

The Importance of Connotation in Literary Translation

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Abstract :

Meaning in literary texts is somehow different from meaning in a technical or scientific text in which the main meaning is denotation (or referential meaning) rather than connotation, as the main function of scientific texts is to carry or transfer information. In literary texts, in which the main function is artistic, connotation acquires additional prominence. This implies that connotation has to be carefully attended to when translating literature. This paper tackles denotation/connotation transactions, and presents a number of authentic translated examples (from Arabic into English and vice versa) that are analysed in order to highlight some translators' errors in rendering connotatively-charged texts. It highlights the importance of connotative meaning in literary translation, which has to be carefully attended to.

Keywords: connotation; denotation; connotative equivalent; associations; function; culture

Introduction

Denotation, referential or lexical meaning of a word denote a core meaning of an object, an act, or a quality that is generally used and understood by the users; whereas connotation implies the associations that a word may bring to the hearer's mind according to his cognition and experience that are additional to its literal or dictionary meaning. Some words that have approximately the same denotation may hold different connotations. The words *house* and *home* have a shared denotation of "a dwelling place", but *home* has the additional connotations of 'comfort', 'privacy' and 'domesticity' that are absent from the word *house*. The denotation of the word *snake* in the Advanced English Dictionary is: "a long legless, crawling reptile, some kinds of which are poisonous". As for the connotations associated with the word *snake*, they include 'evil' and 'danger' as reflected in the idiomatic expression "a snake in the grass. The English word *bus* may connote 'low cost' and 'convenience' for some people (especially the poor), but may be associated with 'discomfort' and 'inconvenience' for others who own private cars. It may have the connotation of 'school' for many children who go to school by bus.

The following stanza (McCrimmon, 1963, p.131) shows the significant connotative differences between some pairs of synonyms (kitten and cat, mouse and rat, chicken and hen):

Call a woman a kitten, but not a cat;
You can call her a mouse, cannot call her a rat;
Call a woman a chicken, but never a hen

Different scholars have differently tackled connotative meaning. John Stewart Mill as early as 1843 related the term 'connotation' to the attributes or properties that a word connotes in opposition to its denotation (cited in Lyons, 1977, p. 175). Pyle and Allgeo (1970, pp.198-200) consider a word's associations to be restricted to "the senses of all the words with which it is always used", i.e. regardless of its referents. Osgood et al (1971, pp.15-16) focus on the psychological condition of using a word and view connotation as the emotive reactions of the users of language to it. Nida and Taber (1974, pp. 91-94) view connotation in terms of the emotional effects of a word on speakers and the emotional response of hearers. Lyons (1987, pp. 54, 143) states that connotation as a psychological and social aspect of expressive meaning reflects the feelings of language users towards a certain issue or thing, and that words like 'huge', 'enormous', 'gigantic', and 'colossal' reflect the speakers' feelings rather than the things they describe. Palmer (1981, p. 92) views connotation as the emotive overtones that result from different styles and dialects. Hervey, S. & Higgins, Ian (1992) classify connotative meaning into six types : Associative , Emotive, Attitudinal, Reflected, Collocational, and Allusive Connotation. Hatim (1997, p. 228) defines connotation as the "additional meanings that a lexical item acquires beyond its primary, referential meaning". Graddol et al (2005, p. 103) equate connotation with "the associations that words have for us". Munday (2001, p. 154) states that shifting the ST connotations may sometimes produce a shift in ideology.

Many connotations are well-established and constitute part of the linguistic competence of speakers (Nord, 2005, p. 102). Carter (2004, p. 116) classifies words into core words that are neutral in connotation such as the word *thin*, but a core word may have a synonym that is positive(*slim*) or negative (*skinny*). Connotation is one way in which synonyms may differ (Palmer 1981, p. 89). They are subject to continuous change. Many of the most obvious changes in the English language have resulted from changes in word connotations. Words that have

positive connotations may become negative and vice versa. An example of this is the word *gay* which was quite positive in the past. The word *charm* which has positive associations today had negative connotation in the Elizabethan age as it was associated with sorcery. The expression *nowadays* had associations of vulgarity and was avoided by the educated in Shakespeare's time and its use then was restricted to people of low status. Since the 1950's, the word *Negro* has acquired strong negative connotations, and has been replaced either by words with neutral connotations such as *black* or by words with positive connotations such as *African-American*. The word *crippled* has been replaced by *handicapped* or a more positive one: *differently-abled*. Some words may have both positive and negative connotations (Wen-li, p. 28). Sometimes SL connotations that are associated with a certain referent are different from the TL counterpart referent (Boase Beier, p. 82).

