

Translation Amid Ideological Constraints and Poetic Freedom: The Case of Pablo Neruda and César Vallejo in Albanian

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Abstract. This study investigates the translation and reception of Pablo Neruda and César Vallejo in Albania during the period of socialist realism, focusing on the ways in which translation functioned as a culturally and ideologically mediated practice rather than a neutral act of literary transfer. Closely embedded within the ideological framework and cultural politics of the socialist state, translation played a decisive role in shaping both the Albanian reception of these Latin American poets and the broader discourse on foreign literature in the country. The paper is grounded in a preliminary bibliographic survey of translations and critical responses to Latin American authors published in Albanian during the Cold War, a period marked by strict ideological control and the dominance of socialist realist aesthetics.

Within this cultural environment, translation was a highly regulated process in which the selection of texts, translation strategies, and accompanying paratextual materials were carefully orchestrated to produce ideologically acceptable representations of foreign authors. Translators operated under significant institutional and political pressure to align literary works with prevailing socialist values, often resulting in selective translation practices or substantial modifications to the original texts. Such interventions frequently entailed deviations from the authors' poetic complexity in order to foreground elements compatible with revolutionary discourse and socialist ideals.

In the case of Neruda and Vallejo, text selection consistently privileged poems that emphasised political engagement, collective struggle and social commitment, while marginalising or excluding more personal, metaphysical or existential dimensions of their poetics. As a result, the translated works underwent a process of ideological filtering that profoundly shaped Albanian readers' perceptions of these authors. This study examines how these translation practices contributed to the construction of a partial and often rigid image of Neruda's and Vallejo's literary output in Albanian culture, ultimately

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producing a simplified and, at times, distorted understanding of their broader poetic trajectories.

Keywords: Albanian literature; translation; reception; socialist realism; Pablo Neruda; César Vallejo; ideological mediation

Introduction

During the Cold War period, literary translation in Albania developed within a narrow ideological framework dictated by the principles of socialist realism as a method. This period, characterised by strict state control over the fields of culture and publishing, subjected literary translations to a rigorous process of filtering, whereby texts were selected, adapted and often distorted in order to conform to the ideological needs of the time. Within this context, translation did not function as a neutral act of mediation, but rather as a form of what André Lefevere calls “rewriting” conditioned by ideology, institutional frameworks, and dominant cultural norms, which interacted with the intrinsic characteristics of the translated texts themselves. (Lefevere 1992: 59)

In this framework, the selection of foreign authors to be translated into Albanian was not the result of a purely aesthetic or literary interest, but rather a choice largely dictated by the compatibility of their works with revolutionary ideals and the messages of class struggle. Consequently, personal, existential, or metaphysical themes – elements of great importance in the oeuvre of many authors – were often overlooked or distorted. Texts were oriented toward a reading that privileged collective aspects and the writer’s social engagement.

This tendency is particularly evident in the way Latin American authors were translated and received in Albania during this period (Smajli & Osja 2026²). Figures such as Pablo Neruda and César Vallejo, although complex poets whose work reveals profound intertwinings between the intimate and the political, were translated primarily because of their involvement in leftist movements and through a partial reading that reinforced only the ideological dimension of their work. This approach produced a reduced and often distorted image of these authors within Albanian culture, foregrounding certain dimensions of their poetics, particularly political engagement, while rendering

² Smajli, B., & Osja, V. 2016. *Capítulo V: El complejo conocimiento de la literatura latinoamericana en la Albania Socialista: análisis de la prensa y revistas de la época. En Literatura latinoamericana y socialismo europeo: Redes, recepción e imaginarios en el contexto de la Guerra Fría cultural.* (Monograph) CLACSO. (Forthcoming)

other aspects, such as introspective or formally complex elements, less visible to the target readership.

