

Noli Translator of English and American Literatures

Dr. Lirak Karjagdiu

Associate Professor

Abstract

This paper focuses on Fan S. Noli as the first, the most prolific and outstanding translator of English and American literary works in Albanian. In addition, this paper centers on Noli's contribution in enriching Albanian literature and culture through translation of English and American literary works in Albanian. However, the paper deals with and discusses only the masterpieces and the most popular works of English and American literatures translated by Noli in Albanian. To this end it was more convenient to divide his translation of English and American Literature masterpieces into Albanian in three main periods: 1. The Beginnings or Early Period (1906-1920); 2. The Period of Maturation or the Middle Period (1920-1961) and 3. The Late Period (1961-1965). Therefore, the paper will shed light on Fan S. Noli's contribution in enriching Albanian literature, in deepening and refining artistic, aesthetic and literary ideas and tastes of the Albanian readers and in laying the foundations for the modernization and westernization of Albanian literature.

Keywords: *Noli, literary translation, English and American literatures, Albanian literature, enrichment and advancement of Albanian literature, modernization and westernization of Albanian literature.*

Introduction

There is no doubt that, though a lot of reviews, researches and studies have been written on Noli's works as a publicist, historian, orator diplomat, literary critic, composer, dramatist, to date no meaningful and comprehensive papers or studies were written on Noli as a translator. This is an anomaly, taking into account that Noli translated religious and literary works almost throughout his entire life, translating thousands of pages from different languages, especially from English. Therefore, the paper will focus on Noli as a translator of English and American literatures, dividing his translation of English and American Literature masterpieces into Albanian in three main periods: 1. The Beginnings or Early Period; 2. The Period of Maturation or the Middle Period and 3. The Late Period. It

is worth emphasizing that this paper deals with and discusses only the masterpieces and the most popular works of English and American literatures translated by Noli in Albanian.

The Beginnings or Early Period (1906-1920)

During The Beginnings or Early Period (1906-1920), Noli translated a few short stories from German, French, Norwegian and Greek languages. While, English and American literary works translated by Noli during this period are as follows: Washington Irving's short story "Legend of the Arabian Astrologer" from the collection of essays, verbal sketches and short stories "Tales of the Alhambra" (1909), E.A. Poe's short story "The Masque of the Red Death" (1909), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "Scanderbeg" (1915), William Shakespeare's drama "Othello" (1916) and E.A. Poe's poem "The Raven" and his elegy "Annabel Lee" (1918).

The translation of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "Scanderbeg" belongs to the first period of Noli's translations. The full title of the brochure, in which the translation of this poem is included, is: "Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "Scanderbeg". Translated by Father Fan S. Noli, Boston., Mass., 1916". The cover of the brochure has the following title: "People's library" (in Albanian "Libraria popullore"), while in the second page is the dedication. Noli dedicates this translation to F. Konica.¹ Further on, in the third page is the preface, which among others says the following: "The lack of the books in Albanian language made me establish "People's library" (in Albanian "Libraria popullore") so that I could present my compatriots some selected works of World Literature. I started with Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "Scanderbeg". This is perhaps the best poem ever written about our national hero and thus deserved to be translated and presented as the first work among many other volumes with literary works that I intend to publish for Albanian readers". Then, in the fifth page is the "Introduction" where some important notes on the author, his works and a quite interesting explanation for the readers can be found. "The American poet", explains Noli, "chose one of the most dramatic episodes of Scanderbeg's life as a subject for his poem and gave us a poem

¹ Fan. S. Noli, Vëllimi I, "Skendërbeu", Libraria Popullore, Boston, Mass 1916, fq. 4.

Faik Konica was one of the greatest figures of Albanian culture in the early decades of the twentieth century. He was a friend of Noli's and wrote little in the way of literature, but as a stylist, critic, publicist and political figure he had a tremendous impact on Albanian writing and on Albanian culture at the time.

that brings together all the qualities of a masterpiece. The leaving of Scanderbeg after the war, the slaughter of Qatip, the seizure of the castle with a forged order, which was unwillingly taken from Qatip, the rise of the national flag and the joy of the people for the liberation of their motherland, is described in a masterful way with full of vivacity, enthusiasm and resonance that wins your heart and mind”.

On the occasion of the translation of this poem, Noli expresses his belief that in general translation of a poem from one language into another is very difficult, “sometimes even impossible”. However, he expresses his hope that: “The flower that I took from Longfellow’s garden did not lose its smell, colour, freshness after I planted it in the Albanian garden. Though, the readers will be the best judges of it”.²

If we make some spontaneous comparisons we will conclude that, while the original, English version, of the poem on Scanderbeg has 16 stanzas, Noli’s Albanian translation has 19 stanzas and the same number of lines. The second stanza of the English version has 12 lines, while in Albanian translation this stanza is divided into two six line stanzas. English version of the thirteenth stanza has 14 lines, whereas the Albanian translation has two 7 line stanzas. Apart from this, Longfellow in his poem uses seven syllable lines, while in Noli’s translation the seven syllable line dominates the poem. Suffices to mention that this is a war like verse, as it reminds us of war.³

