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Multilingualism in Poetry

How to Translate Sayat'-Nova?

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1 Introduction

In the preface to his translation of Ovid's *Epistles*, the English poet John Dryden (1631–1700) records his thoughts on translating poetry as follows:[1]

> Sir John Denham [writes] in his admirable Preface before the Translation of the second Æneid: "Poetry is of so subtil a Spirit, that in pouring out of one Language into another, it will all Evaporate; and if a new Spirit be not added in the transfusion, there will remain nothing but a Caput Mortuum". I confess this Argument holds good against a litteral Translation, but who defends it? Imitation and verbal Version are in my Opinion the two Extreams, which ought to be avoided [...]
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> DRYDEN 1680, preface

He continues by suggesting that the translator, besides being expert in source and target language, must seek 'to give his thought either the same turn if our tongue will bear it, or if not, to vary but the dress, not to alter or destroy the substance'. Translation, its form, and its function have remained topics of academic and philosophical interest but were elevated to the rank of a separate academic discipline only in the 1960s—notably by the works of Nida (1964) and Catford (1965)—despite long-standing engagement with these and related topics and scholarly discussions thereof.[2]

1 As it was the laureate who introduced me to the joys and abysses of Armenian literature and linguistics, and guided me through them when I was an undergraduate and then a graduate student, it seems only fitting that my paper, presented in his honour, should combine his interests in poetry with my linguistic ones. I am and shall always be very grateful for his teaching and his friendship. On this occasion, further thanks are due to Federico Alpi, Tamsin Blaxter, and David Zakarian for providing critical yet constructive feedback on the first draft of this paper; and to Agnes Korn and Murad Suleymanov for their help in finding some Turkic etyma. All errors and omissions are, of course, mine.

2 A collection of such musings is presented in Venuti (2012).

Some more recent approaches advocate a more radical strategy rather than Dryden's golden mean: while he had argued for taking into account what can be expressed in like fashion in source and target language alike, these approaches reject adopting the means and conventions of the target language by 'domesticating' the source text, and propose ignoring, expanding, breaking them. Such often inevitably experimental and outlandish translations—at least from a traditional point of view—seek to 'match the polyvalencies or plurivocities or expressive stresses of the original by producing [their] own' (Lewis 1985, 41). This strategy, termed 'abusive fidelity' by Lewis and 'resistancy' by Venuti (1995, 24), derestricts the translator by allowing them to translate not only the content, but also the means of the original.

The application of this strategy to 18th-century Armenian multilingual dialect poetry and its challenges are the subject of this paper. It endeavours to deliver two things: a discussion of the principal theoretical challenges of translating poetry in general and the above-mentioned type in particular; and to provide a practical example of how such a challenge may be tackled by a resistant, non-'domesticating' approach. The example chosen for this purpose is Sayat'-Nova's *T'amam ašxar pətut ēka*.

Section 2 begins with a discussion of the *ašuł* Sayat'-Nova, a Georgian-Armenian bard of the late 18th century, one of whose poem-songs is discussed later; this section provides a brief overview of his life, œuvre, and use of language, and outlines why his work is interesting for translation studies. Section 3 presents, in necessary brevity, the key tenets of translating poetry, and discusses some of the issues surrounding translations of poetry written in non-standard variants and / or composed in multilingual settings. Following on, section 4 uses the above-mentioned poem as a case study; next to the original text and a non-poetic base translation as well as a brief discussion of the poem's linguistic features, two different translations are offered, which seek to account for the poem's linguistic diversity in different ways. Finally, section 5 briefly summarises the findings of this paper.

2 Sayat'-Nova

2.1 *His life*

The details of Sayat'-Nova's life are not straightforward to retrieve, resulting in much uncertainty as regards even elementary facts such as his birth year, birth place, and name. For this reason, the details presented here are only those which have a reasonably solid evidential background.[3]

3 In his work on Sayat'-Nova, Dowsett presents facts on the one hand, and conjectures and

Conventionally, his birth is dated to 1712, though other dates have been mooted (Dowsett 1997, 31–35). Evidence suggests he was born as Arut'in in or near Tbilisi whence came his mother Sar(r)a; his father Karapet was of Syrian origin and fled to Georgia to escape religious, ethnic, and likely economic tension; he was educated at Sanahin monastery. Of humble origins, it is possible that prior to becoming a professional *ašuł*, he may have learned a trade.[4] According to his own testimony, Sayat'-Nova was an accomplished troubadour by age 30, playing stringed instruments including the *kemancheh*, *chonguri* and the *tar*; the absence of any praise for a musical mentor in his poetry is taken as an indication that he was a self-taught musician.

