

Theorizing about Translation of Multilingual and Multiscriptal Texts: David Albahari’s “Learning Cyrillic” and Its Translation by Ellen Elias-Bursać

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ABSTRACT

Albahari’s short story “Learning Cyrillic”, translated from Serbian into English by Elias-Bursać, combines three languages – Serbian, English, and Blackfoot – and two scripts – Latin and Cyrillic. This article uses the story and its English translation to examine the destabilisation patterns in the concepts of *intra-* and *interlingual translation* that occur in a multilingual text. The paper argues that translational relations are not given but rather contextually determined in each case. Elias-Bursać’s multilingually and graphically aware translation disrupts the traditionally predictable behaviour of ‘source’ and ‘target’ by obscuring the presumed one-to-one correspondence between them. In arguing for a scalable minimal unit of translation, the paper adapts Jin’s (2017) metonymic approach to ‘close’ and ‘distant reading’ to fit the translational agenda. The asymmetry between the ‘source’ and ‘target’, along with a scalable minimal unit of translation, reinforces the pertinence of a contextual framework in the study of multilingual literature’s translational relations.

KEYWORDS: *intralingual translation*; *interlingual translation*; source/target language; literary translation; minimal unit of translation.