

Is Poetry Translatable?

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Abstract:

Translation involves working with multiple languages, including both the source and target languages in which the text is written. Translation is an interpretive process that involves understanding the meaning, nuances, and cultural context of the source text and conveying these accurately in the target language. A successful translation requires careful attention to details such as grammar, vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and style. Thus, translators must be sensitive to cultural differences and be able to translate in a way that respects and reflects the cultural context of the source text. Translating literary works, especially poetry, requires creativity, cultural understanding, and a deep appreciation of the original work. Translating a poem is not merely about rendering words from one language into another; it involves the delicate task of conveying the emotional depth, cultural resonance, and aesthetic qualities of the original. Poetry often serves as a mirror reflecting the culture of its origin, incorporating cultural references, values, and social contexts. Translating poetry is a process replete with multifaceted challenges. Translators need to find ways to preserve the essence of the poem while adapting it to the target language's unique linguistic and cultural context. When translating poetry, it is often important to prioritize the emotional tone over the word-for-word translation. The translator may need to make choices between being faithful to the original language and making the translation accessible and readable to the target audience. This poses the question of whether poetry is translatable or not.

Keywords: Translation, poetry, translatability, challenges, essence, cultural context, understanding of the cultures.

INTRODUCTION

The art and craft of translation, characterized by both its complexity and its profound cultural implications, has long been a subject of exploration and debate within intellectual circles. Dating back to antiquity, when ancient scholars sought to translate revered texts into local languages, the task of translation has evolved over centuries into a discipline that embodies linguistic dexterity, cross-cultural understanding, and a deep appreciation of literary forms. Among various genres of literature, translating poetry presents a unique conundrum, a complex interplay of language, form, and meaning that brings forth a quintessential question: "Is poetry translatable?"

This question, as simple as it may seem at first glance, is laden with contentious perspectives and multi-layered considerations. It sparks a series of interconnected dialogues that extend across linguistic, literary, and cultural studies, each contributing unique insights and further complexities to the discussion. The exploration of this topic necessitates an in-depth understanding of not only language

and literature but also the subtleties of cultural nuances and philosophical inquiries associated with translation.

In attempting to unravel the enigmatic challenge of translating poetry, we embark on a journey that demands a thorough examination of several key elements. The intrinsic nature of poetry, with its layers of meaning, its intricate use of language, and its distinct rhythm and rhyme schemes, must be understood in its entirety. This understanding is pivotal, as the rich essence of poetry often resides within these subtle intricacies and elegant structures.

Further, the complex nuances of language itself pose a significant consideration. Every language, with its unique syntax, semantics, and phonetics, brings forth a distinct set of challenges in the translation process. The idiosyncrasies of linguistic construction and the varied devices employed in poetry, such as metaphors, allegories, and alliterations, further compound these challenges.

The role of cultural context in the translation of poetry is another critical dimension to explore. Poems are often deeply entrenched in the cultural milieu of their origin, imbued with references and symbolism that may not have direct counterparts in another culture. Understanding and adequately translating these culturally-specific elements is a significant task that requires not just linguistic prowess, but also a comprehensive understanding of the cultures in question.

Finally, we must also consider the philosophical undertones of translation. Translation, in its essence, is more than a mere transposition of words from one language to another; it is a complex process of conveying meaning, intent, and artistic expression across linguistic and cultural barriers. This process invites philosophical inquiries about the nature of language, the fluidity of meaning, and the very possibility of achieving faithful translation, particularly when it comes to translating the nuanced and layered medium of poetry.

In light of these considerations, this article seeks to delve into the multifaceted question of whether poetry is, indeed, translatable. By exploring these diverse dimensions - the nature of poetry, the intricacies of language, the role of culture, and the philosophical implications of the translation process - I hope to shed light on this intriguing issue at the intersection of language, literature, and culture.

UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF POETRY

Understanding the nature of poetry is essential in addressing the complexities of its translation. Poetry, distinct from other literary forms, harnesses a unique interplay of emotional, linguistic, cultural, and structural elements, creating a medium of expression that is both potent and subtly nuanced. Roman Jakobson, a prominent linguist and literary theorist, underscored these characteristics in his seminal work, suggesting that the inherent complexities of poetry can transform the task of translation into a deeply intricate endeavour (Jakobson, 1959).

At its core, poetry is characterized by its profound emotional resonance. It distils and conveys the depth of human experiences, emotions, and perceptions in a condensed form. This intense emotional potency often manifests through intricate metaphors, vivid imagery, and a rhythm that resonates with the reader's emotions. The task of translating these emotions, which are often tightly entwined with the specific words and linguistic features of the original language, is no small feat. Translators must strive to evoke the same emotional resonance in the target language, a task that necessitates deep empathy, sensitivity, and creative ingenuity.

The linguistic precision of poetry is another element that adds to the challenge of translation. Poets carefully select and position each word to craft their intended meaning, mood, and impact. Aspects such as word choice, syntax, and linguistic style contribute to the poem's overall essence. In the process of translation, this linguistic precision can be particularly challenging to preserve, especially when the translator is working between languages with disparate grammatical structures or varying degrees of linguistic richness.

Cultural nuances imbued within poetry also add layers of complexity to its translation. Poetry often serves as a mirror reflecting the culture of its origin, incorporating cultural references, values, and social contexts. These elements may be implicit, woven into the metaphors and idioms that may not have exact equivalents in other cultures. Translators, therefore, have to navigate these cultural nuances with an informed understanding, aiming to render them in ways that are accessible to the target audience while maintaining the integrity of the original work.