The nature and size of Sayat'-Nova's œuvre suggest that he held a court position, as do references in his poems.[5] This was, it appears, not at the court of Erekle II directly, who during Sayat'-Nova's time as a bard was king of Karkheti with a seat at Telavi, but of his son, the later king of Kartli and Karkheti, Giorgi XII. When Sayat'-Nova's tenure at court began is not clear; its end, however, came in 1759 as the result of a scandal.[6] Soon thereafter, he took holy orders and became a *k'ahanay*, a married parish priest, in Anzal at the Caspian Sea—a role which did not suit him particularly well. The 'most reluctant priest in Armenian records' (Dowsett 1997, 25) stayed there for an undetermined number of years, but moved to the monastery of Hałpat not long after the death of his wife Marmar in 1768, taking monastic vows; here, he was active as a scribe amongst other occupations, as is evident from a small number of colophons.[7] He died, aged about 82, in Tbilisi in 1795, most likely during raids by the troops of Āghā Mohammad Khān-e Qājār, *šâhânšâh* of Iran (*r.* 1789–1797) in his campaign to re-subjugate Georgia.

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myths on the other (1997, 1–45, 46–75). Even the facts are, however, based in no small part on interpretations of the bard's poetry and marginal notes on manuscripts of his poetry, some in the poet's own hand, others in that of family members.

4 Dowsett maintains that he may have been a weaver or dyer based on the frequent cloth metaphors in his poetry, admitting himself, however, that these are not uncommon (1997, 9); at another point, he suggests he may have been a merchant, too (1997, 63–64). These interpretations may be overzealous.

5 In one poem, for instance, the bard refers to himself as the serf of Gurgen Khan, a byname of the Crown Prince of Kakheti (Baramidze 1963, 28; for the use of the name as a byname of the crown prince, cf. Allen 1932, 351 fn. 4). The later collection of his poetry by his own son, Ioane, was commissioned by his old patron's son, Teimuraz.

6 Cf. the detailed discussion in Dowsett (1997, 76–130).

7 Such colophons occur in, for instance, Matenadaran MSS 4270 (1765/6) and 10838 (1760), in both of which the scribe Step'anos mentions his former alias (cf. Dowsett 1997, 22–24).

2.2 *His Œuvre*

As a courtly troubadour in multilingual 18th-century Georgia, it is unsurprising that Sayat'-Nova's œuvre is similarly diverse with 68 poems in Armenian, 35 in Georgian, 124 in Azeri, and 6 in Russian.[8] His bardic poems, intended for courtly entertainment, almost all fall in the category of romantic poetry, as observed by Dorfmann-Lazarev: 'Quasi tutta l'opera di Sayat-Nova che ci è pervenuta è costituita da poesia amorosa. Le sue metafore sono fluide, il loro significato cambia talvolta anche all'interno di uno stesso poema' (2004, 90). Rather than doing injustice to the technical complexity and the varied imagery of his work owing to restrictions of space here, the reader is advised to consult the detailed accounts of Dowsett (1997, esp. 235–397) and Yang (2016, 163–203) on these matters. The importance of his work can, however, be summarised succinctly in the words of Dowsett:

> [...] within Armenian literature, beside Gregory of Narek and K'uč'ak Nahapet, Sayat'-Nova ranks high. Indeed, through his songs, frequently performed, in the life of the Armenian people, like Burns among the Scots, he can be said to rank highest of all.
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> For the songs of Sayat'-Nova remain popular throughout all the Armenian communities in the world, be it that of Erevan in the Armenian Republic, or that of Chicago in the Diaspora [...] He is recited and sung everywhere.
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> 1997, 234

Some of the typical literary and technical elements of his poetry are discussed below, section 4.2, with reference to the poem treated there.

2.3 *His Language*

Sayat'-Nova's language is remarkable in two ways for the modern reader: he writes in the Tiflis dialect of Armenian, historically spoken in Tbilisi, occasionally mixing elements of Eastern and Western Armenian variants;[9] and he makes prolific use of lexical material from other languages of the region, most notably

8 The numbers are based on the poems published in Baxčinyan (1987); Dowsett's accounts differ slightly. For more on the Georgian poems, cf. Baramidze (1963), Dowsett (1997, 398–421); on the Azeri ones, least studied though most numerous, Gaysaryan (1961), Dowsett (1997, 422–434); on the Russian ones Dowsett (1997, 435–449). Dowsett notes repeatedly that, having never learned Russian to any meaningful extent, Sayat'-Nova's Russian output is not comparable in quality to the rest of his work. For a general discussion of Sayat'-Nova and his works within the bardic tradition of the region, cf. Yang (2016).