Connotations are affected by the co-texts and contexts. The word *dove* acquires positive connotations from such collocations as : "the dove of peace" , "harmless as a dove"; whereas its synonym *pigeon* has negative connotations as it is associated with such collocations as : "a clay pigeon" , " pigeon droppings" , etc (Pyle & Allgeo. 1970, P. 200). The word *liberal* has negative connotation in: "He is too liberal", but has positive connotation in : "He is liberal in an area of dictatorship". The word *bug* can have a positive or negative connotation in different co-texts and contexts:

This room is full of bugs! (negative connotation.)

John is as cute as a bug. (positive connotation)

The connotation of a word is also affected by the context of use (setting, occasion, purpose or function, and participants). The word *laser* is admirable among engineers, but many people have negative feelings about it as a result of the medical risks associated with laser technology. That is why advertisers use the *scanner* in advertisements which is a euphemism instead of *laser-using equipment*.

Connotation is not restricted to words only. Morphemes, syntax, sounds, spellings, and even typographical features can all connote certain meanings and have specific intended functions. For example, the suffix *-ish* was neutral as to connotation in the past, but nowadays has acquired unfavourable connotations in such words as *boyish*. The suffix *-ese* (in words like *journalese*, *translationese*, *officialese*) also contains negative connotations. Some grammatical structures too can have certain connotations. In the following two examples, the second one has more negative connotations in which the speaker seems to be much annoyed by the person asking him such questions:

1. He always asks me such questions.
2. He is always asking me such questions.(negative connotation).

Some have even attached associative meanings to vowels and consonants, saying that long vowels are more peaceful and solemn than short ones as the latter may express quick motion, agitation, and triviality (Boulton, PP.53-59). Poets make use of certain sounds to connote certain associative meanings, as in the deliberate and symbolic use of alliteration and assonance. Users of language can use spellings to express certain associative meanings as dealers do when they use the older spelling forms over the doors of their shops (*Gufte Shoppe* instead of *Gift Shop*) in order to attach a favourable quality of antiquity to their goods. The

romantic poet Keats in his poem "Ode to a Nightingale" changes the spelling of the word *fairy* into its older spelling form *faery* to create a connotation of antiquity:

She stood in tears amid the alien corn
The same that oft-times hath
Charmed magic casements, openings on the foam
Of perilous seas, in *faery* lands forlorn"

As for the associative functions of typographical features, some poets have made use of such features to support the general theme or message of their works as did the poet Malcolm Timperly in his poem: "The Fan" (in which the poem is presented in the format of a fan); and John Hollander in his poem: "Swan and Shadow" (in which the poem is presented in the format of a swan with its reflected shadow). In advertisements, *second-hand* cars are sometimes advertised as *pre-owned* cars, in which the emotional effect is clearly played out. In the political discourse too, connotations have a significant role and function. For example, a news item once appeared in the British magazine: *Reader's Digest*, (1989, October, 135) as: "Why Russia Can't Feed Itself", in which the word *feed* is mainly used with animals and babies, and this use of the verb with reference to Russians is based on its negative connotative function which reflected Britain's negative view of Russia then.

A translators' main concern is to try to reproduce a similar version of the Source Text (Henceforth ST) meaning/function in their Target Text (Henceforth TT) versions. Beaugrande (1999, P.12) tackles the question of meaning in terms of discourse in which meanings cannot be simply handled at the literal level since they "mutually constrain each other". Hickey supports Fawcett's view that a translator faces a special difficulty in relation to the degree "the target audience may need hints as to what is presupposed rather than explicitly conveyed in the original (1998, P.7). A translator is not only a bilingualist but also a biculturalist who does not only consider linguistic and referential factors in the process of translating, but also takes connotations into consideration (Jianzhong & Yan, p.180).

In literary translation where form acquires much importance, connotations are very important as a tool of enriching meanings and arousing imagination. Firth relates the difficulties of translation to matters of meaning (1957, P. 32). Some pairs of synonyms that are denotationally and referentially similar are not interchangeable in certain texts and contexts. For Mc-Guire (1980, P. 15), synonyms such as *perfect / ideal* include within each of them a set of non-translatable associations or connotations. Synonymous words that denote approximately the same thing may convey different connotations not only between different languages (such as English and Arabic), but also between different varieties of the same language (Ilyas, 2001).

