

**TRANSLATING ORHAN PAMUK: CHALLENGES**S.Kanchana<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr.K.Sandhya<sup>2</sup><sup>1\*</sup>(Assistant Professor, VNR Vignana Jyothi Institute of Engineering & Technology, Hyderabad.)<sup>2</sup>(Head and Reader, Dept. Of English, Maris Stella College, Vijayawada.)

S.Kanchana

Orhan Pamuk has become synonymous with contemporary Turkish literature after being awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 2006, and became famous in world literature. Pamuk also has become very conscious of the translations of his works because of his global image. The challenges faced by Pamuk's translators Maureen Freely, Guneli Gun and Victoria Holbrook are to create the authentic voice of the author. The main challenge is not to westernize Pamuk's words. It is not just the role of translator they have to play but a Shadow novelist who has to get close to the heart of the novel to recreate the authentic flavour of the original.

Orhan Pamuk was bestowed with the coveted award for his quest for the melancholic soul of his native city where he discovered new symbols for the clash and interlacing of cultures. The task of translating his Turkish works into English depicting the saga of the melancholic soul reflects the efforts of the translators and proves that translation is not literal but socio-cultural.

According to Nida and Taber (1969), Translation, is the transposition of thoughts in one language by one social group into the appropriate expression of another group, entails a process of cultural de-coding, re-coding and en-coding. It is the cultural aspect of the text that we should take into account while translating as cultures are brought into greater contact with one another.



Dr.K.Sandhya

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Maureen Freely, a successful Novelist translated Orhan Pamuk's works *Snow and Istanbul: Memories and the city, The Museum of Innocence*, strongly feels that her love for the Turkish language, whose subtleties are difficult to get across in other cultures motivated her to take up the job of translation. She wanted to make the beauty of Orhan's sentences visible to people reading English, and she wants readers to hear Orhan the way she hears him.

Maureen Freely mentions about a challenge that she encountered while translating *Snow*. The

Novel has a mesmerizing quality and Pamuk aims to put the reader into a trance. Freely, being a novelist is aware of the fact, how important the storytelling trance is. She found it challenging in recreating that trance in English, inviting the readers into the world of the author which Orhan Pamuk achieved in his original text where the readers get into a trance and start seeing the way the author wants them to.

In *Istanbul: Memories and the city*, Pamuk speaks about Hüzün, or Istanbul's melancholy. It is a smoky window that allows the self to connect to the society, the city to the Islamic and to Western



traditions, the individual to the public, and the high culture to the low. Melancholia is not what Pamuk means as the overview of the word reveals. Istanbul's *hüzün* does not simply combine the city with the self, the East and the West, the past and the present; it emerges as an emotion, which draws from and relates to different, even contrasting traditions conceptions of the word. The skill with which Pamuk can bridge these within the literary scape of Istanbul leads him to claim that the melancholy of the city has a counterpart neither in the Eastern nor in the Western culture. Istanbul, the seat of a long dismembered empire and its lost civilization, provides the basis for a poetics of lament and nostalgia, as well as a means of appreciating the city.

Maureen Freely, while translating *Istanbul: Memories and the city*, understood the Social, political, historical images used by Pamuk. Being born in Istanbul, she was able to absorb the images as they are embedded in the same culture brought the emotional *huzun* in the English translation. The reflection of the black-and-white scenes from childhood and this haze of melancholy that sat over the old city drained them of all color. Maureen freely succeeded in the permeation of the *hüzün* in the English version and she accepts that it permeated her imagination that she could barely see through it.

Maureen Freely had another challenge as there is a past tense in Turkish which does not exist in English—that allows the writer to distinguish between hearsay and what he has seen with his own eyes. Pamuk employs the past tense to associate with dreams, past and fairy tales that one could not have witnessed. Pamuk's book is written in this tense, in a voice that is on the edge of reality, mid way between what he believes imaginatively to be true and what he knows has happened. This tense, this voice, this tone, is perfectly suited to describing melancholy.

Another challenge, Maureen Freely speaks about is that copy editors' own agendas which did not agree with the motivation of Orhan's main character and changed it. She realized that authors or their translators who fail to follow every step of the process risk losing control of the finished work. One can observe a kind of cultural imperialism with some

editors which reflect their tendency to throw away a word or a phrase if it seems strange or foreign. One can understand that there was a strong sense of a one-way conversation coming to Turkey from the west. Pamuk's work has changed that and as a translator, Maureen Freely succeeded in creating a path for two-way conversation.