9 Already Ačařean (1911, 52) remarks that this dialect was at the brink of disappearing because

Farsi, Turkish and Georgian—languages, incidentally, in which he also composed poetry.[10] While this is not the place to present the linguistic ins and outs of the Tiflis dialect,[11] it is worth pointing out some of the key features of this dialect in as much as they affect reading and comprehension.

Phonologically, word initial /ɛ/ has been raised to /i/, resulting in perhaps unexpected spellings: MEA ես [es] 'I' ~ Tif. յիս [yis], MEA երբ [erb] 'when' ~ յիփ [yipʿ]. A similar raising and orthographic change can be observed for /o/ > /u/, thus MEA որ [or] 'who, which' ~ Tif. վուր [vur], MEA որդի [ordi] 'son' ~ Tif. վուրդի [vurdi].[12] Diphthongs like /aj/ and /uj/ have monophthongised to /ɛ/ and /u/; the new /ɛ/ sound is distinguished orthographically from the inherited /ɛ/ ⟨ե⟩, with /ɛ/ < /aj/ rendered as ⟨է⟩, thus MEA այն [ayn] 'this' ~ Tif. էն [ēn], այլ [ayl] 'other' ~ Tif. էլ [ēl]; պտոյտ [ptoyt] 'around' ~ Tif. պըտուտ [pətut].

As regards morphology, the Tiflis dialect groups with that of Erevan and other Eastern dialects in forming the present indicative periphrastically with a present participle in -ում [-um] and a form of the copula եմ [em], so for instance նստում իս [nstum is] 'you sit'.[13] The formation of the future is analogous to that in MEA, but has not undergone phonological reduction and univerbation; thus MEA կշինես [kšines] 'you will make', but Tif. կու շինիս [ku šinis].[14] The nominal system is very similar to that of MEA, too, with only minor differences. The plural formant is the morph -ներ- [-ner-], which in the nominative plural undergoes regular sound changes and is expressed as -նիր [-nir]. The only remarkable difference is the use of an ablative ending -եմեն [-emen], e.g. in չարխեմեն [čʿarxemen] 'from a wheel'.

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of the dominance of Russian and Georgian on the one hand, and the modern literary variant of Armenian on the other.

10 For a discussion of other dialect features in Sayatʿ-Nova, including loans, cf. Hovhannisyan (1990). For details on Armenian as part of the Caucasian *Sprachbund*, cf. Chirikba (2008). To my knowledge, no extensive study of the contact linguistics of the Tiflis dialect has been conducted, wherefore information on non-Armenian lexical material in Sayatʿ-Nova's works must be sought in other sources, e.g. the dictionary of Kʿočʿoyan (1963) or dedicated discussions such as Mirzoyan (1967).

11 For a recent overview of Armenian dialects with descriptions and bibliography, cf. Martirosyan (2019); descriptions of the Tiflis dialect can be found in Petermann (1866) and Ačaŕean (1911, 52–60).

12 A related change /ɛ/ > /i/ and /o/ > /u/ can also be observed in final syllables, thus MEA քեզ [kʿez] 'you' ~ Tif. քիզ [kʿiz], MEA քո [kʿo] 'your' > Tif. քու [kʿu].

13 Contrast the use of the particle կը [kə] and a finite form of the verb, e.g. սիրեմ [sirem] 'I love' used for the present indicative in Western Armenian.

14 For a brief account of the development of the marker կու [ku] and its variants, cf. Karst (1901, 299–309).

TABLE 11.1 Examples of loanwords and their origins in Sayat'-Nova

Armenian	Meaning	Origin
ավազ [avaz]	'song, voice'	NP *âvâz*
բահար [bahar]	'spring'	NP *bahâr*
բեհեշտ [behešt]	'paradise'	NP *behešt*
գուլ [gul]	'flower, rose'	NP *gol*
միզան [mizan]	'scales'	NP *mizân* (< Arab. *mīzān*)
դողրու [dołru]	'correct, right'	Tk. *doğru*
դովա [dova]	'prayer'	Tk./NP *duâ* (< Arab. duʿāʾ)
թամամ [tʿamam]	'complete, entire'	Tk. *tamam* (< Arab. *tamām*)
ջավահիր [ǰavahir]	'jewel, gem'	Az. *cavahir* (cp. Tk. *cevher*, both < CP *gowhar* via Arab. (= NP) *jawhar*)
յաշիլ [yašil]	'green'	Az. *yaşil*
խաբար [xabar]	'news, message'	Az. *xəbər* (cp. Tk. *haber*, both < Arab. *ḫabar*)
ճաղ [čał]	'chandelier'	Geo. *č̣ali*

For speakers of MEA, however, it is not phonological and morphological differences which make the poetry of Sayat'-Nova challenging to understand, but rather its lexis. It is difficult to determine whether the frequent loans from Farsi, (Azeri) Turkish, and Georgian are an expression of the poet's own polyglot nature as well as the poetic form, or a typical feature of Tiflis dialect.[15] Table 11.1 gives a small sample of the loanwords found in Sayat'-Nova's poetry.[16] While the sample is by no means representative, it is worth observing that Georgian loans make up the smallest constituency by far.

