NATIONAL AND CULTURAL FEATURES IN UZBEK TRANSLATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

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Abstract

This article studies how Uzbek literary tradition appears in Uzbek translations of Shakespeare's Sonnets. It compares three translators: Yusuf Shomansur, whose book came out in 1978 and was made from Russian; Jamol Kamol, who translated from English; and Xurshid Davron. The analysis uses the ideas of domestication and foreignization and polysystem theory, and it reads twenty sonnets in four areas: images of nature, names for the beloved and for love, word choice linked to Eastern poetry, and verse form. The main images of the original stay in place, for example summer in Sonnet 18 and the rose in Sonnet 54. Cultural change shows mostly in small additions, such as duldul, mulla, chopon and mohitob, and in the words used for the beloved. In form, 204 of the 210 lines counted in fifteen sonnets have exactly eleven syllables, and the rhyme plan of the original is kept. The results can help translation studies, comparative literature and the teaching of literary translation.

Keywords: Shakespeare's sonnets; Uzbek translation; Yusuf Shomansur; Jamol Kamol; domestication; relay translation; g'azal; poetic imagery.

1. Introduction

Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets, which were printed in 1609. They hold an important place in world poetry. Each poem has a strict form of fourteen lines, yet it speaks about deep questions: how time destroys beauty, how poetry can keep a person alive, how fragile beauty is, and how unclear love can be. For a translator, the task is more than finding the right words. Every sonnet belongs to the culture of Elizabethan England. To move it into Uzbek, the translator must pass it through another set of symbols, values and poetic habits.

Uzbek literature already has a strong tradition of love poetry. From Alisher Navoiy to the poets of the twentieth century, the g'azal and the ruboiy taught readers how to speak about love, parting and beauty. A translated sonnet therefore does not arrive in an empty place. It enters a field of poetry that already has its own rules. This article asks how that field changes the translated text, and whether the changes add to the original or alter it.

Three questions guide the study. (1) Which parts of the Uzbek national and cultural view of the world are easiest to see in the translations? (2) How do translators choose between staying close to the original and meeting the expectations of Uzbek readers? (3) What part do form and verse structure play?

2. Theory and Methods

The study combines several approaches. Nida separates formal equivalence from dynamic equivalence [5]. This helps explain why a translator may care more about the reader's reaction than about matching each word. Venuti's pair of domestication and foreignization [8] is the main tool of analysis: domestication moves the text toward the target culture, while foreignization keeps its foreign feel. Bassnett and Lefevere describe a "cultural turn" in translation studies [3], which shifts attention from words to the culture around them. Lefevere sees translation as a kind of rewriting that depends on poetics, patronage and ideology [4]. Together with Even-Zohar's polysystem theory [2], this view explains why translations in the twentieth century followed the literary rules and cultural policy of their time. In Uzbek translation studies, the foundations built by G'. Salomov [7] still matter, especially his focus on the national character of the translator's language.

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The method is comparative and descriptive, and it uses a purposive sample of twenty sonnets from three translators. For Jamol Kamol, the study takes thirteen sonnets (1, 2, 3, 18, 19, 26, 30, 39, 46, 50, 51, 54 and 85) [10]. For Yusuf Shomansur, it takes Sonnets 91 and 139 and the opening lines of Sonnet 24 [9; 12]. For Xurshid Davron, it takes Sonnets 27, 28, 29 and 66 [12]. Nineteen of these sonnets belong to the first group of the sequence, which speaks to the young man, and Sonnet 139 represents the second group, which speaks to the woman. Each Uzbek text is set beside the English original, in the 1609 Quarto as printed in modern editions [1; 6], and compared by image, vocabulary and verse form. Syllables were counted as vowels in each line. Kamol's sonnets are cited from the open online library where they circulate among readers [10]; his three-volume Saylanma of 2009 contains plays [12].

The sources differ in how they reached the text. Shomansur worked from Russian, as did Shayxzoda [9; 12]. The well-known Russian versions of the period were by Pasternak, Marshak and Finkel [12]. The sources do not say which one Shomansur used, but Marshak's, which won a State Prize in 1948, was the standard version and is the most likely one [12]. Kamol worked from English: he says he did not want to rely on the Russian versions and studied English for four years in order to read the Oxford text [11]. The source language of Davron's versions is not stated.

3. Analysis

3.1. Nature, seasons and imagery

Sonnet 18 is the best-known case. Shakespeare asks whether the beloved can be compared to a summer's day, and says the beloved is "more lovely and more temperate." The comparison works because English summer is mild and short, with "rough winds" and a brief "lease." In Uzbekistan, summer usually means heat, and spring is the classic season of beauty and love. A reader might therefore expect the translator to swap summer for spring.

