Challenges of Literary Translation: Kahlil Gibran’s the Prophet as a case study

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Challenges of Literary Translation: Kahlil Gibran’s the Prophet as a case study

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Abstract

The preservation of the aesthetic value of literary works especially poetry remains the main difficulty that translators face. Literary translation is in fact very challenging. The study compares three translations, two in Arabic and one in French, of Kahlil Gibran’s the Prophet, a wonderful book of poetry originally published in English in 1923 and translated into more than forty languages. The purpose of this study is to see to what extent those translations have managed to assert and preserve the artistic essence of the original text. Besides, the study has examined the main strategies used in those translations. The data are drawn from some passages randomly chosen, of those translations. Relying on the structuralist approach, the study revealed that all the translations have succeeded in a way or another in maintaining the aesthetic value of the source text. But, one translation has been considered more creative than the other ones according to the study.

Keywords: aesthetic value, structuralism, poetry, translation.
Introduction

Literary translation is regarded as the most challenging type of translation. In addition to all the problems that exist in all translations mainly at the lexical, grammatical, cultural and semantic levels, literary translation has to deal also with the aesthetic aspects of the literary text, a task which requires special competence and skills of the translator. Despite the fact that Gibran’s the Prophet, which is a work of poetic philosophy on love, marriage, freedom, time and friendship, was originally published in English in 1923, it still gains more interest from the part of translators and has been translated into more than forty languages. So, the researcher’s choice of this project is based first on this assumption and second because little research has been conducted on literary translation especially on poetry translation. Thus, bearing in mind that literary translation is the most challenging and difficult type of translation (Newmark, 1988), the attempt is to make a comparative study between Arabic and French translations of Gibran’s The Prophet.

The analysis will be focused on two Arabic translations; one is old and the other is recent and then a French translation. The main research question is therefore the following: Is the artistic device of the original text preserved in those translations? Borrowing Jacques Derrida’s (The French philosopher) concept of “deconstruction”, my intention is to try somehow to deconstruct those translations and look for their particularities. To answer this main research question, the study seeks to address the following questions:
- What are the main strategies made in those translations?
- What are their prominent features in terms of: lexical choice, sentence structure and metaphors?

As far as the interest is concentrated on language and how this poetic language is maintained or “faithfully” transferred in the translated versions, structuralist analysis approach was used to analyze the data. The choice of this approach is based on the fact that the purpose of the study is to deal with translations as structures. Therefore, what matters more is the form rather than the content which can be achieved only via the form. To discuss the form means to shed light on the aesthetic features of the literary text and how these features are maintained by the translators. From this perspective, the analyses revealed similarities and differences between those translations. Besides, those analyses reveal that all the translations have managed in a way or another to keep the artistic and the aesthetic value of the original text but one translation has gained attractiveness for its poetic language and creativity.

1. Literature review:

1.1. Literary translation

Literary translation is the type of the translation which deals with any of the literary genres represented in poetry, drama and prose. In this respect, Johnson (1999:1) says that literature is: “an apparently nebulous body of knowledge in oral or written form, an imitation of life, which reflects civilization and culture, and which covers every angle of human activities—culture, tradition, entertainment, information among others.” It is necessary then to point out that literary translation is a very challenging activity mainly because creative writing is itself characterized by a very sophisticated, symbolic and figurative language. In this respect,
Widdowson (1984, p. 151) says that “no matter how literature may be expressed, its effects are certainly attained via language. Literary translation for Goethe is “one of the most important and dignified enterprises in the general commerce of the world.” Therefore, a literary translator for Peter Newmark (1988):

Generally respects good writing by taking into account the language, structures, and content, whatever the nature of the text. The literary translator participates in the author’s creative activity and then recreates structures and signs by adapting the target language text to the source language text as closely as intelligibility allows. He needs to assess not only the literary quality of the text but also its acceptability to the target reader, and this should be done by having a deep knowledge of the cultural and literary history of both the Source and the Target Languages.(p.1).

Talking about literary translation means discussing constraints in translating the aesthetic features of literary texts; Landers (1999) says:

Only literary translation lets one consistently share in the creative process. Here alone does the translator experience the aesthetic joys of working with great literature, of recreating in a new language a work that could otherwise remain beyond reach.(p. 4)

According to Jackson (2003): one of the central requirements of literary translation is to afford a firm interpretation about both meaning and effect. Hence, literary translators are usually much more involved in finding out a corresponding mood, tone, voice, and effect than in literal translation (p.4).