It is this multilingual nature of Sayat'-Nova's language that makes it so challenging to render into another language. Before turning to practical considerations of how to cope with this challenge, however, the difficulties of translating multilingual poetry must be considered more abstractly.

15 Armenian is, of course, a language strongly marked, in past and present, by language contact with, in particular, Iranian languages (cf. Meyer in press); MEA has been heavily influenced also by Russian, on the lexical as well as the phonetic level (cf. Łaragyulyan 1981).

16 It ought to be added at this point that, in many instances, it is not clear whether a loanword is from Farsi or Turkish, since the same word occurs in both in the same or almost the same form, both of which could yield the Armenian word. Since these are dialect loanwords, even Ačaŕean and Nersisyan (1979) and Martirosyan (2010)—the standard Armenian etymological dictionaries—are of no help.

3 Translating Multilingual Poetry

Translating any text from its source language into a target language has its difficulties at the best of times: finding the *mot juste*, matching or replacing idioms and metaphors, periphrasing concepts that do not exist in the target language culture, etc. Further complications arise when the source text has other formal properties—a particular verse structure; rhyme, alliteration, or assonance; and so on—or makes use of more than one source language (and its culture), even if to different degrees, e.g. through code-switching, non-standard loans, or cultural references. How can such texts like poems or songs be translated while maintaining at least the intended effect of the original if not the means of causing it?

Inevitably, this is not a neutral process in which the entirety of the original can be maintained in all respects. It is the task of the translator to find 'diejenige Intention auf die Sprache, in die übersetzt wird, […] von der aus in ihr das Echo des Originals erweckt wird' (Benjamin 1923, 16), but in so doing they need to process, analyse, and decompose content and form of the original and recompose it to fit the target language and its potential formal requirements. What is lost is the naive, innate art and expression of the poet, which is, at best, substituted by the art and expression of the translator.[17] In the particular context of multilingual poetry, the translator faces further challenges since

> [o]ne of the greatest aporias of multilingual translation is the impossibility of translating the heteroglossy and heterogeneity of the translator's own language found in the original. This can only partly be mastered by compensatory strategies like 'materilingual' estrangement or like italics as a marker for the strangeness of one's own language in the original.
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> KNAUTH 2011, 9

One approach that seeks to meet this challenge is a 'resistant' or 'foreignising' translation, i.e. one that does not accept the prevailing constraints—formal,

17 Cf. Jakobson's observation on this matter: 'In poetry, verbal equations become a constructive principle of the text. […] any constituents of the verbal code […] are confronted, juxtaposed, brought into contiguous relation according to the principle of similarity and contrast and carry their own autonomous signification. Phonemic similarity is sensed as semantic relationship. […] paronomasia […] reigns over poetic art, and whether its rule is absolute or limited, poetry by definition is untranslatable. Only creative transposition is possible' (1959, 238).

linguistic, or cultural—in the target language, but stretches or transgresses them, using means and material from the source language or by different methods entirely.[18] Without producing a literal translation, the source text is rendered in such away as to maintain as much of the original culture and author's expressiveness as possible, putting the onus of comprehension, 'making sense of the foreign' on the reader. An expressive, if perhaps trivial example of 'domestication' vs 'foreignisation' is the first German translation of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932; tr. into German by H.E. Herlitschka, 1933):

Henry *Foster* had had his machine wheeled out of its lock-up and, when Lenina arrived, was already seated in the cockpit, waiting. […]	Henry *Päppler* hatte seinen Helikopter aus dem Verschlag herausrollen lassen und saß bereits im Führersitz, als Lenina erschien. […]
London diminished beneath them. The huge table-topped buildings were no more, in a few seconds, than a bed of geometrical mushrooms sprouting from the green of park and garden.	*Berlin* schrumpfte unter ihnen zusammen. In wenigen Augenblicken glichen die riesigen Flachdachbauten nur noch einem Beet geometrischer Pilze inmitten des Grüns der Gärten und Parkanlagen.
In the midst of them, thin-stalked, a taller, slenderer fungus, the *Charing-T Tower* lifted towards the sky a disk of shining concrete.	In ihrem Zentrum stand ein höherer, schlankerer Pilz mit dünnem Stiel, der *Anhalter Flugturm*, und hob seinen flachen Hut aus hellem Beton gegen den Himmel.