Finally, the structural elements of poetry, including rhythm, rhyme, and meter, play a significant role in its overall aesthetic and emotive impact. The particular sound patterns, the cadence, and the rhythmic structure of a poem can often carry as much meaning as the words themselves. Translating these elements can be especially challenging, as they are often closely tied to the specific phonetic and rhythmic properties of the original language. This poses the question of whether to prioritize the preservation of a poem's content or its form during the translation process, a dilemma that has sparked extensive debate within translation studies.

Taken together, these unique characteristics of poetry can make the process of translation a deeply intricate endeavour, prompting reflections on its feasibility and validity. The task of the translator becomes a delicate balancing act, striving to recreate the original's emotional depth, linguistic precision, cultural resonance, and structural harmony within the confines of a different language and cultural context. This complex undertaking underscores the importance of approaching the translation of poetry with a thorough understanding of its intrinsic nature, an appreciation of linguistic and cultural nuances, and a creative approach that honors the original work's artistic integrity.

CHALLENGES IN TRANSLATING POETRY

Translating poetry is a process replete with multifaceted challenges. Andre Lefevere, in his foundational work on translation studies, underscores the significance of both linguistic and cultural aspects in the translation process (Lefevere, 1992). In the realm of poetry, these challenges take on an elevated complexity, intertwining linguistic precision with cultural, historical, and personal nuances.

Linguistic structures form one of the primary challenges in translating poetry. Every language possesses unique syntactic, semantic, and phonetic properties that affect how ideas and emotions are expressed. Syntax, the order of words and their interaction, varies widely across languages and can dramatically impact the meaning and rhythm of a poem. Semantics, or the study of meaning in language, also poses challenges. The nuanced connotations and denotations of words often do not have one-to-one correspondences between languages, making accurate translation difficult. Finally, phonetics, the study of speech sounds, plays a critical role in the construction of poetry. The unique phonetic properties of a language contribute to the creation of rhythm, rhyme, and other auditory effects, often making them challenging to reproduce in another language.

Beyond the linguistic structures, translating poetry also necessitates an understanding and appreciation of the cultural, historical, and personal contexts that permeate a poem. Cultural nuances often manifest through idioms, symbols, and metaphors, which can lose their meaning or impact when directly translated into another language. Historical context, too, can influence a poem, embedding references and allusions that may be inaccessible to readers from different temporal contexts. Similarly, a poet's personal experiences and perspectives can infuse a poem with unique layers of meaning that may be challenging to convey in a translated work.

The challenge of preserving the essence of the original text in translation is poignantly encapsulated by the Italian adage, "Traduttore, traditore," which translates to "translator, traitor" (Nida, 1964). This phrase highlights the potential for loss, distortion, or betrayal of the original work's spirit in the act of translation. Translating a poem is not merely about rendering words from one language into another; it involves the delicate task of conveying the emotional depth, cultural resonance, and aesthetic qualities of the original. Failing to adequately capture these elements can result in a translated work that, while linguistically accurate, lacks the spirit and richness of the original poem.

In summary, the task of translating poetry is a challenging endeavour that requires an intimate understanding of both the source and target languages, a deep appreciation of cultural and historical contexts, and a sensitivity to the emotional resonance and aesthetic qualities of the original work. As we delve into the strategies for overcoming these challenges, we also delve into the heart of what makes poetry a unique and powerful form of human expression.

STRATEGIES FOR TRANSLATING POETRY

The multifaceted challenge of translating poetry, while seemingly daunting, has led to the development of various strategies and approaches within the field of translation studies. As explored by Susan Bassnett in her pioneering work on comparative literature and translation studies, these strategies often involve a trade-off between preserving the form and content of the original poem (Bassnett, 2002).

One prevalent strategy, often referred to as formal equivalence, privileges the form or structure of the original poem. In this approach, translators strive to maintain structural elements, such as rhyme, rhythm, and meter, even if this comes at the expense of a direct, literal translation of the text. The objective here is to preserve the poetic form and aesthetic of the original work, thereby replicating the auditory and visual experience for the reader in the target language.

Conversely, another strategy prioritizes the content or meaning of the poem over its structural elements. In this approach, commonly known as semantic equivalence, the translator focuses on preserving the poem's literal and metaphorical meanings, even if this requires altering or discarding the original poem's rhyme scheme, rhythm, or meter. The intent here is to ensure that the translated work conveys the same ideas, themes, and imagery as the original, even if the form differs.

A middle-ground approach between these two strategies is the concept of 'dynamic equivalence,' proposed by Eugene Nida (1964). This approach aims to recreate the original poem's effect or impact on the target audience, necessitating a degree of creative adaptation. The translator, in this context, is not just a linguistic converter but a co-creator of the translated poem. This approach requires the translator to be acutely sensitive to both the source and target languages' cultural and linguistic nuances, bridging the gap between them.

The role of the translator, in any of these strategies, is pivotal and multifaceted. The famous American poet and translator Robert Frost proclaimed, “Poetry is what gets lost in translation” (Frost, 1920), implying that the nuanced meanings and emotional depth of a poem are inevitably lost during the translation process. Yet, this perspective has been challenged by translation theorists such as Andre Lefevere (1992), who argue that a translator can function as a cultural and linguistic mediator. In this role, the translator navigates the complex terrain of linguistic and cultural differences, striving to produce a translated work that captures the essence of the original poem, even if some elements are adapted or lost.

