



## Traces of Stefan Zweig reception in Albanian

Naser Mrasori <sup>a</sup> , Naim Kryeziu <sup>b 1</sup> 

<sup>a, b</sup> *University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina", Prishtina, Kosova*

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### Abstract

The main purpose of this study article is to examine and to evaluate Stefan Zweig's work in Albanian, as well as the perception of Albanian's readers. This article attempt to explain the popularity of S. Zweig from 1939, when his first short story was translated in Albanian. While before the sixties the reception of Zweig's works in Albanian language was modest, later, in the sixties of the last century, the reception of his works, especially short stories, was more intensive. Both Albanian critics and readers were more interested first for his short stories and then for his biographies, portraits, novels and dramas. The recent reception of Zweig's works in Albanian has been preceded and prepared by many introductions, essays, and articles. His works began to influence even the Albanian writers, especially the works of Sterjo Spase. Hence, we can trace and find certain parallels, similarities, influences and impacts of Zweig's works in Spase's works. When Zweig was translated for the first time in Albanian the opinions of both readers, simple reader and of special reader, was qualitative and uncensored. The works of Zweig were read by the readers of such a social class, which were educated in the west. In this context, Zweig was considered as "a hunter of souls" and had many readers in Albania. During the period of 1937-1944, Zweig was not under the censorship. After 1962 the first collection of Zweig's short stories translated by Mahmut Bobrati and Klio Evangjeli was published. After a couple of years, in 1988, second edition of collected short stories of Zweig, was published translated by Mahmut Bobrati, Robert Schwartz, Enver Fico and Klio Evangjeli. In this year, began the marathon of translations of Zweig's works in Albania, whereas sometimes there were cases that one work was translated by two different translators.

**Keywords:** Reception; chronological; translation; Albanian; influence; similarities; criticism; ideological; censorship

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### 1. Introduction

Thus, in Albanian speaking spaces, it means in Albania, Kosova and other regions where Albanian literature is developed, the echo should be judged according to historical and social contexts, classifying it in various periods, which are different in different areas. Taking into consideration the chronological aspect of Zweig's works, according to data of Publishing House "Argeta-LMG", the first translated book of Zweig in Albanian was published in 1939 in the newspaper "Gazeta e Korçës" of 28 and 30 January, continuing later in February with the publication of selected passages from the

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [naim.kryeziu@uni-pr.edu](mailto:naim.kryeziu@uni-pr.edu)

short-story entitled: “The Love of Nurse and two Little Girls”, while in March of the same year, for the first time was published the short story: “The Letter of the Unknown Lady” (Zweig, 1998).

According to the data of the above-mentioned Publishing House during the years 1942 and 1943 were published a couple of passages from Zweig’s short story: “Twenty-four Hours from a Life of a Woman”. When Zweig was translated for the first time in Albanian the opinions of both readers, simple reader and of special reader, was qualitative and uncensored. Frankly speaking, the works of Zweig were read by the readers of such a social class, which were educated in the west. In this context, Zweig was considered as “a hunter of souls” and had many readers in Albania. During the period of 1937-1944, Zweig was not under the censorship.

Afterwards, in 1962 was published the first collection of Zweig’s short stories translated by Mahmut Bobrati and Klio Evangjeli. After a couple of years, in 1988, second edition of collected short stories of Zweig, was published translated by Mahmut Bobrati, Robert Schwartz, Enver Fico and Klio Evangjeli. In this year, began the marathon of translations of Zweig’s works in Albania, whereas sometimes there were cases that one work was translated by two different translators. Such was the case of literary biography “Maria Stuart”, which was translated first by Viron Koka and later on by Jorgji Dokani. Then again “The Letter of the Unknown Lady” was translated by Vedat Kokona and later, by Robert Schwartz, while the short story “24 hours in the Life of a Woman”, was translated by Gj.Zheji and by E.Fico.

In the meantime, after the sixteenth of last century, Zweig was translated and read more in Albania than in other Albanian speaking areas. However, at that time in Albania, there were no ordinary readers or specialized readers who could express their opinions about reading books, because the ideological factor after 1944 had banned such an act, while both Albanian literature and foreign literature were under the censorship of political authorities. As a consequence, those authors who were translated in Albanian had to be in the service of the ideology due to the fact that the literature of those years in Albania was based in the method of socialist realism. After the breaking away from Soviet Union in sixties, the censorship of foreign literature became more severe.