In this 'domesticating' translation, names (based on historical figures) and locations (all in italics above), have been adapted for a German readership who would be less familiar with the geography of London and the history of Britain than with that of Berlin and Germany, respectively;[19] a 'foreignising' approach would leave the original names unaltered. While in most if not all modern translations, this degree of 'domestication' is avoided, the same is not true on other levels, e.g. metaphor, idiom, or indeed sentence structure. Nevertheless,

18 Cf. Venuti (1995) and, for a critical discussion of this approach, Myskja (2013); the idea itself is not a new one and advocated already in Schleiermacher (1813). As noted by Al-Omary (2013), there is a strong cultural-political and socio-historical context to this kind of translation, which seeks to minimise the 'domestication' of foreign cultures to the expectation of the anglophone world.

19 More recent translations of the novel by Eva Walch and Uda Strätling do not follow this approach.

'foreignisation' can be applied not only to elements with semantic content, but also to more formal aspects, e.g. a rhyme scheme, or for linguistic features, e.g. evidentiality marking.

While this approach allows the translator to maintain as much of the source text as possible in terms of linguistic structures, imagery, and cultural references, the question of multilingualism remains. Simply put: even the most faithful translation cannot maintain ad-hoc borrowings or clearly identifiable, non-standard loanwords from the source language which would impact comprehension in translation. A further problem is that of the audience: a multilingual poem or song written and performed for an equally multilingual audience has different requirements than such a poem composed in a monolingual context. In both cases, the elements and structures from the non-dominant languages will be noted; only in the first scenario, however, will they be comprehensible and potentially affective. In the second case, comprehension cannot be assumed, and while the 'foreign' material may have an effect, it is in all likelihood one of estrangement only.

Assuming a multilingual audience in the source language, transposing this setting on the target community is at times difficult. In the context of English as a target language, there is no single second language shared by the whole speech community: British English speakers may know French or Welsh, those in the United States of America Spanish, those in India Hindi or Urdu, etc. A translation hoping to be faithful to the original by being 'foreignising' or resistant while transposing one multilingual setting into another must, therefore, be community-specific; a translation for an American audience would differ from that for a British one.[20]

A non-target-specific approach avoids such transposition, opting instead for other means of rendering non-dominant language materials and structures in the target language, e.g. by manipulating the translated word (e.g. anagrams, phonological changes) or its typographic representation (e.g. *italics*, bɘtoпiɯ, ɹbɘıqɛ-qoʍɹ, displaced, rotated, script). This method ensures universal comprehensibility in the target audience while, at the same time, reproducing the notability of the loanwords in the source language.

Both approaches, whether linguistic or typographical, aim to make the poem comprehensible and appreciable by the target audience while diverging from the source composition as little as possible in language, structure, and assumed

20 There are, of course, poems and translations which are not intended to be understood in the traditional sense, e.g. dadaist compositions or those purposely employing a great number of lexifier languages; for a survey of such works in the French tradition, cf. Robertson (2017).

intended effect. The following case study endeavours to showcase both approaches, one replicating a multilingual setting by transposing it to the cultural context of a specific target language variety, the other using typographical means to render non-dominant language material.

4 A Case Study: *T'amam ašxar pətut ēka*

The bardic poetry of Sayat'-Nova lends itsef ideally to this kind of translation. The piece chosen for this purpose, poem 26 in Baxčinyan's collection, was originally composed in the Tiflis dialect of Armenian and is replete with loanwords from other languages of the region as outlined above. The choice of this particular poem is owed not least to Dowsett's assertion that 'the song is one of the poet's finest' (1997, 152).

Next to the original text of the poem in Armenian script and transliteration, a literal translation is provided, which does not aim to follow poetic conventions but only to clarify the meaning of the poem. The particular lexical and dialectal challenges presented by the poem are then discussed briefly with a view to explaining the possible resolutions, two attempts at which are offered thereafter: a 'targeted' poetic translation into British English, seeking to find French analogues for the Farsi, Azeri and Turkish loanwords used in Armenian; and a broader typographical version, in which these loanwords do not have different linguistic origins, but follow different typesetting conventions.

4.1 *Armenian Text and Reference Translation*

The original text of Poem 26 as printed in Baxčinyan (1987, 46) as well as a transliteration can be found on pp. 257–258. What follows below is a literalist, non-poetic translation of this poem which aims to provide a background for the other translations to follow.

I have been around the entire world, I did not even leave out Abyssinia, my darling.
I have not seen the like of your face, you are the pinnacle of all, my darling.
Whether you wear simple things or gold, you make it fine, my darling.
Because of this anyone seeing you says 'Ah! Ah!', my darling.