This paper aims to examine this dynamic of ideological intervention in translation by analysing, in concrete terms, the cases of Pablo Neruda and César Vallejo. It also seeks to highlight the significant role played in this process by paratexts such as prefaces, notes, and critical commentaries, which, according to Gérard Genette (1997: 1), function as mechanisms that guide interpretation by providing the reader with a predetermined key to the reading of the work.

The study is based on an analysis of bibliographic sources, existing Albanian translations, and the historical and cultural context in which these translations were produced and received. By adopting this approach, the paper aims to shed light on the way in which translation has been transformed not only into a linguistic act but also into a political and cultural one, with a direct impact on how perceptions of Latin American literature have been constructed in Albania.

Methodology and Corpus

This study is based on an interdisciplinary approach that draws primarily on insights from translation studies and paratextual analysis, while selectively engaging with reception theory in order to contextualise the Albanian case. Methodologically, it combines the bibliographic reconstruction of translations of Latin American authors into Albanian, the analysis of periodical sources and book publications, as well as the historical and ideological contextualisation of these translations within the cultural system of socialist Albania.

The corpus includes translations of works by Pablo Neruda and César Vallejo published in literary journals, cultural periodicals and book editions during the 1951–1990 period. The analysis focuses both on the translated texts and on the paratextual elements that accompany them (prefaces, editorial notes, critical commentaries and editorial introductions), which are treated as interpretative mechanisms that mediate the relationship between the text and the reader.

Compared to Neruda, Vallejo's reception remained more limited and mediated, which reflects both the difficulty of integrating his poetics into the dominant literary framework and the selective mechanisms governing translation practices.

It should be noted that the corpus is asymmetrical with regard to the two authors. While Pablo Neruda was extensively translated and published in both periodical and book form throughout the socialist period, the presence of César

Vallejo in Albanian is significantly more limited. His work circulated primarily through a small number of poems – approximately seven – published in literary journals, without the appearance of a dedicated book edition during the period under study.

This disparity in the availability and circulation of translated material necessarily affects the scope and depth of analysis. Accordingly, while the discussion of Neruda is based on a broader and more diversified corpus, the case of Vallejo is approached as a more fragmentary yet analytically significant instance of selective reception within the same ideological and cultural framework.

On the theoretical level, the study draws on the concept of translation as “rewriting” (Lefevere 1992), on paratext theory (Genette 1997), and on reception and reading theory (Jauss 1982; Iser 1978), conceptualising translation as an ideologically mediated cultural practice. This approach makes it possible to analyse translation not only as linguistic transfer but as a process of meaning production, constructed at the intersection of political power, cultural institutions, ideological discourse and editorial practice.

1. Translators between Creativity and Control: Their Role within the System of Ideological Censorship

Within the system of socialist realism, translators did not enjoy the status of a free mediators between two cultures; on the contrary, they functioned as a link within a broader mechanism of ideological control. In this context, translation was not a neutral act of cultural communication, but a closely supervised process in which the translator was required to align the content of foreign literary texts with the ideological framework of the regime. This reality transformed the translator into an extension of the coercive instruments of power, a figure situated between linguistic and literary creativity and the constraints imposed by censorship.

Rather than faithfully representing the poetics of the original author, the translator was often compelled to intervene actively in the text, deleting, softening or modifying elements that fell outside the bounds of ideologically acceptable norms. This form of ‘translator activism’ was not an aesthetic choice, but a necessity in order to secure publication and to avoid personal or professional sanctions. Consequently, translators operated under constant pressure: on the one hand, a sense of commitment to the original text, and on the other, the obligation to submit to censorship and to the dominant narrative of power (Osja & Krasniqi 2024: 187–205).

This ongoing compromise on the part of the translator materialised in various forms of intervention: the omission of verses, thematic substitutions, the neutralisation of religious or erotic symbolism, and the superimposition of an ideological reading onto works that were not necessarily designed for such an interpretation, as is evident in the case of prefaces accompanying the presentation of authors to the target readership (Asllani 2010: 140–164). In the case of authors such as Pablo Neruda and César Vallejo, translators focused on the most explicitly ideological aspects of their work, while sidelining the introspective, philosophical or formal dimensions of their poetry. In this way, the translator functioned not merely as an editor of a text, but as an active agent of the ideological project that determined what should and should not be translated, what should be emphasised, and what should be concealed.

