

African Literature in Translation: Towards Adopting a Minor Translation Theory

Bethlehem Attfield^{1*}

The University of Birmingham, UK

 <https://doi.org/10.22034/mic.2023.164382>

Keywords

African literature,
comparative literary
analysis, translation
theory, Arabic,
Amharic

Submitted:
06 September 2022

Accepted:
15 January 2023

Published Online:
17 February 2023



Copyright:
©2023 Bethlehem Attfield

Abstract

Building on a comparative literary analysis of two translated African short stories, this article examines whether culture-specific metaphors and symbolisms effectively enrich the texture of a translated text or detract the reader from following the narration. Then, it takes into account critical reception of such culture-loaded stories, for developing an effective translation theoretical framework. Considering that the source texts are written in Arabic and Amharic, both Semitic languages with long literary traditions, the article particularly sets out to adopt a translation approach that focuses on power and means to keep their literary and cultural integrity. The decision to adopt Deleuze and Guattari's minor literature as a basis for translation theory is highly influenced by Reta's, the Amharic author's Hitsinawinet narrative theory. The maze-like framework that Hitsinawinet uses is inspired by the concept of 'rhizome' to effectively map out the complex and fragmented history of Ethiopia. The first draft of the Amharic translation is done based on a translation framework formulated by adopting the concept of rhizome as a map. This concept enables constant modifications, incorporating readers' views through focus group discussions. These complementary methods can facilitate a broader, more dynamic depiction that does not undermine the integrity of the source text.

To cite the article:

Attfield, A. (2023). African literature in translation: Towards adopting a minor translation theory. *Media and Intercultural Communication: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 1(1), 17-28.
<https://doi.org/10.22034/mic.2023.164382>

¹  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8761-1741> |  bba150@student.bham.ac.uk

* PhD Scholar, Department of Modern Languages, The University of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK

This is an open access article distributed under the [Creative Commons Attribution License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). This allows for unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, providing that the original author(s) and source are properly credited.

1. Introduction

This article is based on a comparative literary analysis of two African short stories. *When Will You Come?* (2008) is a short story originally written in Amharic by the Ethiopian author Adam Reta and translated into English as part of a PhD research in translation studies. *The Girl Whose Birds Flew Away* (2016) is written in Arabic by the Sudanese author, Bushra al-Fadil, and translated by Max Shmookler. It won the Caine Prize, the most prestigious prize for African writers in English, in 2017. It is published in the anthology *The Book of Khartoum* that was awarded a 2015 PEN Translates Award.

The aim of this analysis is twofold:

1. to investigate if metaphors, symbolisms, and intertextual references effectively enrich the texture of the translated text or detract the reader from following the narration.
2. to consider the critical reception and translator commentary of such culture-loaded stories, for developing an effective translation theoretical framework.

Both stories are based on distinct African literary traditions and have several intertextual references. Neither Ethiopian literature in Amharic nor Sudan's literature in Arabic easily fall into the major/minor, dominant/dominated dichotomy. When viewed independently both these indigenous African literature have the making of a major literature. In terms of size of speakers, an estimated 150 million people speak Arabic as a native language in North Africa with regional dialects. After Arabic, Amharic is the second largest Semitic language in the world with approximately 60 million speakers. In terms of history, both literatures have over a thousand years of literary tradition. However, the major/minor dichotomy is not a fixed condition, but one of becoming; in the language power dynamics when translated into the global dominant language, English.

Both Reta's Amharic and Al Fadil's Arabic stories relate to love at first sight, told from a young man's point of view in an African urban setting. The Sudanese story ends in a tragedy, while the Ethiopian story ends with a farce. Both stories use stream of consciousness as an effective narration technique that depicts communal perspective but at the same time makes the stories disjointed. Collective utterance is one of the characteristics of minor literature. So, naturally this technique disrupts the dominant form of English language narration.

The Sudanese story is set in a bustling market in Khartoum where the protagonist found himself attracted to a beautiful woman. The woman walks through a market center with her younger sister. He follows them. Unlike the other voyeurs, he tries to strike a poetic conversation with her. Over the following days, a friendship is established between them. The end is however filled with violence.