5 You are a precious jewel, be lucky for anyone holding you!
Whoever finds you doesn't sigh 'Aaah …', woe unto anyone losing you!
It's a pity that she died so soon, be the light for the one birthing you!

Had she lived, she would have given life to another painting like you, my darling.

You are, from the beginning, made from finest steel: gold ornament is drawn on you.
A thread of coral is drawn through a strand of your hair.
Your eyes, golden drinking glasses, a glass is drawn from a wheel.
Your eyelashes are arrows and scalpels, a sharp short knife, my darling.

Your face, let me say it in Farsi, is like the sun and the moon.
The embroidered shawl on your fine back is like a golden girdle.
The pen does not rest in his hand, you have set the artist mate.
When you sit, you are a mulberry bird, when you stand, Raxš,[21] my darling.

I am not that Sayat'-Nova,[22] who builds on sand.
I wonder what you want from us, would that I get news from your heart.
You are fire, your dress is fire; which fire am I to withstand?
You have covered the Indian painting with a veil, my darling.

4.2 *Challenges*

The two approaches to translation have been set out above. Linguistically and structurally, the Armenian of Sayat'-Nova is not so different from English that formal breaks or extensions of English syntax are required. The imagery and cultural background inevitably differ, but are not beyond comprehension. As regards non-'domesticating' translation, therefore, the key questions regard the perspective on the audience and multilingualism. The translator needs to consider whether the translation seeks to render the poem in English so that they might be understood as by a contemporary of Sayat'-Nova, or as by a native speaker of MEA. The latter perspective would entail leaving many loanwords opaque as they are not part of the common modern Armenian vocabulary, either.[23] Following the principle of Benjamin (1923) quoted above, the translations attempted below attempt to echo the effects intended by the author

21 Raxš is the stallion of Rostam, one of the epic heroes in Ferdowsī's *Šāhnāme*.

22 Sayat'-Nova puns on Arab. *nawwâs* 'waverer' here, suggests Dowsett (1997, 153); given that the form of his name used in the original, Սայաթ-Նովասին [Sayat'-Novasin] would otherwise be inexplicable, this seems like a plausible solution.

23 Dowsett (1997, 234) states that most speakers of the modern variants of Armenian do not fully understand Sayat'-Nova's poetry owing to its lexis; he goes on to muse whether this

for his original audience. For the same reason, the form of the target language chosen was the standardised written form of British English rather than another variant more analogous to Tiflis dialect.

As for the poet's multilingualism, the problem is more complex: as stated repeatedly, he frequently uses lexical material borrowed from (Azeri) Turkish, Farsi, and Georgian; since these languages have been in contact with one another as well, many of the words borrowed could stem from more than one language (see Table 11.1 above). For the purpose of the translations below, the phonetically closest form in the contact languages has been assumed as the donor form;[24] in cases where no clear origin could be determined, Turkish was assumed to be the source language.

The translation in section 4.4 below uses different typographic means to differentiate these origins: Turkish borrowings are mirrored along the vertical axis (ɾdƨiʞɯT); specifically Azeri Turkish words are mirrored along the horizontal axis (ʎxɛɹɻ); Farsi borrowings are printed in Fraktur (Farsi); no Georgian loans occur.

By contrast, the translation aiming to transpose the multilingual context of Sayat'-Nova's Tiflis for a modern audience of British English speakers cannot be as consistent. Going by multilingualism acquired at home, the 2011 Census reports that Polish followed by Panjabi and Urdu are the most common languages spoken beside English or Welsh (Office for National Statistics 2013). At schools, however, French and Spanish remain the most commonly studied languages, even though the field is changing and numbers are declining. Accordingly, it seems probable that, even if to a limited degree, the foreign language most accessible to the majority of British English speakers is French, wherefore the translation uses French as the lexifier for those words borrowed from other languages by Sayat'-Nova.[25]

The poem consists of five quatrains with 16 syllables in each verse.[26] The first three verses of each quatrain show an end-rhyme; in the first quatrain, this rhyme is extended to the fourth verse and each subsequent fourth verse

lack of complete understanding in any way affects or diminishes the appreciation of his poetry given the role musical accompaniment and euphony play.

24 Since Armenian has borrowed very actively from its contact languages, only words not commonly used in Armenian are here treated as loanwords.

25 This is, of course, somewhat simplificatory and may go against the principle of resistant, 'foreignising' translation advocated above, does however ensure a degree of comprehensibility not otherwise available. When weighing up faith to the original in substance against the original's intended effect and comprehensibility, the latter two are given priority here.