2. The Case of the Translations of Pablo Neruda

2.1. Publications in Periodicals and Journals (1951–1989)

The name of the renowned Chilean poet Pablo Neruda appears for the first time in Albanian literature in 1951, through the Albanian translation of the poem “A mi partido” (To My Party; Alb. “Partisë sime”) published in the only literary journal of the time, *Letërsia jonë* (1951: 67). Already in its title, the text displays a strongly agitational character and a clear ideological commitment, suggesting that translators were compelled to select only those texts whose content was in harmony with the ideological framework of the socialist realist method upheld by the communist regime. It is important to note that the prominence of politically engaged poetry in the Albanian reception of Pablo Neruda cannot be explained solely as a result of external ideological selection. A considerable part of Neruda’s poetic production in the 1940s and early 1950s is itself marked by explicit political commitment and a close alignment with communist ideology, with such texts functioning as interventions within their original historical context. At the same time, Neruda’s international circulation – particularly during the Cold War – was mediated through ideologically aligned publishing networks that shaped both the selection and dissemination of his work. In socialist contexts, this process tended to privilege politically engaged poetry, contributing to a selective canonisation of his oeuvre. Within the Albanian cultural framework, this resulted in a dominant mode of reception centred on his political poetry, while other phases of his poetic development remained largely inaccessible in translation. Such conditions did not distort the texts themselves but produced a partial and

historically conditioned configuration of Neruda's poetic identity in the target culture.³

This selection criterion, clearly oriented by the ideological discourse of the period, continued to be decisive for the translation of Neruda's other poems, which were published approximately 37 times over a span of nearly 37 years in the journals and newspapers circulating during the communist period⁴. Thus, translations of poems such as "Canto sobre heroísmo" (Song of Heroism; Alb. "Kangë për heroizmin") (in *Drita* 1961: 2), "Símbolo de gloria" (Symbol of Glory; Alban. "Simboli i lavdisë") (in *Nëntori*, No. 5, 1961: 195), "Oda a Lenin" (Ode to Lenin; Alb. "Leninit") (*Nëntori*, 1961, no. 4: 13–14), "Canto de amor a Stalingrado" (Song of love to Stalingrad; Alb. "Këngë dashurie për Stalingradin"), "Siempre" (Always; Alb. "Gjithmonë me gjak"), "Cómo nacen las banderas" (How Flags are Born; Alb. "Si lindin flamujt") and "El general Franco en los infiernos" (General Franco in Hell; Alb. "Gjeneral Franko në Ferr") (in *Ylli*, No. 2, 1963: 26), among others, were produced and promoted in accordance with the political references suggested by the texts, functioning simultaneously as a form of ideological 'passportisation' of the author within Albanian literary culture.

Until 1989, translators who introduced Neruda into Albanian operated within a system that strongly favoured the selection of texts whose content was in harmony with the ideological framework of the socialist realist method upheld by the communist regime. As a result, the process of selection consistently privileged poems aligned with political engagement and collective struggle, while other dimensions of Neruda's poetics were less frequently translated and circulated.

In this way, although Pablo Neruda came to occupy a special place as one of the most translated authors from Latin American literature into Albanian during the communist period, he simultaneously became one of the most selectively received authors within the Albanian cultural context. More specifically, Albanian readers encountered Neruda primarily through this politically engaged phase of his work. Earlier and stylistically distinct collections, such as *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada* (Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair) and *Residencia en la tierra* (Residence on Earth), were not systematically available in Albanian translation until the late 1980s, most notably with the publication of the 1989 edition. This

³ Ignacio López-Calvo, ed., 2016. *Pablo Neruda in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. See in particular the sections on "Reception and Circulation", "Neruda and the Cold War", and "Translation".

