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## ABOUT ARMENIAN TRANSLATIONS OF BRUSOV'S SONNET\*

**Keywords:** *Brusov, Tarontsi, Gasparyan, alliteration, assonance, repetition, original.*

The subject matter of this study is one of Brusov's sonnets and its translations into Armenian (by Soghomon Tarontsi and Khoren Gasparyan). A comparative, contrastive and semantic analysis of both the original and the translations was conducted during the investigation. The analysis explores some elements of the poem such as the title, structure and date of writing, revealing the discrepancy in translations. We comprehensively considered the syntactic constructions, various stylistic devices of the original, as well as numerous repetitions, anaphors, alliterations and assonances of the original and their reflection in the Armenian translations.

**Քրիստինե Բեջանյան**  
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## Վ. ԲՐՅՈՒՍՈՎԻ ՍՈՆԵՏԻ ՀԱՅԵՐԵՆ ԹԱՐԳՄԱՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԻ ՄԱՍԻՆ

**Բանալի բառեր** – Բրյուսով, Տարոնցի, Գասպարյան, ալիտերացիա, ասոնանս, կրկնություն, բնօրինակ:

Այս ուսումնասիրության առարկան Վ. Բրյուսովի սոնետն է և դրա հայերեն երկու թարգմանությունները (Սողոմոն Տարոնցու և Խորեն Գասպարյանի): Կատարվել է թե՛ բնագրի, թե՛ թարգմանությունների համեմատական, հակադրական և իմաստային վերլուծություն: Հոդվածում ուսումնասիրվում են բանաստեղծության որոշ տարրեր, ինչպիսիք են վերնագիրը, կառուցվածքը և գրելու ամսաթիվը՝ բացահայտելով թարգմանությունների անհամապատասխանությունը: Նաև համակողմանի քննվել են բնագրի շարահյուսական կառուցվածքը, ոճական տարրերը հնարքները, ինչպես նաև բնագրի բազմաթիվ կրկնությունները, անաֆորները

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ըը, այլաբանություններն ու ասոնանսները և դրանց արտացոլումը հայերեն թարգմանություններում:

Հետազոտության ընթացքում կատարվել է թե՛ բնագրի, թե՛ թարգմանությունների համեմատական և իմաստային վերլուծություն:

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## **О ПЕРЕВОДЕ СОНЕТА БРЮСОВА НА АРМЯНСКИЙ ЯЗЫК**

**Ключевые слова:** Брюсов, Таронци, Гаспарян, аллитерация, ассонанс, повтор, оригинал.

Предметом данного исследования стало брюсовское стихотворение и два его перевода на армянский язык (Согомона Таронци и Хорена Гаспаряна). В ходе исследования был проведен сравнительный, сопоставительный и семантический анализ как оригинала, так и переводов в ходе которого комплексно рассматривались синтаксические конструкции, разнообразные стилистические приемы оригинала, а также многочисленные повторы, анафоры, аллитерации и ассонансы подлинника и их отражение в армянских переводах. Рассматриваются также некоторые элементы стихотворения, такие как название, структура и дата написания, выявляя несоответствия в переводах.

### **Introduction**

It cannot be denied that over the last hundred years, the theme of “Brusov and Armenia” has been studied almost from top to bottom, but there are still many undisclosed aspects that require consideration. As Magda Dzhanpoladyan writes in 2016 in her article “Valery Brusov’s Assessments of Armenian Poetry a Century Later”, «... it would seem that the theme of “Brusov and Armenia” has been studied thoroughly. What makes us turn to it again today? First of all, the time. After all, time inevitably leaves its mark on the perception of both literature itself and its assessments. Brusov himself wrote about this» (Dzhanpoladyan, 2016, p. 5–6).

As the evidence to this statement, she reminded of the words of another outstanding Armenian literary scholar Kamsar Grigoryan, who in his monograph “V.Ya. Brusov and Armenian Poetry” quoted the lines of the latter's letter to Poghos Makintyan that can be found in the poet's archive. They say: «What we now consider artistic was not considered as such 50, 100 or 1000 years ago and, perhaps, will not be considered so in 50, 100 or 1000 years... Now we are sure that this or that is poetry, but that or that is not poetry. However, no matter how convinced we are of it, this judgment is subjective. Philosophy will change, aesthetics will change, worldview will change, judgments will change» (Grigoryan, 1962, p. 43). It is noteworthy that Kamsar Grigoryan, having dedicated a separate

chapter to Brusov's article «The poetry of Armenia and its unity over the centuries», concluded that «... almost half a century has passed since the day when the introductory essay to "Poetry of Armenia" was written and we can say that Brusov's main statements have not lost their scientific significance up to now» (Ibid, p. 75).