2. Critical reception

The Girl Whose Birds Flew Away begins with:

There I was, cutting through a strange market crowd – not just people shopping for their salad greens, but beggars and butchers and thieves, prancers and Prophet-praisers and soft-sided soldiers, the newly-arrived and the just-retired, the flabby and the flimsy, sellers roaming and

street kids groaning, god-damners, bus-waiters and white-robed traders, elegant and fumbling. And there in the midst, our elected representatives, chasing women with their eyes and hands and whole bodies, with those who couldn't give chase keeping pace with an indiscrete and sensual attention, or lost in a daydream. (p. 41)

A reviewer from Goodreads, a social network for readers says:

The opening of the short story that won the 2017 Caine Prize for African, and a few other passages in the story read almost like a rap. It is a rather delicious, almost dreamlike story of a man who sees two girls, probably an older and younger sister. He is so entranced; he follows them, trying not to frighten them. The older one seems almost magical. I saw her: soaring without swaying, her skin the colour of wheat – not as we know it but rather as if the wheat were imitating her tone. She had the swagger of a soldier, the true heart of the people. And if you saw her, you'd never be satiated. I said to myself, "This is the girl whose birds flew away".

The reviewer wonders what *This is the girl whose birds flew away* signifies. Although he finds the symbolism interesting, he has no idea if the storyteller meant that she was carefree and had escaped harm or something completely different.

Another reviewer comments:

Metaphors strew the text, but I think they are bad. It felt to me as a piece of work written to be literary but failing. It tries too hard. English words are not used correctly. Symbolism abounds, but in such an abstruse manner that readers unfamiliar with Sudanese culture will not understand. Notes refer to Sudanese mythology and history. The notes were inadequate for me.

This reviewer almost sounds offended. Comments such as "want to be, but failing", "it tries too hard" "incorrect usage of English", "abstruse", "unfamiliar" indicate the desire to maintain Western hegemony. Paul Bandia (2006) notes in discussing the translation of Ngugi's "Matigari Ma Njiruungi" from Gikuyu: "if the English translation fails to call attention to the Gikuyu language and its intricate relationship to its culture, then for all intents and purposes Ngugi's work is still being read in relation to the dominant European tradition" (p. 376). In other words, a translation that prioritizes seamless English use (for the sake of readers like the one cited above) undermines culture-specific references, denying the source text's originality.

The contrast between readers' views of the story comes out more sharply in the podcast Literary Roadhouse (2018), where four readers discuss "The Girl Whose Birds Flew Away" in a half hour-long program. One of the discussants said he read it four times and he was left "feeling stupid". When asked why, he said it was not much of a story. This implies, not only did he not understand the cultural references but also the narrative structure. The second discussant said, "it was decent". The other two liked the story because it was different. They particularly appreciated the cadence, the rhythm, and even the repetitions in the story telling. From these remarks one can surmise that the main difference between readers in this case is "attitude". Those who have preconceived assumptions about what a story should be like; in terms of structure, literary tools used, and narration style, are those who failed to appreciate the story.

In a BBC 4 podcast hosted by Olly Mann (2020), Ann Morgan, who read a book from every country in the world to broaden her reading horizon, lists reasons why this may be challenging to many people:

- a) unfamiliar culture can be daunting for fear of ending up feeling frustrated or stupid, at failure to understand it
- b) dreading hard work; the time spent to research background history or context

Literary professionals and industry can play a crucial role publicizing strategies to deal with these challenges and become enthusiastic about hearing different voices;

- a) getting comfortable with not knowing everything. It is possible to read a book without understanding every word. This willingness leads one more step towards re-evaluating one's belief because it opens a window to multiple perspectives, which gives a more complete worldview than the partial colonial narrative.
- b) shading one's preconceived assumptions helps to overcome the inclination to dismiss things we don't understand. This helps to overcome the "authenticity trap", which in fact is a trap of publicity channeled to people based on their identity in which their own ideas are reflected back at them. The publishing industry has exacerbated this problem, with their insistence of book covers reinforcing stereotypes. The marketing industry's algorithms also push the same themes a person has read or watched.

The valuable readers' insights above will be duly considered in the research methodology to formulate a suitable translation framework. As the Amharic story has not been published yet, there is no critical reception available for it. Instead, the translator's commentary will be used for analyzing the text, alongside the research supervisor's feedback.

3. Translation commentary

"When Will You Come?" is set in a residential area in Addis Ababa. A boy finds himself attracted to a girl who is watching a football game with her friends. On his way to a football practice on another occasion he strikes a conversation with her and manages to arrange a date with her. The story ends with a farcical failure to accomplish this plan.