Nevertheless, in Albanian translation, Noli changed the rhythm and the accent in different lines. This way, while Longfellow’s original version of the poem, in general, has three accents in one line, Noli, adhering to the Albanian tradition of the poetry, uses three accents within a line. Furthermore, in the original version the accents fall in the beginning or in the second syllable: The battle is fought and won, while in the Albanian version the first accents fall in the third syllable: Lufton luftën dhe fiton, so it falls in the word “battle” “luftën”. One gets the impression that Noli in his translation uses a lot of alliterations and assonances in order to recreate euphony, for example: This city and all its lands/ Should be given të me again. (Qyteti me të gjitha tokat/ Do të më kthehen përsëri (alliteration in letter t), or: Who we are that shall withstand/ The wind of his lifted hand?

² Fan S. Noli poet në: Fan S. Noli, Vepra 1. Botohet nën kujdesin e ASH të RPSSH, Tiranë, 1987, fq. 346- 347

³ Pojani, V., Lubonja, B. dhe Bonja, E.. Poema “Skendërbeu” e H.W. Longfellow përmes shqipërimin të F. S. Nolit, në: “Fan S. Noli me 130 vjetorin e lindjes 1882-2012”. Konferenca shkencore ndërkombëtare. Fakulteti i Edukimit dhe Filologjisë, Korçë, 2012, fq. 388

(Kur ngre dorën kundër nesh/ Dhena grinë si rrebeshe? (alliteration in letter t and assonance in letter e) or the following example: And the Scribe said What misdeed/ Have I done, that without need/ Thou dost to me this thing? (Dhe Qatipi tha: Po ç' faj/ Paskam bërë që Pashaj/ Më bën mua këtë gjë? (assonance in letter a).

It is worthwhile mentioning that Longfellow used some archaisms, for example: Wearing his signet ring (Me mehyrin e Dorletit)/ To King Amurath's Pasha (Për Mytesarifin e mbretit)/ And the Scribe low in dread (Dhe Qatipi u krrus prej tmerrit). The American poet also used other archaisms, pronouns and nouns for which Noli almost always found equivalents in Albanian language.⁴

Noli's literary criticism works comprise of eight introductions and some other articles, the majority of which Noli dedicates to Shakespearean universe with whom he always felt emotionally and intellectually attached. Themes in Shakespeare's works are universal and they have a lot of reference points in Albanian reality but, above all, Noli liked and admired them because they have a lot of interesting similarities and resemblances with the gloomy and bleak Albanian world and with its existential efforts to come out of the darkness of history. The ability to compare themes and subjects of Shakespeare's works with the Albanian reality can be noticed in almost all Noli's introductions, who through art's universality and allusions expressed the relationships between the individual and the society, the struggle for social justice, equality and democracy and against class distinction, etc. However, Noli did not delve into certain artistic and ethical aspects of the works. It is interesting that in almost all his introductions he used a clear scheme of discussion. This way, in the beginning he shortly talked about the author, then he focused on social and historic milieu of the events, and finally he conducted an essential analysis of the main ideas and philosophy of the work.

In general "Othello", which is based on some altered details of a story by Chianti, is a tragedy of jealousy caused by lies and defamation. The jealousy is caused by self-deception. Viewed from different perspectives, "Othello" is a multifarious tragedy: a tragedy of innocence, the victim of which is Desdemona, a tragedy of credulousness and candidness, the victim of which is Othello, and a tragedy of the victim of devil's will, deception and wickedness, the symbol of which is Iago. Thus, if Desdemona was not that innocent, she would not suffer; if Othello was not that ungrudging and earnest, he would not kill Desdemona; and finally if

⁴ Pojani, V., vep. e cituar, fq. 389

Iago did not have such a satanic character he would not prepare and commit such heinous and dreadful crimes.

Undoubtedly, “Othello” is one of Shakespeare’s best tragedies, translated by Noli. Events in this tragedy are very furious for both readers and viewers. They are very impulsive, the scenes are quite real and lifelike, the dramatic events are presented in a unified way and though without any episodes the tragedy still has a full artistic harmony. Iago is an epitome of hypocrisy so he uses all his cant for his revenge. From outside Iago looks as a kind and polite person to almost everyone. Only from time to time his cynicism shows that he is wicked. Iago seems to be kind, friendly and benevolent to his commander. He says about himself that: “I am not what I seem to be”, which means that he is only pretending. What is even more interesting, all the other characters have a good and a high opinion about him and they trust him, though he is the cause of all the gossips and the evil and mean things of this tragedy.⁵