Thus, it should be pointed out that Grigoryan's monograph was published in Russian in 1962 (before that it was published in Armenian). That is why Dzhanpoladyan resumed that «... today it is no longer "almost half a century" – a whole century separates us from the publication of "The Poetry of Armenia", and too much has changed over the past 50 years. And this gives us every reason and right not just to celebrate the anniversary date, but to once again turn to the most diverse aspects of the topic "Brusov and Armenia" in the light of today» (Dzhanpoladyan, 2016, p. 5–6). Definitely one of them is the translations of the poet's works into Armenian. Undoubtedly, the treasures of world literature contain unique works that become not only a stumbling block for translators (most of whom are talented poets and writers themselves), but also an object of temptation – too many poets wanted to join the famous masterpieces of the world classical literature. One of such works is certainly considered the poet's famous sonnet "*To a Woman*".

The subject of this study is the translations of the sonnet into Armenian.

#### **Armenian translations of Brusov's sonnet**

First, let us pay attention to the date of creation and the title – August 11, 1899. However, we have to take into consideration that it was published in 1900 (in the collection of poems "*Tertia Vigilia*" in the cycle "*Another Tale*" entitled "*To a Woman*"). Nevertheless, in the draft manuscript Brusov entitled it "*From the Century*" with the subtitle "*A Sonnet about a Woman*". With the same title, it was subsequently published in the first volume of the collection of poems "*Roads and Crossroads*" (Brusov a, 1973, p. 29). There are two translations of this poem into Armenian. The first was placed in the book of Brusov's poems compiled by Soghomon Tarontsi, where a poem entitled "Կին" (woman) is published, and there is the date 1900 at the bottom. Having looked through the content of the book, we can find out that the translation was done by Soghomon Tarontsi himself, and there are no comments regarding this work in the notes of the Appendix. Apparently, Tarontsi did not consider it necessary to clarify the date of writing the poem, however, how can one explain the discrepancy in the title? Brusov wrote a poem-dedication and therefore the title is in the dative case (*to whom? – to a woman*), and not in the nominative case, as the Armenian translator suggests.

Later the Brusov State University, with the support of the Russian Center for Science and Culture in Yerevan, published the book "Valery Brusov: Poems and Prose. Translations by Paruyr Sevak, Khoren Gasparyan, Armen Gazaryan". Here we can find the translation done by Khoren Gasparyan with the correct date (August 11, 1899). Besides, the translator indicated the title of the collection – "*Tertia Vigilia*" – in the footnotes. It is commendable that the translator wrote the

title correctly, and the Russian title is also supplied in brackets. Hence, to whom? – To a woman – “Անոջը”.

**Translated by Sghomon Tarontsi**

**Կին**

Դու կին ես, դու փակված գի՛րք ես՝ գրքերում,  
Թողես կապոց ես – գաղտնորեն փաթաթված.  
Որի ամեն խոսք ու խոհի տողերում –  
Էջերն համայն խենթ ժամերով են լցված:

Դու դիվային ըմպելիք ես հրահրուն,  
Որ վառվում է շուրթերին հագիվհագ դիպած,  
Եվ թույն ըմպողն իր աղաղակը ճնշում,  
Փառաբանում քեզ – տանջանքի մեջ ընկած:

Դու կին ես և իրավացի՝ դրանով,  
Դու – պսակված աստղագարդով ի հնութ.  
Աստվածության տիպար ես մեր հոգում մութ:

Ի սեր քեզ՝ մենք երկաթե լուծն անխռով  
Քաշ ենք տալիս, փշրում լեռները այդպես<sup>1</sup>,  
Եվ աղոթում ի հնութ քեզ, միայն քեզ:  
1900 (Brusov b, 1957, p. 94)

