Translating Literariness: Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" Vs Ukë Zenel Buçpapaj's "Kujë"

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Abstract

Prior to being accepted as a real and systematic discipline translation has been lengthily considered a multi-sided driving force used to enable multi-cultural/linguistic communication. As experience shows, translation was born as a practical endeavour to convey social, historical and cultural disparities between countries and only in the 1960s, thanks to Holmes, it was recognised as a solid discipline inexorably intertwined with other disciplines. Moreover, and above all, translation is not just science, it is not a mere process of decoding the encoded - it is an art. Such categorisation is what made Otokar Fischer and other scholars faithfully promote translation as an interface between science and art. This is what this research will try to encompass. We will see how in literary translation, the art of translating marries the theory so that to explain the uniqueness of this discipline. In addition, we will see the concept of literariness as an element of paramount importance in literary translation and especially in poetry, the most sublime aka most problematic genre of literature. As P.B Shelley confesses in A Defence of Poetry: "Poetry ... awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought. Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar; it reproduces all that it represents, and the impersonations clothed in its Elysian light stand thenceforward in the minds of those who have once contemplated them, as memorials of that gentle and exalted content which extends itself over all thoughts and actions with which it coexists. (P.B. Shelley, 1904, 33). Dynamic equivalence is the key to achieve the explanation of complex phenomena through simpler phenomena happening in literary translation and especially in poetry. Through an inductive-descriptive method we aim at bringing light to how and to what extent literariness can be translated by analysing coram Allen Ginsberg's Howl and its translation in Albanian Kujë by Ukë Zenel Bucpapaj. This way we will see the essential and irreplaceable niche literariness occupies in poetry translation.

Keywords: literariness, poetry translation, art of translation, cultural/ linguistic disparities, comparison

ISSN 2411-9598 (Print) ISSN 2411-4103 (Online)

European Journal of Language and Literature Studies

Jan-Apr 2016 Vol.4, Nr. 1

1. Introduction

Literary translation has intrigued linguists, scholars, and translation practitioners since the times of Cicero and the Bible. The more you know and experience the more it challenges you, the more obstacles you meet and the more mysterious it becomes. Whenever you think you have found something, another thing surges, as to question if your findings are exact, loyal and unequivocal. Whatever the case, the love for this art brings a need to protect it from being deviated, maltreated or derailed away from the science-art path. Why?

- First, the translators seem to belong to extremely diversified categories and the number of factors they hinge is so high that what can really be achieved are mostly statistical generalizations.
- Second, because of the multitude of disciplines taken into account, a question arises: what kind of science is likely to be developed through such an undertaking, and, after all, would that make sense?
- Third, since the outcome of such inductive research will crucially be determined by its flows, how can the risk of a closed circuit be avoided? In other words, how can we avoid the risk that the concept of the translation being developed is not simply a reflection of what one or the other has given vital importance, of what one researcher-translator beholds and what another opinions?
- Fourth, are all the efforts equally accessible to the audience? Are the semantic features ambiguous and shallow or are they loyal to the purpose the source language is communicating?

Surely we cannot call or sing "Will the real Translation now please stand up?" The "how", "to what extent" and "on what cost" literariness can be captured and gavelled are the questions we will try to answer when the source poem "eyes" her target sibling. But first, what is literariness?

Literariness (revisited in Jacobson, 1968, pg. 597-609) is commonly known as a togetherness of features present in a literary text and the use of special language and impersonal attitude to reality. To grasp literariness the translator needs to be aware of:

- discourse
- polysemy
- textual self-reference
- repetition
- ambivalent meanings

The concept of literariness is born as the basis of estimated concrete texts and influences the text in 3 levels:

- i. formal
- ii. semantic
- iii. ideological

and because of some factors like:

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- a, who published the text and where
- b. who reads the text
- c. why was it published
- d. what knowledge / expectations does it bring
- e. how is it interpreted / classified

Therefore, literariness appears as a variable of the sensitivity towards time / culture / environment / interlocutors and emerges as "adjustment" of mutual adaptation.