In the “Preface” of the translation, Noli informs the readers know that he translated “Othello” in five months “and he worked two more months” in order to review his translation, after staying nine years in USA, where he arrived in 1906 and graduated from Harvard in 1912. As a matter of fact, he translated “Othello” in 1915, seven years after the Congress of Manastir⁶, three years after Albania proclaimed its independence, and about two years after the establishment of Literature Council of Shkodra⁷. As far as the alphabet goes, Noli used the Manastir alphabet.⁸ Apart from this, in the “Preface” of the translation published in 1916, Noli points out that Shakespeare is “The best playwright in the world”, who wrote poems, comedies, historical plays and tragedies”. According to Noli, Shakespeare’s best plays are: “Hamlet”, “Macbeth”, “Romeo and Juliet”, “King Lear”, “Julius Caesar” and “Othello”. Furthermore, in the “Preface” of the Albanian translation of “Othello”, Noli after providing some of the

⁵ Po aty, fq. 390

⁶ The **Congress of Manastir** was an academic conference held in the city of Manastir (Bitola) from November 14 to November 22, 1908, with the goal of standardizing the Albanian alphabet. November 22 is now a commemorative day in Albania, Kosovo, and Republic of Macedonia, as well as among the Albanian diaspora, known as **Alphabet Day** (Albanian: *Dita e Alfabetit*).

⁷ **Literature Council of Shkodra** is a council, which was formed in Shkoder (Albania), in 1916 by the distinguished Albanian intellectuals of that time to deal with the Albanian language issues and in which some international researches and scholars of Albanian language, literature and culture also took part.

⁸ Vep. e cituar, fq. 9-12

most important information about Shakespeare's life, he then writes about the plot of the tragedy, in general, while he pays particular attention to the characters.⁹

Suffice to mention that not long ago two scholars, Gjovani Bellusho (Giovani Belluscio) dhe Flora Koleci, in their paper entitled: "Lexical and grammatical features and original strategies of Noli's translation of "Othello" from English", have made a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the translation of this tragedy, whereby they explained and compared not only fifty two footnotes provided by Noli in his translation of "Othello", but they also compared and analysed the vocabulary, grammar errors, syntactic structures and the quality of translation but without underestimating the values and creativeness of translation.¹⁰

However, one of the best and the most popular poems translated into Albanian by Noli is "The Raven" written by one of the greatest American poets E.A. Poe. As soon as it came out in 1849, in "New York Evening", this poem was reprinted in many newspapers, magazines and journals. This proves that the poem was very well received, liked and appreciated by the readers. No doubt heightened Poe's fame and popularity as a poet. According to E.H. Davidson, Poe got his idea about the raven in Dickens' novel "Barnaby Rudge". It took him three years to write the poem, given that Poe, meantime, before publishing it, recited it quite often to his acquaintances and friends. According to S. Stovali, in his popular essay "Philosophy of Composition", Poe intended to write a short story but then changed his mind and decided to write his great poem "The Raven".¹¹ In the aforementioned essay, Poe points out that the main ideas for writing a poem are the beauty and sorrow, tone and rhythm. On this occasion, Poe explains the need and the reasons of using the refrain in his poem. This poem has 108 lines, while the climax is achieved in line 54. While T.S. Eliot, one of the greatest modern English and American poets and critics, believes that this poem became even more popular after it was translated

⁹ Kastrati, J., Përkthyesit tanë të veprave dramaturgjike. Fan S. Noli si përkthyes, në Fan S. Noli ndër bashkëkohanikët, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1968, fq. 204-205

¹⁰ Belluscio, Gj., Koleci, F.: "Veçori gramatikore dhe strategji origjinale në përkthimin e "Othellos" së Fan Nolit nga anglishtja" në: "Fan S. Noli me 130 vjetorin e lindjes 1882-2012". Konferenca shkencore ndërkombëtare. Fakulteti i Edukimit dhe Filologjisë, Korçë, 2012, fq. 232-244

¹¹ Korbi, Fan S. Noli, "Korbi i Poes", Revista Adriatike, Vol. 1, Boston, Mass., Shtator, 1918, fq. 38-41

in French by Charl Bodler, who according to Eliot, overcomes even the original.¹²

Though there are different versions of “The Raven”, the poem was first published in “Adriatic Review” (in Albanian: Rivistën Adriatik) in Boston, in September 1918. In the preface of the translation Noli emphasizes the fact that: “ E.A. Poe’s poem “The Raven” is the saddest and the most artistic poem. Moreover, we can say that it is one of the best poems in the world. The poem was translated into Albanian by the editor of this review seven years ago, in 1911, but it is only know that we have managed to publish it for the first time. It goes without saying that in this preface we have to provide the readers with the author’s short biography, in order for them to easier and better understand the poem”. Noli reminds the readers that Poe has written this poem in 1845, when his wife was ill and about to die, with no chance of survival. After her death, he wrote another poem entitled “Annabel Lee” in which, Noli explains: “The author portrays in a very artistic and powerful way his despair for his wife’s loss. These are some of the saddest poems in World literature. Thus we hope that now Albanians will be able to read and appreciate both of them in their mother tongue, without noticing that much the eventual but unavoidable shortcomings and losses in translation”.