26 Dowsett (1997, 274 fn. 99, 286 fn. 139) gives plausible arguments that the song actually consists of five sextains, with verses 3–4 of each stanza being repeated.

ends in the same word as that of the first quatrain. This rhyme scheme and the frequent epiphoras have been maintained in the translations; the number of syllables per verse had to be adjusted to 20, however.

Խաղ ԻԶ

Թամամ աշխար պըտուտ էկա, չը թողի Հաբաշ, նազանի.
Չը տեսա քու դիդարի պես՝ դուն դիփունեն բաշ, նազանի.
Թե խամ հաքնիս, թե զար հաքնիս, կու շինիս ղումաշ, նազանի.
Էնդու համա քու տեսնողըն ասում է վա՛շ, վա՛շ, նազանի:

Դուն պատվական ջավահիր իս, է՛րնեկ քու առնողին ըլի.
Ով կու գըթնե՝ ախ չի քաշի, վայ քու կորցընողին ըլի.
Ափսուս, վուր շուտով մեռիլ է, լուսըն քու ծընողին ըլի.
Ապրիլ էր, մեկ էլ էր բերի քիզի պես նաղաշ, նազանի:

Դուն էն գըլխեն ջուհարդար իս, վըրետ զարնըշան է քաշած.
Դաստամազիտ թիլի մեչըն մե շաղա մարջան է քաշած.
Աչկիրըտ օսկե փիալա՝ չարխեմեն փընջան է քաշած.
Թերթերուկըտ՝ նիտ ու նաշտար, սուր ղալամթըրաշ, նազանի:

Էրեսըտ, փարսեվար ասիմ, նըման է շամշ ու ղամարին.
Բարակ միչկիտ թիրման շալըն նըման է օսկե քամարին.
Ղալամըն ձեռին չէ կանգնում, մաթ շինեցիր նաղաշքարին.
Յիփ նըստում իս՝ թութի ղուշ իս, յիփ կանգնում իս՝ ղաշ, նազանի:

Յիս էն Սայաթ-Նովասին չիմ, վուր ավզի վըրա հիմանամ.
Աջաբ միզիդ ֆինչ իս կանում, սըրտետ մե խաբար իմանամ.
Դուն կըրակ, հաքածըտ կըրակ, վո՞ւր մե կըերակին դիմանամ.
Հընդու ղալամքարու վըրեն ծածկիլ իս մարմաշ, նազանի:

Xał 26

T'amam ašxar pətut ēka, č'ə t'oli Habaš, nazáni.
Č'ə tesa k'u didari pes, dun dip'unen baš, nazáni.
T'e xam hak'nis, t'e zar hak'nis, ku šinis łumaš, nazáni.
Ēndu hama k'u tesnołən asum ē váš, váš, nazáni.

Dun patvakan ǰavahir is, ĕrnek k'u aṙnołin əli.
Ov ku gət'ne áx č'i k'aši, váy k'u korc'ənołin əli.

Áp'sus, vur šutov meřil ē, lusən k'u cənołin əli.
April ēr, mek ēl ēr beri k'izi pes nałaš, nazáni.

Dun ḗn gəlxen ǰuhardar is, vəret zarnəšan ē k'ašac.
Dastamazit t'ili mečʿən me šada marǰan ē k'ašac.
Ačʿkirət ōske pʿiala, čʿarxemen pʿənǰan ē k'ašac.
Tʿertʿerukət nit u naštar, sur łalamtʿəraš, nazáni.

Ēresət, pʿarsevar asim, nəman ē šamš u łamarin.
Barak mičʿkit tʿirman šalən nəman ē ōske k'amarin.
Łalamən jeřin čʿē kangnum, matʿ šinecʿir nałašk'arin.
Yipʿ nəstum is, tʿutʿi łuš is, yipʿ kangnum is, łaš, nazáni.

Yis ēn Sayatʿ-Novasin čʿim, vur avzi vəra himanam.
Aǰab mizid inčʿ is kamum, sərtet me xabar imanam?
Dún kərak, hákʿacət kərak, vur me kərakin dimanam?
Həndu łalamkʿaru vəren cackil is marmaš, nazáni.

4.3 *Version 1: A Bilingual Approach*

The world en entier I've been around, did not even miss Africa, ma chérie.
Yet I did not see the likes of your visage—you're le sommet of all, ma chérie.
You can dress en loques, you can dress en lin—for you will make it de soie, ma chérie.
And thus it is that whoever does behold you keeps saying 'Woe! Woe!', ma chérie.

You are an exquisite joyau—let there be a blessing for the one who holds you.
Whoever finds you does not sigh 'Ahh …'—let there be woe for the one who loses you.
It is a shame she died so young—let there be light for the one who gave birth to you.
For had she lived longer, she would have borne yet another œuvre d'art, ma chérie.