Even Zweig’s works together with some authors who were dealing with psychological world of characters, were not recommended, because official policy of the regime started to involve in the education and creation of “New Man”, who should stick to the rules of game of socialist realism. This is obvious in the introduction of “Magellan” and the collection of short stories published in 1962, where it is evident that Albanian authors and translators were influenced from ideological limitations. Another phenomenon that damaged the echo of Zweig in Albania are abridgements of translated texts, omitting whole passages which were reflecting and mirroring the well bred, emancipated and well-formed world of the West. There is no doubt the shortenings of original text has consequences, because the original is mutilated, it is difficult to follow closely the ideas and events, so that the literary work is damaged and spoiled. This censorship lasted more than forty years, while its peak reached in 1975, when Zweig was prohibited in faculties and high schools even in the Department of Albanian Literature (Mrasori, 2008).

With the fall of Communist system, in 1990, the censorship was annulled in Albania. The ideological barriers were interdicted, as well. At the same time, there was an overflow of the translation of foreign authors. Albanian reader now had all the authors and works that were once banned. But this overflow had some artistic inconveniences. The specialized readers were rarefied, and thus the level of translations began to drop. During the period when the censorship was ruling, unfair censures prohibited many pages of Zweig’s works because of ideological or political reasons. However, in nineties, the phenomenon of clientele instigated again another “censorship”, due to the ignorance and incapacity of translators with exception of celebrities and Pleiades of prominent

translators, such as R. Schwartz, A. Ristani, A. Koçi, V. Kokona, J. Doksani, etc. The specialized criticism, which can help very much in the presentation of an author to the reader, was interrupted because of clienteles, which gave a large advantage to the selling of the book (Mrasori, 2008).

Here, in our country, one can distinguish two kinds of readers, “the ideal reader” and “the real reader”. “The Story of Chess”, “Fouche”, “24 Hours in a Life of a Woman”, and “The letter of an Unknown Lady” are typical and clear examples which enable us to understand essential differences between the ideal and the real reader. The fact that the author had in mind the ideal reader during the writing of short stories is evident in the first pages of them. In this case, there is an appeal addressed to the second person, which makes us possible to individualize the “you” (“ti” in Albanian) of these novels. This “you” (ti) collects and includes all sensitive people towards spiritual sufferings, friends and pals of Zweig. But, what is the role of real reader in the relations of “I” (unë) and “you” (ti)? As a matter of fact, it is possible to make a guess that the author does not check this relationship because he cannot know or foresee who might be his readers in the future.

As a result, in Zweig’s work one can talk only about historical readers of the work, or about the concrete period of time. At the moment of writing his short stories, Zweig did not know who were his real readers, while we can assess more or less his historical readers. So, we can say that at the time when he wrote “A Story of Chess”, this short story did not have a reader, because it was a part of that cycle of short stories, which were written in a letter period or in a period in which were worsened the relations between the writer and the reader, due to the circumstances of that period. One may suppose that the readers of this period is that contingent of young intellectuals, who had reason to become pessimistic and to be disillusioned as the consequence of the Second World War (Mrasori, 2008).

## 2. Methodology

We can say that translations open the gates of world culture and civilization to any literature. One of the principles of comparative Literature is the theoretical as well as methodological Postulate to move and to dialogue between cultures, languages, literatures and disciplines. Therefore, to translate a literary work properly and with complete success means to rewrite a work with inspiration thanks to the impulses received from the author of the original work. Of course, translating an author's work into another literature is by no means such a simple and easy task. In this paper, in addition to the differences and similarities, some comparisons have been made between the two texts, the original one and the translation. In the following, through the historical, chronological and comparative method, the required results are obtained between the two works, where some kind of influence or similarity is noticed, even thematically.

## 3. Result and discussion

### 3.1. Some elements of influence and similarities of Stefan Zweig work in Albanian

Let us compare the first encounter of the Unknown Lady I Zweig’s short story “The Letter of the Unknown Lady”, with the first encounter of Neta, a young girl who is the main character in Sterjo Spasse’s short story entitled “Neta”. The first encounter of Zweig’s story is as following: “I want to unveil all my life, the life, which, to tell the truth begins in the day when I met you... When you came here I was thirteen, still I my teens and was living in the same house where you are living now and holding this letter, the last breath of my life: I used to live in the same hall, just in front of the door of your flat” (Mrasori, 2008).