The story has a similar expressive opening as the Sudanese story:

with the vitality and aptitude that booms during that fresh age of adolescence;
we devised a cunning plan, interwoven with artistic fibs to fool the grown-ups,
to veil the eyes of the elderly with deceit;
those who have lived for forty years on this Earth...
those who have travelled long on a time's journey...
those who were suckling on their last resolve with waning energy. (p. 1)

The translator deliberately chose to keep the sentences in the above paragraph drifting and broken as the original text. The author chose very unusual onomatopoeia to describe the energy that thrives in adolescence - so the translator chose to translate it with a corresponding English onomatopoeia, “booms”. The rambling sentence structure and unusual phrases are features of the maze-like framework of Hitsinawinet theory, an original Ethiopian narrative theory developed by the author, Adam Reta. Hitsin is a Ge'ez word which signifies spaces between letters in a given word structure. Based on the concept of Hitsen, as gaps within a text, Reta formulated Hitsinawinet as a framework of gap filling using the interconnected events in a story. For example, in “When Will You Come?” Reta uses forty-five international and local intertextual references to enrich his writing. International football stars like Maradona, and artworks like Mona Lisa feature in similes:

I begged Korerima with my eyes to come along. I silently implored her; ‘come on my caramel; let me chase after you instead of a ball, let me be your love-playmaker. A number 10 like no other, a Maradona. (p. 3)

Although Korerima’s body language communicates fear and avoidance, I focused on her eyes. My eyes caught a hint of a smile that she was trying to conceal from her mouth (like Mona Lisa). (p.2)

While some of these intertextual references are real, others are imaginary. For example, the artistic discourse given as an interview is fiction. Not only that, but the artist in the story also refers to an imaginary written work (which is furnished with a fictitious author, publishing house, year of publication and number of pages). At the end of the anthology there is a separate list of “fictitious intertextual references” to avoid confusion. The aim of Hitsinawinet narration style is therefore to fill the inevitable gaps within a story via branching out new interconnected stories. Intertextual references serve as a suitable tool to interconnect stories. Reta believes this structure is best suited for rendering the complex fragmented history of Ethiopia:

The 1974 Ethiopian revolution initiated the beginning of the death of the linear story. The fragmenting elements unleashed then are still working their way through all aspects of life. A society in chaos/disharmony cannot give you individuals that are comfortable in linearity. I have to look for ways to represent such realities and processes. The conceptual image or geometric metaphor we acquire from such disorder is a labyrinth or a maze. (Dessalegn, 2012)

The decision to keep this disjointed structure in translation destabilises the Standard English form. This is precisely why readers accustomed to the dominant English narration styles find such stories either as refreshingly unique; “like a rap, delicious, dreamlike” as the first reviewer of the Sudanese story put it, or “bad, abstruse” as the second reviewer found it.

The narration of what started off as a love story in “When Will You Come?” changes to artistic discourse via the interview, entirely narrated as footnote. This is a subversive technique emulating the branching out of rhizome framework in narration. The artist in the interview uses several intertextual references as well as cultural metaphors to put his point across. See the example below:

In an insulated society like ours that is not only polarized but also unprogressive; research should be a priority. Or at least go back and review our ancient integral knowledge. Let's study Zera Yacob, our own 17th century philosopher. That is what my 'Eighteen' collection does on a small scale. So, to me, gursha isn't a simple act. Through it, I see the path my culture has followed; its strengths and failures. Gursha to me is like a canon. (p. 9)

In the above text, the translation had to compensate for the reference to Zera Yacob, by introducing the historical figure within the text (a 17th century Ethiopian philosopher). The reference to "The Eighteen" art collection is fictitious. The definition of Gursha; "feeding a loved one an injera wrapped morsel, to show affection" was initially put as a footnote. Even though the translator advocates for contextualization rather than footnote use, the fact that one Amharic verb required eleven English words to contextualize, merited the exception. However, at a caution from the research supervisor about the importance of the translator taking a firm stance, it was later put back within the text. The decision to keep the original Amharic term is made because of the way it is used as a root cultural metaphor. The shift in storyline as well as genre; from childhood romance written in prose to artistic discourse as an interview, also demonstrates the heterogeneous nature of narration that hitsinawinet enables.