**Translated by Khoren Gasparyan**

**Կնոջը**

Դու կին ես, գի՛րք ես դու գրքերի մեջ,  
Դու փակ ու կնքված, գաղտնի մի փայտեթ,  
Ուր ամեն թերթում վայրկյաններն են  
խենթ,  
Ուր խոսք ու խոհով լի են տող և էջ:

Դու կին՝ ըմպելիք մոգիչ, հեշտավետ,  
Շուրթին չհասած՝ այրու՛մ ես անշեջ,  
Բայց բոցն ըմպողը՝ տառապյալ՝ անվերջ,  
Չսպում է ճիչն ու քեզ օրհնում հավետ:

Դու կին՝ դրանով իրավացի... դու՝  
Աստղային թագով զարդարված հնուց...  
Դու աստվածատիպ՝ վիհում մեր հոգու...

Ու մենք հանուն քեզ կրում ենք և լուծ,  
Երկաթե շղթա, փշրում ժայռ-քարեր<sup>2</sup>  
Եվ քեզ ենք հնուց աղոթում դարեր:  
11 օգոստոսի 1899 (Brusov c, 2021, p. 50)

It is known that the poem was written by 26-year-old Brusov 18 months after his marriage with Ioanna Runt. The latter became for him not just a beloved wife, a devoted friend, a loyal assistant, but also a queen, almost a deity. Yes, we can state that the author does not directly name Ioanna, since here she acts as a collective image, personifying all representatives of Eve descendants, who are able to simultaneously delight, and cause pain, and make happy, and torture, charm and make one drag “*an iron yoke*”. From time immemorial, kneeling down in front of these high creatures, who wear a “*starry crown*”, (as if bowing before heavenly deities), looking up at them from the abyss, the poet tried to cognize the true essence of a woman and to realize her role in the life of a man. Brusov would very much like to unravel her secret, that is to understand why she constantly hides her true feelings, aspirations and desires, what makes her pass off wishful thinking as reality, how she manages to subordinate to her whims a stronger man, weakened by her charms and therefore being so vulnerable.

Consequently, the author used various artistic means to convey the main theme of the sonnet that is more considered the deification of a woman, who is the representation of both wisdom and mystery. «Brusov brought “the idea of the

<sup>1</sup> You, crowned with a star since ancient times, are an image of a deity in our dark souls / In the name of your love we drag the iron yoke unquestioningly and destroy the rocks like this / And we have been praying to you for a long time / Only to you

<sup>2</sup> Adorned with a starry crown since ancient times / You are the Divine born in our soul / and for your sake we bear both the yoke and / the iron chain, we crush the rocks and stones / And for centuries since ancient times we have been praying to you

sonnet”<sup>1</sup> – to a simple definition: “the first quatrain – introduces the main idea; the second quatrain develops it; the first tercet – contrasts the main idea with a new one; the second tercet provides a synthesis of both thoughts” (III, 542). Based on this, one can notice that the following themes alternate in this sonnet: “you are majestic – you torture, but we glorify you; you are majestic – you torture, but we serve you.” Each line, each image in this sonnet delights with its clarity and completeness» (Bejanyan, 2011, p. 271). Thus, the very form of the sonnet suggests that the thesis will be in the first quatrain. Here through various stylistic devices (“*you are a book among books*”, “*you are a folded, sealed scroll*”), the author explains that not everyone is able to understand the Holy Scriptures (although it “*has an abundance of thoughts and lines*”). Nonetheless it can drive an inexperienced reader to madness (“*every moment is mad on its pages*”), to the loss of memory, mind as if after drinking a magic potion, some arcanum (“*witch’s drink*”), which since the immemorial time (as Brusov writes “*from the ages*”) has helped lovers to break away from reality, to find themselves in another, magical world. Such “reification” of a woman shows that the author treats her as an extremely precious “object” that must be protected from all sorts of everyday troubles, to serve it “*crushing the firmament of the mountains*”, to pray to it. Consequently, Brusov recognized two principles in a woman – the witch’s (lower – sinful – earthly) and the divine (higher – spiritual – heavenly), who is able to inspire the poet with her flame (even though it burns, “*scarcely touched the lips*”). Let us consider other stylistic devices conveyed in the Armenian versions.