Literariness comprises 3 components:

- 1. the visible text-narrative features: i.e. the stylistic and memorable features of the essence of the text
- 2. the readers' non-cognitive reactions: i.e. the way how the reader-translator ostracises the text
- 3. the changes special meanings bring: i.e. the readers' endeavour to find elements in the text that bewitch them

Hence, literariness can be translated if the disclosure of stylistic variations, ostracism of the text due to the bewitchment of such variations and the transformation of the concept / common sensations (allusions, imagery) happen at the same time. This is the key to literariness and this is what will be explored in the next part of this paper. Finally, literariness is not a conventional regulatory transformation process, stemming from culture and experience but a sprout of psychological inheritance, of linguistic, sensorial and perceptive ability of the self.

2. Howl vs Kujë

Howl is a 1955 manifesto full of rebellious commentary upon what the Beats generation has undergone through in the American society of the 20th century. It is a poem of protest, of cry and pain indicating what Ginsberg and his companion of suffragettes, Carl Solomon, whom he dedicates the poem to, have experienced because of envisioning a culture not precisely matching the mainstream culture and way of thinking.

Howl is a lament of alienated minds, actually "the best minds of (his) generation destroyed by madness" as Ginsberg confirms in the opening line of the poem. These were the years where the best scholars were born but also subjugated and repressed due to "incongruities" of their literary and cultural production. The poem is narcotic in the way that it makes you feel full of it and wanting nothing more than it so that you could transcend to reality, a reality of darkness, darker than Conrad's, of metamorphosis, but much more elegiac than Shelley's Queen Mab, and of repulsive cataloguing similar to Whitman's. That obscene are the events that they resemble to hell, as William Carlos Williams warns us in the preamble of the poem "Hold back the edges of your gowns, Ladies, we are going through hell."

There is a whole sense of movement in the poem, not just of tenses, not of senses, but of people and ideology travelling from one place to another; a movement of culture away from the mainstream, a physical shifting from New York, the base, and its neighbourhoods to Brooklyn Bridge, then to New Jersey, Mexico, Morocco until we meet in Rockland, as to find peace from all the journey. The whole image is recreated in the target language maintaining such poetic refrain.

There are generalised recognising steps when translating a poem. Initially, we read poetry, and then recreate or translate. In any circumstance, it is difficult to achieve a translation of poetry without flaws or errors, stemming from misreading the original poetic text. According to Jiří Levý (1967) translations of poetry and literature show that professionals understand little of its object of study. Hardly ever have they considered if the translated poetry is read and understood properly. Thus, in comparative studies of translation, a text is treated as an independent creation, - a fatal mistake - and not as a "tool" through which the translator establishes communication between the author and target reader.

As a matter of fact, first, the act of translation is a set of original poetry reflections on the text, created in the mind of the interpreter whose meaning cannot be taken as final and sole. Secondly, the target poetry text is a "derivative", which is "cooked" in the mind of the translator who makes adjustment on it and is likely to add his own aspects of knowledge, thoughts and beliefs. Thirdly, reading and recreation strategies in poetry translation are inextricably linked. Fourth, as a communicative tool, poetry text appears "dynamic". The translator, as a reader and creator, has to rebuild the relationship between the continuity of the target symbols and the features of reality. Moreover, it is advisable to investigate how the author continually changes the grammar of the language, how "unusual" syntactic ingredients appear typical of poetry, and to determine the function of their use. Let us compare:

Molok! Vetmi! Flliqani! Shëmti! Tiganat skuqin hi dhe dollarë hupanakë! Fëmijët çirren nën shkallare! Djelmoshat ngashëreinë ushtri më ushtri! Pleq e plaka shkrehen në vaj park më park!

(Buçpapaj, Kujë,)

[Moloch! Solitude! Filth! Ugliness! Ashcans and unobtainable dollars! Children screaming under the stairways! Boys sobbing in armies! Old men weeping in the parks!]

(Ginsberg, Howl,)

Considering this range of several verbless sentences, where the source language (English) is compared to the target language (Albanian), it is enough to see how the translator, once explicating the essence of the text in terms of semantic content and artistic form, "recreates", but "stays faithful". Moreover, the equivalent "tiganat skuqin hi dhe dollarë hupanakë " to "ashcans and unobtainable dollars" has added significant strength to the source clause (English) in the target clause (Albanian), and maintained the matrix of the source culture.