On the other hand, Mona Baker (1992) whose translation theory is based on equivalence proposes many strategies for translating texts among which literary ones. In this respect, she suggests strategies mainly at the word-level such as: paraphrase, translation by cultural substitution and translation by omission (26). These strategies are in fact among the important ones that professional translators make recourse to. As far as translation strategies are concerned, As-safi () argues that translation strategies can be divided into two categories: general and specific strategies. General ones are useful for any text type whereas specific strategies are used for definite purposes, texts and for target language readership. He cited many specific strategies mainly: domestication, which is very used by literary translators, compensation, addition, and compromise and elaboration strategy (pp.47-52).

2.1. Structuralist approach

Structuralism is a theory which owes its existence mainly to Ferdinand de SAUSSURE and especially by his book: Cours de Linguistique Générale (Course in General Linguistics, 1916). Saussure is basically concerned with what he calls language, that's "a system of signs that express ideas," and this language according to him can be divided into two constituents: "langue, referring to the abstract system of language that is internalized by a given speech community, and parole, the individual acts of speech and the "putting into practice of language"."(p. 25).
Structuralism has had a prominent place in the field of literature and it is defined then as a theory which tries to explain the structures underlying literary texts. Among the figures of this literary movement the French theorist Roland Barthes (1963) who argues that:

The goal of all structuralist activity, whether reflexive or poetic, is to reconstruct an 'object,' in such a way as to manifest thereby the rules of functioning (the 'functions') of this object. The structure is therefore actually a simulacrum of the object, but it is a directed, interested simulacrum, since the imitated object makes something appear which remained invisible or, if one prefers, unintelligible in the natural object. (p.149-150)

2. Methodology
In choosing the structuralist approach, the study seeks to focus on the form of texts. That is to say, on the features that exist within the text as a structure. So, other external issues such as context and the poet’s intentions for instance have less importance.

2.1 Data sampling and collection
The primary data of this study are passages from three translations of Gibran’s The Prophet which are the following:
- Arabic translations:
  1) النبي by Anthonious Bachir(1987)
  2) النبي by Sargon Boulous(2010)

2.2 Analytical method
As poetry in general, and Gibran’s “The Prophet” particularly is based primarily on language, the study makes recourse to the Structuralist approach which is in fact an aesthetic theory that focuses on artistic elements characterizing literary texts. By using this approach, the study seeks to shed light on how these artistic values are represented in the TL.

3. Results and Discussion
The study revealed that all the translations have successfully preserved the artistic quality of the source text. They have shown a proficiency in translating Gibran’s The Prophet. Besides, these translations are an attempt to rewrite the text or to be a “double original” to borrow Stancev’s expression. In other words; they have managed to render the original text as if it was originally written in Arabic or in French. The study revealed also that two translators used mainly a literal translation, which was regarded as a good procedure as far as the artistic features of the SL were maintained in the TL. In this respect, the study showed that literal translation is not always a negative translation strategy. Furthermore, the study argued that one translator who is Sargon Boulous used many strategies among which expansion strategy and literal translation which made in turn his translation more creative and innovative. The discussion of those findings will be through the following examples taken from those translations.

3.1 The main strategies used in those translations:
As it has been just pointed out, Janine Levy and Anthonious Bachir have relied upon one strategy which is particularly a literal translation. As for Sargon Boulous, many strategies were used by him among which reduction (omission) and expansion (addition).
Let us see the following example:

3.1.1 Sentence structure

Gibran’s The prophet belongs to what is called “prosaic or free verse” represented by many poets like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman and others. This type of poetry focuses on language more than musicality. So, we can talk about the structure of the sentences. All the translators kept the same sentence structure used in the original text except for Sargon Boulous who broke this in some passages as shown in the following examples:

3.1.1.1 Example

**From: The coming of the Ship**

Almustafa, the chosen and the beloved, who was a dawn onto his own day, had waited twelve years in the city of Orphalese for his ship that was to return and bear him back to the isle of his birth. And in the twelfth year, on the seventh day of Ielool, the month of reaping, he climbed the hill without the city walls and looked seaward; and he beheld the ship coming with the mist. (p.1)

- **Janin levy’s translation:**

Almustafa, l’élu et le bien-aimé, cette aube qui commençait à poindre à la rencontre de son propre jour, avait attendu, 12 années durant dans la cité d'Orphalèse, le retour de son vaisseau, lequel devait le porter à nouveau vers son île natale. Lors de la douzième année, au septième jour de Ayloul, le mois des moissons, il gravit la colline hors des murailles de la cité. Scrutant l’horizon, il aperçut son vaisseau voguer avec la brume sur les eaux. (P.15)