The following paragraph effectively shows the translation decisions made in order to resist vulnerability created by power dynamics. The translator made a concerted effort to balance the need to keep the distinct qualities of the original text with making the translation comprehensible.

I haven't started sprouting any beards yet. Her boobs (Korerima's) are just forming, sticking out like pointing fingers to the left and right, without a slight sag. I've heard people say, that the burden of life and age makes boobs vulnerable to the Earth's gravitational forces. Just like the saying; a fallen tree is an easy victim for many axes. As a clean-faced youth, I know nothing about such mysteries... I'm just recalling what people say. Nevertheless, there will come a day when she, (dear Korerima, named after "black cardamom") will have to go through this. (p. 1)

Despite the risk of appearing didactic, the translator initially defined the girl's name on a footnote, as the context was significant to the narration. With regards to syntax, the author deliberately used fractured sentences and unusual vocabulary to disrupt the normal Amharic narration form. The translator also deliberately kept this subverted style to defy the dominant forms of the English language. For example, in the original text, the author used the third person pronoun "her", twice and put the girl's name (Korerima) in a bracket, as an afterthought. The translator did not alter this unusual choice, but taking earlier feedback into consideration, included the context of the girl's name within the bracket instead of a footnote. The deliberate choice of the word "sprout" instead of "grow" normally used in the case of "beard" was also maintained in translation. There had also not been any attempt to substitute the proverb about "a fallen tree" with a similar English proverb as the meaning can be inferred with the literal translation. This is a risk the translator had to take, as there is a potential that readers may not get the symbolism as in the case of "The Girl Whose Bird Flew Away". Such insights in translation decisions highlight the need to bring about shift in readers' expectations.

4. Etymology of translation

Both Arabic and Amharic are Semitic languages. The eminent translation studies scholar David Bellos (2011) notes the fact that the word *ästärgwami* in Amharic and *mutarjim* in Arabic originated from the Ottoman (a language from ancient Mesopotamia, where writing originated) word *tercüman* for “translator” is proof for the antiquity of the practice.

The Arabic term *tarjama* has three central and interrelated ideas:

- explanation or interpretation,
- transformation into a different medium, and
- clarification by means of division into sections and labeling (Brustad, 2001, p. 42)

The Amharic word for “translation” *tirgum* also has similar connotations as the Arabic *tarjama*. This background on the nature of Amharic concept of translation demonstrates that Western translation theories, which focus on language transference, are not conducive. As Tymoczko, another translation studies scholar aptly explains, “the transfer metaphor implicit in Western conceptualizations of translation undermines the self-reflexivity and empowerment of translators” (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 7) and thereby make translators implicit to promoting the values of the dominant powers.

That is why her colleague Michael Cronin (2003) rightly asserts that translation theory should not be seen as technical aspect reserved for academics of major languages but as a vital method to understand the position of minority literature practitioners in language and power interactions.

5. Adopting a theoretical framework

With this context in mind, this researcher was motivated to explore a suitable theoretical and conceptual framework that enables translators from minor language literatures to have the power and means to keep the literary and cultural integrity of their source text. With a background in translation studies as postgraduate researcher and an Ethiopian heritage, one of the most particular concerns for the researcher was the possibility of the Amharic text being subjected to English standards during translation. This concern was because English, a globally dominant language with imperial roots, may dominate Amharic, a national language with independent heritage, if the wrong translation framework were to be used. In this regard, asymmetries of power between the two languages becomes the main issue.

Amharic literature delves into its rich linguistic, literary, and cultural resources from as far back as its ancient empire days. Earlier Ethiopian manuscripts during the Axumite Empire mostly during the 7th century were religious texts translated from Greek to Ge'ez. However, the emergence of original Ethiopian Ge'ez texts particularly *Kirbre Nagast* (Glory of the Kings), written 1314-1322, played a crucial role in legitimizing the Solomonic dynasty (Gerard, 1981). Although translation served a significant role in the foundation of earlier Ethiopian literature, standard Western translation theories would likely subvert literary translation from contemporary Amharic fiction. This is because earlier works were predominantly religious texts meant for teaching or illuminating. Contemporary fiction on the other hand is culture loaded and uses original narrative structures that need to be preserved. That

is why there needs to be a politics oriented literary translation theory and framework suitable for Amharic translation: one that can adequately handle a balance in the power asymmetries between languages.