You are altogether un cimeterre orné—arabesques d'or on you are drawn.

Through a strand de tes cheveux coiffés a single filament of coral is drawn.
Your eyes, a golden calice; from a tour de bijoutier a glass goblet is drawn.
Your eyelashes, they are arrows and bistouris and sharp-edged canifs, ma chérie.

Your face, I cannot but say it in French, unto le soleil et la lune is like.
The T'irma shawl around the small of your back unto a golden girdle is like.
Le stylo does not rest in his hand, against le peintre you've made a checkmate strike.
Whenever you sit down, you are un perroquet; when you stand up, Raxš, ma chérie.

I am not that Sayat'-Nova, not un indécis, no, who would build upon sand.
Je me demande what you want from us; would that des nouvelles from your heart were at hand.
You are fire, your dress is fire—which one of these fires am I to withstand?
Over la peinture from India you have cast un voile délicat, ma chérie.

4.4 *Version 11: A Typographical Approach*

The ɘɹiɿɯɘ world I've been around, did not even miss Africa, **my darling**.
Yet I did not see the likes of your **face**—you're the ʇɘƨd ʏɹɘv of all, **my darling**.
You can dress **in rags**ᵴ:, you can dress ʏɹɘɯɿ ɯi—you will make it ƨIIᴚ, **my darling**.
And thus it is that whoever does behold you keeps saying 'Woe! Woe!', **my darling**.

You are an exquisite ʅɐʍɐɔ—let there be a blessing for the one who holds you.
Whoever finds you does not sigh 'Ahh …'—let there be woe for the one who loses you.
It is a shame she died so young—let there be light for the one who gave birth to you.
For had she lived longer, she would have borne yet another **masterpiece**, **my darling**.

You are altogether ɹoʍs ƀɐllǝwǝʃǝd ǝɯʃ ɐ—ʇuǝɯǝʇsɐ ouɯɐɯɹoɟ ƀlos on you are drawn.
Through a strand **of your neatly coiffed hair** a single ʇɹɐɯɹǝʃʃıɟ of coral is drawn.
Your eyes, a golden **chalice**; from the **wheel of a glazier** a glass goblet is drawn.
Your eyelashes, they are arrows and **scalpels**: and sharp-edged **pocket knives, my darling**.

Your face, I cannot but say it in Persian, unto ɯnS ǝɥʇ and ɯooɯ ǝɥʇ is like.
The T'irma shawl around the small of your back unto a golden girdle is like.
ʇɥɐ ƀɐɹʇ does not rest in his hand, against **the artist** you've made a checkmate strike.
Whenever you sit down, you are ƃ ƀɐɯɹoɟ; when you stand, you are Raxš, **my darling**.

I am not that Sayat'-Nova, not ɹǝʇɐʌɐM ǝɥʇ, no, who would build upon sand.
I ʍouɹɑɐɹ what you want from us; if only ƃ ɯɐssɐƃƃɐ from your heart were at hand.
You are fire, your dress is fire—which one of these fires am I to withstand?
Over ʇɥɐ ƀɐıʇıɹıɐƃ from India you have cast ʃıǝʌ ǝʇısıuɹɔxǝ uɐ, **my darling**.

5 Final Remarks

This paper has attempted to illustrate that, in order to better reflect the intended effects and perception of multilingual poetry, a 'foreignising' or resistant approach to translation serves the translator and audience best. Non-dominant language elements can be rendered as lexical material taken from a contact language of the target language or through different typographical means. In each case, the purpose of using non-dominant language material is to simulate the difference between dominant / non-dominant language employed in the original without diminishing comprehensibility. For the same reason, that is preserving as much of the original as possible, the same rhyme scheme and set of epiphoras has been maintained; rather than using a stress-based meter,

verses contain a specific number of syllables. All imagery has been modelled as closely as possible on the original.

While the œuvre of Sayat'-Nova holds an eminent place even in 21st-century Armenia and the diaspora, his songs have not received the same attention as the works of other prominent literary figures like Xač'atur Abovyan or Ełiše Č'arenc' in that no translation of his complete works exists in English or indeed French.[27] A complete translation into English must therefore be a *desideratum*. As has been shown above, however, such a translation must seek—by one means or another, and not necessarily those suggested here—to relate the poet's words to the English reader in as close a fashion as possible to that envisaged in the Armenian, Georgian, or Azeri Turkish original. Inevitably, this entails making difficult decisions as to what is given primacy: a close but poetic rendition of the poet's words, or of his intended effects on his audience? As the two variants above illustrate, the choice is an aesthetic one, and might differ across Sayat'-Nova's œuvre, and have a different appeal to individual readers and translators.

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