- **Anthonio Bachir’s translation:**

- **Sargon Boulous’s translation:**

3.1.1.2 Example
Then said Almitra, "Speak to us of Love."
And he raised his head and looked upon the people, and there fell stillness upon them.
And with a great voice he said:
When love beckons to you follow him,
though his ways are hard and steep.
And when his wings enfold you yield to him.
Though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you. And when he speaks to you believe in him.
Though his voice may shatter your dreams as the north wind lays waste the garden.
For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth so is he for your pruning.
Even as he ascends to your height and caresses your tenderest branches that quiver in the sun, so shall he descend to your roots and shake them in their clinging to the earth. (p.7)

Janin levy’s translation

Alors Almitra dit, Parle-nous de l'Amour.
Et il leva la tête et regarda le peuple assemblé, et le calme s'étendit sur eux. Et d'une voix forte il dit :
Quand l'amour vous fait signe, suivez-le.
Bien que ses voies soient dures et rudes.
Et quand ses ailes vous enveloppent, cédéz-lui.
Bien que la lame cachée parmi ses plumes puisse vous blesser.
Et quand il vous parle, croyez en lui.
Bien que sa voix puisse briser vos rêves comme le vent du nord dévaste vos jardins.
Car de même que l'amour vous couronne, il doit vous crucifier.
De même qu'il vous fait croître, il vous élague.
De même qu'il s'élève à votre hauteur et caresse vos branches les plus délicates qui frémissent au soleil.
Ainsi il descendra jusqu'à vos racines et secouera leur emprise à la terre. (p.23)

Anthonio Bachir’s translation

حينذاقْتُ لك المطرة: هات لنا خطبة في المحبة
فروع أرستُ ونظر إلى الشعب نسيبة وحنان فقامتها جميعهم خاشعين فقال لهم بصوت عظيم
إذا أشارت المحبة إليك فاتبعها، وإن كانت مسالكها صعبة مختارة
وإذا ضمتكم جناحها فطبعوها، وإن جرحكم السيف المستور بين ريشها
وإن عطش صوتها أهل لكم وبدها كما تجعل الزنزوبية البستان قاعًا صامفاً لأنه كما، وإن خاطبكتم المحبة فصدقوها
إن المحبة تكفي في أيضًا تعلكم، وكما تعمل على نموكم هكذا تعلكم وتهوا الأفعال منكم وكمآ تتفهم إلى أعلى شجرة
حياتهم تعشق أصصاهوا الطبيعة المرتعشة أمام وجه الشمس.
هكذا تتحدرو إلى جذورها المنتصقة بالتراب وتهزها في سكونة الليل (ص.23)

Sargon Boulous’s translation

الحب
إذاذًا، قالت للمرأة: هل لنا خطبة في الحب.
فرفع رأسه ونظر إلى الشعب، فخيمت عليهم السكنة
وتصوت عليهم قائل:
عندما يوميُّ الليل الحبَّ أتبعه، حتى لو كانت طرقاته وعرة ومشبكة.
If we read carefully those translations, we discover that the two first ones kept the same sentence structure. Concerning Boulous, he violates it especially in the end of the passage. He even added his point of view about love (see the underlined sentences). Therefore, the two translators adopted a literal translation in the sense that they kept the same syntactic structure, the same word order and they tried to be in a way or another “faithful” to the original text but with respect to the specifics of each language in terms of syntactic structures and sentence word order (SVO or VSO). Concerning Boulous’s translation, it is characterized by a sense of creativity; the translator broke the original structure and gave the text a new spirit through a very good vocabulary and a sublime narrative style.

3.1.2. Lexical choice
Translation in general is a matter of choices. In this respect, a word especially in poetry has a great importance both at the semantic and the artistic levels. The study revealed that the translators came up sometimes with different alternatives of the same word.

3.1.2.1. Example
Most of the translations into arabic translated the word: love by the word: الحب but Sargon Boulous translated it by :اٌّذجخ; in the French version ,it is translated by the word :amour.