Thus, this sentence is an enumeration of metaphors, four to be exact: tiganat skuqin hi; tiganat skuqin dollarë; hi hupanak; dollarë hupanakë, which enrich the target language (Albanian) as well.

The translator has maintained the versification of the original poem, but he has also advocated his creative spirit. Moreover, through the exhaustive use of the structural model of the free verse, the translator has managed to convey his inner reactions, but avoiding getting out of the context of the source poem. Compare:

trutë ia treguan Qiellit, hekurudhave, panë engjëj krahëshkruar e mendjekthjellët duke u kalamendur majë kalibeve,

(Buçpapaj, Kujë,)

[who bared their brains to Heaven under the El and saw Mohammedan angels staggering on tenement roofs illuminated.]

(Ginsberg, Howl.)

u strukën dhomave të parruara, në brekë, dogjën paratë e veta në kosha mbeturinash, dëgjuan Këngën e Dajakut matanë murit,

(Buçpapaj, Kujë,)

[who cowered in unshaven rooms in underwear, burning their money in wastebaskets and listening to the Terror through the wall.]

(Ginsberg, Howl,)

Poetry translation specifically gets the translator into the vortex of anguishing attempts to follow his own rules and making skilful decisions, so that his version could turn up into an enumeration of striking linguistic findings. Compare:

gazavajas, shijeparë, fytyrengjëj, duke u djegur për lidhjen e moçme hyjnore me dinamon yje-yje në makinerinë e natës.

(Buçpapaj, Kujë,)

[angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night.]

(Ginsberg, Howl,)

At first look, such findings might derive from common words. The translator did not find impromptu tools to achieve the effect of the original. He had to choose between the prosaic variant and the awakening of emotions to the target reader. But he should be aware of the "stubborn" character of poetry as well, which encompasses a range of problems, and, therefore, the translated version is final when once one of the findings is altered, the poetry is alienated.

Translation of free verse is not only a challenge in itself but it embodies a strict form of versification and as such it allows or awaits "word-weaving" so it would be the "faille dress" to the poetry. Free verse is not just scribbling of a sudden thought and it has its own rules. A free verse built is well-conceived if the verse has got music or rhythm although there is no definite rhyming. If the translator conveys the words of the free verse text whimsically he will maintain the integrity of the source poetic text intact. Instead of believing in the translation of a "concrete verse" he should believe in showing faithfulness towards the source versification. Why? Because the source versification does not allow him or provide him the ground to act this way and consequently the imitation of it would bring the "rebirth" of the outside form of the poetry or the alteration of the metre of the source poetry text. What the translator has done in this case is: he has grasped the sound enumeration and rhythm as the unique peculiarity of the source verse. Compare:

të këputur, rrecka-rrecka, zgavrat pa sy, në humbamendje, në çoje, turravrap territ mbinatyror të shtëpive të akullta, varka që çajnë majave të qyteteve të përmallura për xhazin,

(Buçpapaj, Kujë,)

[who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat up smoking in the supernatural darkness of cold-water flats floating across the tops of cities contemplating jazz,]

(Ginsberg, Howl,)

In fact, the idea of translating free verse confuses the translator-reader and the tendency to "freely" choose the rhythm, metre or rhyming is so strong that he might feel irresolute of choosing which technique is the correct one to show his faithfulness to the source text. Whatsoever, the translator has definitely restrained himself from doing it in this poetry. Compare:

biseduan shtatëdhjetë orë pa nda, nga parku te jataku, në Belvju, në muze, në Urën e Bruklinit,

(Buçpapaj, Kujë,)

[who talked continuously seventy hours from park to pad to bar to Bellevue to museum to the Brooklyn Bridge,]

(Ginsberg, Howl,)

The meaning of poetry can be found: 1) in using the text as evidence of the writer intention: what is significant is what the writer means by the text; 2) viewing the text signalling its own intrinsic meaning, whatever the writer might have intended: what is significant is what the text means; and 3) reading it the reader's way, i.e. what is significant is what the text means to the reader, whatever the writer might have intended or whatever the text might objectively appear to mean. According to Cox and Dyson "a poem that is in any degree successful blossoms under our careful attention, and comes into fullness as we proceed. ... includes a new sense of the poem's structure and imagery, its tone and verbal delicacy, its precise effects" (Cox & Dyson, 1965: 12-13).