Many reviewers have lauded Pamuk's embrace of atypical and postmodern literary techniques, arguing that his novels embody a unique narrative voice. Some reviewers have criticized Pamuk's novels for their heavy-handed symbolism, repetitive plots, and contrived characterizations. British scholars have also faulted the English translations of Pamuk's works—primarily by translator Güneli Gün—for their overuse of colloquial American idioms.

Several American critics have countered these claims, asserting that the British reviewers are only objecting to the use of American, rather than British, terminology. Guneli Gun who has translated *The Black Book* in her own assessment of Pamuk's contribution to Turkish literature, commented that, "Pamuk is the champion of educated New Turks who yearn for a legitimate place in the world of ideas. His work meets the West on its own terms, resonating with philosophic and aesthetic concerns that go beyond national boundaries."

At a deeper level, Pamuk problematizes the historical evolution of Turkish language, history, and culture while he insightfully presents this evolution as a part and parcel of global relations. His novels reveal cultural specificity that is skillfully presented through the eyes of others. They are translations and back translations.

The reception of the English translations is problematic. It reveals how book reviewers who read the novel in translation assume that they read the original text. They consistently avoid discussing the text as a translation and do not acknowledge the translator. Basic issues related to translations such as accuracy, intended audience, its economic value in the current book market, the translation's relation to the literary trends in the target literary system or its place in the translators' career are left unaddressed. Negative reviews of the text are based on a certain assumption of what a Turkish novel should be.



Reviewers often comment on what is problematic or absent from the text, thereby employing a position of judgment and superiority. Positive reviews, on the other hand, praise literary and stylistic aspects of the text, attributing these elements to the original author.

This is true with Guneli Gun, her translation is rendered in a predominantly American idiomatic language. She chose to express meaning in a way that sounds natural to American readers. The use of diction by Gun is in parallel with Pamuk's baroque and flamboyant Turkish in the original *Kara Kitap*. Gün captures the reflective psyche of the characters of the original text. Gün accomplished the literary technique of stream of consciousness when she presents the thoughts and feelings of the characters as they occur.

Guneli Gun's translation is sensitive to sound, music, alliteration, and assonance. In this translation, Gün boldly meets the challenges of matching Pamuk's long, complex, and at times tiring sentences without being grandiloquent and ornate. Similarly, she experiments boldly with semantic and syntactic structures that are not commonly found in fiction or everyday American usage.

Gün's translation is a herculean accomplishment rendering Pamuk's long sentences not only with accuracy but also with similar intensity and effect. Gün's sentence is wordy, circuitous, and carries on the long list of objects piling the apartment airshaft without omitting any slight detail.

Victoria Holbrook who translated **The New castle** stands out as fluent, readable, and straightforward. Holbrook's sentences are short, succinct, pithy, and epigrammatic in contrast to Guneli Gun. Considered together, her syntactical and lexical choices give the effect of an historian narrating the story in retrospect. She opts for vocabulary that matches the first meaning of Pamuk's words. Gün, on the other hand, opts for vocabulary that is literary, poetic, suggestive, and allusive. Gün's choice of language and style matches with the task of narrating the mental state of the characters in *The Black Book*.

The readers also have to understand that two different translators have two distinct agendas of writing, two different perceptions of the function of

the text in new context, and two different readerships in mind (one British, the other American) even though the language in question is English. Reviewers assumed that since it was the same writer behind the translations, they should read similarly. They did not even consider the possibility that the writer might have employed different styles in the two novels.

Pamuk in one of his interviews mentioned about the significant role of a good translator. Until recently, translators like Freely went unrecognized for their part in rendering an author's vision and narrative into a new language. With the success of authors like Pamuk, editors, publishers and reviewers have begun to elevate translators from mere scribes to partners who co-create original texts.

As invisible as they may be, translations exist as texts: they circulate widely, and they are read and taught at schools. Multiple translations of the same work exist side by side. There is much to be done to establish the parameters for translation criticism that is in par with literary criticism. The work of Orhan Pamuk's translators, a substantial endeavor of cross-cultural activity often goes unnoticed, unacknowledged, and overshadowed by the author's international fame. There is a need for calling attention to the place of translation and translators in the production and circulation of worldly texts. Every translation is in relation to the specific time and place of its publication and in relation to the specific audience complicates our understanding of translation process and product.

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