



Cultural translation in dramatic literature of the first and second Pahlavi eras (1300-1330 SH) with a look at two plays by Rafi Halati and Moez al-Divan Fekri

Ramtin Shahbazi¹

Recived:28/11/2021

Accepted: 15/3/2022

Abstract

Rafi Halati and Moez al-Diwan Fakhri are two playwrights of the Pahlavi era who have tried to adapt many of their works and present Western works from this point of view on stage for Iranian audiences. This happens at a time when Iran tries not to act passively in dealing with Western theater and achieve a self-imposed image of this form of theater. In the Moscow-Tartu school of cultural semiotics, what the state and thought have addressed in their practice is called cultural translation. Therefore, to show the "action" of these two playwrights as the theoretical basis of cultural semiotics, and according to the method that this form of semiotics provides, the amount of cultural "Accept" and "Ignore" in the texts will be studied. As a study example, the two plays "Esfahani Cholman" from Halati, which is a cultural translation of "One Servant and Two Masters" by Carlo Goldoni, and the play "Abdullah" from Fekri based on the play "Ernani" by Victor Hugo are reread. This research, which is based on the practical purpose, based on the method of collecting library information, based on the qualitative method, and based on the nature of a mixture of two descriptive and comparative methods, try to answer the question of a state of mind to accept and how has the cultural ignore of their time acted in the face of western texts? This research aims to find and clarify a part of the history of Iranian dramatic literature based on the method of cultural semiotics.

Keywords: *Cultural Translation, Pahlavi Dramatic Literature, Cultural Sphere, Cultural Semiotics, Rafi Halati, Moez al-Divan Fakhri.*

¹ - Corresponding Another, Assistant Professor of Cinema Department, Faculty of Arts, Soore University, Tehran, Iran; ORCID ID: 0000-0002-6543-1747; Email: Ramtin.shahbazi@soore.ac.ir



Copyright© 2024, the Authors | Publishing Rights, ASPI. This open-access article is published under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution- NonCommercial 4.0 International License which permits Share (copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format) and Adapt (remix, transform, and build upon the material) under the Attribution-NonCommercial terms

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Western theater does not have a long life in Iran. But this same art has provoked different challenges in dealing with society from the very beginning of its arrival in Iran. This dynamic shows that theater redefines itself depending on other social elements and acquires its meaning. According to others, theater cannot be separated and recognized as one of the other cultural phenomena of a society.

Culture itself is a multi-faceted category that theorizing during the years since the birth of this term have tried to clarify its various dimensions for their audience by providing various definitions. These definitions have paid attention to aspects of culture in each period, but in each period after new studies, theorists have realized that there are still undiscovered aspects of this word that need new efforts to understand them.

Rafi Halati and Moez al-Diwan Fakhri are two playwrights of the Pahlavi era who have tried to adapt many of their works and present Western works from this point of view on stage for Iranian audiences. This happens at a time when Iran tries not to act passively in dealing with Western theater and achieve a self-imposed image of this form of theater. In the Moscow-Tartu school of cultural semiotics, what the state and thought have addressed in their practice is called cultural translation. Yuri Lutman and his associates in the Moscow-Tartu School established the first foundations of cultural semiotics.

As a study example, the two plays "Esfahani Cholman" from Halati, which is a cultural translation of "One Servant and Two Masters" by Carlo Goldoni, and the play "Abdullah" from Fekri based on the play "Ernani" by Victor Hugo are reread.

This research tries to answer this question, how did the state and thought act in the direction of absorbing and rejecting the culture of their time when facing the Western texts?

2. Literature Review

In the last decades of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, various schools were formed in Russia regarding semiotics; In the meantime, only the Moscow Linguistics Circle turned from linguistics to semiotics. In this circle, literary studies were considered first, and semiotics was given priority later.

During this period, in addition to the history of Russian literature, which he taught at the University of Tartu, Estonia, Yuri Lutman paid attention

to many subjects during his scientific life from the perspective of semiotics. He was able to establish a suitable bridge between social and artistic texts and society by studying cultural signs.

At the same time as the late discovery of the Russian form in Europe, the semiotics of the Russian-Tartu school also in the 1960s It was recognized by the international community. The semiologists of the Tartu-Russia school, by transitioning from their previous schools, i.e. formalism and constructivism, simultaneously with the emergence of the theories of information, game, and cultural anthropology, were able to take effective steps in recognizing and diagnosing information fields. In 1967, Yuri Lotman wrote an article on precise methods in Russian literary studies for the Italian journal *Strumenti Critique*, in which he outlined the foundations of his research on cultural semiotics. In short, it can be said that Lotman believes that language is the first factor that shapes culture, and other elements such as myth and religion are placed in the next ranks. Lotman believed that if texts make models of the world, these same texts can be secondary systems shaping societies in the place of culture. When these cultures form and define codes for themselves, semiotics can help to understand these codes.