Spasse’s Nita, remembers:

“Listen to me, because I am going to remind you all the details one by one: do you remember the day in September of last year, when you hired the house of the neighbor? You came accompanied, while I was by my windowsill of my house. As soon as I saw you, I liked you, at first sight”. (Spasse, 1980).

The reaction of Zweig’s main character was obvious:

“All night I was thinking of you, even without meeting you. The next day you came, but although I overhead behind the door, I could not see you and as a consequence, I became more curious. Finally, after three days, I was very much perplexed and distressed because you looked quite different...I was expecting to see a good matured old man with glasses, but instead you were quite young and unchanged...you were wearing sportswear and walking hastily. You were holding your hat in your hand and, I admit, I was amazed when I saw you so alive with dense bushy hair. I really was surprised when I saw that you were a vigorous young man, with particular charm, elegance, and grace, fond of amusements and adventures, on one hand, but at the same time, you were a serious man, determined, firm, conscious, wise and well-read young man” (Zweig, 1998).

However, in “Neta”, we have this version:

“As soon as I saw him, he seemed to me rather attractive; he had a lean white face, two black brows, two penetrating eyes, a large forehead, and two thick lips, white and dense, and shimmering teeth. Afterwards, he had an agile and handsome body and a white shirt, grey coat, and white trousers. He was so kind and so dear that I kept looking at him all the time behind my windows” (Spasse, 1980).

The influence of literary works upon literary work is perhaps the most evident type and, of course, the most interesting. In such cases, the influence shows the influenced author producing work which is essentially his own. In this context, the influence of Zweig’s short story “A letter of Unknown Lady” on S.Spasse’s (Albanian writer) short story “Neta” may be shown in themes, characters, style, images and descriptions and motives.

Thus, in Zweig’s short story, the main character of the short story comes back to Vienna in early morning after a brief holiday. As soon as he settles down in his room, suddenly he remembers that just that day was his birthday. Just in that day he was forty one. His servant informs his boss that some visitors came to visit him in order to congratulate him, some other people congratulated him by phone. Among the letters that arrived, the writer (character) notices a letter with an unknowing address. Just this letter woke writer’s curiosity, because it had thirty pages written in a hurry, with a very touching content. It was strange, the letter did not have the sender, but instead of title, it had the following words: “To you, whom I have never known” (Mrasori, 2008). The writer was doubtful, because he was not sure whether it was sent to him or to a fictitious man. Because of this reason he was curious and began to read the letter.

Whereas in Spasse’s short story “Neta”, the grey-haired old man Pal Gjinoshi, putting in order his books in book shelves, finds a dusty letter among the pages of an old pale novel. He opens the letter with curiosity and finds out that it was written many years ago, when he was young. At once he remembered the event in detail. In three paragraphs were recollected three days before marriage. In one of those days, his sister delivered to him a few telegrams of congratulation and a peculiar letter sent by mail. To Pal Gjinoshi, that letter seemed special, because on the marginal edge of the letter there were a red line, a yellow line and a blue line. The letter was scented and perfumed. It came in his mind that in that moment, his young bride put her hand on the shoulder of Pal and stood closer for a while to throw a glance at letter, but she didn’t understand anything, while Pal continued the letter with curiosity (Mrasori, 2008).

Both characters visit secretly the room of their lover. In Zweig's short-story, the heroine usually was emotional and nostalgic because of the missing of her lover:

"In your room there were few changes: there were more books and pictures, sometimes a piece of new furniture. But above all there was the vase with my roses, which I sent for your birthday as a recollection from me. Therefore, I was glad to take care for those flowers, because in this way my breath was near you, the perfume of my love (Mrasori, 2008)."

In Spasse's "Neta", the heroine more or less has the similar motive:

"I used to enter in your room in order to make your bed better and to arrange in order on table the pile of your books. One day, I decided to put flowers on your table. I took a glass from my neighbour, I filled it with the most beautiful flowers of the garden and put it on the table. I don't know what kind of impression left to you my flowers. Nevertheless, you were thinking that the flowers were sent by hostess, but despite this I continued to bring flowers every day (Mrasori, 2008)."