In summary, while the task of translating poetry presents numerous challenges, the strategies developed by translators reflect a dynamic and creative engagement with these challenges. Whether prioritizing form or content, or seeking to recreate the original poem’s effect, these strategies attest to the nuanced craft of poetic translation. Despite the complexities and potential losses in translation, the role of the translator as a mediator and co-creator can render the translation of poetry a viable, albeit demanding, endeavour.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL DIMENSION OF TRANSLATION

The act of translating poetry raises questions that extend beyond the realms of linguistics and literary studies into the domain of philosophy. The task of translation prompts an existential interrogation of the identity of a text when it is rendered in a different language. Central to this philosophical discourse is Walter Benjamin’s influential essay, “The Task of the Translator” (1923). Benjamin’s work proposes a paradigm shift in how we conceptualize translation, challenging conventional notions of fidelity and equivalence.

In the view of Benjamin, an optimal or ‘pure’ translation does not seek to establish informational or semantic equivalence with the original text. Instead, it endeavours to reveal the unique mode of signification inherent in the original work. The process of translation, therefore, is less about replicating meaning and more about illuminating the linguistic and semantic dimensions of the original text that are specific to its language and cultural context. This perspective significantly reframes the objective of translation from a task of linguistic transfer to one of interpretive revelation.

In line with this perspective, a translated poem is not seen as a mere replica or copy of the original. Instead, it is perceived as a transformation of the original text, a new creation imbued with the essence of the original but also carrying its unique characteristics. This transformative quality of translation corresponds to the idea that each language structures reality in different ways, and thus the translation process involves adapting the original text’s expression of reality to fit the linguistic and cultural structures of the target language.

Moreover, Benjamin proposes the idea of translation as a continuation of the original text. This notion challenges the traditional dichotomy between the ‘original’ and the ‘translated’ text, suggesting instead a form of symbiosis where the translated text becomes an extension of the original. In this regard, the translated poem does not merely ‘carry over’ the meaning of the original but extends its life and reach, potentially opening up new interpretive possibilities and exposing the original text to new audiences and cultural contexts.

This philosophical exploration of translation problematizes a simplistic binary view of translatability, wherein a text is deemed either ‘translatable’ or

‘untranslatable.’ Instead, it acknowledges the complexities and transformative potential inherent in the act of translation. Under this lens, translation becomes an intricate dance between fidelity and freedom, replication and invention, continuation and transformation. Such a perspective does not provide a definitive answer to the question, “Is poetry translatable?” but instead enriches the dialogue by shedding light on the intricate and nuanced nature of the translation process.

THE TESTIMONY OF TRANSLATED POETRY

The practice of translating poetry, despite its inherent complexities and philosophical challenges, is possible and has yielded substantial contributions to global literature. This assertion is substantiated by the existence and success of translated poetry on a global scale, illustrating the potential of the translator’s craft to transcend linguistic and cultural barriers.

Consider, for instance, the renowned translations of ancient Greek epic poems such as Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. These monumental works, translated into various languages over centuries, have profoundly influenced global literature. They have shaped and inspired countless literary traditions, introducing readers across generations and cultures to the grandeur of Greek mythology and heroism (Lattimore, 1951). While these translations inevitably differ from the originals in terms of language and style, they capture and convey the essence, spirit, and cultural significance of the original works.

Translations of verses from the 13th-century Persian poet Rumi provide a notable example. The enduring appeal and influence of Rumi’s poetry in non-Persian speaking cultures can largely be attributed to these translations. While they may not fully capture the nuances and richness of the original Persian text, the translated verses convey the profound spiritual and philosophical insights of Rumi’s work (Arberry, 1961). The resonance of these translations with readers worldwide attests to their ability to transmit not only the meaning but also the emotional depth and cultural significance of Rumi’s poetry.

Another successful example of poetry translation involves the work of multiple Albanian translators who translated ‘If’ by Rudyard Kipling into the Albanian language. Fan S. Noli, an Albanian public and political figure, statesman, poet, and translator, was the first to render it into Albanian, marking a significant milestone in Albanian literary history. This serves as an exemplar of successful poetry translation efforts.

Compare:

“**If–**” (title, source text) => “**Në munç**” (title, target text) => “**If you are able**” (title, back translation of target text).

Similarities:

- Both phrases begin with the word “If,” suggesting conditional statements.
- They both introduce a hypothetical or conditional scenario.

Differences:

- Phrase 1, “If–,” is an incomplete sentence, leaving the rest of the condition or scenario unsaid. It leaves room for interpretation and expectation.
- Phrase 2, “If you are able,” provides a more specific condition by indicating the requirement of being able or capable to fulfil the hypothetical scenario.

- Phrase 1, being incomplete, leaves more room for imagination and contemplation, allowing the reader to fill in the missing details.
- Phrase 2 provides a clearer expectation by explicitly stating the need for capability or ability to meet the condition.

Overall, while both phrases share the use of the word “If” to introduce a conditional scenario, Phrase 2 provides more clarity by specifying the condition of being able or capable. In contrast, Phrase 1, being open-ended and incomplete, allows for a wider range of possibilities and interpretations.

“If you can keep your head when all about you” (line 1, source text) => **“Në mung të mbash në kokë terezinë”** (line 1, target text) => **“If you can maintain tranquillity in your mind”** (line1, back translation of target text).

Similarities:

- Both phrases begin with the conditional statement “If,” indicating a hypothetical scenario.
- They both highlight the importance of maintaining a certain state or quality.
- Both phrases imply the need for control or composure in challenging situations.

