and become a recreation of the verse, something not permissible for a translator to do.

(5) The distinguished historian, critic, and Albanian-English translator Robert Elsie has translated into English, among other things, some poems by Migjeni – a remarkable Albanian poet from the 1930s. In one of his versions of the poem "Vjeshtë në parakalim", ("Autumn on parade"), a detail seems to have escaped him – perhaps because English and not Albanian is his native language and so dialect forms might seem unfamiliar. In this particular case, he changed somehow the meaning of the verse. The Albanian original is:

> "Dhe në atë vaj bashkohet horizonti i mbytur
> në mjegull përpise. Pemët degët e lagura
> me vaj i mbështjellin në lutje – por kot! E dinë, të fikura,
> se nesër do të vdesin... Vallë! A ka shpëtim ndokund?" (Migjeni 1980: 62)

Translated by Elsie, the lines emerge as:

> "The horizon, drowned in fog, joins in
> The lamentation. In prayer dejected fruit trees
> Fold imploring branches - but in vain, they know.
> Tomorrow they will die... Is there nowhere hope?" (Migjeni 2001: 71)

What is apparent first of all is the use by the poet of the word "përpise" (devouring) (a dialect form of "përpirëse). The translator avoids it and puts the accent to the word "lamentation", somehow losing the poem's spirit. "Përpirëse" in Albanian suggests that someone or something is wholly swallowed by something else – here in figurative terms, the horizon is overwhelmed by an all-absorbing fog, which has swallowed everything, leaving no sign of life or hope anywhere. The other point that becomes apparent is the rendering of the word "shpëtim" (literally "salvation, rescue, escape") as "hope": two very different nuances in a general poetic context. The poet, exhausted by a condition in which he has long lost hope, prays for salvation: "shpëtim" (salvation, rescue) and "shpresë" (hope) in Albanian are words that bear different meanings.

In translating an author, we enter their cultural identity, and, precisely for this reason, we should take great care when it comes to what the author represents. In the end, as Eco teaches us, a good translation helps the reader to understand the translated work, but it is very possible that a translator may cloud the reader's view of a work and what its author wishes it to impart.

5. Conclusion

The origin of multi-lingualism has been under discussion ever since the attempt, facilitated by divine messages, to address the challenges of human existence. The Bible tells of the myth of Babel – the story of the Babylonians who began to build a grandiose city with a tower that would touch the heavens. God could not allow this and obstructed the work by muddling the languages of the workers so that they could no longer cooperate: "Therefore was the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth" (Genesis 11:9). Trapped in this confusion, human beings started communicating with the help of translation. However great a culture, it always needs translation, and it was pointed out that "literary translations were expected to fill the gap and to meet important social and cultural needs" (Baker and Saldahna 2011: 520).

The problematics inherent to literary translation prompt a persistent search for answers. My essay has attempted to show how translation plays a key role in establishing inter-cultural communication between peoples belonging to different cultures, with a nuanced reading of Eco's ideas regarding translating and the translator. Some examples of problem-creating literary translations were given.

What we call literary translation requires the sacrifice of the source text in order to reach the reader of the translated text. On this point, Eco asserts more than once that translation never says exactly the same thing (it says *almost* the same thing) as the original. In the end, every literary translation is just a tepid attempt at transferring one hundred percent of the meaning of a word (not to mention the challenge of phrases and idioms) – because, as Sabato (2011: 61) puts it, "the

living language of a people is wholly bound up with their history, their mountains, their trees, earth and sky. And words have the colour and scent of the land in which they were carved."

Agreeing that the ideal translation does not exist, Eco emphasizes that humans continue to translate regardless. Because, he concludes, it "is like the paradox of Achilles and the turtle. Theoretically speaking, Achilles should never reach the turtle. But in reality, he does. No rigorous philosophical approach to that paradox can underestimate the fact that, not just Achilles, but any one of us, could beat a turtle at the Olympic Games" (Eco 2001: ix).

References

Baker, Mona, Saldanha, Gabriela (eds.). 2011. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*. London and New York: Routledge.

Barone, Orlando. 1996. *Diálogos Borges Sabato*. Buenos Aires: Emecé.

Bell, Roger T. 1991. *Translation and Translating: Theory and Practice*. London: Longman.

Borges, Jorge Luis. 1974. *Obras completas*. Vol. 1. Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores.

Borges, Jorge Luis. 2000. *This Craft of Verse*. Câlin-Andrei Mihâilescu (ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Camus, Albert. 1961. *The Outsider*. Trans. Stuart Gilbert. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. 1949. *On Invention, Best Kind of Orator, Topics*. Trans. Harry Mortimer Hubbell. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Eco, Umberto. 2001. *Experiences in Translation*. Trans. Alistair McEwan. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press.

Eco, Umberto. 2006. *Të thuash gati të njëjtën gjë*. Trans. Mariana Ymeri and Alketa Ylli. Tiranë: Dituria.

Fitzgerlad, F. Scott. 2007. *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*. New York: Scribner.

Frost, Robert. 1964. *Robert Frost's Poems*. With an Introduction and Commentary by Louis Untermeyer. New York: Washington Square Press.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 2004. *Truth and Method*. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer, Donald G. Marshall. London: Continuum Publishing Group.

Jakobson, Roman. 1959. "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation". *On Translation*. Reuben Arthur Brower (ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 232-239.

Kaur, Rupi. 2017. *The Sun and Her Flowers*. New York: Andrews McMeel Publishing.

Krasniqi, Gazmend. 2018. *Sistemi dhe përkthimi*. Tiranë: Palimpsest, pp. 18-28.

Kundera, Milan. 2014. *Shakaja*. Trans. Mirela Kumbaro. Tiranë: Dituria.

Lefevere, André. 1984. "That Structure in the Dialect of Men Interpreted" in Elinor Shaffer (ed.). *Translation in Theory and Practice*. Comparative Criticism, 6. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 87-100.

Migjeni. 1980. *Vargjet e lira*. Prishtinë: Rilindja.

Migjeni. 2001. *Free Verse*. Trans. Robert Elsie. Pejë: Dukagjini.

Noli, Fan Stilian. 2000. *Albumi 2*. Redaktor: Rexhep Abazi. Prishtinë: Enti i teksteve dhe i mjeteve mësimore i Kosovës.

Peirce, Charles Sanders. 1994. *Collected Papers*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Poe, Edgar Allan. 2013. *Complete Tales and Poems*. USA: Maplewood Books, Kindle edition.

Sabato, Ernesto. 1950. *The Outsider*. Trans. Harriet de Onis. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Sabato, Ernesto. 2004. *Tuneli*. Trans. Mira Meksi. Tiranë: Onufri.

Sabato, Ernesto. 2006. *El Túnel*. Buenos Aires: Seix Barral.

Sabato, Ernesto. 2011. *Heterodoxia*. Buenos Aires: Seix Barral.

Sabato, Ernesto. 2018. *Tuneli*. Trans. Fatbardha Statovci. Prishtinë: Pema.

Shakespeare, William. 1999. *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.* SGML markup by Jon Bosak.

Talgeri, Pramod, Sawalia Bihari, Verma. (eds.). 1988. *Literature in Translation: from Cultural Transference to Metonymic Displacement*. Mumbai: Popular Prakashan.

The Book of Genesis. 1921. With an Introduction and Notes by Herbert E. Ryle. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tytler, Alexander Fraser. 2007. *Essay on the Principles of Translation*. London: J. M. Dent & Co.