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A Rhetoric of Meanings: provoking some questions on the outlines of translated existence in textual frames of discourse

Abstract: This paper is concerned with the possibility of applying rhetoric as an approach and a tool for mediating cultural gaps in understanding that are based on existential sets of values expressed in culturally-significant texts of a language. It is not the choice of words but the choice of the meanings these words are involved with that makes it possible to relate rhetoric to epistemology and next – to semantics. A rhetoric of meanings is concerned with the deliberate choice of wording and the ethos that guides that choice in overcoming cultural gaps that most of the time are based on asynchronies in speech patterns. My concern is not the English tongue. My only concern is the expression of our Bulgarian cultural Self into English-based spaces of our global existence. Not the transcended Self, but the translated one, that needs the words of speech in order to tell our own story so that people can access it. It is like programming a universal culture-compatibility key – a reader of meanings based on rhetoric knowledge.

Rhetoric as the vehicle of extending our existence in our texts

All my study is based on myth said Noam Chomsky to me on February 5th 2008. I have been wondering ever since about the possible restatement of his meaning within the pragmatic context of Bulgarian cultural practices that have been generating our existential meanings and consecutive upon them misrepresentations of our culture in English.

Understanding the myths of a culture touches upon the grounds of its existential self-perception while exploring its texts is bound to reveal the roots of its Self-wording. In order to track the grounds for our turns of speech we go through reconstructing the model of the world, contained in a text and finding the Set or Multitude where this world stands.

Rhetoric gives clues for such reconstruction by reaching the level of significant text features that bear the meaning of existence for identifying and comparing cultures. Rhetoric is the ideal approach for the searches of meaning within textual manifestation of natural discourse, for it stands between philosophy and method, between art and science, between poetics and grey prose.

To start with I do agree with the American philosopher of Bulgarian origin Timen Timev that poetics is bound with destroying *the order in the established set of connections between words, thus destroying the standards of established meanings* [1].

Rhetoric contains the taxonomy of such an approach: the triadic unity of ethos (the culturally established common order of rituals and practices) – pathos (the emotive set of contextual layers) and logos (the textual structure of discourse determining its modus significandi) provides a sound basis for the analysis of existentially rooted language turns at our time, marked with the transcendence from literacy to e-orality.

What could possibly be the nearest pragmatic goal of such study [2]: in a rapidly changing environment even the memory of a global machine is insufficient for the survival of a human individual. We are somewhere within history and we are a beginning of another chain in diachrony, handing over our messages to those who shall come next.

We often say that people create worlds, and machines just follow instructions. We often say that a human cheats in language usage neglecting the rules. We sometimes say that a human being gets tired of cheating i.e. of supporting imaginary worlds. We also say that human imagination has limitations. Still we believe that beyond our existence there will be someone who shall survive and need our messages and understand them.

It is all about survival.

A human mind does not believe in death for it goes through myriads of worlds that extend our mental existence to eternity. Language is bound to contain eternity in the human understanding. The study of its recursive units would then all be within the scope of linguistic anthropology. As far as we haven't heard a Martian speak yet.

Identity is one of the aims of a Self where we start from rebuttal, go through consolidation of our singularity and then we are ready to change without fear we might lose our identity.

Transcending next comes as the power of building our identity in our own text, synchronizing it with the language of our culture and with what is accepted as a global or universal standard, and hiding it in our singular metaphor relying on the vagueness of natural language

Intertext next comes in the hierarchy of the connected in the www and in the appearance of the myths of the Net – the tales of netizens, based on engineering the adaptation of a text to connect generations in a diachronic projection of intercultural exchange across fields that are interest of interdisciplinary studies which form metadiscursive communities – or a specific jargon, connecting pieces of knowledge that have been approached from various backgrounds and in diverse methods.

That might also be called: fighting the minimalistic principle in encrypting our own Self in the Net by following the triadic model of ethos, pathos and logos that is immanently woven in a text in the process of its production.

Next we will make this paper set a discussion on two aspects of the authentication of texts in the fluctuating contexts where Time is a significant agent in their semantic loads.