Differences:

- Phrase 1, “If you can keep your head,” focuses on keeping one’s composure or remaining calm in the face of adversity, emphasizing emotional control and level-headedness.
- Phrase 2, “If you can maintain tranquillity in your mind,” specifically highlights the importance of inner peace and serenity, suggesting a more focused and introspective approach to handling difficulties.

Overall, both phrases convey the idea of maintaining a certain state of mind in challenging situations, but they approach it from slightly different angles. Phrase 1 emphasizes composure and emotional control, while Phrase 2 emphasizes inner tranquillity and a calm mind-set.

“Are losing theirs and blaming it on you” (line 2, source text) => **“Kur shokët çmendër dhe fajtor të nxijnë”** (line 2, target text) => **“When friends go mad and blame you”** (line 2, back translation of target text).

Similarities:

- Both phrases share the introductory clause “When,” indicating a specific condition or situation.
- They both involve others reacting negatively towards the subject.
- Both phrases suggest a scenario where blame or negative actions are directed towards the subject.

Differences:

- Phrase 1, “When all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you,” describes a broader context where people in general, not just friends, are losing their composure and attributing the blame to the subject. It suggests a more widespread reaction.
- Phrase 2, “When friends go mad and blame you,” narrows the focus to specifically friends, indicating a closer relationship and the impact of their actions. It suggests a more personal and intimate connection.

Overall, both phrases convey the idea of facing blame or negative reactions, but they differ in the scope and relationship of the individuals involved. Phrase 1 presents a more general scenario where people in general are losing control and blaming the subject, while Phrase 2 specifically highlights friends as the ones going mad and blaming the subject.

“If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you” (line 3, source text) => **“Në munç të kesh besim, kur të dyshon”** (line 3, target text) => **“If you can have faith when anyone doubts you”** (line 3, back translation of target text).

Similarities:

- Both phrases begin with the conditional statement “If,” indicating a hypothetical scenario.
- They both emphasize the importance of maintaining trust or faith in oneself.
- Both phrases highlight the ability to remain steadfast and confident despite doubt or scepticism from others.

Differences:

- Phrase 1, “If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,” focuses on self-trust and self-belief in the face of doubt specifically from “all men.” It suggests the challenge of maintaining confidence and conviction even when facing widespread scepticism.
- Phrase 2, “If you can have faith when anyone doubts you,” emphasizes the importance of having faith in oneself when “anyone” doubts. It encompasses doubt from a broader range of individuals, not necessarily limited to “all men.” It suggests the need for unwavering self-belief regardless of the source of doubt.

Overall, both phrases convey the idea of maintaining trust or faith in oneself despite doubt, but they differ in the scope of doubt and the emphasis on self-trust versus faith. Phrase 1 emphasizes the challenge of trust when faced with doubt from all men, while Phrase 2 encompasses doubt from anyone and emphasizes the need for faith in oneself.

“But make allowance for their doubting too” (line 4, source text) => **“Kushdo, dhe s’ka njeri që të beson”** (line 4, target text) => **“And there is no one who believes in you”** (line 4, back translation of target text).

Similarities:

- Both phrases acknowledge the presence of doubt or scepticism from others.
- They both suggest the need to consider or accommodate the doubts of others.

Differences:

- Phrase 1, “But make allowance for their doubting too,” emphasizes the importance of understanding and taking into account the doubts of others. It suggests a sense of empathy and tolerance, recognizing that people may have their own reservations or uncertainties.
- Phrase 2, “And there is no one who believes in you,” highlights a lack of belief or trust from others. It implies a sense of isolation or a lack of support, emphasizing the absence of anyone who has faith in the subject.

Overall, both phrases address the issue of doubt from others, but they approach it from different angles. Phrase 1 encourages consideration and understanding of others’ doubts, while Phrase 2 emphasizes the absence of belief or support. Phrase 1 focuses on

maintaining understanding and openness, while Phrase 2 highlights the challenges faced when lacking support or belief from others.

“If you can wait and not be tired by waiting” (line 5, source text) => **“Në munç të preç, dhe pritjen s’e kursen”** (line 5, target text) => **“If you can wait, and you don’t spare waiting”** (line 5, back translation of target text).

Similarities:

- Both phrases begin with the conditional statement “If,” indicating a hypothetical scenario.
- They both highlight the importance of waiting without becoming tired or avoiding the act of waiting.
- Both phrases emphasize the quality of patience and endurance in the context of waiting.

Differences:

- Phrase 1, “If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,” focuses on the ability to wait without experiencing fatigue or weariness. It suggests the need for stamina and resilience during periods of waiting.
- Phrase 2, “If you can wait, and you don’t spare waiting,” highlights the act of not sparing or avoiding waiting. It suggests a commitment to fully embracing and engaging in the waiting process, without cutting it short or trying to escape it.

Overall, both phrases convey the importance of patience in waiting, but they differ in their emphasis. Phrase 1 focuses on not experiencing tiredness or fatigue, while Phrase 2 emphasizes the commitment to fully embracing and not avoiding the act of waiting.

“Or being lied about, don’t deal in lies” (line 6, source text) => **“Në të gënjejshin, ti nuk i gënjen”** (line 6, target text) => **“If they deceive you, you do not deceive them”** (line 6, back translation of target text).

Similarities:

- Both phrases emphasize the importance of not engaging in deception or lies.
- They both suggest a response to being lied to or deceived by others.
- Both phrases advocate for maintaining integrity and honesty in the face of deception.