The translator has to choose the right TL synonym (out of a set of synonyms embodied with positive, negative, and neutral associations). In the translation of certain literary texts, it is often the case that many culturally-charged SL connotations are mistranslated or lost, either because translators focus on denotation only, are unaware of the connotative function of the SL items, or cannot find the proper TL connotative equivalents. When such lost or distorted connotations constitute the gist of the SL message, the harm done to the original text is beyond measure.

When a SL item is used mainly for its denotation or referential meaning (as in scientific texts), the translator has to render it into its TL counterpart referential meaning as in the following sentence:

An owl is a nocturnal bird of prey.

اليوم طائر ليلي مقترس.

In the above sentence, the word *owl* is used mainly for its referential meaning or function. A translator cannot render it into a TL item that has a different referential or denotative meaning since it is the referential meaning that is in focus.

When the SL item or expression is not used for any specific referential meaning, but mainly for its socio-cultural associations, rendering it at the denotation level into the TL would cause the loss of the original intended associations, or may even produce the opposite associations in the TL reader's mind, it would be quite justifiable and proper to render the SL item into a different referential meaning in the TL to preserve the original intended SL associations that are in focus. In an example like : "You are as lovely as an owl", it is not the referential meaning which is in focus , but the connotative one, i.e. the attribute of beauty associated with owls in the modern English culture. Rendering it into a language/culture that views owls negatively (as Arabic) would produce incongruous and contradictory meaning for the TL reader:

أنت جميلة كالبيوم!!

A woman addressed in this way would take this as an insult rather than compliment; i.e. the intended original English positive connotative meaning would be distorted and undermined. It is quite legitimate in such circumstances to sacrifice the incongruous literal (referential or denotative), meaning and give priority to the connotative one. The translator may select a bird that has similar associations of beauty in the TL culture such as عصفورة (literally: sparrow) to avoid such pitfalls:

, أنت جميلة كالعصفورة

i.e. "You are as lovely as a sparrow.)

Franjiya (1990) produces a beautiful connotative equivalent in his translation of Wordsworth's poem "*Lucy*, in which the first line connotes the joy and serenity of the romantic union of man with nature, whereas the second line connotes the contrary for the then living poet:

But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me.

انها اليوم في قبرها
اما انا فلي الشجون

Had the translator opted for a referential equivalent, the TL text would have lost its lovely and warm associations.

Connotations are indeed very important in literary translation (which may also apply to some political, religious, and advertising texts), where form and formal features have important functions and associations. Unfortunately, it is often the case that translators focus on denotative

and referential meanings when rendering texts in which connotative meanings play an important functional and artistic role, producing thus incongruent and awkward renderings.

SL connotations are mistranslated or lost, either because translators focus on denotation only, they are unaware of the connotative function of the SL items, or cannot find the proper TL connotative equivalents. When such lost or distorted connotations constitute the gist of the SL message, the harm done to the original text is beyond measure indeed.

Let us consider a number of translation examples from English into Arabic, and from Arabic into English:

Examples from English-Arabic translations :

1.

Iago: Ere I would say, I would drown myself for the love of a guinea-hen; I would change my humanity with a baboon.

(Othello, Act 1, scene 3)

Jabra : قبل أن أغرق نفسي متن أجل فرخة حبشية

The SL item *guinea hen* has negative connotations (of prostitution), but the Arabic rendering فرخة حبشية has no such connotations whatsoever. Thus, the highly negative connotative implication and overtones of the SL text have been lost in the TL text.

A better rendering could be the use of a SL item that has equivalent or similar negative connotation such as: كلبة مبتذلة (a cheap bitch).

2.

Iago: By Janus, I think no.

(Othello, Act 1, scene 2)

(Jabra) : لا والله

Iago's character in *Othello* has been presented by Shakespeare as a hypocrite throughout the play, and this is why Iago's oath is : "By Janus" (Janus being a Roman god with two faces, one to the front and one to the back of his head) . His oath is overwhelmed with negative associations of hypocrisy that reflect his mean and hypocritical nature. The translator has rendered the SL item "By Janus", which is connotationally negative into a connotationally positive expression in the TL (Arabic) oath:

Jabra: لا والله (i.e. By Allah).