When adopting a translation theoretical framework based on political engagement Tymoczko (2000) proposes an approach that centers on “power”. Hence, the choice to adopt Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari “minor literature” as a translation theory to deal with the issue of Amharic becoming a minor literature during translation. In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari (1986) explain that “a minor literature is not related to a minor language; rather it is what a minority constructs within a major language” (p. 16). Minor literature is therefore political and collective in nature and deals against asymmetries of power between languages with resistance. They further explain, when people have to use a major language that is not their own, their literature should allow to challenge the language and making it follow a revolutionary path. This shows that the major/minor dichotomy is not a fixed condition but that of becoming, when it undergoes through different language functions and centers of power.

The three characteristics of minor literature according to Deleuze and Guattari are:

- a) the deterritorialization of the language
- b) the minor writer is part of a collective or has collective utterance
- c) the political nature of the literature

Both stories when translated into English have these three characteristics. Although Arabic is a dominant regional language and Amharic is a dominant national language, they both become minor literature through translation into a dominant global language.

As a practical tool for political effectiveness, Tymoczko (2014) proposes the choice of texts for translation by itself as a political act, and the need to willingly manipulate them during translation. Choosing Reta's short stories for the translation is a deliberate political act. The Ethiopian revolution of 1974 started with a popular urban uprising that overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie I, the two hundred twenty-fifth and last of the Solomonic dynasty. The following thirty years were marked with violence as the interim government tried to establish an autocratic Socialist party-led rule. Reta's Hitsinawinet theory is an innovative response to effectively capture the fragmentation of the Ethiopian society caused by the revolution, through subverting the formal linear forms of narration. His stories have all the characteristics of minor literature. They are therefore conducive to be translated based on minor translation theory, which primarily focuses on power resistance.

Reta best captures his Hitsinawinet concept in a cultural root metaphor of “Injera”. The numerous holes of injera; the national bread, signify visible and invisible spaces and their connectivity. He explains; “the unique Ethiopian fermented bread is round and appears flat, yet it is three-dimensional. It is solid, yet soft and spongy. The holes on it seem like monads, and yet they are all interconnected through a maze” (Dessalegn's interview with Reta).

Inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's work (1987) in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Reta adopted the “rhizome” to his hitsinawinet theory. This structure allows “...a network, a spider's web” (p. 29).

According to Deleuze and Guattari, a book written as a rhizome allows, “heterogeneous multiplicities, that is, each is composed on innumerable elements co-existing in simple mode of relation possible...” The aim of the rhizome framework is therefore “to survey its tendencies or becomings, for the better and for worse” (p. 37). Based on these concepts, Reta particularly adopted four characteristics of the rhizome for his narration theory.