However, the fruitlets of poetry are never clear: sometimes they evoke, remind, or emit a different taste, sometimes they lurk or forge. The translator, therefore, is required to play the role of "resuscitator" that possesses special mastery in reading the signs and their association with the relevant meaning of the poem. In no case he must act as an independent "author" of individual reactions. He needs to interpret the real taste of the poem and the effects necessary to capture the central message and additional secondary messages. This way he maintains "intact" the significance to the symbolic value of the poem – this is what we see in this translation: Compare:

I pashë mendjendriturit e brezit tim të rrënuar nga çmenduria, duke vdekur për bukë, epsharë, lakuriq, zhag rrugëve të zezakëve në agim në kërkim të syve idhnakë,

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(Bucpapai, Kujë, )
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[I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix,]

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(Ginsberg, Howl, )
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On one hand, the fear embodied in the inability of a completely faithful translation of the texts is associated with the risk of producing a weak translation because of being "humble to what is lying underneath it" so that the product is a togetherness of usual, necessary and utilised values of language. But being grasped after this means damaging the creative freedom required in such case, and failing to seize or discover the inconceivable or unconceivable, the unstated and the non-stated. On the other hand, the belief embodied in the possibility of a completely faithful translation is associated with the risk of producing a constraint translation, where the translator experiments, plays with language use, seeks to coordinate polyvalent meanings, allusions and accentuation of the source text, acting upon his ways, judgment and intuition. Both these risks are avoided in the translation of "How!". Compare:

u strukën dhomave të parruara, në brekë, dogjën paratë e veta në kosha mbeturinash, dëgjuan Këngën e Dajakut përtej murit,

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(Buçpapaj, Kujë, )
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[who cowered in unshaven rooms in underwear, burning their money in wastebaskets and listening to the Terror through the wall.]

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(Ginsberg, Howl, )
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However, two questions naturally arise: If we accept that the translation is "achieved" as a fruit of the translator's creative freedom, then to what extent can it be used? Is there a risk that by rampantly playing with style and expressive nuances of the words we sacrifice the faithful conveyance of source text message?

Creative freedom is not only connected to the playful nature of the translator, it is a "compromise" where the translator is "biased" to the content and the metaphorical expression of the poetic text and "breaks" the rules of syntax or metonymy. Creative freedom stems from the textual "energy", whether from words, verses or complex formulations appearing as interdependent nodes between the translated poetic text and the language of translation, which consequently brings the enrichment of the latter. Compare:

ISSN 2411-9598 (Print) ISSN 2411-4103 (Online)

European Journal of Language and Literature Studies

Jan-Apr 2016 Vol.4, Nr. 1

lypësi i çmendur dhe engjëlli rrahin Kohën, të panjohur, por, përsëri, duke hedhur në letër atë që u la të thuhet në kohën pas vdekjes,

(Buçpapaj, Kujë,)

[the madman bum and angel beat in Time, unknown, yet putting down here what might be left to say in time come after death,]

(Ginsberg, Howl,)

Obviously, poetic translation involves reading and recreating and the literary translator is a reader and a creator.

On one hand, the ways of reading the literary text, of understanding its content and rhetoric differs from one readertranslator to another, and it comes a moment where the translator starts playing the role of the source poet and transforms the text into his native language. Moreover, the style that the translator-reader conveys into the translation is sealed with the stamp of the tradition, the taste of the time and place where he translates.

On the other hand, there is a myriad of ways of reading and conveying a source poetic text and there are no final, definite and exhaustive methods or techniques the poetic text is translated. Hence, in this translation of "Howl" the translator-reader has utilised the extraordinary flexibility of the target language, creating new words, metaphors, and syntactic displacements and maintaining the rhythm. Compare:

I pashë mendjendriturit e brezit tim të rrënuar nga çmenduria, duke vdekur për bukë, epsharë, lakuriq,

(Buçpapaj, Kujë,)

[I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked,]

(Ginsberg, Howl,)

The structure of the poem is rather strange but it has symbolic significance. For example, in Part I the poet used the verb "see" in the simple past tense "saw" and a list of other events following in the past; in Part II he switches to present but using a repetitive gerund and in Part III simple present tense but echoing a future and everlasting aspect, creating a refrain "I'm with you in Rockland", which repeats 19 times. It is done to maintain the symbolic effect of movement in time and space.