2-1 Cultural semiotics and translation

Cultural semiotics does not consider culture as static. About another culture, the culture itself constantly restores itself and perhaps creates new ideas. The pattern that the members of a cultural society have in mind of their own culture shows itself more with the relations between cultures than by appealing to a single culture. In other words, by absorbing and understanding new texts, culture has undergone innovation and can understand its characteristics.

One of the functions of communication between cultures can be considered the reconstruction and production of texts, But another important achievement of this relationship is the understanding of insider culture. An understanding that is not possible directly to the essence and is achieved by comparing oneself with another. In this way, a primary ideological point of view always accompanies the indigenous culture. But how is this vital relationship achieved considering the wide range and gross distinctions between one's own and another's symbolic systems? Cultural semiotic theorists consider the process of translation to answer this question.

From the perspective of cultural semiotics
Translation means living on a cross-cultural border, looking at other wonders, turning them back, making them one's own, internalizing,

giving way, and at the same time not giving way (Sojoodi, ۲۰۰۹, b, p.147).

As was discussed, texts are among the pattern-making systems from Lotman's point of view, and artistic texts also play an essential role in this. Because the codes of the culture give meaning to the texts and make them represent the culture.

2-2 Translation of the play as an intercultural theater

Throughout the history of theater, despite the neglect of translation studies in this field, plays have traveled from one country to another, and in the meantime, changes have occurred in them according to the cultural developments of the countries. Therefore, the translation of plays can be considered as an intercultural process.

In Iran, the theater with its Western members has not had a long history and is considered the product of the historical developments of the past two centuries.

The history of every country is marked by milestones that can represent the transition of a country from one era to another. The entry of theater into Iran happened at one of these historical milestones. During the reign of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (1210-1275) SH, there were many exchanges between the European governments and Iran, the result of which was the introduction of theater to Iran. Travels were not limited to the king and the courtiers, and besides these two groups of officials, we can also mention students, businessmen, and immigrants who interpreted and translated what they saw in other countries, and this is an achievement commensurate with cultural education. They brought to their fellow countrymen.

After a turbulent period, Iranian theater experienced a forced calm during the reign of Reza Shah. A new era that is limited by the dominant force of the one-sided and vertical tyranny of Reza Shahi, Sepehr is a sign of critical discourse in theater, but instead, events are happening in Sepehr, a sign of theatrical performance techniques, that affect the cultural scope of theater.

The theater during Reza Shah's era had its head in its pocket and was excluded from society due to tyranny and censorship. However, during the era of Mohammad Reza Shah, the flow of the theater was completely reversed. Theater can return to the heart of society. The compressed spring of political energies has suddenly been released and this issue affects all elements of society, including the theater. The political pluralism of this period also pollutes the lap of culture, and the works presented are somehow rooted in political events. The society

between 1320 and 1330 SH was pregnant with many events. The elements that can be considered during the Pahlavi era cultural translation are 1- the translation of rules; 2- The ratio of language to translation; 3- The proportion of widely used texts in the performance of halls.

3. Methodology

This research is based on the practical purpose, based on the method of collecting library information, based on the qualitative method, and based on the nature of a mixture of descriptive and comparative methods.

4. Results

In this section, two plays are discussed.

4-1 Esfahani Cholman (Rafie Halati-1301 SH)

Esfahani Cholman's play in 1301 SH has been culturally translated by Rafi Halati based on the play *One Servant and Two Masters* written by Carlo Goldoni.

He is the most prolific translator from 1300 to 1330 SH, A translator who, according to A familiar tradition, has avoided mentioning the name of the original play being adapted, and for this reason, it is very difficult to understand the roots of the adaptation of the works. Rafi Halati was born in 1276 SH has started his artistic activities in 1297 SH. He started with the Iran Comedy Company. He graduated from the Saint-Louis French language school, has a bachelor's degree in sculpture, and is considered one of the students of Kamal al-Molk. In addition to translating, he was also famous for writing plays, directing, acting, painting, etc. Esfahani Cholman is one of the first works to be translated culturally. A work that can be analyzed in the period before Rezashahi. However, because this play was staged many times during the era of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, it is in tune with the culture of this era.

The discussion about the cultural translation of this work can be started with the first model-making system considered by Yuri Lutman, i.e. the discussion of language. Goldoni insists on using everyday language in his Venetian plays, which include a servant and two masters in the same group. According to his opinion, people in a show should talk on stage as they talk in normal life. Therefore, he changes the words and the rhythm of the speech according to each character. The view is

the opposite in his Toskai plays and in such plays, people speak very formally and sullenly.