The original, English version, of “The Raven” has eighteen 6 line stanzas, while Noli’s translation has eighteen 11 line stanzas. Not long ago, one of the well-known Albanian scholars E. Dodona had found out that there are two Noli’s versions of translation of this poem in Albanian, he translated the first version in 1911 and the second version, a revised one, in 1918. In the original version of the poem a sixteen syllable and five syllable line, as a refrain, dominate, while in the translated version of this poem an eight syllable, seven syllable and two syllable lines, were used. The translation of “The Raven” in Albanian was received with enthusiasm by Albanian literary criticism. Vehbi Bala, a well-known Albanian scholar, in his survey about Noli praises this translation by saying that: “The popularity of E.A. Poe’s poem “The Raven” is permeated by a feeling of extreme sorrow and despair, which is achieved due to the special value of the poetic artistry of the translator, especially when it comes to melodious, harmonic and rhythmic effects that has on the reader”¹³

¹² Ibrani (Gjinali), Z.; Fan S. Noli përkthyesi i parë i poezisë amerikane në gjuhën shqipe. Universiteti i Kosovës në Prishtinë, Fakulteti Filozofik, Prishtinë, fq. 67-68.

¹³ Noli, F. S., vep. e cituar, fq. 43

Noli thus, through the translation of "The Raven" has managed to create a new artistic reality by oftentimes avoiding or disregarding the original but by also increasing the value of his translation. Regarding this, K. Ashta expresses his opinion by concluding that: "In Noli's translation, the readers find themselves in front of an Albanian work, in front of an elegy that the Arber people (the Medieval name for Albanians) know how to understand and express. Noli translated the spirit of these poems in popular eight syllable lines, sticking to the Albanian tradition, to this new aesthetic pleasure that impresses and heightens us"¹⁴

While the elegiac poem "Annabel Lee" by the same American poet, which Noli translated in 1918, is about the longing, grief and profound spiritual pain of a lover, who was suffering for a young girl named Annabel Lee, whom he loved so much but the girl also loved the young lover. He believes that even the angels envied their love. However, since she passed away, to her lover, who was yearning for her, seems that: "her sister angels have abducted her and buried her in a grave, in a place, near the sea. To the poor lover, it seems as the angels did not love and even envied Annabel Lee, who was frozen by the south frost. Lamenting ruefully with a twinkled heart and pricked spirit, moans because such a love was stronger than any other love, which was never known or seen by any man, not even by angels or demons. However, the depressed lover with a burnt heart feels great pain for the beautiful Annabel Lee and he even remembers her with insatiable nostalgia and feels that even the moonlight and stars are shining like his eyes for Annabel Lee, thus he remembers and imagines her night and day and this is how he keeps his heart warm as he puts in the end of the poem: Of my darling—my darling—my life and my bride,/ In her sepulchre there by the sea—/ In her tomb by the sounding sea. In this excellent elegy the author uses quite often hyperbole, metaphor, simile, antithesis and some epithets. The reproduced rhymes, give a sort of euphoria to the sad, grieving and sinister tone and atmosphere of the elegy."¹⁵

¹⁴ Zhuri, N., Noli: Përkthyesi dhe kritiku, në: "Fan S. Noli me 130 vjetorin e lindjes 1882-2012". Konferenca shkencore ndërkombëtare. Fakulteti i Edukimit dhe Filologjisë, Korçë, 2012, fq. 384

¹⁵ Aliu, L., Me përkthimet e Nolit, në 100 vjetorin e lindjes 1882-1982. Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës, Prishtinë, fq. 227-228

The Maturation or the Middle Period (1920-1961)

While in the second period, or the maturation period (1920- 1961), Noli translated and published three of the best and most popular English tragedies “Macbeth”, “Hamlet” dhe “Julius Ceasar” (1926).

Noli published “Othello” in 1916, and 10 years later he also translated three other tragedies one after the other: “Hamlet”, “Julius Ceasar” and “Macbeth”. At the get go Noli was reluctant about the success of his translations. This is perhaps due to the fact that he was not educated in Albanian, as he was an Albanian from Ibrik Tepe, a remote part of Albanian, while English was a foreign language to him, but a language that he acquired and learned very well and that never let him down. The translation of “Othello” was successful. He started to read Shakespeare’s works when he was very young, about 15 years, by attempting to also know and understand Shakespeare and his works through the role of a prompter in the Greek theatres in Athens.

He considered his “meeting” with Shakespeare as one of the greatest events in his life, a “meeting” which helped and enabled him to understand not only art but also the history of the entire humanity. This way, Shakespeare is one of the first great world writers that entered the Albanian world and culture. Noli, apart from offering Shakespeares’ tragedies to the Albanian reader, through his literary criticism works or introductions (prefaces), as he calls them, he helped Albanian readers to better understand the message of the work, while at the same time he paved the ground for further development and advancement of the Albanian literary criticism. In his introductions that precede all the translated literary works by him, he analyzed the work, in general, by unravelling and explaining the historical, philosophical, social and political problems. Introductions of almost every translated work are short but very concise studies through which, in a comprehensive way and in a language used by him so eloquently and responsibly, criticized and condemned the vices of a certain category of society, such as: the unrestrained greediness of the hypocrites, slyness, careerism and perfidious and mysterious fratricide.¹⁶

Thus, in the three introductions of the Albanian translations of Shakespeare’s famous tragedies “Hamlet”, “Macbeth” and “Julius Ceasar”, Noli explained the essence of the Shakespearean theatre, the universality of his thought and the fate and psychology of humanity.

¹⁶ Bexheti, V., Fan Noli dhe Shekspiri, në: “Fan S. Noli me 130 vjetorin e lindjes 1882-2012”. Konferenca shkencore ndërkombëtare. Fakulteti i Edukimit dhe Filologjisë, Korçë, 2012, fq. 395

Nevertheless, above and beyond all, through them Noli gave a message to the Albanian world, political and social groups about the challenges ahead for the Albanian man and nation. Moreover, in these introductions parallelism with historical and social Albanian context is ever present and sometimes even exaggerated.¹⁷

Whereas, in his introduction of “Macbeth” Noli notes: “No other theatrical work brings together in a small space such a fatality full of thrilling and morbid events in “Macbeth”, the most horrible tragedy written by Shakespeare’s demonic pen” and further on through a short but comprehensive analysis, he calls this tragedy as: “A mirror of all Scotland’s history”, a critique of ‘the terrorist system’ and “a tragedy of criminal ambition”.¹⁸ “Macbeth” is a flawless work of dramatic art, which is based on one of the most important ethical principles and no wonder that it is known as one of the best dramas in World literature. The ethical idea in which “Macbeth” is based, which is plunged in a dark pessimism, is that the bad and mean things that you try to do to the others in fact you are doing them to yourself. This is the essence of Macbeth’s reflection when in darkness he thinks whether to kill Duncan. Ever since the moment when, under the influence of his wife, he kills Duncan and becomes a king until the moment when he dies from the stabbing of the revengeful sword, Macbeth harms himself by destroying the others. Briefly, what kind of work is ‘Macbeth’? It is a tragedy, which has characters that are livelier than real people, who have a profound psychology and important poetical thoughts and images, which are consentient with the situation and circumstances that prevail. This is a tragedy which is based on one of the most important principles of life, meaning that the message of this tragedy is that the lives of the people are tied together in a mysterious way so that when a man destroys or kills another man, he/ she has at the same time killed himself. That is why this tragedy was performed and is still being performed in theatrical scenes all over the world.

The spirit of “Macbeth” is the battleground of the evil and good forces. The sources of the forces of evil can be found in gluttony and excessive ambition, in the malevolence of witches and Lady Macbeth’s greediness. The sources and the power of goodness are more mysterious and they

¹⁷ Rredhi, G., “Mendimi kritiko letrar i Fan Nolit në lidhje me artin klasik botëror”, në: “Fan S. Noli me 130 vjetorin e lindjes 1882-2012”. Konferenca shkencore ndërkombëtare. Fakulteti i Edukimit dhe Filologjisë, Korçë, 2012, fq. 357-358

¹⁸ Noli, F.S. Introdukta, në Fan S. Noli. Vepra 6, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1988, fq. 21-66

appear only at the outset in Macbeth's thoughts and in some attitudes and acts of certain honest and decent characters. At the get go the forces of evil prevail but when the conflict and the war spreads within the crowds then the forces of evil are defeated. Had the struggle between these forces not stopped then the evil would spread all over the world, as Shakespeare was convinced that justice should prove its superiority and the truth and goodness should prevail and triumph over evil.

While, in the tragedy of "Hamlet", Noli tries to find the essence of Hamletism in this drama which, as he emphasizes in his Introduction to his translation of "Hamlet": was written (developed) and ornamented in such a masterful and astonished way that we may call it as the best and the most popular theatrical piece ever played and performed in any theater". It is obvious that Shakespeare's hypnotizing ability and imagination overcome all kinds of human boundaries. According to Noli, as a profound reader, the whole tragedy of Hamlet's spirit can be summarized in the following lines: The time is out of joint: O cursed spite, /That ever I was born to set it right! This time he makes a worthy and suggestive description of Hamlet's endless dreams and sufferings of his subtle and frail soul that suddenly "all the world falls on his head; He is neither dead nor alive, neither sane nor insane; He is about to die, about to kill himself, about to become mad, on the brink of the abyss from where he knows that sooner or later he will head towards disaster and be destroyed. His mind is in the graveyard, among ghosts, skeletons and skulls...; His revenge is a work of art...; Hamlet is one of the richest and the profoundest characters that has ever come from Shakespeare's pen...; Hamlet is the highest and the most beautiful oak of Shakespearean wood, etc".¹⁹

This is why, though many distinguished critics have attempted to interpret and understand the character of Hamlet, he still remains the most enigmatic character in the world of drama. Ten believes that Hamlet is in fact Shakespeare himself. Gervinus considers Hamlet an idealist. Bodelstadt regards Hamlet as a character that can not adjust into his setting and environment. Whereas, Ygo looks on Hamlet as a misanthrope. As a matter of fact, every bright and intelligent reader notices that Shakespeare through Hamlet has mainly expressed and portrayed himself, in the first years of the XVII-th century.²⁰

Because of meditative and poetic features, because of the pain and the suffering of the mystery of life, because of its perfect artistic portrayal of

¹⁹ Rredhi, G. Vepër e cituar fq. 359

²⁰ Qosja, R. Gjurmëve të një kritiku letrar, në: Fan S. Noli ndër bashkëkohanikët, Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1968, fq. 130-145

the pain and suffering and because of the feeling of solemnity that captivate Hamlet, he remains, from the very beginning until today not just in England but all over the world, always young, attractive and charming, always close and clear to all the readers and viewers, a pabulum to both more refined and intellectual people and ordinary people.

“Julius Caesar” at first sight looks like a tragedy of thirst for power, which unconsciously craves for divine power. But, if we delve into the tragedy, it will clearly come out that it is a tragedy of Roman Republican spirit and system, which did not realize that the new era of the imperial spirit has arrived. The new imperial spirit is represented through Julius Caesar, Anthony and Octavius; the old Republican spirit and system is represented through, defended and desired by Cassius and Brutus. Shakespeare tells the story of the conflict between these two spirits and systems and the triumph of the new spirit over the old one.²¹

Moreover, Noli explains that there are modern critics who interpret the assassination of Julius Caesar as a crime and a pointless bloodshed. Those critics, Noli notes: “Do not judge political assassinations by today’s standards as according to standards of the Republican and Antique world of Greek and Rome, the assassins of the tyrants were praised and considered as heroes and liberators, while the assassination of the tyrant was considered a great deed and a patriotic duty of each free citizen”. Noli does not agree with the argument that the bloodshed was useless as the “Caesar-ism” triumphed even after Julius Caesar’s assassination, while the best answer was given by Brutus and Cassius, when they insist that: “Their deed will go down in history and their names as liberators of their homeland will be remembered generation after generation”.

As a matter of fact, Brutus and Cassius, according to Noli’s beliefs resemble too much each other though they represent two different schools. They, according to Noli, represent two different systems and share the same opinion about the toppling the tyranic regime as they both think that “this should be carried out mercilessly and in complete disregard with moral scruples”. However, as Noli writes, after the first step, upon the assassination of Caesar, Brutus and Cassius separate. Cassius believes that they should move fast, use all available means to settle accounts with the foes and show no mercy whatsoever toward the opponents, while Brutus thinks that in order to win freedom they should move forward carefully and cautiously with reliable friends, with noble means and with no further bloodshed. Nevertheless, neither the people of Rome nor the leadership,

²¹ Noli, S.F. Vepër e cituar, fq. 29-32

explains Noli, are guilty for staying aside drily but terrorized and leaving in lurch Brutus and Cassius. In the end Noli remarks: “This fatal attitude had been paid dearly by the future generations, who had been subjected to tyranny for centuries until the Roman Empire was ruined and wiped out”. The allusions and analogies of this tragedy with Albanian history are quite evident as Noli tried to draw historical parallels between the destiny of the Ancient Rome and Albania after the difficult and fatal year for Noli and his government, in 1924.²²

By trying to interpret (albanize) and not translate the works, he enabled the Albanian readers to easier and better understand the essence of Shakespeare’s works and to preserve their artistic worth and significance without distorting or losing the poetic idea and the messages of his works. This means that he worked on translating and interpreting words and phrases from foreign languages, in this case from English language, until he was convinced that those words and phrases were completely understandable and comprehensible in Albanian.²³

The Last Period (1961-1965)

Finally, in the last period (1961-1965), during his calm and old age, Noli translated a few poems by both English and American poets. From English literature he translated the following poems: “If” by Rudyard Kipling (1962), “My Native Land” by Walter Scott (1962), “On the Eve of His Execution” by Chidiock Tichborne (1963) and “Mortality” by Willim Knox (1963). While from American Literature Noli translated the following poems: Herman Melville’s “The Martyr” and (1963) and Edwin Markham’s “The Man With the Hoe” (1963).

Meantime, Noli published in “Dielli” review on 1 November 1961 the translation of the poem “If” by Rudyard Kipling, who is one of the greatest prose writers and poets of Victorian literature. This is a meditative poem with some elements and dilemmas in the form of philosophical, moral and ethical antithesis. The theme of this poem (expressed in conditional: “If”) is the endurance of an honest man in front of challenges, temptations, hurdles and unexpected and merciless events in life. Such a man, according to the poet, should try to keep calm even when faced with stigmatization from his friends; to show and demonstrate self-reliance in his aims and ideals even when the others don’t trust him; to be patient, tranquil and

²² Raifi, M. “Misioni i Fan S. Nolit”, në: Fan S. Noli, *Vepra 7. Rilindja, Prishtinë*, 1988, fq. 311-312

²³ Bexheti, V. *Vepër e cituar*, fq. 396

sincere even when the others lie, gossip and despise him; to have his own opinion and attitude but not be the slave of them; to feel the same about the ebbs and flows, triumph and defeat; to be tolerant toward arrogance or haughtiness; to move forward even when many obstacles stand in front of him; to not be spoilt by money and wealth and to not plunge into pessimism; to live with the king but to respect the common people; to live with the poverty-stricken but to not be haughty; to be good to his friends and to not make enemies; to work hard and not be lazy. Thus, a man who is honest, a man who has these principles and virtues, will deserve the poet's admiration, who would show him his respect by acclaiming: Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it, And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!²⁴ While, Noli translated and published the elegiac poem titled "My Native Land" by Walter Scott, who is the founder of the historical novel during the Romanticism and a talented poet as well, in "Dielli" newspaper on 4 February 1962. This poem consists of two parts, whereas the main theme of this poem is love, longing and sufferings of a poor unhappy man for his country. In the first lines of this poem the poet grieves by complaining: Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,/ Who never to himself hath said,/ This is my own, my native land!

Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd,/ As home his footsteps he hath turn'd/ From wandering on a foreign strand!/ If such there breathe, go, mark him well.

This way, "the banished man" or "the wasted man" of this poem, keeps his love for his motherland alive not by taking a look into the map but by admiring it. It looks like the banished man left his country in order to miss it and love it even more. He wonders, works, achieves successes in life but again he is never happy as his heart is burning for his homeland, the land of his predecessors. A banished man like this is not only underestimated by the foreigners but, moreover, in a foreign country, he is doomed to disregard, indifference, ignorance and oblivion. In the second part of this poem the banished man addresses Scotland with an apostrophe as his motherland, the land of noble and heroic customs and traditions.²⁵

Then, Noli translated and published the poem titled "Mortality" by William Knox, a well-known Romantic poet, in "Dielli" newspaper on 14 August

²⁴ Bihiku, K., *Periudha e fundit e krijimtarisë poetike të Nolit*, në: Fan S. Noli, *Vepra 7. Rilindja, Prishtinë, 1988*, fq. 647-650

²⁵ Cicko, A., *Një studim për qasës të "My Native Land" të V. Skotit në përkthimin e Nolit*, në: "Fan S. Noli në 130 vjetorin e lindjes 1882-2012". Konferenca shkencore ndërkombëtare. Fakulteti i Edukimit dhe Filologjisë, Korçë, 2012, fq. 321-322

1963. In a short note Noli points out that: “This was one of the most favourite poems of the martyr President Abraham Lincoln and it is believed that he recited it just the night before he was assassinated” In this meditative, didactic and philosophic poem, the author draws a bad on vanity, haughtiness and stubbornness, which leads a man in abyss, isolation and evil. According to the poet, a man who is full of vanity and boastful no matter what he may do and achieve “will be ruined” or “will vanish as a wave in the sand” as everything is relative, given that the end of life, death, will make all creatures equal, hence he criticizes and satirizes the human vanity: “O why should the spirit of mortal be proud!/ Like a fast flitting meteor, a fast flying cloud,/ A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave – / He passes from life to his rest in the grave”.

Afterwards, Noli translated and published the poem entitled “On the Eve of His Execution” by Chidiok Tichborne (1963), a not very well known and ill-fated poet of Renaissance Period, on 4 September 1963. The theme of this very sad elegiac poem is the emotional state of a young boy before being sentenced to death. Almost the entire poem is permeated by a gloomy and lamentable atmosphere. In his sincere confession, the man sentenced to death complains that ever since his early youth, he was plagued by troubles and his good deeds were returned to him in a bad way but no one cared to understand his problems and issues and now though his youth is gone he did not get old, but he is dying disappointed without hopes, far away from his friends and with no consolation. His touching story reaches its climax in the third stanza, where his ill luck and fatality is strongly expressed and emphasized: I sought my death and found it in my womb,/ I looked for life and found it was a shade,/ I trod the earth and knew it was my tomb,/ And now I die, and now I was but made;/ My glass is full, and now my glass is run,/ And now I live, and now my life is done.²⁶

In addition, Noli translated and published the poem entitled “The Man With the Hoe” (1963) by Edwin Markham, an American poet, in June 1963. In this poem Markham talks about work, life, sufferings of a hard and difficult life, the misuse and oppression of peasants, who in their lives go through hell because of the class differences and thus he warns the oppressors about the possible rebellion. In the last stanza Noli, as the translator of this poem, localizes in a few lines the message of this poem for the Albanian reader, by asking: How will it be with kingdoms and with kings--/ With those who shaped him to the thing he is--/ When this dumb Terror shall rise to judge the world, After the silence of the centuries?

²⁶ Fan S. Noli, *Kotësia njerëzore, në Albumi, Rilindja, Prishtinë*, fq. 149

And finally, Noli translated and published the poem entitled “The Martyr” by Herman Melville, in March 1963. The theme of this poem is the assassination of a popular, distinguished and peace-loving leader in a trap and in an insidious way. Hence by killing the goodness and freedom the rebellion of the people is foretold, who is weeping and wailing but at the same time thinks of avenging the crime committed by “the powerful”²⁷

One of the most important features of these poems translated by Noli is that the authors are either prose (fiction) writers such as Scott or Kipling and they are not that famous. Most likely, Noli was incited and motivated to translate these poems because of the ethical, human and poetic messages, emotions and values they convey and also because of their similarities and situations that allude to the experience, ideas, tone, sufferings and ups and downs of the translator’s life.