The use of love or الحب is stronger than اٌّذجخ which is used in other translations. Hence, the word "الحب" is stronger than "حب". The use of love or اٌّذجخ we can speak of what the French critic Marc Gontard refers to as the violence of the word...
remains in its philosophical dimension: the violence of the word. So, Boulous’s translation an aspect of this strong feeling. This resembles in a way Zarathoustra’s love in Nietzsche’s masterpiece: “Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra” which was translated by: 

Besides, and as it is stressed in the famous Arab dictionary: Lisan Al Arab (اللغة العربية) is regarded as an aspect of the real feeling which is  "حب": حب.

3.1.2.2. Example

ST
Then said Almitra, “Speak to us of Love” and he raised his head and looked upon the people, and there fell a stillness upon them. (p. 7)

Anthonio Bachir’s translation

حينئذ قالت المطرة: حا لنا خطبة في الحبة.
فرفع رأسه ونظر إلى الشعب نظرة حبة وحنان، فصمتوا جميعهم خاشعين. (ص. 23)

Janin levy’s translation

Alors, Almitra dit: Parle-nous de l'Amour. Et il leva la tête et regarda le peuple assemblé, et le calme s'étendit sur eux. (p. 23)

Sargon Boulous’s translation

آنذاك،قالت المطرة: ألا فمتكممنا عن الحب.
فرفع رأسه وتطمّع الى الجمع، فخيمت عليهم البكزة. (ص. 24)

When comparing those translations, the study revealed that Sargon Boulous succeeded in using the rights words (the underlined ones) which made his translation very poetic and very symbolic. A good choice of words was used by him in order to present two different situations, one of manipulation, represented by Almitra and one of stillness symbolized by the audience. As for the other translations, they succeeded in transferring the metaphor in the target language but without much more creativity.

3.1.3. Metaphors

Metaphors are artistic features that give much beauty to poetry. So, the transfer of their effect from SL to TL is very challenging. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase that actually means one thing is used to refer to another one, thus making an implicit comparison. In fact, the study revealed that Gibran’s The Prophet is full of imagery especially metaphors. In general, the translators have succeeded in preserving this beauty in the TL even if they used different strategies among which Literal translation.

3.1.3.1. Example
From: Joy and sorrow
And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears.
The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.
Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter's oven?
And is not the lute that soothes your spirit, the very wood that was hollowed with knives?
When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy.
When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.
Some of you say, "Joy is greater than sorrow," and others say, "Nay, sorrow is the greater."
But I say unto you, they are inseparable.
Together they come, and when one sits, alone with you at your board, remember that the other is asleep upon your bed. (p.22, 23)

Anthonio Bachir's translation
البئر الواحدة التي تستحق منها ماء ضحككم قد طالما ملئت تكسين دموعكم
وهل في الإمكان أن يكون الحال على غير هذا المنوال؟
فأنتما أعمل وهب الجرح أبناءك في أحساككم تضاعف الفرح في أعماق قلوبكم
لأنه أليم الكأس التي تحفظ خمركم هي نفس الكأس التي أحرقت في أتون الخراب
قبل أن بلغته لكم?
أم ليست الفيتارة التي تزيد طمأنينة أرواحكم هي نفس الخشب الذي قطع بالمدى والفوؤد؟

Janin levy's translation
فإذا فرحتم فتأملوا ملياً في أعماق قلوبكم تحيا أمة ما أحزنكم فلا يفرحكم الآن و إذا
اجابتكم نكم جيوش الكالمة بصاصكم نائبة إلى أعماق قلوبكم وتألوا جدا نروا هنالك
بالحقيقة أنكم تكون لما كنتم تعتقدون أنها غابة مسراكم على الأرض
و يخيل إلى أن فريقاً منكم يقول: "إن الفرح أعظم من النرح" فيعارضه فريق آخر: 
كلا، بل النرح أعظم من الفرح" أما أنا فأنا أقول لكم: انها تؤمن لا ينبغي أبداً
معاً و يذهبان معاً فإذا جلس أحدهما موتئداً إلى ماندتبنا فلا يعبر عن أذهانكم أن
رفقة تكون حينئذ مضطجعاً على أسيركم (ص.40)
Et le puits où monte votre rire a si souvent été rempli par vos larmes. 
Et comment pourrait-il en aller autrement? Plus profond le travail de la peine dans votre être, plus de joie vous contiendrez.
Car la coupe qui renferme votre vin n'est-elle pas celle-là même qui brûla dans le four du potier? Et le luth qui apaise votre esprit n'est-ce pas le bois même naguère évidé par le couteau?
Quand vous êtes joyeux, regardez au fond de votre cœur et vous verrez que votre joie résulte uniquement de ce qui a causé votre chagrin.
Quand vous êtes malheureux, regardez encore une fois votre cœur et vous comprendrez en réalité que vous pleurez pour d'anciens délices.
Certains d'entre vous disent «La joie dépasse la peine.» ; d'autres disent : «Non c'est la peine qui domine.»
Et moi je vous dis : elles sont indissociables.
Elles arrivent ensemble et quand l'une s'assied à table en votre compagnie, rappelez-vous que l'autre est assoupie sur votre lit. (p.47)