The reality of this poem happens in certain time and space and what appears in it symbolises a shift or challenge to their borders. But such challenge is "fantasy" that echoes the pain still present "here" and "now", "there" and "then", "there" and "now". It is precisely this "crash" of "concrete" and "abstract" simultaneously happening that "recreates" the sense of movement in time and space in the translated version as well.

However, this "recreation" is not limited just to these categories, nor is the level of language. The allies to this are the alliteration, assonance, metre, rhyme and metaphor. By understanding how poetic language is modelled vertically, the interpreter harmonises the force of the uniformity to that of liberation from judgement. Though the position described in the poem resembles limbo, the significant movement within the images, the vertical painting following a prosaic model enforces the composition and orchestration of the music in the poem. Compare:

Ngadhënjime! kalime lumi! vërtitje! kryqëzime! lartësi! Zotshfaqje! Dëshpërime! Dhjetë vjet çjerrje kafshërore, vetëvrasje! Mendje! Dashuri të reja! Breza të krisur! atje, në shkëmbinjtë e Kohës!

(Buçpapaj, Kujë,)

[Breakthroughs! over the river! flips and crucifixions! gone down the flood! Highs! Epiphanies! Despairs! Ten years' animal screams and suicides! Minds! New loves! Mad generation! down on the rocks of Time!\

(Ginsberg, Howl,)

The poem howls for liberation from judgement. Though the title is "Howl", it does not function as a way to pity or judge what is happening in it. On the contrary, there is no space for it. No surprise to that, Poetry is the sublimation of the ordinary. Poetic use of language is not "frozen". It develops continuously enriching human expression. Everything inside it is positioned in its naturally-defined place. There is no room for divergence.

Compare:

Molok, ti, burg i pakuptueshëm! Molok, ti, gemer i pashpirt gelie, Kongres kobi! Molok, ndërtesat e tua, gjyge! Molok, ti, shkëmb gjigand lufte! Molok, ti, qeveri gojëmbyllur!

(Buçpapaj, Kujë,)

[Moloch the incomprehensible prison! Moloch the crossbone soulless jailhouse and Congress of sorrows! Moloch whose buildings are judgment! Moloch the vast stone of war! Moloch the stunned governments!

(Ginsberg, Howl.)

The way how the poem is conveyed into the target language (Albanian) requires clear, precise and approachable rhetoric free from misunderstandings or different interpretations to the central message or additional messages. This can not only be related to the idea of "untranslatability", i.e. "the translation is impossible due to the lack of lexical, grammatical and meticulously stylistic equivalents" of the languages being confronted, but also to the fact that the translation should transfer all the product deriving from the original meaning within a framework which imposes a different discourse and creates a dissimilar reality. Compare:

të këputur, rrecka-rrecka, zgavrat pa sy, në humbamendje, në coje, turravrap territ mbinatyror të shtëpive të akullta, varka që çajnë majave të qyteteve të përmallura për xhazin,

(Bucpapai, Kujë,)

who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat up smoking in the supernatural darkness of cold-water flats floating across the tops of cities contemplating jazz.]

(Ginsberg, Howl,)

Since the translation in itself requires the linguistic conveyance of the original, on the other hand it urges the complete inexhaustible and "healthy" retake of the source text (English language), - the whole Semitic symbolism of Moloch¹ was maintained, the grandeur of the chain of cries and apocalyptic effect reflects in the translated version as in the following case.

Compare:

Molok! Molok! Makthi yt, Molok! Molok, ti, dashurizbrazur! Moloku i mendjes! Molok, ti, gjykatës shpirtkosore i njeriut!

¹ Moloch was a idolatrous God to whom children were sacrificed by placing them on fire. http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10937-moloch-molech

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(Buçpapaj, Kujë,)

[Moloch! Moloch! Nightmare of Moloch! Moloch the loveless! Mental Moloch! Moloch the heavy judger of men!]