⁴ Journals *Literatura jonë*, *Nëndori/Nëntori*, *Miqësia*, *Zëri i Rinisë*, *Bashkimi*, *Ylli*, *Drita*, etc.

limited availability contributed to the formation of a reading horizon in which Neruda appeared predominantly as a politically committed poet, while lyrical, introspective and formally experimental aspects of his poetics remained less visible.

The Albanian reader's access to Neruda's work was thus shaped by a historically conditioned process of selection and circulation, which foregrounded his political poetry while leaving other phases of his work less accessible. This resulted not in a distortion of the texts themselves, but in a partial configuration of the author's poetic identity within the target culture.

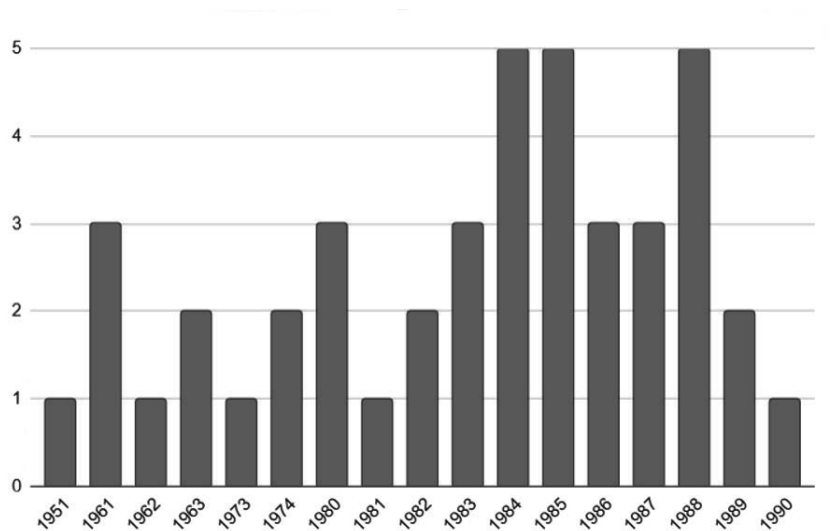


Figure 1. Frequency of appearance of the two authors, Pablo Neruda and César Vallejo, in press and periodicals in the context of translations of Latin American literature into Albanian, 1950–1990.

Source: Authors' own processing, based on data from the ELASOC II research database (Smajli et al. 2026a).

2.2. Publications in Book Form: The First Volume “Que despierte el leñador” (Let the Rail-Splitter Awake; Alb. *Zgjohu druvar!*)

The first publication of Pablo Neruda’s poetry in book form in the Albanian language is the collection *Zgjohu, druvar!* (*Que despierte el leñador*, Let the Rail-Splitter Awake) published in 1958 and translated by Dhimitër Pasko (Mitrush Kuteli)⁵. Beyond sporadic publications in official journals and newspapers, Neruda’s poems were introduced into Albanian for the first time in a stable book format precisely through this selected collection.

The book takes its title from a political poem with a protest-oriented and agitational tone, saturated with revolutionary imagery and with the glorification of the role of the proletariat. The collection was not prepared on the basis of the Spanish original, nor does it represent an authorial selection by the Albanian translator; rather, as stated in the book⁶, it relied on intermediary editions produced in Romania, the Soviet Union, and France, languages and publishing contexts characterised by politically selective approaches. This circumstance clearly reflects the ideological orientations of the centre and satellites of the socialist camp, such as the USSR and Romania, which directly influenced Albanian publishing policy.

As a consequence, the majority of the poems included in *Zgjohu, druvar!* (1958) conform to the requirements of socialist realism for politically engaged art and for the figure of the poet as an instrument of communist ideology. In this sense, Neruda was presented primarily as a revolutionary and militant poet, while other dimensions of his poetics were left in the background.