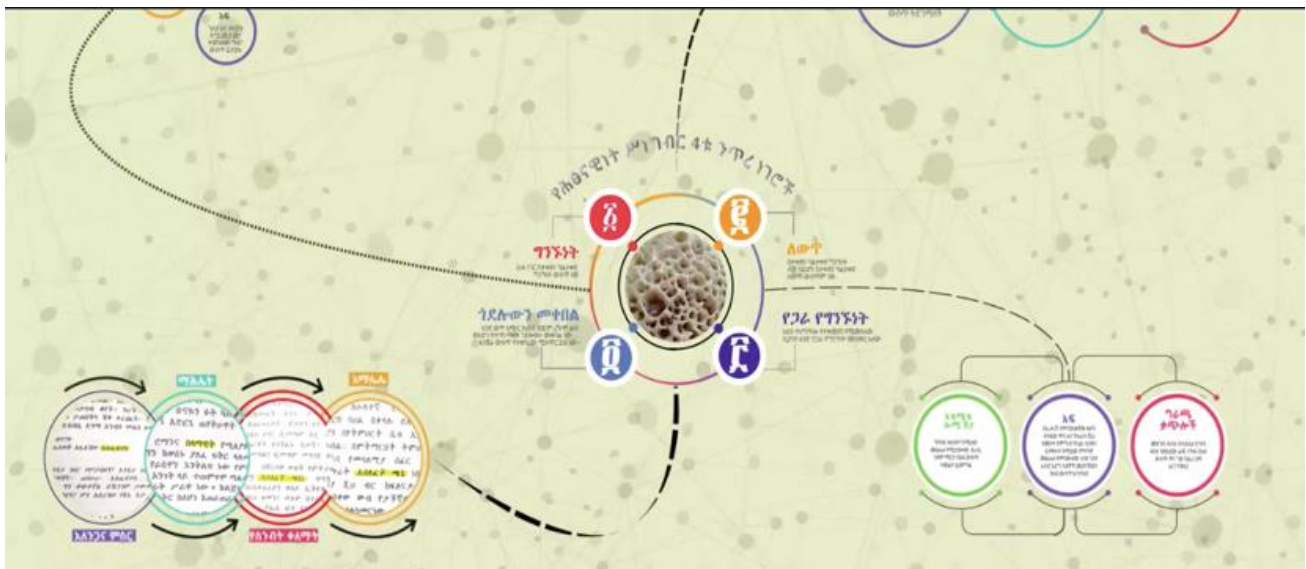


Figure 1. Interconnectivity in Adam Reta Books: *ኤትዮጵያዊነት* Hitsinawinet Infographics

The middle figure with image of injera, as root metaphor shows the four characteristics of Hitsinawinet narration framework:

1. Connections; intentionally or unintentionally everything is linked;
2. Change; intended or not, everything inevitably goes through change;
3. Interconnection; seemingly unrelated things are interconnected at least by one link;
4. Gap filling; for a text to be successful one needs to acknowledge the inevitable gaps within the text.

The figures on the left and right show how stories can be interlinked through fictional characters resurfacing to branch out into other stories. He similarly adopts rhizome as a conceptual framework to construct multicursal; maze-like stories that best depict Ethiopia’s fragmented society. For example in “When Will You Come?” half way through the story, the young protagonist recalls an interview his father gave to a journalist. His father is a famous visual artist mentioned in at least two of Reta’s other short stories. By taking a fictional character from a previous story to be the father of the protagonist in this story and by including an interview form entirely told as a footnote, the author not only forms interconnections but weaves an entirely different story. Hence he manages to render fragmented stories branch out from one story as a rhizome.

Tymoczko (1999) cautions that translators of a literary text to a dominant target culture are obliged to make cultural materials explicit and define potentially unfamiliar cultural materials. This process affects the movement and it is associated with surrendering in the language power dynamics. This

potentially compromises the literary status of the text, making it appear more didactic than imaginative literature.

In “The Girl Whose Birds Flew Away” most cultural references are explicitly defined at the end. For example:

- “What a devilish afreet she was.”
- “Have you forgotten that Khalil Farah was one of singers?”

At the end of the story eight cultural terms were defined including “afreet”, which is a Sudanese mythical creature, and Khalil Farah, an anti-colonial Sudanese poet. This requires the reader to go back and forth to find out the meaning, which breaks the flow of the reading. In-text contextualization would have been a better option in both these cases.

In carrying out literary translation from a politically motivated and deliberately subverted minor literature to a dominant form of global language, an ethical approach must be framed that does not compromise the integrity of source literature for the sake of conformity to English standards. This may at times involve choosing to maintain opacity of certain culturally specific realities, and disrupted syntactic forms, which naturally destabilize the dominant forms of English.

The adoption of minor literature translation framework enables the translator to maintain a balance between Reta’s subversive style, and rendering a coherent, compelling story in the English as it is in the Amharic.

As Claramont (2017) rightly points out, the translators in this scenario have an ethical responsibility. Their role is not to find equivalence, but to make complex decisions about when to become malleable or defiant, in order to resist vulnerability created by power dynamics. The minor translator primarily has the responsibility for conveying the sociolinguistic effect of the source as well as making conscious decisions to maintain a discourse of resistance against power dynamics including social inequalities.

The need to have heterogeneity in minor translation is therefore what makes the adoption of rhizome as an important conceptual framework for minor translation. As Deleuze and Guattari deduced in *A Thousand Plateaus*, rhizome as a conceptual model is ideal for establishing perpetual connections between semiotic chains and power dynamics in various areas of study.

The minor translation theory primarily focuses on the concept of the rhizome as a map and not a tracing like Chomsky’s structured model. Deleuze and Guattari assert “what distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real” (p. 13).