It visualizes the change of words in the *paratext* in translations and reproducing of the same text by different editors and publishers as mechanisms in redirecting the semantic accent so that it becomes closer to the temporal ideology. Lexemes can serve as association-keys. It is not the translator's choice, it is not the use of synonyms – there is no such thing as synonyms when codes are viewed. Synonyms could be synchronic events, but used in diachronic plan they cut through layers of ideology-bound meanings.

The second issue is the *recognition* of a text by the author and by the culture it refers to.

Very often these two aspects of the survival of a culture in text are interwoven, for they contain both the intention of the writer and the secondary intention of a user in entirely different situation.

The study is challenged by the prospect of finding ways to re-word the treasured texts forming our cultural identity as Bulgarian into the languages spoken today by our globalised younger generations and thus – to make us a space for the future.

It seems that we have made contributions as Bulgarians in each field of today's knowledge but in stating our presence in the world. And this is a question of Rhetoric, oriented to the content-based formulae of survival within the larger pressing problem of the survival of humanity. Rhetoricians in academia tend to shy the art of literary remake for it does not seem to be so short-cutting across the marshy grounds of persuasion and so profitable as profession. Yet, story-telling is one of the means of today's PR activities and the grounds for movie-production.

Translation as the art of intralingual rewriting of our beautiful classical texts has never been on the agenda of our rhetorical education, and the training of translators and interpreters is considered to be the task of the ELT institutions and practices of international companies.

However, the task of making Bulgarian textual art visible, unfolding all its beauty, and tempting the world to come into closer touch with our culture is a task for Bulgarian institutions, and for Bulgarians. Our translators of Shakespeare or Burns, of Mark Twain and Tolkien, and the like are people who have an outstanding command of our native tongue, revealing its splendour in rousing our admiration for English texts.

The translation from Bulgarian into English is scanty and, I dare say – poor, for it preserves the words, not the beauty of the text as we feel it. That is not the fault of the translators. Translators do what they have been trained to do and what they have received as orders. What our translator-training schools lack is the freedom of interpretation. It is also what our literature lacks altogether. If the Bible has thousands of translation versions, and a tale like *The Little Match Seller* by Andersen has a thousand parodies and adaptations, a single touch upon a beautiful text like Karavelov's *Bulgarians of Old Time* or a poem by Ivan Vazov (whose manner of writing is somewhere between Wordsworth and Byron), will raise indignant voices complaining that our sacred texts are touched.

It is the question of rewording our own thoughts about what makes a culture survive: whether it is better to keep it under cover in a museum seldom-visited, or have it retold and put to show, active and fascinating in the fashion of the complex message of today's global talk?

In the first place this question concerns the issue of the text efficiency as a product of culture – its value as a cultural formant. Secondly, there is the issue of the efficiency of diachronic transfer or the production of versions to old texts. Thirdly, this is the translation of Bulgarian texts into other languages using the global linguist in the web. Fourth comes the need of Bulgarian texts composed in other languages.

None of my English classes has ever accepted otherwise but as a joke on bad translation, a poem with a singular melody even when read voicelessly to sound in the way:

Come, grandad, blow on your pipe
And I will join in the tune
With songs of heroes and outlaws,
With songs of bygone chieftans –
of Chavdar the terrible outlaw,
Of Chavdar the chieftan of old –
The son of Petko the Terror. [3]

At the same time, people still prefer the translations of Valery Petrov of Shakespeare, and the translations of Geo Milev of poetry into Bulgarian to later and closer to the originals versions.

What we need in our case is not translation but synchronizing the art of literature for our best poets and writers have never stayed closed amidst the walls of the Balkan, but have kept in time with the topics and the languages of the world. In our language Burns' *Every*

lassie has her laddie has a name and Jennie who is running through the blooming rye, all wet from the early summer dew, does not come into conflict with the poem but adds concrete image to it.

Sometimes a version or a completely new text opens the view and does more favor to a cultural value than mere translation of words. It does sound trivial, yet Bulgarian texts still stay unopened, getting dusty and naïve, making us ashamed of their primitive tongue. The case is not that one, though. For languages grow up together with cultures, and retelling our stories for grown up cultures is our own task.