Differences:

- Phrase 1, “Or being lied about, don’t deal in lies,” focuses on not reciprocating lies or engaging in deceitful behaviour when one is being lied about. It suggests a stance of refusing to participate in falsehoods regardless of the actions of others.
- Phrase 2, “If they deceive you, you do not deceive them,” specifically addresses the situation where others deceive or lie to the subject. It emphasizes the importance of not retaliating with deception and maintaining a commitment to truthfulness.

Overall, both phrases convey the idea of refraining from deception, but they differ in the context and focus. Phrase 1 addresses the broader concept of not dealing in lies when being lied about, while Phrase 2 specifically focuses on not deceiving those who deceive you. Both phrases promote integrity and staying true to one’s principles in the face of deceitful actions.

“Or begin hated, don’t give way to hating” (line 7, source text) => **“Në të urrefshin, ti s’i çan me brirë”** (line 7, target text) => **“If they hate you, you don’t retaliate with hatred”** (line 7, back translation of target text).

Similarities:

- Both phrases highlight the importance of not responding to hatred with hatred.
- They both suggest a stance of non-retaliation and resistance against giving in to negative emotions.
- Both phrases advocate for maintaining a sense of integrity and compassion despite being hated.

Differences:

- Phrase 1, “Or begin hated, don’t give way to hating,” emphasizes the idea of not succumbing to hatred even when one is subjected to hatred from others. It encourages the individual to resist the temptation to respond in kind and maintain a higher moral ground.
- Phrase 2, “If they hate you, you don’t retaliate with hatred,” specifically addresses the situation where others hate the subject. It emphasizes the importance of not responding with hatred as a form of retaliation. It highlights the individual’s choice to rise above the negativity and respond with love or understanding instead.

Overall, both phrases convey the idea of not responding to hatred with more hatred, but they differ in their context and focus. Phrase 1 addresses the possibility of being hated and emphasizes the need to resist hating in return. Phrase 2 specifically addresses the situation of being hated and emphasizes the choice to respond without hatred. Both phrases advocate for maintaining a sense of grace, compassion, and integrity in the face of hatred.

“And yet don’t look too good, nor talk too wise” (line 8, source text) => **“Dhe s’hiqesh as m’i mënjim as m’i mirë”** (line 8, target text) => **“And you don’t show off as being wiser or better”** (line 8, back translation of target text).

Similarities:

- Both phrases caution against excessive display or expression of superiority.
- They both advocate for modesty and avoiding an overly self-assured demeanour.
- Both phrases highlight the importance of not flaunting one’s wisdom or goodness.

Differences:

- Phrase 1, “And yet don’t look too good, nor talk too wise,” advises against appearing excessively confident or self-important. It suggests a need for humility and avoiding an outward display of superiority in both appearance and speech.
- Phrase 2, “And you don’t show off as being wiser or better,” specifically addresses the act of showing off or boasting about one’s wisdom or superiority. It emphasizes the importance of refraining from flaunting one’s superiority over others.

Overall, both phrases convey the idea of avoiding excessive display of wisdom or superiority, but they differ in their focus and approach. Phrase 1 warns against appearing too good or wise, encompassing both appearance and speech, while Phrase 2

specifically addresses the act of showing off or boasting. Both phrases promote humility and modesty in interactions with others, encouraging a balanced and respectful approach.

“If you can dream – and not make dreams your master” (line 9, source text) => **“Në munç të ëndërrosh e të mejtosh”** (line 9, target text) => **“If you can dream and contemplate”** (line 9, back translation of target text).

Similarities:

- Both phrases begin with the conditional statement “If,” indicating a hypothetical scenario.
- They both highlight the importance of dreaming and engaging in imaginative thinking.
- Both phrases emphasize the need for balance and control in relation to dreams and thoughts.

Differences:

- Phrase 1, “If you can dream – and not make dreams your master,” focuses on the idea of not being controlled or consumed by dreams. It suggests the need to maintain a sense of agency and control over one’s aspirations and not be overwhelmed by them.
- Phrase 2, “If you can dream and contemplate,” emphasizes the act of dreaming and reflecting upon one’s thoughts. It suggests the value of thoughtful contemplation and reflection in the process of dreaming.

Overall, both phrases convey the importance of dreaming and engaging in imaginative thinking, but they differ in their emphasis. Phrase 1 focuses on the need for control and not allowing dreams to dominate one’s life, while Phrase 2 highlights the act of dreaming and the value of contemplation. Both phrases promote the idea of actively engaging with dreams and thoughts while maintaining a sense of balance and control.

“If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim” (line 10, source text) => **“Dhe nga këto në mos u robërofsh”** (line 10, target text) => **“And unless you become enslaved by these”** (line 10, back translation of target text).

Similarities:

- Both phrases address the importance of maintaining control and balance in relation to thoughts.
- They both caution against becoming overly fixated or enslaved by one’s thoughts.
- Both phrases emphasize the need for a balanced and mindful approach to thinking.

Differences:

- Phrase 1, “If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim,” focuses on the idea of not being overly attached to or obsessed with one’s thoughts. It suggests the importance of maintaining clarity and perspective, rather than letting thoughts dictate one’s actions or become the sole focus.
- Phrase 2, “And unless you become enslaved by these,” highlights the potential danger of becoming enslaved or controlled by the mentioned entities or circumstances. It suggests the need to avoid being dominated or overwhelmed by external influences.