Poem title comparison between the Albanian edition *Zgjohu, druvar!* and the Spanish Original.

⁵ Dhimitër Pasko is widely known in Albanian literature by his literary name, Mitrush Kuteli. He is one of the most important authors of modern Albanian prose. He translated primarily from Romanian and Russian, and in his translations used his original name, Dhimitër Pasko.

⁶ This Albanian edition is a selection of poems compiled from the following sources: Neruda, P. 1950. *Poeme*. Bucharest: Editura de Stat; Neruda, P. 1954. *Izbrannoe*. Moscow: Goslitizdat; *Le Chant général par Pablo Neruda*. 1952. Paris: Les Editeurs Français Réunis. The Albanian edition *Zgjohu, druvar* (1958: 2), provides an editorial note specifying these source texts.

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No.	Albanian (1958)	Spanish (original)	Source	Notes
1	Zgjohu, druvar!	"Que despierte el leñador!"	<i>Canto general</i>	
2	Këngë e Bolivarit	"Un canto para Bolivar"	<i>Canto general</i>	
3	I arratisuri	"El fugitive"	<i>Canto general</i>	
4	Zanatet në front	"Los gremios en el frente"	<i>España en el corazón</i>	
5	Këngë dashurie për Stalingradin	"Canto de amor a Stalingrado"	<i>Canto general</i>	
6	Këngë e re dashurie për Stalingradin	"Nuevo canto de amor a Stalingrado"	<i>Canto general</i>	
7	Këngë kushtuar Ushtëris së Kuqe në të hyrë të dyerëve të Prusisë	"Canto al ejército rojo a su llegada a las puertas de Prusia"	<i>Residencia en la Tierra</i>	This poem belongs to the third part of <i>Residence on the Earth</i>
8	Partisë sime	"A mi Partido"	<i>Canto general</i>	
9	E madhe është bota e re - Në të dy në udhë - ndryshohet historia - Treni i Siberisë - Kënga e tretë e dashurisë për Stalingradin - Pushkini	"Es ancho el nuevo mundo" - Transiberiano "Tercer canto de amor a Stalingrado" - Pushkin	<i>Las uvas y el viento</i> <i>Las uvas y el viento</i> <i>Las uvas y el viento</i> <i>Tercera Residencia</i> <i>Obras Completa</i>	
10	Shqipëria	"A Albania"		Is a political poem dedicated to the Albanian nation during its communist era
11	Odë ushtresë popullore	"Oda solar al ejército del pueblo"	<i>España en el corazón</i>	
12	Falje s'ka!	"No hay perdon"	<i>Canto general</i>	
13	Përshëndetje Kinës	Saludo a China	<i>Uvas y viento</i>	
14	E humbëm edhe këtë ndajnatë	"Hemos perdido aun este crepusculo"	<i>Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada</i>	
15	Fshati	"El Pueblo"	<i>Canto general</i>	
16	Kësaj nate mund të shkruaj vjersha	"Puedo escribir los versos más tristes esta noche"	<i>Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada</i>	
17	E dashur, mos vdis!	"Amiga, no te mueras"	<i>Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada</i>	
18	Në vendin tim – pranverë	"Cuándo de Chile"	<i>Uvas y viento</i>	
19	Hymni i kthimit	"Himno y regreso"	<i>Canto general</i>	
20	Dhjata e parë	"Testamento (I)"	<i>Canto general</i>	
21	Porosi	"Disposiciones"	<i>Canto general</i>	

Nevertheless, several poems that preserve Neruda's characteristic style and metaphorical language – such as “Hemos perdido aun este crepúsculo” (We Have Lost Even This Twilight; Alb. “E humbëm edhe këtë ndajnatë”), “Puedo escribir los versos más tristes esta noche” (Tonight I Can Write the Saddest Lines; Alb. “Kësaj nate mund të shkruaj vjersha”), and “Amiga, no te mueras!” (My Darling, Do Not Die!; Alb. “E dashur mos vdis!”) (Neruda 1958: 68–72) – exerted, in an implicit manner, an influence on one of the most important lyric poets of the second half of the twentieth century in Albanian poetry, Frederik Rreshpja. Rreshpja's inclination to privilege metaphorical language, stylistic refinement and modernist form, in opposition to the norms of socialist realism, became the cause of his condemnation and imprisonment.