Sargon Boulous’s translation:

A careful comparison of the ST and the TT show that the translators have managed to transfer the effect of the metaphors. For instance, the first metaphor which concerns the combination of joy and sorrow, all the translators came up with a good alternative which is replacing the word: "selfsame" by "ثئش". They made indeed recourse to TL to look for equivalence which made their translations very poetic. Concerning the other metaphors, even if the translators used literal translation and kept the same sentence-structure, they succeeded in preserving the artistic features of those metaphors; the last line can be a good example in which there is a personification of joy and sorrow.

3.1.3.2. Example:

ST

A voice cannot carry the tongue and the lips that give it wings. Alone must it seek the ether? And alone and without his nest shall the eagle fly across the sun. (p.2)

Janin Levy’s translation
La voix ne peut emporter la langue et les lèvres qui lui ont donné des ailes. Elle doit partir seule à la recherche de l’éther. Et l’aigle doit voler seul et sans son nid au-delà du soleil. (P.16)

**Anthonio Bachir’s translation**

فإْ اٌصٛد لا ٠سزط١ع أْ ٠ذًّ اٌٍسبْ ٚاٌشفز١ٓ اٌٍٛارٟ رسٍذٓ ثجٕبد١ٗ ،ٌٚزٌه فٙٛ ٚدذٖ ٠خزشق دجت اٌفضبء

(ص.16)

**Sargon Boulous’s translation**

لا ٠مذسأْ ٠ذًّ ِعٗ اٌٍسبْ ،ٚاٌشفبٖ اٌزٟ ِٕذزٗ الأجٕذخ

عٍ١ٗ ٚدذٖ أْ ٠زمصٝ الأث١ش، َ 

(ص.17)

When comparing these translations, we find out that the first ones, because of their use of a literal translation, have rendered the same metaphor in the target language without any change or addition. Boulous, on the other hand, for the sake of preserving the aesthetic effect, has used two alternatives of “alone” rather than one which are meant to differentiate between two cases or two images.

3.1.3.3. Example:

**ST**

And he heard their voices calling his name and shouting from the field to field (p.3)

**Janin levy’s translation**

Et il entendit leurs voix qui l’appelaient par son nom et qui criaient d’un champ à l’autre (p.17)

**Anthonio Bachir’s translation**

وسعمهم يصرخون بعضهم ببعض من حقل إلى حقل (مردين اسمه (ص.17)

**Sargon Boulous’s translation**

وعบาลت الأصوات في كل حديب وصوب تتخفت باسمه (ص.16)

What can be said is that the French version kept the same structure of the sentence and made word for word translation. So, the metaphor is faithfully transferred in the target language. The same thing can be said about Bachir’s translation. As for Boulous, he has made a kind of expansion to the source text by adding a word stronger than “call” which is given a very positive connotation.

3.1.3.4. Example:

**ST**

Love has no other desire but to fulfill itself. (p.9)

**Janin levy’s translation**

L’amour n’a pour seul désir que de s’accomplir. (p.27)

**Anthonio Bachir’s translation**

والمحبة لا رغبة لها إلا في أن نكمل نفسها (ص.25)

**Sargon Boulous’s translation**

 ليست للحب رغبة أخرى غير أن يحقق ذاته (ص.23)

As we can see two translations have managed to preserve the form and meaning of the metaphor by choosing the appropriate words; Janin Levy has translated to fulfill by: accomplir
which يحقق and added the word ذات and Boulous has opted for:
Anthonio Bachir’s translation seems to be ambiguous and weak because he has not well chosen the right words; in Arabic we cannot say:

3.1.3.5. Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST</th>
<th>Arabic World English Journal (AWEJ) Vol.6. No.1. 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nor tarries with yesterday. (p.12) For life goes not backward</td>
<td>Anthonio Bachir’s translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car la vie ne retourne pas en arrière ni se s’attarde à hier. (p.32)</td>
<td>Sargon Boulous’s translation :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>لأن الحياة لا ترجع إلى الوراء .ولا تلتذ لها الإقامة في منزل الأمس.(ص.29)</td>
<td>لأن الحياة لا تمشى إلى الوراء .ولا تلتذا بصحبة الأمس.(ص.30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All translators used literal translation in order to convey the meaning of the metaphor which implies the continuity of life. They also made recourse to addition strategy by adding some relevant words so as to preserve the aesthetic features of the metaphor. Anthonio Bachir added two words: لا تقتلكو بصحبة : Boulous added: الإقامة و منزل .