Overall, both phrases convey the idea of maintaining control and balance in relation to thoughts, but they differ in their focus. Phrase 1 emphasizes the need to not make thoughts the ultimate aim or objective, while Phrase 2 warns against becoming enslaved by external influences. Both phrases promote the importance of maintaining mindfulness and control in thinking processes.

“If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster” (line 11, source text) => **“Në mung të preç Triumfin dhe Hatanë”** (line 11, target text) => **“If you can wait for Triumph and Calamity”** (line 11, back translation of target text).

Similarities:

- Both phrases begin with the conditional statement “If,” indicating a hypothetical scenario.
- They both present a contrasting pair of experiences, one positive and one negative.
- Both phrases emphasize the importance of resilience and endurance in the face of different outcomes.

Differences:

- Phrase 1, “If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster,” highlights the ability to handle both success and failure, Triumph and Disaster, with equanimity. It suggests being able to navigate and cope with extreme situations, whether they bring success or failure.
- Phrase 2, “If you can wait for Triumph and Calamity,” focuses on the idea of patiently waiting for both positive and negative outcomes, Triumph and Calamity. It suggests the ability to endure and remain steadfast during periods of anticipation and uncertainty.

Overall, both phrases convey the idea of resilience and adaptability in the face of varying experiences, but they differ in their emphasis. Phrase 1 focuses on meeting and managing extreme situations, while Phrase 2 emphasizes the ability to wait patiently for different outcomes. Both phrases highlight the importance of maintaining composure and strength in the face of diverse circumstances.

“And treat those two impostors just the same” (line 12, source text) => **“Dhe t’i shkelmoh të dy si kallpazanë”** (line 12, target text) => **“And to treat both the same as impostors”** (line 12, back translation of target text).

Similarities:

- Both phrases emphasize the importance of treating two entities or situations equally.
- They both suggest the need to approach those entities as impostors or deceivers.
- Both phrases advocate for maintaining an impartial and objective perspective.

Differences:

- Phrase 1, “And treat those two impostors just the same,” specifies “those two” impostors, implying a specific context or situation. It suggests treating those specific impostors with equal scepticism or caution.
- Phrase 2, “And to treat both the same as impostors,” uses a more general statement, referring to any two entities or situations. It highlights the importance of treating any pair of impostors equally, irrespective of their specific identity.

Overall, both phrases convey the idea of treating entities as impostors and treating them equally, but they differ in their specificity. Phrase 1 focuses on a specific pair of impostors, while Phrase 2 speaks more generally about treating any pair of impostors equally. Both phrases promote maintaining a balanced and sceptical approach when encountering potential deceivers.

“If you can bear to hear the truth you’ve spoken” (line 13, source text) => **“Në munç të mbaresh, kur një dreq ta dreth”** (line 13, target text) => **“If you can keep your composure when a demon perverts”** (line 13, back translation of target text).

“Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools” (line 14, source text) => **“Të drejtën dhe në lak syleshin heth”** (line 14, target text) => **“Justice and casts pebbles in your path”** (line 14, back translation of target text).

Similarities:

- Both phrases begin with the conditional statement “If,” indicating a hypothetical scenario.
- They both highlight the importance of maintaining composure in challenging situations.
- Both phrases involve external forces distorting or obstructing the truth or justice.

Differences:

- Phrase 1, “If you can bear to hear the truth you’ve spoken / Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,” focuses on the ability to handle the distortion and manipulation of truth by deceitful individuals. It emphasizes the need to remain calm and composed when others twist your words for their own deceitful purposes.
- Phrase 2, “If you can keep your composure when a demon perverts / Justice and casts pebbles in your path,” specifically addresses the act of a demon perverting justice and placing obstacles in one’s path. It highlights the need to maintain composure and resilience in the face of such unjust actions and challenges.

Overall, both phrases convey the importance of maintaining composure in the face of deceit and injustice, but they differ in their focus and context. Phrase 1 addresses the manipulation of truth by deceitful individuals, while Phrase 2 specifically focuses on a demon perverting justice and obstructing one’s path. Both phrases promote the idea of remaining steadfast and composed in challenging situations.

“Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken” (line 15, source text) => **“Kur sheh kalan’ e jetës të rëzuar”** (line 15, target text) => **“When you see the castle of life fallen”** (line 15, back translation of target text).

“And stoop and build’em up with worn-out tools” (line 16, source text) => **“Dhe prap e ngre me veglën e çkallmuar”** (line 16, target text) => **“And yet you raise it again with the tool destroyed”** (line 16, back translation of target text).

Similarities:

- Both phrases depict a situation where something significant has been broken or fallen.
- They both highlight the determination to rebuild despite the challenges or obstacles faced.

- Both phrases convey the idea of using tools or resources that are worn out or destroyed.

Differences:

- Phrase 1, “Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken, / And stoop and build’em up with worn-out tools,” focuses on the concept of watching the things one has devoted their life to being broken and rebuilding them using worn-out tools. It emphasizes the emotional investment and the act of persevering with limited resources.
- Phrase 2, “When you see the castle of life fallen / And yet you raise it again with the tool destroyed,” specifically mentions the sight of a fallen castle, representing the collapse of life’s fortresses. It highlights the determination to rebuild even when the tool being used is destroyed, suggesting a sense of resilience in the face of adversity.

Overall, both phrases convey the idea of rebuilding despite brokenness, but they differ in their focus and context. Phrase 1 emphasizes rebuilding with worn-out tools after witnessing personal investments being broken. Phrase 2 specifically references the fallen castle of life and the act of raising it again with a destroyed tool. Both phrases highlight the theme of resilience and the ability to rebuild in challenging circumstances.