A solution here could be the use of an oath that would signal negative associations of hypocrisy and dishonesty such as:

قسما بالحرباء (By the chameleon) since in Arabic a *chameleon* is a symbol of inconsistency and dishonesty when used as an attribute of a person.

3.

I should venture purgatory for't.

(Othello, Act 4, Scene 3.)

Jabra : سأجازف بدخول المَطْهَرِ لقاء ذلك
 Mutran : من يقلد بعلي التاج فقد رضيت بالأعراف سبيلا

The word *purgatory* according to the Christian faith refers to the place of temporary suffering after death, (i.e. atonement for the dead that they might be freed from sin), and hence has such Christian connotations.

Jabra's rendering المَطْهَرِ *al-maṭhar* seems to be somehow close to the original denotation, whereas Mutran's translation الأعراف has some Islamic culture-specific associations that are totally different (a place located between Hell and Heaven for those whose sins and good deeds are equal). The closest Islamic term to *purgatory* is perhaps the word كِير in which sinners are exposed to fire to wash their sins (Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya, P.59). But since focus here is on the attribute of suffering as sacrifice for a noble goal, a better connotative equivalent could be suggested without restricting ourselves to the denotational/referential level :

... سأضحى بكل نفيس من أجل...

4.

Hot, hot, and moist. This hand of yours requires
 A sequester from liberty, fasting, and prayer,
 Much castigation, exercise devout,
 For here's a young and sweating devil...
 (Othello, Act 3, Scene 4)

Mutran: هذه اليد نضيرة يا سيدتي
 Jamal: هذه اليد جذابة، يا سيدتي

Shakespeare here uses the term 'moist' in collocation with 'hand' for its sexual implication and associations (not its referential meaning). Both translators, unfortunately, render it into Arabic as "نضيرة" (fresh) and "جذابة" (attractive) respectively, to the complete loss of the SL negative associations. These renderings lack the original sexual associations. To reproduce the SL connotations in the TL version, a translator in such cases ought to produce a connotation-oriented rendering instead of a referentially-oriented one such as using the word مثيرة (i.e. tempting).

5.

For here's a young and sweating devil
 (Othello, Act 3, Scene 4)

Mutran : ذلك لأن هناك شيطاننا فتيا سريع العرق
 Jamal: لأن هناك شيطاننا شابا سريع العرق

Shakespeare uses the expression sweating *devil* for its sexual associations. Both translators reproduce the denotation of the English word sweating literally ("يعرق"), or "سريع العرق" (of quick sweating), which lack the original sexual associations. To reproduce the SL connotations in the TL version, a translator in such cases may produce a

connotation-oriented rendering instead of a referentially-oriented one, using such an expression as: شيطان الشَّبَق (literally: the devil of lust).

6.

When we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted,
To sever for years
(Lord Byron)

Razuq : عندما افترقنا بسكينة ودموع

The word 'silence' in Lord Byron's poem is co-textually related to 'tears' , and contextually reflects the sorrowful break-up or departure of lovers, i.e. it is charged with negative associations of sorrow and bitter heart-broken feelings. The translator has unfortunately rendered '*silence*' (with all its context-based negative associations) into سكينة in Arabic, which has positive connotations of tranquility, reassurance, and inner pleasure or content. This totally contradicts the mood depicted in the English poem. A better equivalent here in Arabic (in terms of denotation and connotation) is the word صمت (silence):

عندما افترقنا بصمت ودموع

7.

The dew of the morning
Sank chill on my brow
It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now.
(Lord Byron)

Razuq : ندى الصباح سقط قريرا على جبيني:

The word *chill* in Byron's poem is co-textually and contextually charged with negative associations and unpleasant feelings of bitter sorrow and even shame as a result of the beloved's discomfoting behaviour and break of vows. But the translator unfortunately renders the word *chill* into the Arabic word قريرا that is very positive in its associations and has an idiomatic sense of joy as explicit in the Holy Quran, (Sura 25: Al-Furqaan, verse 74):

رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ

Our Lord! Let our wives and our offspring be a source of joy for us.

The translator in this instance has missed the mark, distorting the text's aesthetic and pragmatic function by shifting the ST negative connotation into positive connotation in the TL text. The English word *chill* here should have been rendered differently so as to reproduce the negative associations of the ST. One may use the Arabic word قشعريرة (chill or shiver) as a better equivalent in terms of denotation and connotation:

بعث ندى الصباح القشعريرة في جبيني

8.