It should be noted that Tarontsi added the epithet “փակված” (closed) to the metaphor “book among books” (книга между книг). Thus, it turned out that it is “a closed book in books”. Gasparyan is more precise – “you are a book among books”. In the next line, Brusov clearly hints at the Holy Book, but the Armenian translators distorted the entire meaning of the line by introducing the epithet “զաղուխ” (secretly in Tarontsi’s version), “զաղուխ” (secret in Gasparyan’s one), and the translation of the fifth and sixth lines does not correspond to the original. If we consider Tarontsi’s translation, it turns out that the paper bundle, secretly wrapped, is a devilish, flaming drink for the one who drinks poison (accordingly the seventh line). However, this is more reminiscent of some alchemical text, not the Bible. Gasparyan suggested for the “witch’s drink” the epithets magical, voluptuous, but he correctly translated “drinking flame” (напиток – ведьмовский, жгущий огнем).

Let us pay attention to the syntax. The author used the words “you” and “woman” to emphasize the two most important ideas for him in this poem. The appearance of this two-part nominal predicate with a zero copula at the beginning of the first, second quatrains and tercet seems to “bulge” these two concepts, to “protrude” them. Thus, Gasparyan is closer to the original. He, by omitting the auxiliary verb “էս” (which remained in Tarontsi’s version at the beginning of the

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<sup>1</sup> which is according to him the synthesis of contradictions as a constructive moment in the formation of the content of the sonnet

first tercet “Դու կի՛ն ես”), was able to preserve the anaphor of the original. None of the translators accurately reflected the structural and semantic organization of the poem: instead of six sentences of the original (three of which are exclamatory), Tarontsi presented only four. Although Gasparyan presented six sentences, but the translator used three ellipses<sup>1</sup> in the first tercet. However, to do him a credit, we should state that in Armenian this punctuation mark denotes, rather, not the end of a sentence, but incompleteness, an understatement of thought, which is not considered in the text of the original. On the contrary, Brusov emphasizes the majesty of the woman with exclamatory marks at the end of the fifth, eleventh and fourteenth lines. In the Armenian language, this mark is replaced by “stress”, which is placed on the emphasized word. And both translators used it as it can be seen in the text.

Coming back to the anaphors, we have to note that there are several of them in the original: thrice *You are a woman*; twice *in his*; *And*; 5 times *You*. Tarontsi conveyed only four Դու (in the first, fifth, ninth, tenth lines), and Gasparyan completely preserved all five Դու (in the first, second, fifth, ninth, eleventh lines). It should be noted that Tarontsi omitted the anaphor of the third and fourth lines, while Gasparyan preserved it, resorting to the conjunction “where” (ուր). The repeated conjunction “and” in the last line was conveyed by both translators, however, the anaphoric one at the beginning of the eighth line of the original appears in a slightly changed position in the translations. For example, Tarontsi raised the conjunction to the beginning of the seventh line, while Gasparyan, on the contrary, lowered it to the beginning of the twelfth line. When considering the anaphors, one cannot help but touching upon other repetitions, which are clearly excessive in the original: “woman” used thrice, “from the century” twice, “your”, as well as the conjunction “and” 5 times, and “you” 8 times. These repetitions are also reflected in the translations: twice կի՛ն, ի հնու՛թ is used by Tarontsi, four times – քի՛զ and Լ/ու, five times – Դու, while Gasparyan uses it seven times, five times – Լ/ու, thrice – քի՛զ and կի՛ն and twice – հնու՛ց and ուր.

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<sup>1</sup> The ellipsis is described as suspension points or dots, a punctuation mark consisting of a series of three dots. An ellipsis can be used in many ways, such as for intentional omission of text or numbers, to imply a concept without using words. Style guides differ on rendering an ellipsis in printed material, f.e., according to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, it should consist of three periods, each separated from its neighbor by a non-breaking space (Merriam, 1998, p. 178), but according to the *AP Stylebook*, the periods should be rendered with no space between them, etc. (Toner, 1998, p. 151). However, there are some differences in the punctuation rules for using ellipses in Russian, Armenian and English. In Armenian, there are even two types of ellipses: բազմակետ, which corresponds to the Russian sign <...> when abbreviating a text, although in Armenian four dots are used in this case. The other variant is կախման կետեր, denoting incompleteness, an unspoken thought. Let us note that, that unlike Russian, in English a dash is used in this case to denote an unfinished thought. But, as is usually explained in syntax textbooks, in English there are only two reasons for using ellipses, one of which is to denote a pause in speech, usually caused by uncertainty, doubt, thoughtfulness or artificially maintained to create tension. And in the Russian language, D. E. Rosenthal lists eight rules for using ellipsis, in particular, to indicate the incompleteness of a statement caused by various reasons (the speaker's anxiety, external interference, etc.); to indicate pauses in speech, hesitation; to indicate an unexpected transition from one thought to another, etc. None of these statements can be found in the original.