(Ginsberg, Howl,)

In this case, the translator has not only succeeded in doing this, but also managed to increase the expressivity of the source language text (English) in the target text (Albanian) through two new composites loaded with dense emotional and metaphoric components i.e. "dashurizbrazur" and "shpirtkosore", used as equivalents to "the loveless" and "heavy Judger" respectively. So, it is clear that, conceptually and practically speaking, translation includes the image and imitation, analogy and metaphorisation. Moloch is the subject to all such madness and the metaphor to what lies within the human soul of those people supporting the government, maybe the government itself who could do anything to kill that stream of youth and love who were positioned contrary to mainstream.

Poetry translation recognises different forms, such as "variant", "imitation", "reproduction", "adaptation" or "transformation" (Andre Lafevere in Bassnett-McGuire, 1980: 81-82).

Poetry translation entangles the translator into a nightmarish game, where no violation of self-invented or self-defined rules is allowed. His mastery and apprenticeship is bound to submit to the self-critical attitude which becomes more and more present in the whole process of translation. From this perspective, it seems clear the important role the translator plays at "reproducing" a poetry by being "loyal" or "ignoring" the cultural reality of the source text no matter how impersonal it is to his reality, to the different factors that have influenced his conception and creativity and the individual circumstances which directly and/or indirectly are reflected in the target poetry text. In addition, translators often "recreate" a poetry text only considering the target culture, where the text is "unhooked" from the influences of its origin and then translated as if it was a genuine creation and not a product of the source culture. Such thing is not observed in the translation of the poem that is the subject of our research.

3. Conclusion

By understanding and practicing poetry translation as a literary creation conditioned by the respective source text, the translator becomes able to convey multiple strata of voices, images, symbols, meanings and implications of a literary work to the audience in an exhaustible, loyal, truthful and fluid way. The translator should avoid ventures that cause ambiguous reading, interpretation or translation. He should overcome the difficulties deriving from four "languages" (the source language, the target language, the author language, the personal language). He can do this through the knowledge, through the discovery of literariness, through separately probing the semantic content of the words, and the implications coming from their relationship.

Literary translation has been "baptized" with different terms. Thus, some call it "variant", some "imitation", some "recreation" or "transformation". Meanwhile, based on the comparison of *Howl* and its relevant translation, we have proposed the term "retake". There is always some lack of loyalty when it comes to translation. Still the following criteria, but not only, were followed in the translated version of this poem:

- (1) the use of free verse.
- (2) the attempt to maintain the patterns of the original language
- (3) the use of complex alliteration patterns, similar to the original.
- (4) the attempt to imitate syntactic inversions, collocations, archaisms of the source language.
- (5) the attempt to reproduce the sound of the source text.
- (6) the attempt to understand and rebuild the ideology embedded in the source text.

- (7) the attempt to reproduce the mood of the source text.
- (8) the attempt to maintain the visual form of the source text.
- (9) the attempt to maintain the regular pattern of the source text.
- (10) the attempt to build complex alliteration structures in the target language.
- (11) the mis-reading of the central essence of the source text message on purpose or by mistake.

It is often said that poetry is untranslatable. However, the experience embodied in the translation of Ginsberg's *Howl* proves the contrary, - whenever the translator reaches the depth of the source poet's thinking, perception and experience, he becomes one with the text. Here the translator-reader appears to be the "ideal" one and led by the imagination of the author, but without getting "imprisoned" in the text. The translator resulted conscious in conveying the means, the meaning, the image and the hysteria of *Howl*ing. As in the original *Kujë* properly and faithfully is transmitting the cry which is not a cry, it is an unarticulated cry, as if it flounders into your throat aiming at taking away every atom of life but leaving the pain, making you consciously stupid of reality but augmenting the adrenaline to push you forward to do something – that is awaken.

Albeit the upshots of translation are not a consequence of the carefully-determined concept of translation moulded according to a precise function, all translations reflect the translator's reading, interpretation and personal selection criteria as defined in the concept of the function of the source and target text. The success or failure of such attempts depend on the readers' maturity, but variations of the methods used to translate *aka* write emphasize the idea that there is no single and "right" way to translate *aka* write a poem. Translators are given the opportunity to see themselves freed from the constraints of conventions that govern translation, and to be responsible while tackling with the source poetic text. This is the very starting point where meta-text or translation-reading (inter-lingual translation) originates.

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