The sample does not show this. Kamol keeps summer (yoz) from the first line and follows the same idea: the wind tears off the flowers, our summer is short, and the sun sometimes burns too bright. The cultural shift lies elsewhere. He adds calm, loving words for the beloved (sokina, dilbar) and calls the beloved malak, "angel." So the image is kept foreign, while the way of addressing the beloved is made familiar. Spring appears only where the original also has it: in Sonnet 1 as bahor darakchisi, "herald of spring," and in Sonnet 3, where the original's April becomes bahoriy ayyom, "days of spring" [10].

The rose is a second test. In Sonnet 54, Shakespeare sets the sweet-smelling rose against the "canker blooms," flowers that look the same but have no scent. Kamol keeps the rose (atirgul) and the idea of scent. He turns the "canker blooms" into thorny, poisonous flowers (tikonli, zaharli gullar), a clear picture for readers who may not know the dog rose. The nightingale (bulbul), the usual partner of the rose in Uzbek poetry, does not appear in this sample. Small touches from the local tradition show up in other sonnets. In Sonnet 2 he adds tulips (lola), which the English does not have. In Sonnet 19 he uses qaqnus for the phoenix and yulbars for the tiger [10].

3.2. The addressee, love and the words of feeling

The first 126 sonnets speak to a young man, and the later ones to a woman, the Dark Lady. Uzbek has no grammatical gender, and the pronoun u means both "he" and "she," so the translator can address the beloved without marking gender. Kamol makes the bond with the young man clear with do'st, "friend" (Sonnets 19 and 30), and with the tender jonim, "my dear" (Sonnet 46). At the same time he uses epithets from classical love poetry for the same person: sohibjamol in Sonnet 1 and mohitob, "moon-faced," in Sonnet 39 [10]. This mix shows the old manner of praising a beloved in the g'azal entering a poem about friendship.

Sonnet 139 shows the other side. The English text speaks of the beloved as "she" and "her" in its third quatrain. Shomansur turns the whole poem into direct address with sen-forms, and no word in it shows the beloved's sex [12]. The poem works equally for either addressee, and only the place in the sequence tells the reader who is meant. His version also gives the beloved's lashes a drawn sword (yalang'och qilich), an image I do not find in the English text, which may come from the Russian version.

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In Kamol's sample, English "love" appears mainly as sevgi and muhabbat. In Sonnet 46 he uses both together, and in Sonnets 26 and 30 he writes sevgim. He does not use ishq in any of the thirteen sonnets [10]. Shomansur uses ishq in both of his love poems, Sonnets 91 and 139 (sening ishqing, ishqim tufayli), and calls the beloved yor in Sonnets 24 and 91 [9; 12]. Davron uses muhabbat in Sonnet 29 and ishq in Sonnet 66 [12]. The contrast is clearest between Shomansur and Kamol: ishq leans toward the mystical language of the g'azal, while sevgi and muhabbat stay closer to the plain, human tone of the original. Kamol also draws on the classical register in other words: hijron and oshiq in Sonnet 39, evoh in Sonnet 30 and salomnoma in Sonnet 26 [10].

Forms of address also show national culture. Shakespeare's thou and you mark closeness and respect, and Uzbek has a similar pair, sen and siz. Kamol and Shomansur use sen, the close form, in every sampled sonnet [9; 10; 12]. Davron does the same (sening muhabbating), and siz appears only once, in Sonnet 66, in a line with no clear counterpart in the English (Siz tomon cho'zilmas tilanib qo'lim) [12]. This fits the original and the habit of the g'azal of speaking straight to the beloved, so polite siz does not weaken the confession. A more formal tone appears in single phrases instead. In Sonnet 26, "lord of my love" becomes ey sevgim sarvari, a courtly address known from Persian-Turkic poetry.

3.3. Big themes: time, death and the life of poetry

Two themes run through the sequence: time that destroys beauty and verse that keeps the beloved alive. Both are clear in Sonnets 18 and 19. In Sonnet 19, Kamol speaks to Time directly with ey zamon and asks it to spare the friend's face, and the final lines say the friend will stay young in the poet's verse [10]. The call ey sounds like classical address. Yet the vocabulary of fate and passing life does not grow beyond the original in this sample. Dunyo in Sonnet 1 and zamon in Sonnet 19 translate "world" and "Time." Davron's Sonnet 29 renders "heaven" as falak, the classical word for the sky as an agent of fate [12]. The Eastern coloring is lighter than first expected. It shows in the tone of address and in classical words and interjections, not in extra philosophy. Poets such as Navoiy also write about the lasting power of the word, so the theme moves easily between the two traditions.