The typist home at teatime clears her breakfast, lights
Her stove, and lays out food in tins.

(T.S. Eliot, the Waste Land)

وترجع الضاربة على الآلة الكاتبة الى بيتها في موعد الشاي

The English expression teatime has institutionalized cultural associations (as English families gather at home after work to have a light meal and tea around 5pm.). It has been translated into Arabic as موعد الشاي which unfortunately does not express the original connotations. A solution or approximate equivalent could perhaps be the addition of some explanatory words to make up for the lost associations, or to use an Arabic expression: العصريّة which in some Arab countries means a light afternoon meal with tea.

9.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes.
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,

(The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, T. S. Eliot)

الضباب الأصفر الذي يمسح ظهره فوق الواح النوافذ
الدخان الأصفر الذي يمسح خطمه فوق الواح النوافذ
ويلصق لسانه في زوايا المساء

Eliot's expressions *yellow fog* and *yellow smoke* in his poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" are charged with dense negative connotations such as 'gloom' and 'monotony' associated with the common and lasting thick fog and smoke in London.

The Arabic renderings of الضباب الأصفر , and الدخان الأصفر however, do not seem to fully express the negative connotations despite the fact that the yellow colour in Arabic has some negative associations: 'evil' and 'jealousy` (Ilyas, 2001). Fog in most parts of Arabia is rare even in winter. The translator may add a negative modifier to make up for the original strong negative associations by adding such a modifier as: الثقيل (heavy).

10.

The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree,
Sing all a green willow;
Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,
Sing willow, willow, willow

(Othello , Act 4, scene 3)

Mutran : ثوت الحزينة تكي تحت الجميزة
غنوا جميعا على الصفصافة الخضراء

Jamal: جلست المسكينة تنتهد قرب الجميزة
غنوا جميعا أغنية الصفصافة الخضراء

Colour connotations differ in different cultures. For example, the connotations of the colour 'green' in English include some negative associations such as 'naivety' ("to be as green as grass"), 'envy' ("green with envy") and jealousy ("green-eyed monster"), whereas all the connotations of it in Arabic are quite positive, symbolizing life and beauty (Ilyas, 2001). This is reflected in the Quran and Arabic poetry too. One of the names of paradise in the Qur'an is الخضراء (*the Green*) which is derived from the colour *green*. In Arabic poetry the colour *green* is almost always used with positive connotations (as in the lines of Suleiman Al-^{isa}):

نمشي نمشي مطرا أخضر
نسقي نسقي الوطن الاكبر
(Suleiman Al-^{isa}'s)

literally : (On we walk, on we walk as green rain
Watering, watering the greater homeland)

Al-Bayaati uses many such expressions in his poems: صاعقة خضراء (green thunderstorm); قطرات المطر الخضراء (the green drops of rain); القمر الشيرازي الأخضر (the green Shiraz moon); نجم اسطوري اخضر (a fabulous green star), etc.

In this example, Desdemona retells the story of her mother's maid called Barbary, whose lover went mad and left her. The song of "Willow" expressed the maid's misfortune that died while singing it. Desdemona's situation is similar to that of Barbary's, as Othello turns mad in his fit of deadly jealousy. Shakespeare has made use of the 'willow' image in *Merchant of Venice* also as Dido laments the loss of Aeneas:

"with a willow in her hand,
Upon the wild sea banks, and waved her love,
To come again to Carthage".

The negative sad associations of the S.L. text would acquire positive connotations in the T.L. text if translated denotation-wise. In such a case, a connotation-oriented rendering could be used. In order to reproduce the sorrowful SL connotations of the item under discussion "green willow", one may omit the colour 'green' and add the phrase الباكية الحزينة (weeping and sad) when rendering it in order to reproduce equivalent negative connotations:

هيا انشدوا جميعا مرثية الصفصافة الباكية الحزينة

Examples from Arabic-English Translations :

1.