Certainly this is the violation of the rules of the classical sonnet as it is known that the words, and especially whole phrases, should not be repeated in it, since «...in a sonnet, the greatest poetic power is concentrated on a minimal area...» (Becher, 1965, p. 191). According to a well-known Russian philologist and literary critic K. Gerasimov, in a sonnet one should avoid repeating proper names, and use as little prepositions, conjunctions, and pronouns as possible (Gerasimov a, 1985, p. 81). He considered Brusov as one of the “outstanding Russian sonnetists” (Gerasimov b, 1983, p. 37), whose “sonetary” (Gasparov a, 1995, p. 83) contained more than a hundred sonnets. However, in this article we will neither reveal this aspect of the poet's work nor present the genre characteristics of the sonnet, especially since this issue has been repeatedly considered by famous literary scholars (M. Gasparov, O. Fedotov, S. Kormilov, B. Tomashevsky, I. Bekher and others). Our task is other: to understand, to decipher why such an “experienced sonnetist” needed these repetitions. Consequently, the author needed to use these words repeatedly for some reason. Let us assume that this allowed the author to remind constantly of his main goal that is of the binary opposition of his role (as a man), dictated by the very structure of the sonnet. Here in the first quatrain the thesis is suggested: a woman as a riddle denoting wisdom. In the second quatrain, the antithesis comes where the stationary/ stability of the first quatrain is replaced by a whirlwind of feelings that cause both suffering and pleasure. The synthesis described in the first tercet marks the dignity, or rather, the advantage of a woman, consisting in her dual nature. Thus, the denouement of the last tercet (where a man can be observed for the first time) means his acceptance of his dependence on a woman: he himself admits his being a slave for her. In this case, translators can only be praised for not violating this balance (or, as far as possible, minimizing losses).

Some researchers of the genre also indicate a prohibition on the use of the enjambement technique. However, it is also present in the original (italicised the seventh/ eighth lines; the twelfth/ thirteenth/ fourteenth lines italicized in the text).

Ты – женщина, ты – книга между книг,  
Ты – свернутый, запечатленный свиток;  
В его строках и дум и слов избыток,  
В его листах безумен каждый миг.

Ты – женщина, ты – ведьмовский напиток!  
Он жжет огнем, едва в уста проник;  
*Но пьющий пламя подавляет крик*  
*И славословит бешено средь пыток.*

Ты – женщина, и этим ты права.  
От века убрана короной звездной,  
Ты – в наших безднах образ божества!

Мы для тебя влечем ярем железный,  
Тебе мы служим, тверди гор дробя,  
И молимся – от века – на тебя! (Brusov a, 1973, p. 179)

Accordingly, the translators repeated this technique after Brusov. Compare:

**Tr. S. Tarontsi**

Եվ թոյն ընկողն իր աղաղակը ճնշում,  
Փառաբանում քեզ – տանջանքի մեջ ընկած:

Ի սեր քեզ՝ մենք երկաթե լուծն անխռով  
Քաշ ենք տալիս, փշրում լեռները պղպես,  
Եվ աղոթում ի հնուք քեզ, միայն քեզ:

**Tr. Kh. Gasparyan**

Բայց բոցն ընկողը՝ տառապալ՝ անվերջ,  
Հասկում է ճիչն ու քեզ օրհնում հավետ:

Ու մենք հանուն քեզ կրում ենք և լուծ,  
Երկաթե շղթա, փշրում ժայռ-քարեր  
Եվ քեզ ենք հնուց աղոթում դարեր:

If we examine the phonetic structure of the poem, we will note that the entire sonnet is built on the alternation of hissing sounds (ж, ш, щ, ч, s, з) and vowels (и, е, а, у), however, Tarontsi only alliterated the text (ժ [ʒ], ց [ts], շ [ʃ], գ [z], ջ [dʒ]). Gasparyan also resorted to alliterations (ջ [dʒ], թ [t], խ [kh], չ [tʃ], շ [ʃ]) and assonances (ու [u], ի [i], է [e], ա [ʌ]), which made it possible to emphasize the rhythm of the text, convey the author's melodious intonation, without losing the notes praising this “official anthem” to a women. Mikhail Gasparov has repeatedly noted that “the most striking feature of the poem is its «phonic organization: dense alliterations, the selection of words by sound more than by meaning» (Gasparov b, 1985, p. 7). And such a sound series conveys the “tortures” of the lyrical hero, for whom, as Kornet Chukovsky writes, the caresses of his beloved are «a dungeon, torment, a coffin of embraces» (Chukovsky, 2012, p. 153). He depicted loving embraces as the cruelest execution. «Passion for him is not only torment, but also a kind of battle, a fatal duel of two souls» (Ibid, p. 151). Turning to the reproduction of the rhythmic pattern by the translators, we note that in its expressive coloring the translation of the last tercets coincides with the original text, although, as it is known, this is one of the most difficult tasks in translating poetry, since different languages belong to different systems of versification and have different phonetic norms. For example, as the translator of Shakespeare's sonnets Samvel Mkrtchyan admitted, «...Armenian translators generally lengthened Shakespeare's ten-syllable verse to fifteen, which is quite natural, given the huge difference that exists in the Armenian and English languages, especially in the quantitative ratio of monosyllabic words. When translating, preference was given to fifteen-syllable three-line verses (5+5+5). Shakespeare's sonnet has three quatrains and one couplet with the rhyme scheme ababcdcdefefgg» (Shakespeare, 2003, p. 3). And we can assume that in this case the translation is not inferior in strength to the original one. «The verse is smooth and sonorous, it is easy to read and comprehend» (Bejanyan, 2011, p. 274). Once, Mikhail Gasparov used to write about Brusov's own translations in the preface to the book “Solemn Greeting”: «Young Brusov translated not poetry, but poetics. He would snatch several unusual images, phrases, rhythmic changes from the translated work, reproduce them in Russian with striking accuracy, and convey everything else approximately, filling in the



contours of the original with his own variations in the same style» (Gasparov a, 1995, p. 7). This is exactly what the translators did. And here in the Armenian language, Brusov's sonnet did not lose its "sound". On the contrary, by paraphrasing some word combinations that «give rise to insurmountable difficulties of direct translation, and figures of speech wholly foreign, and hence incomprehensible in the other tongue» (Cooper, 1928, p. 484–485), the translators provided the foreign-language reader with such an "unambiguous" version of the sonnet that it is impossible to make a mistake in its perception.

### Conclusion

Summing up the analysis of the translations of Brusov's sonnet, we conclude that to one degree or another, both translators managed to «translate a work of verbal art across the language border without losing the poetry of life contained in it» (Bejanyan, 2011, p. 274) and convey to the reader of another language culture the entire beauty of Brusov's masterpiece. As one of the greatest Armenian poets, Hovhannes Tumanyan, noted, evaluating the Armenian translations of Shakespeare, «... a translator is always obliged to be faithful to the idea of the original and give an interpretation that is understandable to the reader. This requirement significantly increases when a work is translated in which every word and sentence, measured and weighed, has its deep meaning and a specific place»<sup>1</sup> (Tumanyan, 1994, p. 31). In addition to these words, it can be said that not only talent, knowledge of the language and skill are needed, but also love for the original text and its author. This is the most important position that a translator must maintain.

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<sup>1</sup> թարգմանիչը ... հավատարիմ մնա գործի մտքին և հասկանալի տա ընթերցողին: Այս պահանջը մեծանում է մանավանդ, երբ թարգմանվում է այնպիսի մի երկ, որի ամեն մի խոսքն ու նախադասությունը, չափած ու կշռած, ունեն իրանց խոր նշանակությունն ու հաստատուն տեղը: - *The translation is ours – K. B.*

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