3.1.3.6. Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ST</th>
<th>Arabic World English Journal (AWEJ) Vol.6. No.1. 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You may house their bodies but not their souls, For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.(p.12)</td>
<td>Anthonio Bachir’s translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vous pouvez loger leurs corps mais non leurs âmes, Car leurs âmes habitent la demeure de demain, que vous ne pouvez visiter, pas même dans vos rêves.(p .32)</td>
<td>Sargon Boulous’s translation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The adoption of literal translation by all the translators was a good strategy because the implication of the metaphor and its beauty are highly maintained. The personification of bodies and souls are well transferred from the SL to the TL.

3.1.3.7. Example
Pleasure is a freedom song (p.61)

Janin levy’s translation
Le plaisir est un chant de liberté (p.88)

Anthonio Bachir’s translation
الكلّة إنشودة الحرية (ص.83)

Boulous’s translation
الكلّة نشيد حرية (ص.84)

The metaphor is well translated by the translators by adopting literal translation and by proposing good equivalents; say alternatives for the word: song which are: chant, نشيد.

3.1.3.8. Example

ST

It (pleasure) is the blossoming of your desires,(p.61)

Janin levy’s translation
Il (le plaisir) est l’épanouissent de vos désirs.(p.88)

Anthonio Bachir’s translation
الكلّة زهرة رغاتكم (ص.83)

Boulous’s translation
إنها (الكلّة) أزهر رغبتكم (ص.84)

The translators used literal translation to define pleasure. The same aesthetic effect is therefore maintained in the TT.

3.1.3.10. Example

ST

It (pleasure) is a depth calling unto height.(p.61)

Janin levy’s translation
Il (le plaisir) est une profondeur appelant une hauteur.(p.88)

Anthonio Bachir’s translation
الكلّة عمق ينتادى نحو عّلة (ص.83)

Boulous’s translation
هي (الكلّة) عمق ينتادى نحو عّلة (ص.84)

The definition of pleasure as being “a depth” looking for “height” was translated literally by the translators. They succeeded in fact in preserving this poetic image engendering two contradictory situations; one of “depth” and the other of “height”.

3.1.3.10. Example

ST

It (pleasure) is the caged taking wing.(p.61)

Janin levy’s translation
Il (le plaisir) est l’encagé prenant son envol.(p.88)
Anthoni Bachir’s translation
(اللّدَة طائر قد أفلت من قفصه (ص.83)

Boulous’s translation
إنه ذئب اللّد (انهرة ذئب انمحهق خازجا قفصه (ص.84)

All the translators maintained the implication of the metaphor which associates pleasure to a bird (طائر) looking for freedom by adopting of course literal translation

Conclusion
Talking about poetry, Aristotle says that “Beauty is the gift of God”, and the translations which have been examined have succeeded in many ways to preserve the beauty and the aesthetic value of a book of poetry full of images and metaphors. Literal translation has be reconsidered according to the study and it must not be always treated from a negative perspective. The structuralist approach was very helpful in the sense that the “Prophet” is written in a very good English by an Arab poet who possesses two different cultures. This element makes his language ‘universal’ in as it is full of wisdom and advices that can be useful for all human beings. That is why the element of culture does not create many problems for the translators. A limitation of this study is that it cannot be generalized on all the translations of Gibran’s The Prophet if we take into consideration that the book has more than seven Arabic versions and ten French ones. Besides, all the metaphors that exist in Gibran’s Prophet and which are more than one hundred could not all be dealt with in this study. Further research may be conducted to analyze the other translations and other aesthetic features that characterize Gibran’s poetry like the style and similes.

About the Author:
Mourad EL Khatibi is Poet and translator: published four books of poetry and edited a collective book. He is currently a doctoral candidate conducting research on political discourse and translation at Mohammed 5 University, Rabat, Morocco. He is a member of the Moroccan Writers Union

References:


