Cultural Otherness and Authorial Intention Preserved through Translation: Examples from the Runyankore and the Chinese Literary Traditions [1]

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> *It was the gun which made possible the mining of Africa's gold and which effected the political captivity of their owners, it was language which held captive their culture, their values and hence their minds. The culture and history carried by these languages were thereby thrown on the rubbish heap and left there to perish. Nugugi Wa Thiongo (`The Language of Imperialism' 1993)*

> *... [T]ranslation becomes less a process of mediating an old text into the present than a way of merging past and present so that the dramatized actors ... become literal embodiments of the transfer of energies the author seeks in his structuring acts. Charles Altieri `Modernist Abstraction and Pound's First Cantos: The Ethos for a New Renaissance' 1985)*

In the context of the world's written languages, Runyankore, one of the Bantu languages of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa, is only a new comer. The history of its transcription can be traced back to the advent of colonialism in the East African region, particularly in Uganda where the native speakers of Runyankore live. The allied forces of colonialism, namely, the explorers and, more importantly, the missionaries cannot be dissociated from the language's written history, since they were the agents who took the initiative to turn the prevalent oral language into its written form. The earliest available material written in Runyankore dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century. Therefore, the first transcriptions adopted a romanized script. Furthermore, one of the pioneering works written in Runyankore was a version of the Bible.

Present day standard Runyankore/Rukiga orthography dates from as late as 1954, when an orthography conference established the new transcription system. [2]

Be it as it may, the oral tradition of the people (Banyankore) and their language cannot be ignored. This tradition appears to have age-old roots which historians like Wilson and Were, basing their research on early expositions of the region's historical accounts, place during the dynasties of the Batembuzi and Bachwezi in the greater Bunyoro-Kitara Kingdom of that interlacustrine region around the last millennium. The greater part of the information, however, has been collected from mythological accounts and the fragmentary handing down of facts.

The Runyankore recitations dealt with hereunder, belong to the oral tradition that has dominated and continues to dominate a major part of African Literature. It has been argued that reducing this literature to a written format – let

alone translating it into foreign languages – compromises the richness of the originals. In the words of the late poet Okot p'Bitek such a transformation "blunts the edge of the spear." Despite the introduction of a written transcription system for the language, the majority of composition today remains oral.

Nevertheless, this discussion will not enter into the oral versus written debate but will rather limit itself to the presentation of Runyankore recitations within the context of the translation of their transcriptions – a point of departure of sorts.

As for the Chinese component within this study, our aim is to provide an element of comparison from the point of view of a totally different culture to that of the Banyankore people. The Chinese script (or written character) has been the main distinctive feature of the Chinese language for those dealing in the translation of texts from that culture. It represents, in contrast with the oral-based transcriptions of Runyankore, an established written form that evinces characteristics peculiar to the Chinese mind and the aesthetics of the East. Among these characteristics, perhaps the most important and no doubt the one at the origin of the written character as a medium for communication, is the early Chinese preoccupation with bureaucracy, political jurisdiction, and governance. The aesthetic possibilities offered by the Chinese script are multiple and of a nature distinct from that in the languages of Indo-European origin. The following comments on the art of calligraphy by John Hay will provide an introductory sketch on the essential characteristics of the Chinese script:

> *The physiological metaphors in calligraphy texts are immediately sensible. This in itself is an important indicator. It is immediately effective to ask someone, in their first meeting with calligraphy, to look at the characters as if they were a body structure – as supporting skeletal structures made beautiful with flesh, and strong with muscle and sinew – to suggest they grasp kinesthetically the implications of movement, so that they can perceive the tensions and balance within the writing through these same functions within their body.* [3]

However, arguments as to how far pictorial and pseudo-somatic interpretations of the Chinese script should be favoured in the process of translation are varied and contradictory.

Here, we present Runyankore and classical Chinese as languages which, in spite of undergoing their own particular processes of transcription and modernization, still offer rich media for translation. This article aims at presenting an overview of cultural, linguistic, and translational perspectives. We consider that the text in its totality represents an irreducible unit of translation as against other smaller units such as the sentence or the word.

Grasshopper Dinner: A Delicacy

The issue to be dealt with in this section is a complex one due to the variety of problems it unearths. If, as we have said, the only available unit for the translation of a literary text is the text itself, the problem we immediately confront is an hermeneutical one. The notion that a translator derives from the source text as a whole will create the conditions for a transcreation into the target language. If, for instance, we were to attempt the translation of Milton's Paradise Lost or Arnold's The Light of Asia into a language other than English, expertise in the areas of Christian and Buddhist thought would be required. How far such expertise, in these marginal cases of religious poetry, turns into an affinity influencing the translator's point of view, represents inevitably, an arbitrary parameter.

There exist, however, other sources of influence which are also based in hermeneutics. Numerous studies of Milton's opus overtly adduce an interpretation of the author's depiction of Heaven as of satanic and not saintly origin. Satan has been made into the hero of the epic poem through critical interpretation. It is obvious that in such circumstances and regardless of what our opinion about *Paradise Lost* may be, poetic fervor and doctrinal (or counter-doctrinal) partiality can hardly be unraveled from each other in the mind of the translator undertaking his/her task. In the case of Arnold's famous work, judgment passed on it by critics like T. S. Eliot might be found to influence greatly the process of translation. [4] If, on the other hand, we consider lyric poems like Lorca's `Romance de la luna luna', Ronsard's `Sonnet

pour Hélène' or Li Bai's `Yu Jie Yuan' (玉階怨), our attention veers towards the wider realm of cultural understanding in the broadest possible terms.

In order to comprehend what Lorca means by his translucent images and thus be able to internalize the rhythm that sustains the poem, the translator will need to identify within the piece the cadence of Gypsy guitar music. Similarly, Ronsard's sonnet, though perhaps more familiar to us because of the host of translations and transcreations obtainable in English, will all the same require of the translator a certain knowledge of mannerisms and the status of women in the French high-society of the sixteenth century. It will also require a recognition of the tone of emotional intimacy which pervades the poem and makes it not unlike a vengeful love letter.

The translator will become aware of the standing the poet has within a national tradition and thus recognize general characteristics of a poetry which, as Geoffrey Brereton has posited in the case of Ronsard, "mark him out from other French poets." [5]

In Li Bai's case, cultural appreciation will no doubt enhance our understanding; yet, that alone is not sufficient. A successful translator will also need to consider the extremely stylized use of a poetry of understatement which intensifies the level of intimacy conveyed in Ronsard's poem or that expressed through the reverberations of Lorca's chiming verse.

Lastly, the Runyankore recitation might be seen to furnish still another degree of cultural and generic specificity. A grasshopper meal in the Ugandan country side can be understood partially by a foreign guest through a combination of documentaries and culinary explanations, however, the expanded cultural experience transmitted through a recitation specially composed to celebrate the yearly festival will, of necessity, challenge any skilled translator.

10. I caught and held it fast, Omuheesi, the smith among grasshoppers
- From Kigyere's Rwanda,
- And Mwambutsya's Burundi,
- He never abandons his tools,
- I said: "You wrought your iron long ago, but today the charcoal will burn out."
11. "Well come, well come, Kahiire ka Rwabutiitiiba,
- The one that the child chews,
- As he goes to draw water for his mother."
- I went on: "You 've always looked half cooked but today you 'll be well done".
12. I caught it and drew it out of the grass, Mbogo,
- The huge and flabby-bellied one,
- I said: "May you waddle on the roasting tray,
- And your belly burst in the basket!"
13. I caught them gleefully, I, The Nimble, The Decisive One,
- I tied nine packages, like a pregnancy,
- The tenth, I held tight in my hands without tying it,
- I then raised my eyes to the heavens to observe.
14. The eagles were sent from Butumbi and Bunyaruguru,
- The birds came from Karagwe and Kiziba,
- The chickens squawked as they watched in amazement,
- The sun above could not shine through.
15. The male kite came, The Audacious One,
- The hawk came, as hunger prevented it from sleeping,
- The crow came in its new suit,
- The buzzard came, The Devourer, He Who Abounds In Courage. [6]

Apart from the fact that there exists a great variety of grasshoppers and that their culinary qualities are quite distinct, the atmosphere suggested by the whole piece is certainly that of a festival or communal celebration and, as such, it is something with which it is difficult to identify from the necessarily narrow perspective provided by a foreign culture. Mention is made of the participating people as well as of numerous animal species, the geography of the area, the hunt, the cooking and the general feeling of enjoyment, making for a holistic understanding that is far removed from the life of city dwellers in most industrialized countries. We should also note that this sort of enumeration serves as one of the most ancient and useful tools for the conservation and propagation of knowledge within cultures with obvious parallels in Ancient Greece and China. The value of these otherwise descriptive statements of identity needs to be measured according to a specific order of cultural gradation and therefore requires careful study. Taking heed of the all too often used device of assimilation through translation becomes therfore an imperative activity.

The translator is, in the first instance, a reader and a listener; then, s/he is an author, poet, novelist, dramatist or essayist. It is important however, that in spite of all the above points of order, we are able to remain open to the possibility of an incomplete understanding of the cultural realities particular to foreign civilizations past and present, even when such civilizations are the ones within which we, as translators, have grown up. The concept of `culture' is itself an academic formulation primarily used in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to address problems larger than (or not akin to) the political and geographical realities of nations.

When looking for the correspondences in vocabulary and tone which will ensure a successful translation, we must keep in mind the lurking danger of ambitious and sometimes refined stereotyping or generalization. In this context, Suzanne Gearhart has enunciated clearly the conceptual constraints we believe every translator has to contemplate when attempting a literary translation. In her book *The Interrupted Dialectic*, the conclusions she offers about the cultural assumptions entertained by philosophers and critics are illuminating.

> *Any number of other descriptions of culture that see it as all-encompassing, as the fundamental phenomenon in terms of which other phenomena must be situated and analyzed, depend on similar models of culture – or, one could say, similar myths of culture. In privileging a model culture in terms of which all specific forms of culture can be understood and accounted for, such descriptions attempt to place themselves within but also, implicitly beyond culture.* [7]

Such a statement, if used as a cautionary remark in the process of translation, far from restricting the translator to a limited choice of cultural settings or to a literal translation of the source text, prepares the ground for a creative response to the original text. Although conceptually possible, to go "beyond culture" trying to embrace at once both cultures, is inconceivable in translation. By discarding the formal strictures imposed on any translator through the unavoidable phenomenon of cultural partiality (whether the partiality originates in a preference for the source or the target cultural setting is not relevant in this context), the realm of creativity is opened. The translator searches, as a reader first, the detail of an account which thrives on its own original unity and independence and where cultural factors are coordinates only in as much as they can, of their own, manifest through the text without commentary.

For the purpose of this discussion, let us take culture to include the general way of life of a people, expressed through the handling of their tools and their day-to-day activities, their physical and spiritual reactions to a particular environment and the articulation of these in a specific language. It will be also useful to keep in mind what S. C. Harrex and Guy Amirthanayagam have noted in the context of the emergence of new literatures in English, something we believe is relevant within the culturally enlarged context of the present study.

> *A key issue faced by the non-European `New Literature' writers ... is the irrelevance as well as the relevance to them of `the literature of Europe from Homer'. Correspondingly, Eliot's "catalyst" metaphor in `Tradition and the Individual Talent', as well as his "historical sense", acquire new dimensions (or transformations) of meaning when applied to the `Commonwealth' and other new literatures from ex-colonial societies. The catalyst for most of their writers is the cross-cultural*

character of their situations or identities; through the process of writing, of creating protagonistic figures and voices, they generate new insights into – new definitions of – cultural identity. [8]

Given the human ability to adapt to any environment, disregarding origins and their associated superficial or cosmetic realities, and given the affiliated human ability to acquire proficiency in any language (for language appears to constitute the dividing line between cultures), birth, geography and the accident of exposure could, arguably, make up the only parameters for a cultural classification of humanity. Adaptation and acquisition seem therefore to confer more strength to notions of a viable universalism than to those reinforcing cultural otherness. It is from this inherent human capacity to adapt to foreign custom that we derive the thesis that cultural otherness does not impair the effective and accurate translation of literary texts.

The cultural background of the individual author is reproduced and reflected in the created text. The author makes use of the experiences which s/he shares with other members of the society. Such cultural background is not immediately apparent to the native speaker since it is dressed in the trappings of idiom, metaphor, popular aphorism and proverb, all of which sound natural to her/him and do not raise the necessity for conscious thought. It is in this domain where problems are engendered for the translator. How much of the original's cultural expression should be introduced into the target language rendition? (A cultural expression may be as short as a word and as long as the entire text.) Should the cultural baggage of the original be sacrificed for the sake of the author's intent? How can the two survive and coexist in the translation? All these are preliminary considerations to be born in mind by the translator.

`I Mean to Say'

If we could always satisfactorily answer the `whys' around us, then we would be able to boast a thorough understanding of our life experiences and perhaps establish the basis for a lasting global *status quo*. We often search for reasons to account for particular occurrences in daily life and the corollary to this sometimes brain-tearing anxiety, ultimately leads to the full appreciation of the occurrence itself.

The ultimate explanation of cultural processes and attitudes lies within the realm of causality; however, the seam to a definite cause is not always available for use by the translator. Thus, the greatest task in the work of translation relates to the identification of the causes underlying the presentation of the subject matter chosen by the original’s author. Reasons as to the specific choice of theme, expressions and phrases define the author's intent within a given text. Such is what is encompassed by the term `textuality'.

The author is seen utilizing the medium of language with its amalgam of lexical, grammatical, and stylistic options to convey a literary reality which is all too obviously fictional. Whether the author's concern is didactic or purely aesthetic does not matter in our discussion. However, his/her consideration of the reader is of utmost importance and therefore needs to be retraced in the process of translation step by step.

The above mentioned concerns can be best shown to cohere in the context of the following situation.

If one is led, while engaged in an informal exchange of literary knowledge, to translate a poem orally for an interlocutor concerned with apprehending the meaning and the emotional slant of the piece, then a rough, perhaps repetitious translation will be seen to fulfill the task. So long as this rough translation awakes in the listener a notion of the complexity which cultural and literary components contribute to summon within the text, the job can be reckoned satisfactory. The process might last five minutes or half an hour, its scope however, is not limited to a reproduction of the source text's original form, nor is it confined to the use of a specifically literary terminology; the interlocutors are free to experiment until agreement has been reached. Such an oral and personalised translation, although different in nature from the original piece, remains much closer to it than any written text can ever be, inasmuch as it requires the fostering of a live relationship between the poetry and the listener and because the striking of such a relationship is certainly the foundation of any poetic activity. This `home-made' process also has within its reach the tools of analysis to benefit a clear and fast interpretation. We take a broad translation approach as that outlined through this simple example as the model for effective literary translation. We believe that in spite of Frederic C. Tsai's mostly negative formulation, our intent remains close to that implied in his lines:

Translation is a discouraging game, but it is also a rewarding one. In [sic] literary translation, in spite of all the sweat and pains, it [sic] can bring you very much closer to a genius and make you share in a measure his ecstasy of creation. Some writers actually have the habit of turning to translation when they have nothing brilliant to say, because translation opens their mind. [9]

The Compost Heap of a Dead Language

Having established personal interpretation as the only deterministic rule for literary translation, the question of language proficiency in the source language becomes less important. In the cases mentioned at the beginning of the article, and mostly in those illustrated by Ronsard and Li Bai (because both poets belong to pre-modern societies and wrote in a tongue not readily accessible to today's reader) there is a limit to the knowledge of the language any translator can acquire. `Dead languages' as Latin, Ancient Greek, Sanskrit or Classical Chinese are, in tune with what the metaphor suggests – only decomposing matter can actually provide nourishment – fertile ground for the new interpretations and developments of themes created in olden days and developed, as they most certainly were, from the malleable oral traditions of ancient peoples.

However, as Jacques Lacan has explained in the context of psychoanalysis, "a distinction must be drawn between reading coffee grounds and reading hieroglyphics" something "that could not be justified were it not directed towards the unconscious." In many respects, the concerns of peoples removed from us by millennia or by the accident of transcription might be said to belong to the realm of the unconscious since their propositions are not readily verifiable. Lacan's ensuing analysis takes on further relevance:

It must be said that this [distinction] is admitted to only with difficulty and that the mental vice denounced above enjoys such favour that today's psychoanalyst can be expected to say that he decodes before he will come around to taking the necessary tour with Freud (turn at the statue of Champollion, says the guide) that will make him understand that what he does is decipher; the distinction is that a cryptogram takes on its full dimension only when it is in a lost language. [10]

From this point of view, the original orality and prevalence of Runyankore recitations make the language of their transcriptions a comparatively `dead' language. Yet, if we consider the idea of subsistence of a culture and its traditions to which poets invariably adhere, a `dead language' has much to contribute to the development of humanity. Critical attention must perforce be focussed somewhere between these two poles, an ambiguous and difficult terrain to be treaded carefully by the translator.

The following excerpts from Mubangizi's recitation Ekaraamu n'Orurimi (The Salvation of Our Language) tackle different themes in terms of praise and anxiety. First of all, there is the praise of the imported cultural component (writing) in preserving and expanding the Runyankore/Rukiga cultural heritage by way of transcription. This feature is contrasted with the total disappearance of languages, whose demise has been brought about by lack of writing. The credit goes to the "White -Man" who pioneered the writing of Runyankore/Rukiga as well as to the first indigenous writers.

On the other hand, mention is also made in the recitation of those indigenous people who collaborate with 'foreigners' in denying Runyankore/Rukiga equal status with foreign languages such as English. The author appreciates the advantages of a universal language in easing communication across a wider cross-section of nations but remains skeptic that such a language might be found effective in preserving the indigenous literary genres to the same extent as an indigenous language would. By alluding to the local cultural reality through metaphor for example, the author emphasises the urge for the preservation of the language. This sort of recitation is at the centre of an intercultural struggle and our translation has endeavoured to highlight such element.

1. The Producer Of Words narrates without voice,
- The Informer Over Long Distances acts without sending anyone,
- The Producer Of News receives them without hearing,

- The Lover Of Teaching instructs well after leaving this world,
- This is the work of the pencil which speaks the truth,
- And also lies.
2. In the satchel, The Upright One travels,
- The Drinker From A Glass gulped mouthfuls,
- The palm of the hand as its stage, it struts while moved about,
- The Dancer On A Banana Leaf paints as it walks,
- This is the pen that pierces paper,
- And makes it bleed as we read.
3. Behold, The European, The White Man, The Inventor,
- Sharpened a piece of wood and inserted a point,
- The point licked black ink,
- The ink bit on the leaf, so they call it paper,
- The paper set about educating as if it were the authority.
19. The other day when I took a look at Nkore and Kigyezi,
- I saw the European and the native tongues fighting it out,
- The White man stood there encouraging his own to win,
- The Black man stood by waiting for his demise,
- I said: "Alas! at times, homes go into disrepair in the presence of their owners."
20. The next morning, I saw some of the natives coming to their senses,
- By midday, I found that some more had been enlightened,
- Things collapse and recover, people fall and rise,
- Your step-mother is never your mother,
- Your husband's wife never wishes you a heir,
- They said: "Let's endeavour to promote our language,
- To be the source of pride for Black man!"

Mubangizi's sharp depiction of the social phenomena engendered by the introduction of writing and foreign languages in Uganda represents an invaluable document of the struggle between cultures which provides ample grass-roots evidence for the consideration of cultural and language-related issues that are part-and-parcel of the translator's education.

To undertake a translation from any of the so-called `dead' languages and from ancient Chinese in particular, implies to have access to expert opinion handed down through the ages as well as to be able to elicit at each point in history the different characteristics fitting the times and concerns of the people amongst whom these arose. Furthermore, it implies that the translator must be able to consider all this valuable data only at the time when it is actually summoned by the original text and not to employ it as a crotch for the translation, supporting as it otherwise might, a lack of thorough knowledge about the culture or a fear that the end result may not be as coherent as the original text.

The translator recruits an enormous amount of `help' from previous translations and from critical contributions only to ultimately renounce them for some personal reading of the original. But the translation itself can only be of use as a modern piece of literature if, whilst maintaining the integrity of the subject matter, it adapts the cadences and rhythms of speech in the source text to an idiomatic form, or, a sufficiently engaging form open to the appreciation of the modern reader.

Within the context of translation from the Chinese into English, there are obvious instances of such methodologies. Perhaps, two extreme examples might be found in the works of Arthur Waley and Ezra Pound. Whilst the first strived to fit the ancient Chinese poem within a frame of reference which both historically and stylistically belonged to Victorian

England, the latter, working on similar texts only a decade later, found it in himself to alter the traditional components of English diction in order to accommodate what he thought to be a new way of understanding poetry.

Waley is the representative of safe and idiomatic translation, not devoid of beauty we should hasten to add yet, not challenging enough to the modern ear. Pound represents the experimenter who engages with the original text and, perhaps more importantly, with the syntactic and semantic components of the target language.

As A. C. Graham has said in the context of philosophical exchanges between China and the West, the "adaptation of philosophy [and here we would like to include literature] to a new language (from Greek and Latin to modern languages, from Sanskrit and from Western languages to Chinese) often involves both an improvement in terminology and a deterioration in syntax." [11] Although Graham speaks of changes particular to philosophy and in a direction of translation opposite to the one we are expounding on, through his general remarks it is possible to infer that the interaction of two languages can and in fact does create the advent of changes in both tongues and moreover, that the target languages ought to be open to such alterations. This is in fact a phenomenon akin to that evidenced in pidgin and ghetto languages around the world and through which colonialism gets its due measure of transformation during its waning stages as a culturally oppressive global phenomenon.

When we speak of `maintaining the integrity of the subject matter', we mean the honest acknowledgment of the parenthood of ideas shown forth in the text and a stylistic similitude brought within the limits of the idiomatic capacity of the target language. These two points in themselves restrict enormously the choice of, for example, established metaphors in the target language and push the translator in the direction of creativity. A creativity which approximates the original in its energy should be the end goal of the translator. Eugene Eoyang provides a good simile to help our understanding of what is meant by a successful translation:

> *Some translators convey what they view as the original meaning with the exact equivalent, yet the equivalence is merely nominalistic: while the two words designate the same reality (or set of realities), they do not, as words, affect the reader with the same sense or feeling; they do not, to put it as a Chinese might, `bear the same fragrance'.* [12]

In the above mentioned poem by Li Bai, the English reader should not only be able to enjoy a similar tone of understatement but s/he should also have access to some conceptions about the relationship between the sexes implied in a reading of the original. The process of achieving such similarity is however, not always easily entered into. Arthur Cooper says in the context of the translation of ancient Chinese poetry:

> *The difference, in the matter of fidelity to an original poem, between translating in prose or free verse, which may give the readers confidence that they are reading what the poet really wrote, and translating into some kind of more or less measured verse with at least an affinity to that of the original, is very largely illusory. The least translatable line in this poem,* [13] *which I may be said to have `thrown away' by simply making it "Riverbirds mingle their voices now", would require a painting rather than a few words in any other language but Chinese.* [14]

Whilst Cooper's dismissal of any one literary form as the rightful medium for effective translation of poetry appears to be an accurate generalization, the idea that his line [15] might require a painting to be fully appreciated , cannot be considered a happy resolution to the argument. We believe that a close approximation is always feasible and that acquaintance with the parameters of poetic form and a particular style can help the end result in great measure.

`Invading Dew' and `Injuring Bonanos'

A well-known Tang 唐 dynasty poem will serve as illustration here. Meng Hao-ran's (孟浩然) `Spring Dawn (春曉) is another piece in which some lines could perhaps be best admired through a pictorial depiction. We argue with this example the fact that the visual imagination evoked in these scenes is not alien to the poetry or to literature and should provide us with enough aesthetic material for a satisfying translation into English of the original poem. The following table provides Innes Herdan’s translation of Spring Dawn, a crib, and our own translation for the purposes of analysis.

Innes Herdan's Translation [16]	Crib	Our Translation
春 眠 不 覺 曉，		
Chūn mián bù jué xiǎo,		
Asleep in spring I did not heed the dawn	*[spring] [sleep] [not] [aware] [dawn]*	Spring sleep spares not the dawn
處 處 聞 啼 鳥。		
chù chù wén tí niǎo.		
Till the birds broke out singing everywhere	*[place] [place] [hear] [crow] [bird]*	All around I hear bird songs
夜 來 風 雨 聲，		
Yè lái fēng yǔ shēng,		
Last night, in the clamor of wind and rain,	*[night] [come] [wind] [rain] [sound]*	Night came roudy, wind and rain
花 落 知 多 少。		
Huā luò zhī duō shǎo.		
How many flowers have fallen	[flower] [fall] [know] [many] [few]	Who's to know the flowers strewn

What we propose as an alternative version is a piece which, whilst keeping to the original economy of words also tries to provide a similar impression both stylistically and emotionally. As Cooper says quoting a French sinologist "Attention ! every one of these syllables is a world in itself, a linguistic cell charged with radiating meanings like those of a multifaceted gem." [17] It seems, however, that in spite of such an appropriate metaphor, Cooper does not allow for the same quality within the English language. [18]

Because the historical or linguistic research required of the translator remains an ancillary form of data that, in the best of cases, informs the poem indirectly, limitations such as a profound knowledge of the ancient sounds and the obvious unfamiliarity with the tone of what was then 'current parlance' may be considered of lesser importance. It is a fact acknowledged by many sinologists that a thorough knowledge of ancient Chinese is very rarely attained. Therefore, a command of the target language appears to have the greatest consequence in the process of translation. These are, no doubt, bold assertions. However, we will endeavor to show through the various examples how success in cultural transference within the framework provided by poetry can be achieved when the translator concentrates on the text at hand and attempts to read in it the myriad possibilities it engenders.

Ezra Pound's translations from the Chinese in his early book *Cathay* have achieved a high level of fidelity to the original texts. They have been praised as translations but they prevail as successful English poems in their own right. Of the poems in *Cathay*, `The Jewel Stair's Grievance' (Yu Jie Yuan - 玉階怨) is perhaps the best known, owing both to its accessibility (it is only four lines long) and to Pound's explanatory note.

Ezra Pound's Translation [19]	Crib [20]
玉 階 生 白 露	
yù jiē shēng bái lù	
The jewelled steps are already quite white with dew,	*[jade] [stairs] [bear] [white] [dew]*
夜 久 侵 羅 襪	

yè jiŭ qīn luó wà	
It is so late that the dew soaks my gauze stockings,	*[night] [late] [invade] [silk] [stockings]*
卻 下 水晶 簾	
què xià shuǐjīng lián	
And I let down the crystal curtain	*[remove] [down] [crystal] [curtain]*
玲瓏 望 秋 月	
línglóng wàng qiū yuè	
And watch the moon through the clear autumn.	[delicate] [look at] [autumn] [moon]

This crib opens up an understanding of the difficulty of arriving at an accurate translation. The choice of English equivalents ought to be a restrictive one. André Lefevere is very critical of Pound's efforts in this direction and attributes the American's interest in Chinese poetics merely to a desire to falsely appraise and publicize, "to draw attention to one's own poetics [Imagism] ... to claim that it had been practiced, unbeknownst of course to the unenlightened in England and America, by great poets in another culture, and never mind if you don't know a thing about the poets and the culture." [21]

Although such accusations hold a measure of truth – most of us are familiar with the publicist exercises Pound was prone to stage, and the limited knowledge of his Chinese language skills when he first attempted the translations in *Cathay* – we should be careful to play down Pound's contribution. Excellent Chinese critics like Wai-lim Yip have studied in detail Pound's translations and expressed their satisfaction in no uncertain terms.

> *Even more stimulating than this visual recreation of cultural details, which restores flesh to the skeleton of dictionary meanings, is Pound's ability to go beyond the `word-sense' and `phrase-sense' and capture the voice and tone of the speaker, something which no dictionary can ever provide and which it takes a student years of familiarity with the language to grasp.* [22]

Returning to the poem, if what Pound chooses to give away in his explanatory note is meant to correspond to the exact meaning of the poem, then such a note does great injustice to the translator. Pound's poem does not need it. We are given a scenario: the stairs; a reference to the time of the day in "late" and "moon", and a further reference to time (season) in "autumn"; the rest is a poetry of suggestion very close in style to the original piece. The dew symbolizes both the tears of the neglected lady and the sensual dimension of love. The poetic tension is achieved through a fixity in the rendition, the stockings are soaked with dew because the lady has not changed places during her wait; similarly, her eye remains intent on the observation of the moon which is, again, a symbol of the lover. Behind Pound's "my" and the "I" we can only sense an intangible figure. The strength of the portrait resides not only in that "she utters no direct reproach" but also in that her will is fixed even when she has fallen prey to a desire which, because not reciprocated, would have her rend her hope. Such is also the achievement of the original piece.

In this case, what Pound has achieved in the translation of the poem, he gives away unnecessarily in the note. For Feng Hua-zhan however, the note is proof of Pound's understanding of ancient Chinese poetry. He writes:

> *Due to this note, we are able to know that Pound understood very well the beauty of implicitness and conciseness in classical Chinese poetry.* [23]

Around that time, Pound was working on the manuscripts and cribs of the American orientalist E. F. Fenollosa. His success resides on being able to interpret and internalize (an act Altieri has called "transubstantiation") the poetry he saw in the skeletal form of Fenollosa's cribs and to convey that in a poetic form which, though new to the 1910s reader, can arouse the sensibility of poetry lovers worldwide.

To illustrate our discussion from the perspective of Runyankore, we shall take another of the recitations by Benedikito K. Mubangizi, `Omuhiigo Gw'Entare' or `The Lion Hunt'. [24] This poetic composition narrates an engagement with a lion. The piece coveys a strong sense of movement and exalts the virtue of courage in the hunter, something without which the chase would have been unsuccessful. The predicament suggested by the combination of the elements of danger and bravery in the person of the protagonist, justify the heroism the story bestows upon him.

The following translation excerpts endeavour to reproduce the sense of the original as well as their poetry. We have attempted not to distance ourselves from the line structure and meter of the original, replacing the Runyankore idiom with English idiom so as to make the end result appear as natural to the ear as the original recitation. We have provided the original, a line by line translation, and a full translation in order to facilitate comprehension of the passages we will use in our discussion.

Commentary on Original Text	Crib	Our Translation
Mm! Mm!		
The reciter opens with the conventional opening onomatopoetic line (Mm! Mm!)		
	Mm	Mm! Mm!
1. Obwa ijo obu entare yaagamba		
The following line provides the situational context		
	The other day when the lion talked	The other day when the lion roared,
Nibwo abariisa baataasya omu ihangwe,		
This line, together with the next, provide through diction some of the sound effects imitating the lion's roar.		
	It is when the herds-people returned their herds in daylight.	When the herds were returning in broad daylight,
Abahingi efuka bakaitsiga omu misiri.		
	The cultivators left hoes in the fields.	Farmers left their hoes in the fields.
2. Kajwengye ekatsinda, yaagamba,		
The reciters puts emphasis on the roar. Secondary emphasis is put on the lion's appearance.		
	The Maned One roared and talked	The Maned One roared,
Empanga zaaruruma, emigongo yaatetema,		
The emphasis is on the effect of the roar. To convey this effect, the reciter introduces a degree of hyperbole in the second part of the line.		
	The valleys rumbled, the hills quaked,	The valleys echoed and the hills shook with the roar,
Abanyabwoba baayenyaarira nibahunga.		
Like in lines 1.2, 1.3 and stanza 3, the reciter emphasises people's reaction to the lion's roar.		
	Those of fear urinated on themselves while fleeing.	Cowards soiled themselves as they fled.

Line 1 of the first stanza opens with "Obwa ijo..." which means literally: "Of yesterday-but-one". Taking into account the Runyankore diction and the impetus of the performance, such literal translation is clumsy. Moreover, when we consider the natural narrative of the Runyankore recitation, although reference is not made to a past event, the time-frame remains indefinite and an apparent closeness to the present makes it all the more relevant to the reader; hence our translation "The other day ..." Similar cases of disrupted time frames are to be found elsewhere in the recitation.

This process is reversed when the target language `rejects' the semantic context of the original piece. Line 1 of the second stanza means literally "The maned one roared and talked". Through its semantic associations, the original affords quite effortlessly the possibility of a `talking lion', something unacceptable in English without the use of an artificial device like personification. Stylistically speaking, the original "talked' represents only the author's emphasis on the sound of the lion's roar. Consequently, the translation omits all reference to the speaking lion.

So far we have considered idioms. Let us now turn to those expressions which seem to be imbedded in the language's cultural past. For the purpose of this discussion, we shall include here expressions which draw from the sphere of practical life in a metaphoric or associative manner. It is such idioms that we shall term `culture-bound', implying that culture and language remain inextricably joined in them.

Commentary on Original Text	Crib	Our Translation
5. Omuri Katereza yaazaaguruka neekuunyakuunya,		
These two lines depict the might of the lion. Even though there is agitation in the village, the lion is not bothered. It has nothing to fear. It could be assumed that the lion was lying in Katereza as it roared …		
	In Katereza it set off unbothered,	Through Katereza, it walked unconcerned,
Omuri Nyarwanya yaatemba neehendekyeza,		
… and the part of Nyarwanya through which it walked was sloping under its weight as it went up-hill. The unnatural limping refers to the authority the lion imposes over the people.		
	In Nyarwanya it climbed limping,	Through Nyarwanya, it strutted,
Nti "Kahendwe orugogo, bakakubungisa omutaari!"		
This expression contains a double curse to the lion. "Orugogo" is a net-like trap set by hunters to intercept fleeing animals. This is what the reciter wishes the lion to encounter. And in an attempt to have its assumingly fractured bones healed, the reciter further wishes that it a knife be used as a splinter.		
	I said: "May you be broken by a bonano stem and be healed by an arrow".	I said: "May you be broken by a trap and be healed by a hunter's knife!"

We shall take three examples from `The Lion Hunt' which, due to the `cultural otherness' they portray, seem to present major obstacles for the translator.

Crib	Our Translation
17.-Nti "Neekazaagire omu ishaazi rya rufu,	
I replied: "May it rest in the kraal of death,	I retorted: "May it rest in the kraal of death,
Ekazaagururwamu emyambi n'amacumu,	
And be driven out by arrows and spears,	And be driven out by arrows and spears,
Bakagyeshera mutwe-gwa-mperayo!"	
To the water-holes, never to return."	To the water-holes, never to return".

Stanza 17 conveys the meaning of a double curse comparable to the Australian parlance: "May your chooks turn into emus and kick your dunny down", which combines two tragic occurrences to intensify the thrust of the curse.

As we can see from the line by line translation, the original "May you be broken by a bonano stem and be healed by an arrow" has been transformed substantially in the translation process. The original context necessitates an extended

explanation which does not fit the general structure of the recitation. As shriveled bonano stems are not considered beneficial for the growth of the tree, they are cut off for mulching. Smooth as they are, they represent a hazard for those who walk the fields. Once the first curse is expressed, the reciter intensifies his hate for the lion by desiring that in getting a cure for the bones it fractured in the imagined accident on a bonano stem, splinters be made with arrows, something that we immediately associate with the brutality of skin penetration.

Stanza 17 casts another curse as did line 5.3. Considered as a whole, it is an allusion to cattle grazing. When the cattle gather in one place after grazing, the herds-people take them to the water-holes. Herds-people normally use sticks to control the herd. After the cattle have drunk, they are taken back to the grazing grounds or, depending on the time and the distance from home, taken back to the kraal for the night. Here the reciter wishes the sticks to become arrows and spears and instead of driving the lion back as he would have done with the cattle, he wishes it "never to return".

Although our translation keeps to the imagery of the original, the wording might require the help of a gloss in order to convey the full extent of the local implications carried by such a curse.

Commentary on Original Text	Crib	Our Translation
	26. Ruheenda-bikaaka eremba, ecweka embooreera;	
When a banana tree is cut down, it decays and turns into a very soft substance. It is this 'useless' state to which the lion is reduced. The emphasis is on the moribund state of the lion, although the image is rather exaggerated.		
	The Breaker Of The Stout weakened and turned into a decomposing banana tree,	The Ravager Of The Mighty turned to jelly,
	Eyezongoza rimweija, eyeniha aha butaka;	
	It turned once and struck itself against the ground,	It slumped lifeless to the ground,
	Ogwayo gwomamu; tutuuhuuka nituteera ebiruhuuko,	
	Its (heart) dried up and we went up the hill breathing sighs of relief,	Its heart stopped and we climbed back up the hill breathing sighs of relief,
	Tuti "Ahuuu!"	
Onomatopoeia is used to imitate the sound one emits when exhausted; a strong oral respiration, generally achieved with rounded lips.		
	Thus: "Pheew!"	"Pheew!"

The translation of "embooreera" in line 1, stanza 26, is approached in a manner similar to that of stanza five above. Literally, the term means "the decomposed bonano tree", suggesting a rotten jelly-like substance. Thus we use metonymy in the translation.

Our consideration of these three examples through extensive explanation and glosses constitutes a translation approach in itself. George Steiner has called this method "the only completely honest format for a reader and a user of poetic translation." [25] Such an approach endeavours to clarify the cultural obscurities and their relevance within the context of the complete text under translation. However, the level of explicitness enlisted greatly surpasses that of the original and calls to mind the objections to cultural appropriation raised in the first section of this study.

On the other hand, it could also be argued that a culture-bound expression in the source language may be rendered by an equivalent culture-bound expression in the target language. The above example of `emus kicking dunnies" is one in place here. Similarly, "wax" could perhaps supplant the jelly-like substance indicated by "embooreera". But the scope for inclusion of such culture-bound expressions from the target language in the context provided by a foreign text under translation is limited. In following such an approach, we would be replacing culture-bound expressions with equivalents and thus altering enormously the original style and form of the source texts.

A translation bent on conveying the cultural realities of an original text will readily stretch its level of explicitness. Such translation will tend to highlight certain features of the original text and make them easily understood in the target language, consequently mutating the end result through lengthier accounts. It is for this reason that, in many cases, we are perhaps truer to an original text when we opt for a simple cultural transfer while trying to recreate the style and emotional dimension of an original piece. It is often more rewarding to let the translation exhaust its own possibilities and not to burden it with a host of annotations which distract the reader from a unified understanding of the translated text.

Simultaneously, a translation may concentrate on what Popovic has called the "invariant core", aiming to reproduce the "spirit of the original". In such an instance, the most important element remains a consideration and full understanding of the author's intent. This, however, when achieved, is mostly at the expense of the elements of form and the cultural `cosmetics' of the source text. Content rather than form takes precedence.

Unless we aim at ridiculing the cultural trappings of the source text, translation should respect `otherness', for, in addition to the alleged authenticity of the source text, such difference in cultural understanding is ultimately the means by which the translation comes into being as a unique literary work in the target language.

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[1] Article co-authored with Bernard Atuhaire

[2] Rukiga and Runyankore are very close dialectal versions which some people would like to consider as separate languages but which most linguists and grammarians gather under the same liguistic umbrella: Runyoro/Rutooro.

[3] Hay, John, *Theories of Art in China*, (ed.) Susan Bush and Christian Murck, Princeton University Press, 1983, pp. 75-6.

[4] For Eliot Sir Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* was *not* a example of `major poetry'.

[5] Brereton, Geoffrey, *An Introduction to the French Poets*, Methuen, London, p.19. Brereton says of Pierre de Ronsard Sonnets pour Hélène: "They also show him at his most characteristic, the ssaured master of that peculiar blend of the familiar phrase and the classical allusion which marks him out from other French poets."

[6] Mubangizi, Benedikito, `*Enduuru Y'Esenene*' (`The Grasshopper Alarm'), (trans.) Bernard Atuhaire, *Ebyevugo By'Eriigyenda*, Omuhane Gw'Okumanya, Uganda, 1973.

[7] Gearhart, Suzanne, *The Interrupted Dialectic: Philosphy, Psychoanalysis and Their Tragic Other*, The John Hopkins University Press, baltimore, pp. 241-42.

[8] Harrex, S. C.& Amirthanayagam, `Notes towards a Comparative Cross-Cultural Criticism', *Only Connect: Literary Perspectives East and West*, (ed.) Harrex & Amirthanayagam, CRNLE & East West Center, Adelaide, 1981, p. 3.

[9] Tsai, Frederic C., `The Name and Nature of Translation', *Renditions*, nº 10 (Autumn 1978), p. 120.

[10] Lacan, Jacques, *Écrits: A Selection,* p. 160.

[11] Graham, A. C., *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature*, State University of New York Press, 1986, p. 356-57.

[12] Eoyang, Eugene, `Translation as Excommunication', quoted in J. S. M. Lau's `Translation as Interpretation', *Tamkang Review*, Vol. XV nº 1,2,3,4.

[13] Ode nº 34, *Shi Jing* 詩經 (*Book of Poetry*), compiled by Confucius.

[14] Cooper, A., `Englishing the Earliest Chinese Poems', *Agenda*, Vol. 20, 1981-83, p. 58.

[15] Cooper's line is used in our commentary as a paradigm for what is a constant recurrence in Chinese poetry, namely, the pictorial quality of verses.

[16] Herdan, I., *300 T'ang Poems*, Far East Book Company, Taiwan, 1973, p. 386.

[17] Our translation from the French “Attention! Chacune de ces syllabes est un monde en soi, une cellule linguistique chargée de significations irradiantes comme une gemme à facettes." Other students of Chinese have made similar comments on the nature ot the Chinese script. Ernest Fenollosa has written extensively on this topic in his *The Chinese Character as a Medium for Poetry*, Stanley Nott, London, 1936.

[18] Ernest Fenollosa writes on p. 32 of the abovementioned article:"Should we pass formally to the study of Chinese poetry, we should warn ourselves against logicianised pitfalls. We should be ware of modern narrow utilitarian meanings ascribed to the words in commercial dictionaries. We should try to preserve the metaphoric overtones. We should be ware of English grammar, its hard patterns of speech, and its lazy satisfaction with noun and adjectives. We should seek and at least bear in mind the verbal undertone of each noun. We should avoid `is' and bring in a wealth of neglected English verbs. Most of the existing translations violate these rules."

[19] Pound, E., The Translations of E. P., (ed.) Hugh Kenner, Faber and Faber, London, 1953. "Note. -- Jewel stairs, therefore a palace. Grievance therefore something to complain of. Gauze stockings, therefore a court lady, not a servant who complains. Clear autumn, therefore she has no excuse on account of the weather. Also she has come early, for the dew has not merely whitened the stairs, but has soaked her stockings. The poem is especially prized because she utters no direct reproach." p. 194.

[20] Bai, Li 李白, Yu Jie Yuan 玉階怨, *Tang shi san bai shou* 唐詩三百首. Terms like *yu* (玉) `jade', *bai* (白) `white', *jing* (晶) `refined' and *ling-long* (玲瓏) `delicate' carry female connotations as well as alluding to purity. The term *wang* (望) `look out' used as a verb in this poem, has the meaning of `full moon' when used as a noun, and *shui-jing lian* (水晶 簾) `crystal curtain' can be taken to mean the fittings in the lady's lodging yet could also be an reminder of grief in the form of tears.

[21] *Translation, History and Culture*, (ed.) Susan Bassnett ans André Lefevere, Pinter Publishers, London, 1990, p. 16.

[22] Yip, W. L., *Ezra Pound's Cathay*, Princeton University Press, 1969, p. 90.

[23] Feng, H. Z., `Pound and Chinese Poetry', Waiguoyu , Shanghai Wai-yu Xue-yuan Xue-bao 上海外语学院学报, 1983, p. 26.

[24] Mubangizi, B. K., *Ebyevugo By'Erigeenda*, Omuhanda Gw'Okumanya, Uganda, 1973, p. 19-22.

[25] Steiner, G., *The Penguin Book of Modern Verse Translation*, 1966, quoted from Mimi Chan and Piers Gray in `The Game of Names', *Renditions*, Autumn 1980, p. 87.