6. Translation theoretical framework: Research methodology

The translation of “When Will You Come?” is done based on a translation framework formulated mainly by adopting the concept of rhizome as a map. “The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation” (p. 12). In order to hone this theory further, a research is underway. This nature of a map, which enables

connectivity in all its dimensions, and “susceptibility to constant modifications” is also adopted in the translation theory. The research methodology therefore seeks to incorporate views from many dimensions including publishers and marketing perspectives. Most importantly, however, it takes on Bandia’s (2012) recommendation; for an effective communication of a text, one should draw a “parallel between the author, the translator, and the reader, who are linked by the heterogeneity of their experience”. Accordingly, the research methodology includes:

1. incorporating readers’ perspective via focus group discussions, involving a group of Amharic and Arabic translators from Emerging Translators Network and Ethiopian Translators Network. As highlighted by some reviews of the Sudanese story, readers need to detach from prior assumptions about the universal use of the standard form of the English language in translation, and instead open themselves up to many different versions of the English language;
2. incorporating the author’s views and perspectives via interview;
3. comparative literary analysis of translated texts originally written in;
 - a) an official national language: Amharic
 - b) a major regional African language: Arabic

Compensation and contextualization techniques are frequently used in the experimental translation, to help make sense of the fragmentation of a rhizoid story. However, minor translation should by nature be heterogeneous and experimental as signified above by the concept of rhizome as a “map”. So, the outcome of the research will be used to hone a second draft. This is followed by further refinement of the theoretical framework and a final version of the translation.

This approach effectively utilizes the practical translation and theoretical components, by enabling each to inform the other.

These complementary methods facilitate the space for creating a broader, more dynamic representation that captures the complexity of the source text. The broad methodical representation in this research also requires an active and engaged reading process to grasp translations from indigenous literary cultures.

To conclude, cultural metaphors, symbolisms and intertextual references effectively enrich a translated text. However, the translator of a minor literature has the responsibility of conveying cultural norms of the source by contextualizing them. This is essential in order to balance the dynamics of power between the two languages, while maintaining the subversive narration styles and certain opacity of the source text. The proposed minor translation theory and framework enables heterogeneous and experimental translation as signified by the concept of rhizome as a 'map'.

The outcome of the suggested research will be used to hone the proposed theory, as well as a recommendation to initiate change in the literary industry. This complementary method will facilitate a broader, more dynamic representation that depicts the complexity of culture-loaded and subversive source text in translation.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

References

- Al-Fadil, B. (2016). The girl whose birds flew away. In R. Cormack & M. Shmookler (eds.), *The book of Khartoum* (M. Shmookler, Trans.). Comma.
- Bandia, P. F. (2006). Decolonizing translation. *The Translator*, 12(2), 371-378. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2006.10799223>
- Bandia, P. F. (2012). Postcolonial literary heteroglossia: A challenge for homogenizing translation. *Perspectives*, 20(4), 419-431. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2012.726233>
- Bellos, D. (2011). *Is that a fish in your ear? Translation and the meaning of everything*. Faber & Faber.
- Brustad, K. (2001). *Interpreting the self: Autobiography in the Arabic literary tradition*. University of California Press.
- Claramonte, M. C. A. V. (2012). The map is not the territory: Toward a minor translation. *Perspectives*, 20(3), 269-284. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2012.702397>
- Concepcion, A. (Host). (2018, March 21). Literary roadhouse [Podcast] <https://www.literaryroadhouse.com/story-girl-birds-flew-away>
- Cronin, M. (2003). *Translation and globalization*. Routledge.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1986). *Kafka: Toward a minor literature* (D. Polan, Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (B. Massumi Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.
- Dessalegn, A. (2012). An interview with Adam Reta. *Callaloo*, 35(2), 348-354.
- Gerard, A. (1981). *African language literatures: An introduction to the literary history of Sub-Saharan Africa*. Longman Group Limited.
- Mann, O. (Host). (2020, September 30). Reading outside your comfort zone. *BBC Radio 4*. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000myyp>
- Reta, A. (2021, July 15). Interconnectivity in Adam Reta books [Video]. *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mR2tBSPNLck>
- Reta, A. (2008). *When will you come? Etemete lomi shita* (Trans.). Assab.
- Tymoczko, M. (1999). *Postcolonial translation: Theory and practice*. Taylor and Francis Group.
- Tymoczko, M. (2000). Translation and political engagement: Activitism, social change and the role of translation in geopolitical shifts. *The Translator* 6(1), 23-47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2000.10799054>
- Tymoczko, M. (2007). *Enlarging translation, empowering translators*. Tailor and Francis Group.