3.4. Form, meter and rhyme

Form is also shaped by culture. A Shakespearean sonnet has three four-line groups and a final pair, rhymed abab cdcd efef gg, in iambic pentameter. Uzbek poetry has two main meter systems: aruz, based on long and short syllables, and barmoq, which counts syllables. All sampled sonnets keep fourteen lines. Counting vowels as syllables, 204 of the 210 lines counted have exactly eleven syllables: 176 of 182 in Kamol's thirteen sonnets, and every line of Shomansur's Sonnet 139 and Davron's Sonnet 66 [10; 12]. The few exceptions are single shorter lines. This shared line is one syllable longer than the English ten, and it shows the syllable-counting barmoq system at work in three translators, one of whom worked from Russian. Uzbek is an agglutinative language with long words and many endings, so fitting the content into ten syllables is hard, and an extra syllable gives the translator room.

Rhyme is another challenge. English has few rhyme partners for each word. Uzbek has many grammatical endings, which makes rhyme easy but often only grammatical. In Sonnet 18, Kamol keeps the pattern abab cdcd efef gg, for example qiyos–bas with dilbar–o'tar, and the last pair is a near rhyme (nur–umr) [10]. Shomansur's Sonnet 139 and Davron's Sonnet 66 also open with abab rhyme, in near rhymes such as yolg'on–bilan with bekor–yaradoq, and o'lim–qo'lim with xo'rlikka–ko'rlikka [12]. No repeated-word pattern of the radif-qofiya kind was found in the sampled sonnets. The closing couplet stays a couplet and states the main point of the poem, as in the original.

3.5. Added cultural references

The clearest cultural changes are small, named references. In Sonnet 51, the poet's horse is faster than thought; Kamol compares it to duldul, the legendary horse of Islamic tradition, which the English does not name. In Sonnet 85, the original says the poet is like an unlettered clerk who only says "Amen." Kamol writes besavod mulla and Omin, a figure and a word every Uzbek reader knows, although the clerk becomes a Muslim cleric. In Sonnet 26, the poet's words are poor and "naked," and the beloved is asked to dress them. Kamol dresses the image in a worn chopon and a to'n, two familiar

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items of local dress [10]. These changes follow Venuti's domestication. They keep the job of the image but move it into Uzbek daily and religious life.

4. Discussion

The twenty sonnets give a careful picture. First, the main images of the original mostly stay: summer in Sonnet 18 and the rose in Sonnet 54. Second, Uzbek culture enters through words for the beloved and for love (dilbar, mohitob, malak, sevgi, ishq) and through added references (duldul, mulla, chopon, lola). Third, the form stays close to the original: fourteen lines, the same rhyme plan and a closing couplet, with an eleven-syllable line shared by three translators. Fourth, the translators differ by route and by taste. Shomansur, who worked from Russian, uses ishq in both of his love poems. Kamol, who worked from English, prefers sevgi and muhabbat, and Davron uses both. So the way Uzbek culture enters the sonnet depends not only on national tradition but also on the translator's source text and personal style.

It would be too simple to call these changes losses. From the view of dynamic equivalence, the translator wants today's Uzbek reader to feel something close to what Shakespeare's first readers felt, and this often needs cultural mediation. But too much domestication has a risk: it can flatten what is typical of the Renaissance, such as wit, clever comparisons, wordplay with legal and trade terms, and double meanings. The most useful path seems to be a balance, as in Kamol's Sonnet 18: the foreign image stays, and the culture enters through the address.

The scope of the study is narrow on purpose: twenty sonnets from three translators, read closely, with the English original beside each. Within this scope the pattern is consistent. A wider corpus would show whether it holds for all 154 sonnets, but the main result already stands: Uzbek translators keep the images and the form of Shakespeare's sonnets and bring the Uzbek tradition in through words of address and love and through a few added references.

5. Conclusion

Uzbek translations of Shakespeare's sonnets show how a famous Western text becomes part of the national literary system. In the twenty sampled sonnets, the main images and the verse plan of the original are kept, and cultural features appear mostly in words for the beloved and for love, in forms of address and in a few added references such as duldul, mulla and chopon. The Eastern lyric heritage, above all the g'azal, works as both a source of material and a filter through which the English original is seen. The translators also differ in how they reached the text: Shomansur through Russian and Kamol from English. This may show in Shomansur's steady use of ishq and in images such as the drawn sword of Sonnet 139, which has no clear source in the English. Further work could compare all 154 sonnets in all available Uzbek versions and add studies of how readers respond.

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