We have been trying the texts of writers like Elin Pelin, Aleko Constantinov, Yordan Radichkov, Yordan Yovkov, Ivan Vazov, Dimiter Dimov, Dimiter Talev, Fany Popova-Mutafova, Angel Karaliichev's *Bulgarian Folk Tales*, with our undergraduate students at the South West University of Bulgaria. The most difficult texts which lose up to 16% of their specific sounding are those of Yovkov (*Indje*) and Vazov (Under the Yoke), while Elin Pelin translates into clear structure.

A couple of years ago we translated *Bulgarians of Old Time* with a few graduate students in one of their MA courses. We needed the first 2 hours to read the text in our native tongue and have it interpreted in Modern Bulgarian trying to visualize the people and places described. Then we needed another couple of hours to say what we have negotiated as our group version in English. After that we had a day's rest, and on the third day we read every version aloud: and there was one version which made us happy with the effort. It is a popular type of exercise with the teachers of English at our universities to do similar texts: a vast unorganized effort with no final product other than the skill, yet still there is no remarkable result and young Bulgarians have not much to tell when they've stayed abroad.

The other name for the final product of such effort is *nostalgia*. It comes to the minds of people who have been far from home and need to hear from it. It comes as a dream, a vision, a text reborn in their own style. Sometimes, driving back home on a dark night in the fall, a long forgotten rhyme suddenly rings through your brain and you start rewording it in either prose or verse in English. It is a challenge to listen in such a way to some poems by Yavorov, Pencho Slaveikov, Dimcho Debelyanov, Hristo Smirnenski, Geo Milev and Hristo Botev. In such cases translation no longer looks a job for *those wo cannot write*. Interculture is based on the common features of cultures and relies on their individual contribution. Ivan Vazov sounds much in tune with Wordsworth although each of them sings of different objects:

Сега съм у дома. Наокол планини и върхове стърчат; гори високи, диви шумят; потоците, кристални и пенливи, бучат - живот кипи на всичките страни. Природата отвред, кат майка нежна съща, напява ми песна, любовно ме прегръща. [4]	FIVE years have passed; five summers, with the length Of five long winters! and again I hear These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs With a soft inland murmur.--Once again Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs, That on a wild secluded scene impress Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect The landscape with the quiet of the sky. [5]

On the Question of Identity:

The words of an author

> *'When **I** use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.' ...*

> *'That's a great deal to make one word mean,' Alice said in a thoughtful tone.*

> *'When I make a word do a lot of work like that,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'I always pay it extra.'* [6]

To start with, I quite agree with defining the word as a *semantically active complex* [7]. A word can be a trademark, or it can also be the tar drop into a jar of honey.

What makes a text alien to an author might be just a word replaced by an editor or translator.

My first value is my freedom. I do not recognize texts containing words similar to the underlined ones in the examples below – such cases always lead me back into the physical world in a dispute, or conflict based on misunderstanding or rather - on the refusal of my value system to let them pass. I refuse to recognize such texts as mine.

(1) He liked the taste of mushrooms so much that he could not believe they were forbidden him… Толкова много харесваше вкуса на гъбите, че не можеше да повярва, че му бяха забранени... – Толкова обичаше гъби, че не можеше да си представи това вкусно нещо да е отровно. We had to translate this sentence from English with an MA group. They never changed the word *forbidden*. I continued with the experiment with another group telling them they needn't sound literal. Two graduate students reached the second version. The greater part of them did not notice the difference.

(2) doctor's orders: he said! – I would never use that expression in a text other than a parody or a negative one.

(3) винаги съм се опитвала да... - старая се: once a journalist interviewed me back in the early 1990s. She changed the given expression for one word that has always given me shivers – there is no expression like *старая се* in my existential idiolect. I still refuse to recognize the text as mine. In contrast, another journalist interviewed me on practical philosophy in the early 2000. He made a mistake in the final text misreproducing the name of the English philosopher Alfred Eyre as Alfred Deir. It was funny. It might have provoked smiles from people who knew the name and who attributed the mistake to the author of the text, i.e. to me. I do not mind. I recognize the text as mine. Mistakes are only imperfection, while the change of a node of meaning is like taking out the special stone that keeps a bridge strong. In such cases words need to get extra pay.