Conclusions

It is important to underscore that Noli’s translations are not only capable of surviving and topical for the readers but at the same time his translations are so eloquent, professional and masterful that no one has ever before given us such translated works. Noli’s translations have become part of our culture, thus “Hamlet” lives among us only through Noli’s artistic translation, while “Rubaiyat” are read, reread and quoted only the way Noli translated them. Therefore, we can say with confidence that Noli has something Shakespearean, Fitzgerald-an, Poe-ean, Khayyam-ean and Ibsen-ean in him.

No doubt that our most distinguished translator showed and proved that to translate means to create artistically with patience, wisdom, noble and inexhaustible passion. He used his poetic talent for his translations and this way managed to come up with translations that captivate and fascinate Albanian readers even decades after they were translated. It is sufficient to mention that only in the translation of “Rubaiyat”, which is indeed a masterpiece of translation, all his poetic streak and his agility and affinity as an experienced and talented translator come out. With such translations Noli, in a way, even then was able to take Albanian readers’ hands and send them to those places where even he has never been before.

It is important to point out that the best way to enrich a national literature is through the translation of foreign literary works of kinds and categories that were not developed sufficiently in national literature. This way, a translated work oftentimes incites or stimulates the underdeveloped kinds,

²⁷ Fan S. Noli, *Vepër e cituar*, fq. 151

categories and genres of national literary works. In other words, a translated literary work not only enables the development of national literature but it also enriches and advances national literature. Moreover, Noli translated literary works when Albanian literature did not have sufficient tradition especially in such literary genres, kinds and categories as prose and drama, given that Albanian literature at that time was moving from Romanticism (in Albanian also known as Renaissance) into the Age of Realism. Hence, Noli chose the foreign literary works for translation into Albanian based on a certain criteria. As a matter of fact, when Noli started to translate English and American literary works in Albanian the number of world literary works and masterpieces translated into Albanian was very limited, thus he chose for translation into Albanian those works that were needed to the Albanian society, culture and readers.

It is also worthwhile noting that some of these conclusions are in complete concordance and harmony with the thoughts, opinions and assessments of the majority of researchers and scholars of Noli's works. Most of them think and believe that Noli's translations are real artistic recreations. In other words, he proved that not only he knew his mother tongue extremely well but at the same time he also knew a number of other foreign language and was highly talented when it comes to artistic recreating of literary works and masterpieces of English, American and other foreign literatures. M. Kuteli gave a very realistic comment and assessment about Noli's ingenuity for translation, when he said: "No doubt that the language, subject and theme are foreign, however Noli adapted the literary works by using his artistic and ingenious skills and gave us an absolute Albanian equivalent of these works. Such works are Poe's 'The Raven' and 'Annabel Lee', then Longellow's 'Scanderbeg', which was translated in the rhythm, form and tradition of our national songs and poems, some passages of Shakespeare's works and the majority of Omar Khayyam's 'Rubaiyat'. It is obvious that by selecting and translating literary works and masterpieces of European and American literatures, Noli showed that he had a special and refined taste, that he knew very well the artistic and literary achievements of the distinguished, prominent and outstanding English, American and world writers, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, he proved that he had a special affinity, taste and talent for translation. In this context, we should stress out that Noli is the first translator of English and American literature into Albanian and at the same time the first translator of Shakespeare's works at a time when no one believed that the translation of the works of this world genius was possible at all. When it comes to motives of Noli's translations, it is worth

explaining that while the motives of his translations in the first period of his translations had mainly to do with the awakening and increasing of the national awareness, in the second period or the maturity period his main motives were related to the uprooting the idea of freedom, equality and democratic values and eliminating or eradicating the reactionary, obscurantist and dictatorial ideologies. Finally, in his last, the third period of translation he translated for educative, entertaining, meditative and philosophical purposes. However, the main purpose of the translation of the masterpieces of world literature, in general, and English and American literatures, in particular, was to enrich Albanian literature, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to deepen and widen the ideas and refine the artistic, aesthetic, ethical and literary tastes of the Albanian readers.

It should be mentioned as well that, given language precedes literature and that it is the main substance (subject) of literature, vocabulary, and the lexical and semantic wealth have a special and extremely important significance in Noli's translations and original works. The vocabulary that Noli used is really rich and played an important part in finding and enriching the Standard (Literary) Albanian Language. Whereas, his translations of English and American literary works occupy a special and honourable position as far as enriching our national culture goes, not only as an artistic testimony of that time but, first of all, as a distinguished and permanent linguistic and aesthetic value.

Finally, Noli through his translations of works and masterpieces of World literature, in general, and of English and American literatures, in particular, has made a turning point in Albanian literature by laying the foundations of the modernization and westernization of Albanian literature.

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