In the cultural translation of this play, completely Iranian names are used, and most of the characters have authentic Iranian names. The language used in the translation of the dialogues also seems to match the language that was used in the cultural translation of plays during the period of Reza Shah and before that. Divine language and literary prose seem to have faced changes during the performance. The geography of Goldoni's play is also completely adapted to the geography of Iran. For example, the city of Venice changed its name to Tehran and Turin to Hamedan, and the servant's character (Sohrab) often emphasizes his Isfahan identity.

4-2 Abdallah (Moazal Divan Fikri-1326 SH)

Gholam Ali Khan Fikri, nicknamed Moez al-Divan, is considered one of the theater activists during the first Pahlavi and the second Pahlavi period. In addition to writing plays, acting, and directing in the fields of theater and cinema, he was able to record several plays as a translator in his career. His father, Morteza Gholi Khan Movid Al-Malamek, was one of the political activists of the constitutional era, and this family perspective made Moazaldivan write his works with a view of society. In the works that he wrote himself, you can see the traces of the living conditions of the people of that time.

Fikri translated Abdullah based on Victor Hugo's Ernani play. Ernani's play is considered one of the most controversial plays in the history of dramatic literature.

Ernani's play was written in 1830, and in it, Hugo reviews a part of the political history of Spain in the early 16th century, i.e. 1519. In this play, although Hugo chooses Spain as the scene of his stories, he tries to include pictures of the French society of his time, that is, the frustrations of the great French Revolution in his work. Victor Hugo spent his childhood in Spain and it seems that he decided to write Ernani under the influence of a village called Ernani. In this show, by insisting on different cultural signs, from clothing to geography and verbal elements, Hugo tries to make Spain a stronger culture and his thoughts not only in the form of a simple plot but also in the form of the way of life of the characters, personal ideals and their social and...

Moazaldivan Fekri started the cultural translation of this work when Iran, after a period of prosperity of 5 years from 1320 SH To 1325 SH, had again suffered social failures and failures. The writers were looking for heroes who could fix this chaotic situation, but because there was

no bright spot, the result was nothing but despair and darkness. Therefore, the romantic heroes stepped into the field again. The discussion about Abdullah's cultural translation of Victor Hugo's *Ernani* play can also be started from the language category. Victor Hugo is more of a writer than an urban playwright. Therefore, many literary aspects such as the use of metaphors, similes, and many other literary techniques can be traced in his works.

In his translation, like Hugo who tells the story in French in Spain, Moazaldivan tries to organize the story in a country other than Iran. Therefore, they choose Iraq. Accordingly, the names of the characters are also chosen from Arabic names. Abdullah sits in place of Ernani, Soraya in place of Donasul, Abu Hanifa in place of Don Roy Gomez, and Saeed in place of Don Carlos. The geography of the play and the names in some moments cause the translator to lose the language and use Arabic instead of Persian. This point has made the factor of the first pattern-maker intended by Lutman to be distorted and cultural translation reduced in these scenes.

On the other hand, Fekri removes most of the literary aspects of the work and what causes the play to expand in width for the characterization of the characters, and therefore, nothing remains of the story as a whole. For example, in the third act, the sixth scene, Don Roy Gomes talks about the exploits of his family by passing in front of the pictures of his ancestors in the entrance hall of the palace. These words are expressed with literary subtleties that have been completely removed, and this causes Hugo's language to stutter in the original text as well. On the other hand, some of the descriptions that were preserved in the translation were so short that they lost all the details.

In this context, referring to more detailed issues such as how to refer to the coverage, geography, and even the political approach are raised and discussed in both texts.

Conclusion: In this article, the basics of cultural semiotics were re-read from the perspective of Moscow-Tartu thinkers and it was observed how Lutman and his fellow thinkers divide linguistic and textual elements into primary and secondary factors in the production of meaning for cultural semiotics. One of the things that they have paid attention to is the category of self-relation and the other is in cultural translation as a sub-section for cultural semiotics. In the following, the two playwrights of the first and second Pahlavi eras, Rafi Halati and Moez al-Divan Fekri, were discussed, and by reviewing two cultural translations of them, an attempt was made to state how the elements that were changed in their works were. In the cultural translations they

have done, both of these authors have unconsciously tried to convey the meaning through the Persian language to achieve other layered signs among the cultural elements, which can be used in studies of the history of Iranian theater and adaptation studies to enter a new stage.