وفي اسواق هذا الوطن الممتد
كالجرح من المحيط للخليج

(^cAbdul Wahab Al-Bayati)

(Franjiyya) : And in the markets of this nation
Lying like a wound from the Ocean to the Gulf

There are some points to be considered in this rendering. The translator has rendered the word الوطن into *nation*, and the SL qualifier الممتد into Lying. First, the word *nation* perhaps acquires some negative connotations in its co-text as it is followed by the word *lying*. To overcome such negative associations that result from the homonymous nature of the word *lying*, one can use the TL word *homeland* which has positive connotations. The other point is rendering the SL word الممتد into *lying*, which connotes static associations, whereas the SL word الممتد could be rendered in a better way into *extending*. The SL phrase من المحيط للخليج has political and nationalistic associations for many Arabs who believe their homeland to be one that extends from the Atlantic to the Arab Gulf. The English phrase: 'from the Ocean to the Gulf' is void of such positive political associations and even holds some ambiguity as a geographical location, since there are many oceans and gulfs in the world. One solution here could be to shift the implicit reference to an explicit one in the TT by the addition of the modifiers 'Atlantic' (before 'Ocean') and 'Arab' before 'Gulf'. The suggested rendering would be like:

And in the markets of this homeland
Extending like a wound from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arab Gulf

2.

فالعالم في العصر الجليدي على ابوابه الجنود
والطغاة، يحجبون بالجراند الصفراء نار الليل
(^cAbdul Wahab Al-Bayati)

(Franjiyya) : The soldiers and tyrants
At the gates of the ice age world
Hiding the flame of the night
With yellow newspapers.

The connotations of الجرائد الصفراء here are negative political ones (mean, backward, and misleading) which the poet wants to associate with tyrants. The idiomatic English expressions

'yellow newspapers' or 'yellow journalism' have a totally different set of connotations that are associated with scandals and sensational matters. This means one cannot render the SL phrase literally or denotation-wise. A better connotative English equivalent for الجرائد الصفراء here could be:

shabby newspapers

3.

وتمارسين السحر في الواحات كاهنة
وفي سعف النخيل تلوحين
للسائرين بنومهم والهائمين
وتضاجعين الميتين

Al-Bayati)

(Abdul Wahab

(Franjiyya): Practicing magic in the oases like a priestess
Waving the air with palm branches
For the wanderers and the sleep-walkers
Making love to the dead

The translator renders the Arabic verb تضاجع into “making love”. The translator's rendering seems to focus on the referential level only without attending to the connotative one. The Arabic verb تضاجع has negative associations, whereas “make love” in English has positive associations. When Al-Bayati wants to express positive associations in such a case, he usually uses two other expressions: يمارس الحب or يطيارح الغرام. A better connotative equivalent in English for the negative connotations of the SL text would be something like:

to have sex with...

Or: to lie with

4.

عيونك شوكة في القلب
توجعني واعبدها
واحميها من الريح،
وأغمدتها وراء الليل والأوجاع ... أغمدتها
فيشعل جرحها ضوء المصابيح
(Mahmoud Darweesh)

(Khalid Suleiman): Your eyes are a thorn in my heart;
It stings me, yet I adore it
And protect it from the wind.

The SL item توجعني literally implies 'that hurts me' but within its co-text and context, it is a favourable type of hurt that has positive or even desirable associations as explicit in the second and third lines: " yet I adore it and protect it from the wind", as the thorn becomes a substitute for the eyes that symbolize the poet's beloved homeland, Palestine. Unfortunately, the translator renders it into the English verb 'stings me' which is usually used for insects like hornets, and hence acquires negative and incongruous connotations; for how can something that stings be adored and protected from the wind?!

The English verb 'pricks' is a more normal collocate for 'thorn', and does not produce any such discrepancy or connotative incongruence:

Your eyes are a thorn in my heart,
That pricks me, yet I adore it
And protect it from the wind.

5.

فلبثنا نرقبه رقية أهلة الاعياد
and we remained watching for him as one watches for the new moons of the
festivals

(Wright, vol.2. p.20)

The SL word أهلة in the expression أهلة الاعياد, is the plural of هلال (literally: crescent) and the SL word الاعياد is the plural of عيد. In this instance, Wright presents a denotative or literal rendering of the SL expression into English "moons of the festivals" as if denotation is in focus which renders the TL text somehow vague and inexpressive. The fact is that it is connotation which is in focus here, i.e. the eager waiting and watching for someone which is compared to Muslims' eager watch for the crescent's new appearance in the eve following the 29th day of fasting in the month of Ramadan to decide whether the following day would be the 30th fasting day (in case the crescent was not observed) or the first day of Al-Fitr Ied (Fast-break Tide) if the crescent was observed in the sky. It is a culture-specific image. One could therefore translate this instance by focusing on the connotative meaning:

and we remained watching for him as one eagerly watches for an important
newsbreak.