It is necessary to mention that the unknown lady of Zweig's short story has even intimate relationship with his lover:

"I woke up in the morning and preparing myself to leave. I had to go to my office and that is why I did not like to see your servant. When I stood dressed in front of you suddenly you took me in your arms and set your eyes on me: I wondered if it was at a spark of memory in darkness, or I guess you found that I was beautiful, happy and excited at that moment? Then, you kissed me. I got away from you slowly and wanted to leave. Next, you asked me: "Won't you take some flowers from me? I said "Yes". Then you took four white roses from the blue vase which was on the table and gave them to me. Afterwards, I kissed them day after day. And later, I used to send always a bunch of white roses for your birthday like those roses that you had sent to me after the first night of our love. I wonder, during these eleven years, have you ever asked yourself who was sending as gift white roses to you? (Mrasori, 2008)."

However, Spasse's Neta has a platonic love which resembles a dream:

"I was already eighteen I had met and known a lot of young men on the town. They like me very much, but I ignored them because none of them conquered my heart. I was not interested for their flattering's. But it is strange: your glance fascinated me. There is a puzzle in your eyes and speech. Yes it is true! I was so excited when I saw you! Love was not conquering slowly: he is quick, fulminous, merciless and unexpected. Inside me there was a clash of feelings: nothing could cool me down, nothing! How many times I entered and came out of my room. I pretended that I was reading a love story in fiction or in poetry. Next, I would go in front of mirror and look at my own face, and at times I smiled. At other times, I was frowning, here I showed and whitened my teeth and pretended that I was a real lady! This is madness, though for me they were thoughtless acts" (Mrasori, 2008).

Apart from warm love, Zweig's unknown lady is fond with books. Reading books is for her a joy, a support, a backing and a noble experience. She confesses:

"I stood in front of door in order to have an overview of all things because all your things were, more or less, strange and different. Among them, there were Indian icons, Italian sculptures, large and diverse, and, finally, books...there were so many beautiful books that I could not have imagined. I felt a kind of superhuman admiration for them. You were for me everything; you were a life for me. Everything existed if it had something to do with you. You changed all my life. Once I was disregarded in my classroom, suddenly I became the best pupil of my class; I used to read hundreds of books; I was able to read them until midnight, because I knew that you loved books. That's the time when I was living only for you. I used to buy all your books; when your name was mentioned in

newspapers that day was a feast, a holiday for me. Perhaps you don't believe I learnt by heart every line of your book. I read them very often.... (Mrasori, 2008).”

In the meantime, in Spasse's "Neta" the Unknown Lady has similar motives for books, though she learns from books that love is an illusion, her love is divine for her:

“One day, the letters that you wrote last night, I found split and scattered on your table, while some of them had fallen on the carpet. I picked them up quickly and afterwards, I threw a glance on a manuscript, where I read these underlined lines: “Love is an illusion. In order to remain alive forever, it should stay a continuous illusion”. I rushed downstairs. Love was not true, but it was an illusion. Petty! I thought. I wonder: were my acts an illusion? Do I have to get rid of illusion in order to love him so much? I have never thought about this. I have never either heard or read such a thing! Virgil, Dante, Hugo, Goethe, a whole world of famous poets have written volumes glorifying love, calling it divine...My beloved, the ideal of my life humiliates and vilifies love calling it an illusion, a lie, something that does not exist! He should be a man who has never felt or understand love. Perhaps I ought to trust my beloved that love is an illusion, but not my love because my love is a true love, and divine love” (Mrasori, 2008).

There are considerable similarities in their separation. The Unknown Lady of Zweig's short story supplicates her dearest love, with these words:

“Listen to me my dear...This is my first and last imploring to you...Please, do me a favour, for my birthday, which is a day which I remember, pick up some roses and put them in your vase. Please do it my darling, do it as the others do once in a year, when they hear and serve Mass for their beloved deceased”. But I don't believe in God anymore and ...I don't trust a Mass service. I trust only in you. I love only you and live only inside you. It is only one day in a year, do it. I beg you, do it silently, my heart. This is my first and my last pray which I send to you, because I love you, I love you, thank you, I love you! Farewell! (Mrasori, 2008).

Meanwhile, in Spasse's short story, Neta, (Spasse, 1980), although disappointed has only one request as her love is bordering with adoration, she wants only to be remembered by her beloved:

“Your marriage with another girl is not an obstacle for my love. However, the words of your letter moved me. You say again that love is an illusion. Your words distressed me very much. As I write this letter, my eyes have dissolved in tears; my hand is trembling, while I have a heartthrob. Now, I am begging you only one thing. I don't want you to love me, as love for you is an illusion; therefore I only want you to remember me. This is the only sacrifice that I am asking from you. And when the years will bend your back and the troubles turn your grey hair, you may be sure that my love will not extinguish, because I don't want anything, but only, only to love you. Farewell forever. Remember me!” (Mrasori, 2008).