There is one more aspect to the issue in debate.

We often read in the introduction to certain text: *it contains autobiographical elements about the author*, or *it is based on an episode from the life of the author*. Such statements are similar to the expression *according to me*. They place the author of a text in the position of an outsider to the brainwork spent on the creation of the text.

Such statements have always stricken me with the absurdity behind the words, for what is the life of a human individual but what we are doing from the beginning to the end: what then could be the life of a poet or writer or dramatist but the words employed in the hard business to redo our common concepts in a unique way each next moment.

A text is an extension of the Self of the author. That makes authentication possible.

While authentication may refer to certain parts of a text, or to versions of a text by the same author produced in different stages of his or her career, recognition is another case. The former is the task of other people while the latter is what the author does.

My friend Rossie Milenkova-Kyheng is responsible for the latest edition of the texts of Saussure – she shared having sometimes a sleepless night arguing over the word-markers of the authentic texts of Saussure present in the lectures put down by his students. In a case of that kind, there is the interference of the individual interpreter, who was not – in the time of the lecture – bound to keep the rule of invisibility but was taking notes to individual purpose. The interference of an interpreter's mind in the case of Saussure's lectures seems evident for a student would not keep up in pace for lacking the lecturer's meaning. I wonder, though, whether Saussure would have minded the change of style if he had seen the hand notes.

It is widely known that the German philosopher Kant never cared about the versions of his texts that caused so much trouble to his publishers and translators [8]. Once he had the ideas cleared, he could recognize them in twenty text modes.

The other end of the story is when a single word input makes the author refuse to recognize a text: authors rarely accept editors' changes without fight.

The Self of a text is not a mere representation of the author's Self. It is based on the relations and attitudes of the Author to the rest of the world.

This explains the complexity of the word as a text-unit bearing the identity of the author: the Self of a text can recognize itself in the images behind the words.

Pictures and words

> *… it is crucial to understand that images are both mental and physical, within the body and mind [9]…*

The eminent psychologist D. O. Hebb once wrote : « you can hardly turn around in psychology without bumping into the image.» Give people a list of nouns to memorize, and they will imagine them interacting in bizarre images. Give them factual questions like "does a flea have a mouth?" and they will visualize the flea and "look for" the mouth.

Internet culture is based on image. Text is something that adds to picture and read aloud it acquires audience. Not just poetry and drama, but prose needs reading aloud. Our noisy brains rarely allow a text speak to us, but if we listen to a performer, then the text receives a sound body.

The beauty of a rhyme comes with its recitation. The melody allows the brain relax over the words and get on to grasping the image and become empathic to the emotion. A poem's first interpretation is from reading matter to sound of voice. Each next time the brain remembers the sounding and starts it when we read the poem anew. An audio image is as important as visual image and touch and movement add to the picture. Language is a medium where reality is trying to appear. A virtual text would act upon the virtual individual who is made of signs. Within the web spaces the semantic relations play real and a mind turns into existence through text. That makes the cultural text signs so significant.

The Self of a Text

There is a short story by Zdravka Eftimova: *Shoes* [10]. It is a text of a definite character and its critics mention the inconsistency in punctuation and spelling. Critical comments recommend the author to have her spelling and style checked. Looking for a language standard, they refuse to recognize the text for being unrefined.

Like an individual, a text has its own self. A person can be highly educated or uncultured and speaking in slang or in dialect. A text is anthropomorphic by origin. It has a plot and heroes that can be cultured and refined, simple, cunning, rude and even adventurous. A text is a thin projection of the author's self. It needs autonomy whether being standard or not.