6.

فرد شعورهن السود بيضا
(fate) turned their black hair white.
(Wright, vol.2.p.49)

In Arabic, the colour white collocates with hair to express old age, but in English the colour grey is used to express old age. The translator kept the same collocation for English too. In English the hair colour that is associated with old age is not 'white', but 'grey'. To reproduce the equivalent denotation and connotation of the Arabic expression under discussion, one could render it into:

Turned their black hair grey.

7.

وتفاحة من سوسن صيغ نصفها ومن جنانر نصفها وشقائق

There is many an apple, the one half of which is fashioned of a lily, and the
other half of a pomegranate blossom and an anemone.

(Wright, vol.2. p.217)

The translation of this poetic verse seems to have focused on the denotative meaning of the verb صيغ as explicit in his rendering "fashioned of ...".

In fact the connotation in the SL is in focus. The focus is on the white colour of lilies in one half of the apple, and the red one of pomegranate blossoms and anemone in the other half. One could therefore suggest a connotation-oriented rendering instead of the incongruent referential one:

What a (beautiful) apple half of which has lily-white complexion, the other half with the
red-complexion of a pomegranate blossom or anemone.

8.

سبحان الذي أسرى بعبده ليلاً من المسجد الحرام إلى المسجد الأقصى
 from the sacred temple (at Mecca) to the Temple
 which is most remote

(Wright, vol.2. p.144)

Wright renders the SL expression المسجد الأقصى into:

"the temple which is most remote".

The referent in the Arabic text المسجد الأقصى is Al-Aqṣaa Mosque in Jerusalem which comes next to Mecca's Al-Kaaba in sanctity for Muslims. The expression "the temple" in English does not represent or express the SL Arab-Islamic connotative meanings and culture-specific associations, and in fact connotes other religions such as those of the Hindus or Siekh, etc. The best approach in rendering such an instance is to reproduce some of the original Arab-Islamic associations:

from the Sacred Ka'ba Mosque in Mecca to the Al-Aqṣaa Mosque in Jerusalem.

9.

ومن يسلم وجهه إلى الله وهو محسن فقد استمسك بالعروة الوثقى
 and whoso turns himself wholly towards God, whilst he does good, has laid hold
 on the surest handle.

(Wright, vol.2. p.196)

Wright seems to have literally rendered the SL expression استمسك بالعروة الوثقى which has some context-based religious associations of piety into: "has laid hold on the surest handle", with the loss of the religious connotation in English. A better rendering here could be a more explicit rendering which would reproduce the original implications, rendering it into :

"has clung to the firm strings of piety".

10.

قالت رب أنى يكون لي ولد ولم يمسنني بشر قال كذلك الله يخلق ما يشاء
 (Quran, 3:47)

Many translators (Arberry, Abdullah Yousif Ali, Al-Hayek, Kassab, Pickthall, etc.) have rendered this euphemistic SL expression يمسن (that is charged with sexual associations) into "touch" which does not have such euphemistic sexual associations in English.

A better English equivalent for such an instance would be the euphemistic English expression 'to know'. The suggested rendering then would be something like:

She said: "O my Lord!

But how shall I have a son when I have not known a man? "

From the above examples, it is clear that connotative meaning requires more attention from translators when rendering literary texts.

Conclusion

Connotative meaning is of much significance in literary texts, translators should therefore fully attend to it, because literary works and texts are not intended to convey information in the form of denotative or referential facts, but rather to express human experiences, insights, and comments on psychological, social and cultural aspects of life.

When connotation is in focus, and it is not possible to find a connotative equivalent in the TL, translators can resort to exegetic translation, or use an explanatory footnote to draw the attention of readers to the connotative differences between the SL and the TL, and highlight the relevant S.L. cultural implications.

Indeed when connotative meaning in literary texts is in focus, it should sometimes be given precedence over denotation and referential meaning if a denotation-based rendering would produce connotative incongruence between the SL text and the TL text.

Departments of translation and translation-training foundations should pay special attention to to-be-translators, and train them as to the importance of connotative meaning in a number of registers, genres and text types (literature, advertisements, politics) whenever connotation is in focus.

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