#### **4. Literary Translation**

First, Comparative Literature means the knowledge of more than one national language and literature, and/or it means the knowledge and application of other disciplines in and for the study of literature and second, Comparative Literature has an ideology of inclusion of the Other, be that a marginal literature in its several meanings of marginality, a genre, various text types, etc. (Zepetnek, 1998)

Any language is human prior to being national: Turkish, French, and German languages first belong to humanity and then to Turkish, French, and German peoples. —LEO SPITZER, “Learning Turkish” (1934) (Apter, 2006).

It is known that a large number of readers are acquainted with foreign literature and especially with its masterpieces mainly through translations and literary criticism. Moreover, the origin of many national literatures derives from translated literary works. Thus, even the origin of Albanian literature is related to and dependent upon translations of foreign literary works. British linguist George Steiner once said, “Translation exists because men speak different languages” (Cao, 2013)

The art of translation is no younger than the art of original writing, however the role of translation craft has been known since antiquity. From the success of the translation of a literary work depends its echo and popularity outside the country.

Unlike the painter, sculptor and music composer in the fine arts and in music, the writer expresses his inner world and perception of the reality by rare means unknown, uncommon and unusual to all individuals. These means are certain tools of language, namely writers use special language styles and devices to create their literary works. While the works and masterpieces of music, painting, and sculpture know no linguistic bounds.

Even when it comes to the art of film there are cases when language is not a huge obstacle, hence writer, poet or playwright must be aware about the obstacles and limitations posed by nature, content and the characteristics of their works in spreading and disseminating within a wider readership. In other words, independent of their genre and kind literary works have to obtain the visa in order to travel abroad.

It is exactly because of the aforementioned that the paramount role of translation and reception of literary works have become even more important. The role of translation has grown alongside the development of society and human culture. Furthermore, translation is not just a simple activity, but also the most competent means and ways to interpret literature and literary works in society. Owing to the art of translation hundreds and thousands of novels, short stories, poems and dramas have visited various foreign countries, by usually becoming part of the culture of those countries. The cultural significance of translation could not be stated more clearly. Translation signifies encounters with otherness, bringing the “foreign” closer. Translation understood as a cultural activity has been central to the interpenetration of the global and the local throughout history. But this interpenetration has accelerated dramatically over the last twenty years, thanks among other things to the revolution in communications, and it has led to what we know as “globalisation” (Nelson & Maher, 2013). Moreover, if a literary work has been translated masterfully and with inspiration, then it has also helped to enrich the common cultural treasure of humanity. Last but not least, thanks to literary translators and literary translation the notion of World literature has been created.

## 5. Conclusion

Well-known author Stefan Zweig, known for his extraordinary novels and narration, known, widespread and translated into many languages of the world, including the Albanian language. In Albanian his works have a long tradition and it can be noticed that in addition to high readability, Zweig has left traces of influences and approximations, which can be seen quite well in the comparisons presented in this paper. It can easily be concluded that Zweig is one of the most translated authors of German literature in Albanian.

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#### AUTHOR BIODATA

**Naser Mrasori** is an Associate Professor within the Faculty of Philology at the University of Pristina, Kosovo. He is assigned for the subject modern German literature, Analysis of Literary Texts and comparative Literature. Naser Mrasori has a number of publications in Journals concerning with the Analysis of Literary Text and Comparative Literature. Naser Mrasori is known also as a professor in German Department and as expert in Higher Education in Kosovo. Naser Mrasori teaches modern German literature and comparative literature at the University of Prishtina. His published work includes articles and books in the areas of literature, modern and contemporary German literature. He published in 2008 a monograph: *The Reception of S. Zweig’s literary work in Albanian*.

**Naim Kryeziu** is an Assistant Professor within the Faculty of Philology at the University of Pristina, Kosovo. He is assigned for the subject of Literary Translation. Naim Kryeziu has a number of publications in different Journals mainly on Translation. He published a number of books in respective fields of Literary Translation. Naim Kryeziu is known also as a literary translator in Kosovo and Switzerland.