Recognition of a text by a culture is a similar procedure to the recognition of a text by its author after being revised: what stands behind the word is an image that can be culturally recognized, adopted, or refused. Such is the case of *The Historian* by Elizabeth Kostova*:* a beautifully written story, which is a failure for the lack of cultural Self of Hungarian, Romanian, Bulgarian or Turkish nationality. A vampire proves an outsider to cultural self-estimation. Upon first reading we are shocked by its not taking care of our national values. The second impulse is to correct information. Even after we have appreciated the text as a well-written fictional story, there is still our unwillingness to be represented as blank spots in both history and geography hanging behind.

English tradition has a specific attitude to literary texts.

If	we	shadows	have		is	offended,
Think	but	this,	and	all	is	mended,
That	you	have	but	slumber'd		here
While		these	visions		did	appear.
And	this	weak	and		idle	theme,
No	more	yielding	but		a	dream,
Gentles,		do		not		reprehend:

if you pardon, we will mend… (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* final)

To the interwoven cultures of the Balkans a text is owed respect. When an outsider tries to write a good story about our cultural realities, we raise oppositions: in the case of Elizabeth Kostova we find the text false; in the case with Mercia Macdermot's *The Apostle of Freedom* – the text is highly appreciated and next given to neglect.

We need to start doing this cultural translation ourselves for who would better keep the Self of our textual reality.

Like the identity of an individual author, the identity of a textual binder of culture is nostalgic. The words of such texts appear to be expanded containers of emotion through history.

> Time past and time future
> Allow but a little consciousness.
> To be conscious is not to be in time
> But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
> The moment in the arbour where the rain beat.
> The moment in the draughty church at smoke fall
> Be remembered; involved with past and future.
> Only through time time is conquered.
> T.S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*

The other text

'The din of a thousand texts' in the translator's head becomes even louder when the product of translation, editing or censorship is viewed across cultures.

The constantly repeated by theoreticians of translation statement that a translator shall remain invisible does not work when creativity is needed. The global machine is far from being efficient in the choice of variants: its database has expanded enormously for the latest years. There must be some inefficiency with its dictionaries and lists of equivalent expressions – in terms of organization and programming.

It still seems to me ridiculous that it shall deal with words, seen as synonyms - not with phonemes or lexemes, or even textemes. However, it's the word that finally serves as a marker of a text's authenticity.

When we are writing, we often go, unaware though, of that, to the resorts of the texts that have formed our culture.   Similarly, the editors of anthologies and readers, reshape the reality governed by the text-messages, in ordering them to an individual plan.

Today we experience the adventure of restructuring the received messages into pictures of physical places ordered to the lore of the desirable – not to the facts of their existence. Story-telling becomes the powerful mechanism of text-weaving in the oral e-culture as well as for the outsiders who no longer bother about written texts. Words matter – as codes, as keys, as magic that gives brilliance to figures and guides our avatars into their quest. Until they are able to find a way out and have a glimpse of the sense of life. Enchanted by words we start our own adventure. Like Alice in Wonderland - guided by our own stories.

 Thus the role of the human philologist, concerning the texts that appear as our cultural signifiers will be to mind the value of a text where the world needs weaving again each next time.

Everything except language
Knows the meaning of existence.
    Trees, planets, rivers, time
Know nothing else.
They express it
Moment by moment as the universe.
Even this fool of a body
Leaves it in part, and would
Have full dignity within it
But for the ignorant freedom
Of my talking mind.

Les Murray, *The Meaning of Existence*

There is a relativity principle according to which the same facts do not lead to the forming of the same picture of the World in all who are watching it but in the case that they have similar language picture or follow the same language model [11].

And vice versa: the same language model does not necessarily lead to the same mental picture of the world that replaces physical experience as complex fact.

Here are two more examples:

(1)While reading the emblematic poem *Daffodils* in English I can see the colour of the sun on each single element in the picture drawn by the poet Wordsworth – in my mind picture the usual colors of spring sunshine on green fields and a lonely cloud in deep blue sky looks only natural as it is in Bulgaria; when I read it in Russian, words start to matter and the picture is sad, cold and grey. The English painter has made something pale and without scent – something thin and expiring from my experience-based sensation – something very close to the word-picture of the Russian translation and far away from the play of the Southern sun on the golden daffodils in my garden which I consider the true image of Wordsworth's poem.