References

Page | 40

- Aghaabbasi, Yadollah (2011), Goldoni, the reformer of Delarte's Commedia, In the translation book of the play One Servant and Two Masters, Tehran, Ghatreh Publication.
- Aghayi, Naser (2008), Development issues of Western theater in Iran (1257-1357) SH, Doctoral Thesis, Department of Advanced Art Studies, Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Tehran.
- Avazpour, Forood (2009), Investigation and analysis of cultural indicators in the adaptation of two works adapted from the play Macbeth, Master's Thesis, Department of Drama, Faculty of Arts, Soore University.
- Azhand, Yaghoub (1994), Playwriting in Iran, Tehran, Ney publication.
- Basiri, Aida (2011), Cultural connection and discontinuity in Iranian theater from the pre-constitutional period until 1330 SH, master's thesis, School of Fine Arts, University of Tehran.
- Borhani, Bahareh (2005), Adaptation, Master's Thesis, Drama Department, Faculty of Arts, Soore University.
- Bozorgmehr, Shirin (2000), The effect of translation of dramatic texts on Iranian theater, Tehran, Tebyan publication.
- Eco, Umberto (2011), An introduction to the book World of Mind: The Semiotic Theory of Culture, A collection of cultural semiotics articles, Translated by: Farhad Sasani, Tehran, Elm Publication.
- Eslin, Martin (2003), The Field of Drama, Translated by: Mohamad Shahba, Tehran, Hermes publication.
- Eslin, Martin (2011), An introduction to our contemporary Shakespeare, Translated by: Reza Soror, Tehran, Bidgol Publication.
- Fekri, Moez al-Divan (1947), Abdollah, Tehran, Library documents of the city theater complex.
- Fekri, Moez al-Divan (2002), Moez al-Divan Fekri one-act plays, Tehran, Rozbahan publication.
- G. Brockett, Oscar (1996), History of the theatre, First Volume, Translated by: Houshang Azadivar, Tehran, Morvarid Publication.
- G. Brockett, Oscar (1997), History of the theatre, Second Volume, Translated by: Houshang Azadivar, Tehran, Morvarid Publication.
- Goldoni, Carlo (1986), The Servant of Two Masters, Translated to English by Edward J.Dent, NewYork, Applause Theatre and Cinema books.
- Halati, Rafie (1922), Esfahani Cholman, Tehran, Library documents of the city theater complex.
- Halati, Rafie (2006), Rafie Halati one-act plays, Tehran, Rozbahan publication.

- Heydari, Azita (1991), Bibliography of theaters in Tehran, Theater Quarterly No. 15, Tehran, Namayesh Publication.
- Hugo, Victor (1891), Hernani, Boston, D. C. HEATH & CO., PUBLISHERS.
- Jahazi, Nahid (2004), Dramatic literature in the first Pahlavi era (1299-1320) A.H., master's thesis in the field of dramatic literature, School of Fine Arts, University of Tehran.
- Khabari, Mohamadali (2006), A research on the process of adaptation in Iranian theater, Tehran, Jihad-e- Daneshgahi Publication.
- Khazimeh, Mehrdad (2005), A thesis on adaptation and dramatization (story) in cinema and television, Department of Dramatic Literature, Faculty of Arts, Tarbiat Modares University.
- Malekpour, Jamshid (2006), Dramatic literature in Iran, Second Volume, Tehran, Toos Publication.
- R. Effinger, John (1900), First Performance of Hernani, Chicago, Scott, Foresman, and Company.
- Sabah, Helen (2010), Romantic hero, Translated by: Golnaz Ghafari Saleh, Hirsia Morid, Mahdiyeh Jafarzadeh, Tehran, Iranian Poets Association Publication.
- Samini, Naghmeh (2000), The book of love and magic, Tehran, Markaz publication.
- Sepehran, Kamran (۱۳۸۹), Theatrocracy in the constitutional era, Tehran, Nilofar Publication.
- Seyedhosseini, Reza (1997), Literary schools, First Volume, Tehran, Negah Publication.
- Shahbazi, Ramtin (2014), Cultural semiotics of Iranian literature and theater history (1300-1330) AH., Tehran, Elm Publication.
- Sojoodi, Farzan (2009) a, Intercultural communication: a semiotic approach, a collection of semiotics articles: theory and practice, Tehran, Elm Publication.
- Sojoodi, Farzan (2009) b, Intercultural communication: translation and its role in attraction and rejection processes, a collection of semiotics articles: theory and practice, Tehran, Elm Publication.
- Sonesson, Göran (2011) b, Self sees Other: Other meaning in cultural semiology, A collection of cultural semiotics articles, Tehran, Elm Publication.
- Taghipour, Masoomah (2002), Introduction, in the Moezoldivan Fekri one-act plays Book, Tehran, Rozbahan Publication.
- Taghipour, Masoomah (2006), Introduction, in the Rafie Halati one-act plays Book, Tehran, Rozbahan Publication.
- Teymori, Maryam (2009), Cross-cultural theater from theory to performance, master's thesis in dramatic literature, Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Tehran.
- Torop, Peter (2011) b, Translating and translation as culture, A collection of cultural semiotics articles, Tehran, Elm Publication.