“If you can make one heap of all your winnings” (line 17, source text) => **“Në munç të vësh m’i grumbull çdo thesar”** (line 17, target text) => **“If you can place every treasure upon a heap”** (line 17, back translation of target text).

“And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss” (line 18, source text) => **“Edhe t’i loç të gjitha me një zar”** (line 18, target text) => **“And play them all with a single dice”** (line 18, back translation of target text).

“And lose, and start again at your beginnings” (line 19, source text) => **“T’i humpç edhe të nisësh përsëri”** (line 19, target text) => **“Lose them and start anew”** (line 19, back translation of target text).

“And never breathe a word about your loss” (line 20, source text) => **“Pa thën’ asgjë për këtë batërdi”** (line 20, target text) => **“Without saying a word about this absurdity”** (line 20, back translation of target text).

Similarities:

- Both phrases present hypothetical scenarios and start with the conditional statement “If.”
- They both describe the act of taking significant risks and facing potential losses.
- Both phrases emphasize the ability to start afresh and not dwell on or disclose the losses experienced.

Differences:

- Phrase 1, “If you can make one heap of all your winnings / And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss, / And lose, and start again at your beginnings / And never breathe a word about your loss,” specifically mentions making a heap of winnings and risking it all on a single chance. It highlights the importance of resilience and starting anew without discussing the loss.
- Phrase 2, “If you can place every treasure upon a heap, / And play them all with a single dice, / Lose them and start anew / Without saying a word about this absurdity,” emphasizes placing every treasure on a heap and playing

them all with a single dice. It also emphasizes the act of starting afresh without mentioning the absurdity of the situation.

Overall, both phrases convey the idea of taking risks, facing losses, and starting anew without dwelling on or sharing the losses. Phrase 1 focuses on risking and losing one's winnings, while Phrase 2 highlights the act of placing every treasure and losing them. Both phrases promote resilience, adaptability, and the ability to maintain composure in challenging situations.

“If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew” (line 21, source text) => **“Në munç të kesh një zemër, trup e kokë”** (line 21, target text) => **“If you can possess a heart, body, and mind”** (line 21, back translation of target text).

“To serve your turn long after they are gone” (line 22, source text) => **“Që të shërbejnë sa të bëhen trokë”** (line 22, target text) => **“That serve you until they are worn out”** (line 22, back translation of target text).

“And so hold on when there is nothing in you” (line 23, source text) => **“Dhe të vazhdosh i djegur shkrupt në furrë”** (line 23, target text) => **“And continue burning, with yourself as the ember”** (line 23, back translation of target text).

“Except the Will which says to them: ‘Hold on!’” (line 24, source text) => **“Dhe të thërret vullneti: ‘Mbahu, or burrë!’”** (line 24, target text) => **“And the will calls out: ‘Hold on, oh man!’”** (line 24, back translation of target text).

Similarities:

- Both phrases emphasize the importance of perseverance and determination in challenging circumstances.
- They both suggest the need to rely on inner strength and willpower to continue holding on.
- Both phrases highlight the idea of pushing oneself beyond physical and mental limitations.

Differences:

- Phrase 1, “If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew / To serve your turn long after they are gone, / And so hold on when there is nothing in you / Except the Will which says to them: ‘Hold on!’”, focuses on the act of forcing one’s heart, nerve, and sinew to serve even after they are exhausted or depleted. It emphasizes the power of the Will to sustain and motivate oneself.
- Phrase 2, “If you can possess a heart, body, and mind / That serve you until they are worn out / And continue burning, with yourself as the ember / And the will calls out: ‘Hold on, oh man!’”, emphasizes the possession of a heart, body, and mind that serve until they are worn out. It highlights the idea of one’s inner fire, represented by the burning ember, and the Will calling out to hold on.

Overall, both phrases convey the idea of enduring and holding on, but they differ in their specific emphasis. Phrase 1 emphasizes pushing beyond physical and mental limits, while Phrase 2 highlights the possession of inner strength and resilience. Both phrases promote the importance of perseverance and relying on the Will to keep going in difficult circumstances.

“If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue” (line 25, source text) => **“Në munç të zbreç në turm’ e të mbash nderin”** (line 25, target text) => **“If you can descend into the crowd and maintain honor”** (line 25, back translation of target text).

“Or walk with Kings – nor lose the common touch” (line 26, source text) => **“Të hash me mbretin, të pish me neferin”** (line 26, target text) => **“Eat with the king, drink with the soldier”** (line 26, back translation of target text).

“If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you” (line 27, source text) => **“Në mos të ngaftë dot as mik as hasmë”** (line 27, target text) => **“If neither friend nor foe can trouble you”** (line 27, back translation of target text).

“If all men count with you but none too much” (line 28, source text) => **“N’i daç të gjithë, po asnjë për dasmë”** (line 28, target text) => **“If you love everyone, but none for wedding”** (line 28, back translation of target text).

“If you can fill the unforgiving minute” (line 29, source text) => **“Në munç për çdo minutë të përpjetë”** (line 29, target text) => **“If you can compress sixty seconds”** (line 29, back translation of target text).

“With sixty seconds’ worth of distance run” (line 30, source text) => **“Të rëncë tamam sekunda gjashtëdhjetë”** (line 30, target text) => **“Into a fleeting moment”** (line 30, back translation of target text).

“Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it” (line 31, source text) => **“Zaptove dhenë me çdo mall dhe hir”** (line 31, target text) => **“You have seized the earth with every commodity and grace”** (line 31, back translation of target text).

“And – which is more – you’ll be a Man, my son!” (line 32, source text) => **“Dhe ca më mirë, qënke trim, or bir!”** (line 32, target text) => **“And even better, you are brave, O son!”** (line 32, back translation of target text).

Similarities:

- Both phrases present a series of conditional statements outlining virtues and characteristics to aspire to.
- They both emphasize the ability to interact with people from different backgrounds and maintain one’s values and integrity.
- Both phrases touch upon the importance of resilience and the ability to withstand both adversity and adoration.
- They both highlight the value of time and making the most of each moment.

Differences:

- Phrase 1, “If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue, / Or walk with Kings – nor lose the common touch, / If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you, / If all men count with you but none too much; / If you can fill the unforgiving minute / With sixty seconds’ worth of distance run, / Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it, / And – which is more – you’ll be a Man, my son!”, focuses on the ability to communicate effectively and maintain moral values while navigating different social contexts, including interacting with both crowds and kings. It emphasizes the balance between high and low social spheres and the importance of maintaining integrity in relationships.
- Phrase 2, “If you can descend into the crowd and maintain honor, / Eat with the king, drink with the soldier; / If neither friend nor foe can trouble you, / If you love everyone, but none for wedding; / If you can compress sixty seconds / Into a fleeting moment; / You have seized the earth with every commodity and grace, / And even better, you are brave, O son!”, centres on descending into the crowd and maintaining honor, specifically highlighting the ability to dine with kings and drink with soldiers. It emphasizes the ability to navigate social situations with grace and treat everyone with respect.

Overall, both phrases convey similar ideas of maintaining integrity and resilience while interacting with different social groups. Phrase 1 focuses more on effective

communication and the balance of social contexts, while Phrase 2 emphasizes the ability to maintain honor and treat others with respect.

To summarize the comparison between the source text and the target text:

Similarities:

- Both texts present a series of conditional statements that outline virtues and characteristics to aspire to.
- They both emphasize the importance of resilience, integrity, and the ability to withstand adversity and maintain values.
- Both texts touch upon the significance of time and making the most of each moment.

Differences:

- The target text often provides more specific translations that convey the intended meaning in the source text.
- The target text occasionally introduces additional elements or nuances to capture the essence of the source text in the target language.
- The target text may adapt the wording or structure of the original text to fit the linguistic and cultural context of the target language.

Overall, the target text effectively captures the core messages and themes of the source text while adapting them to the target language. It maintains the spirit and intention of the original text, presenting a faithful translation that resonates with the target audience.

The successful translation of such significant poetic works underscores the transformative power of translation. Even if the translation does not mirror the original text in every aspect, it has the potential to recreate the aesthetic and emotional experience of the original in a new linguistic and cultural context. Moreover, by bridging cultural and linguistic divides, translations enable a wider audience to access, appreciate, and be influenced by these poetic works, thereby enriching the global literary landscape.

This affirmation of the feasibility and impact of poetic translation does not diminish the challenges inherent in this endeavour. Still, it provides a compelling counter-narrative to the contention that poetry is untranslatable. It testifies to the potential of translation to faithfully convey the spirit and depth of poetic expression across languages, cultures, and epochs, underscoring the valuable role of translation in fostering cross-cultural literary exchange and understanding.

CONCLUSIONS

When revisiting the initial query (Is poetry translatable?), it is found that it is a multifaceted and intricate question that defies straightforward answers. The challenge lies in the fundamental nature of poetry as a unique amalgamation of meaning, form, sound, and cultural context. Translating poetry, therefore, demands more than linguistic fluency—it calls for a fine balance of artistic sensitivity, cultural understanding, and creative reinterpretation.

Indeed, the complexities of translating poetry are manifold, and the process is fraught with potential pitfalls. It can be an arduous journey of negotiating between the source and target languages' structures, idioms, and cultural nuances. The translator

must grapple with the task of preserving the poem's rhythm, rhyme, and meter in the target language, often without compromising the fidelity to its meaning and tone.

Despite these inherent challenges, the body of translated poetry spanning across languages, cultures, and eras bears testament to the feasibility of this endeavour. Successful poetic translations, though not carbon copies of their originals, manage to capture and convey the essence, spirit, and depth of the original works. They bridge linguistic and cultural divides, allowing a broader audience to appreciate and engage with the works that would otherwise remain inaccessible to them.

Furthermore, the practice of translating poetry transcends a mere linguistic exercise—it evolves into a rich cultural and creative process. By bringing a foreign poem into one's own language, the translator contributes to enriching their own literary tradition with fresh metaphors, ideas, and aesthetic forms. They foster a cross-cultural exchange of ideas, emotions, and experiences, augmenting the diversity and richness of the global literary landscape.

Ultimately, the task of translating poetry underscores the transformative power of language and the human capacity for creative adaptation. It is not just about reproducing an existing piece in another language; rather, it involves reimagining and recreating the poetic experience for a new linguistic and cultural context.

Thus, despite the intricacies and challenges, the translation of poetry is a deeply rewarding endeavor, an act of linguistic, cultural, and creative mediation. It is a testament to the shared human ability to communicate, empathize, and create, across boundaries of language and culture. The translation of poetry, therefore, is more than just a possibility—it is a profound expression of the interconnectedness of human experience and understanding.

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