(2) Nurel's colors are different for they have voice: Nurel was a 2nd-year English Philology student at Shumen University when she first e-mailed me. She cannot see. She can translate, though. She has learned how to employ her other senses and her knowledge of words in order to convert sound into colour. She is producing text-facts that stimulate a vision of physical experience in my Bulgarian and German/Russian studies group who can all see, but cannot grasp the imperfections in the word-picture by only listening to the text. She says that sunshine has a sound. While translating colorful texts, she never fails, although she has never seen colours and the words are only abstract names to her

The manipulative power of texts leads people, again and again, to seek the adventures of mind in knowing humanity. It is the mechanism of each individual's involvement into a lifelong effort. The answer to one single question of the type 'Who am I" or 'Why am I?' leads to restructuring the texture of reality, by replacing - in our mental film - the pictures of existing places even the ones, taken yesterday, by our own complex memory of emotion and movement, smells and colour, tastes and tune which provide the life of a true existence of shared subjectivity.

In a text-generated reality we look for the *Self of a text* – the *ghost*, the *soul*, the *being* as it might turn out in single situations where the text turns into the adopted discourse of an individual author. This complex feature of a living text is to be seen as the ***set*** of the individual mind-stages underlying each single output as a completed authorship, authenticated by the agent of Time-binder – Die Augenblicke of human individual completion.

Texts travel in time. A text read 30 years ago is no longer the same now. Like the golden daffodils it is likely to function in different ways under different light. Nowadays a text needs a picture. In a couple of years the text may turn into a hologram and go on merging its texture with the reality of generations who have no other knowledge of the long history of human culture but that contained in texts.

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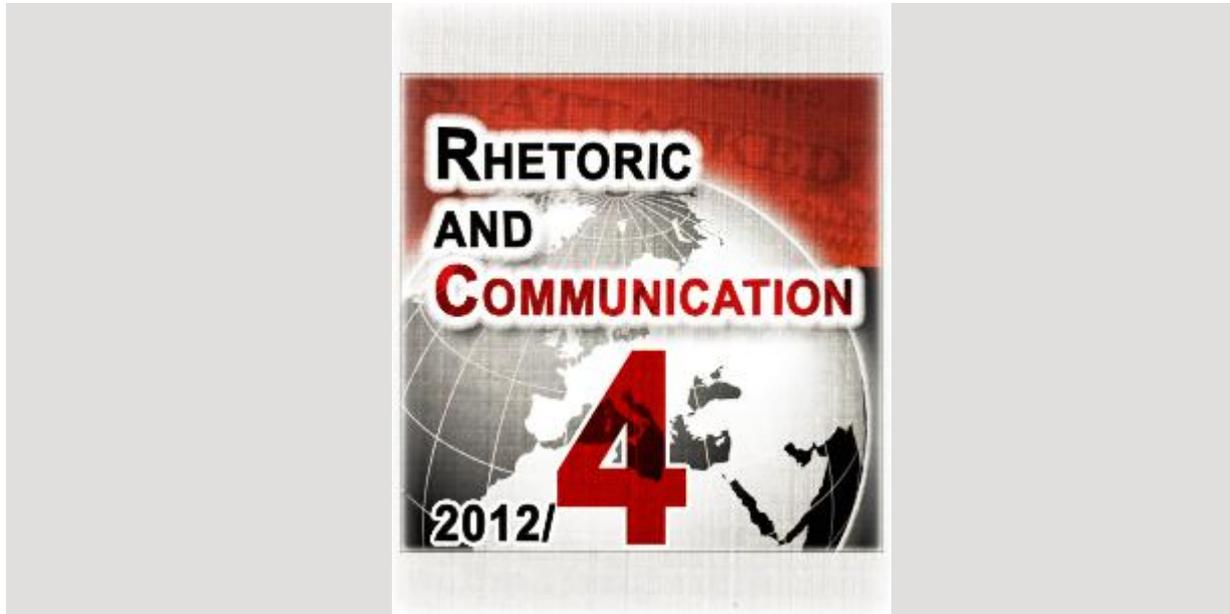
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