

## CAN A TRANSLATION BE BETTER THAN THE ORIGINAL?

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**Annotation:** *That translations can never chiefly be with sources is an assumption that reigned over the field of study on translations for centuries. But present-day theoretical as well as practical comprehension defies the assumption, reflecting that under certain situations, translations can be superior, re-interpret, complete the original in effect, readability, as well as cultural appropriateness. The article reflects on the debate with contemporary approaches of translation, past case studies, as well as narratives of situations under which, why, as well as when a translation can be assessed as "better" than the original. The debate is extended with consideration of ethics as well as aesthetic boundaries of such translations as well as reflecting on the effect of audiences' expectations, purpose, as well as cultural distance on notions of value as well as of success.*

**Keywords:** *Translation superiority, literary adaptation, translation vs. original, reception theory, fidelity and creativity, cultural mediation, translator agency, ideological repositioning, stylistic transformation, translational authorship.*

### INTRODUCTION

Translation is typically conceptualized as secondary, functional, and subsidiary on behalf of the original. The ancient cliché of the original author's "servant" or "mirror" would have the former's work be literal, rather than creative. But history and recent translations tell of a more differentiated world. Translators typically don't only transmit sense but re-create, recontextualize, and re-invent text for variegated linguistic, cultural, and ideological scenarios. The article raises the question whether translations can be "better" than the original and, if yes, why. In framing the question, we re-evaluate the task of the translator: not only as transmitter but as co-creator of sense.

#### Methodology

Our research adopts a comparative Qualitative approach through the comparison of specific case studies of religious, philosophical, and literary works. We adopt theoretical prisms like those of Skopos theory (Vermeer), reception theory (Jauss), and post-structural thinking (Derrida, Venuti) in trying to analyze purpose in translation, effect on the receiver, and cultural framing. We also subject literary as well as critical reviews of the receptor and primary work in trying to analyze their reception and value in the field.

#### Results

##### Translation as Cultural Amplification

##### Case Study: Edward FitzGerald's Rubaiyat of Omar Khayy

FitzGerald's rendition is widely famous for poetic merit in English but far removed from Khayyam's Farsi original. Its structure, sense, and vocabulary were reinterpreted by him as would be appropriate for Victorian philosophical interests and sensibilities.

Analysis: The English-speaking readers were enamored of the FitzGerald version that most of them did not know the composition and thematic direction of the original. The work attained autonomous classic status, having attained immortality in the world of letters through interpretative fervor more than fidelity. It subsequently perhaps "overtook" the original composition for its destination culture and period.

#### Clarity and Modernization of Archaic Texts

Example: The Bible Translated Today (such as The Message by Eugene Peterson)

Where earlier translations seek formal equivalence, later translations seek dynamic equivalence and readability. The Message translates Biblical language into common contemporary English, explaining obscure concepts more fully for contemporary readers.

Commentary: The readability and understandability provided by renderings of that type can facilitate the reader towards more personal investment in the text than is possible with the ancient original. In those cases, the translation is "better" within the limits of communicative efficacy and personal investment.

#### Enhancing Literary Quality and Aesthetic Appeal

Case: Baudelaire's French Translations of Edgar Allan Poe

Translational work of Charles Baudelaire made European greatness of Poe popular in France, as it had become symbolist poetry folklore. The poetic depth infused through Baudelaire's work at certain places exceeded Poe's work.

Analysis: In French, Poe is world letters above all owing to Baudelaire's poeticized translation. The translations of the interpreter produced collectively an altogether new structure of beauty, proclaiming literary greatness and presenting the original with renewed vitality in the alien language.

#### Ideological Repositioning

Case: Emily Wilson's *Odyssey* (2017)

They stand not only as being in concise iambic pentameter but as an ideologically re-shaped version either. While earlier versions of it shun rather than celebrating brutalising of Odysseus and rather more critically watch relations of gender.

Analysis: It is more compatible with contemporary sensibilities and feminist sensibilities. It re-presents ancient heroism in contemporary ethical and cultural categories, and it may be superior to earlier versions and possibly the original, in comprehension.

#### Translating as Political and Ethical Intervention

Example: Fan translations of banned or censored books

In autocratic regimes, certain volumes get censored or banned. Censored translations may replace sections deleted or give the complete sense deleted by the culture of origin.

Analysis: These translations in these situations amount to ethical corrections restoring lost verity or aesthetic integrity of the original. These kinds of translations can be understood as being morally superior than those flawed or partial copies of an original.

#### Discussions

That it can be that a translation may be "better" than the original is a quite finely tuned, context-dependent construct. Superiority is not being measured in terms of essential criteria, but purpose and reception of the translated text. Under the banner of Skopos theory, purpose of the translation is the criterion of success, possibly re-purposing the original in fulfilling an end. Under reception theory, meaning is co-constructed on the part of the receiver, and an effective enough translation capable of conveying more may be more "valuable."

Such modifications, then, become controversial. Does the translator have freedom of retitling the sense, the tone, the morality of the work being translated? Where is the line of division between interpretation and appropriation? Undeniably clear is the fact that translations cannot be set-in-stone copies but re-interpretations in motion. Translations can re-enliven, re-animating and re-infusing writing, stretching beyond it or going beyond it under certain historic or cultural situations.

#### CONCLUSION

Indeed, the end product might be the superior work of the original, but after we redefine the adjective "better." With the fine-tuning of style, sharpness of ideology, impact on the reader, or cultural sensibility, translations can intellectualize and rewrite work the original never did nor intended. Wherever we present translation as the lesser task, it is more of a work of strong creative writing, sometimes of resurrection.

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