In shaping the reading of Neruda as a politically engaged poet, in addition to the selection of texts, we argue that the accompanying preface also played a significant role. Following a practice also widespread in other socialist countries this element was essential in offering domestic readers a ‘correct’ and ideologically acceptable image of foreign writers. In this way, Neruda's figure was filtered through a biased ideological lens, foregrounding primarily his political profile and limiting alternative readings of his poetic work.

2.3. Publications in Book Form. The Second Edition: The *Poezi* (Poems) Collection, 1989

The translation and publication of the book Poems (Alb. *Poezi*, 1989), which appeared at the end of the 1980s during a period when the controlling mechanisms of the communist system over culture were beginning to fade and a more liberal cultural atmosphere was emerging, introduced an almost complete presentation of Neruda's modernist poetics. For the first time, the book revealed the full scope of his poetic language to the Albanian reader, who was eager for genuine literature unmediated by political orientation.

The translator of this edition – himself also a well-known poet in Albanian literature – took care to present in full the dimension and dynamism of Neruda as a poet, selecting the most representative poetic texts from all phases of the development of his poetics, ranging from the early collections *Crepusculario* (Book of Twilight) (1923), *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada* (Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair) (1924), *Residencia en la Tierra* (Residence on Earth) (1927–1935), *Los últimos poemas* (The Last Poems) (1937–1944), to *Cien Sonetos de amor* (One Hundred Love Sonnets) (1960) and culminating with the final volume *La rosa separada* (The Separate Rose) (1974).

Within this freedom of selection, beyond linguistic and stylistic richness, the chosen texts also highlighted the thematic abundance and chromatic range that had for a relatively long period been censored for the Albanian reader, who had been offered a portrayal of Neruda solely as a politically engaged poet. Thus, in this collection, the translator included poems with personal, erotic, metaphysical and existential motifs, alongside poems of nature and social concern, while also emphasising their aesthetic dimension.

Although this translation, too, was not produced directly from the original language, as suggested in the preface of the edition (Arapi 1989: 5), it relied on the best selections circulating in French and Italian literary contexts, and was guided by the critical discourse that accompanied these selections in those countries.

In this case as well, in order to reshape and reconstruct the true image of Neruda as a poet, the preface played a crucial role alongside the selection and translation of the poems. For the first time, it sought to shift attention toward the poet's poetics, inaugurating a discourse that operates with the instruments of rigorous literary criticism. The following excerpts, we believe, illustrate this point:

The path of Neruda's great and universal poetry, from his earliest publications to the end of his life, has had both points of convergence and divergence with various poetic movements and schools, especially the French ones... his earliest poems also speak of his encounters with French Symbolism⁷ (Arapi 1989: 8).

Later come the influences of French Symbolism, Surrealism, and Expressionism. Thus, in the first phase of his development, Neruda's poetry is more than ever charged with explosive, baroque, and dark metaphors⁸ (Arapi 1989: 18).

More than the individual word, Neruda seeks and enriches its semantic meaning, its poetic polyvalence. This, in turn, leads him toward metaphor and symbol – the central figures in Nerudian poetry (Arapi 1989: 17–18).

3. A Comparison of the Two Prefaces

The two prefaces accompanying the Albanian editions of Pablo Neruda's works – the preface to *Zgjuhu druvar!* without declared authorship but clearly

⁷ Arapi. F. *Parathënie* (Preface) in Neruda, P. 1989. *Poezi* (Poems), F. Arapi, transl., Sh.B. "Naim Frashëri", Tirana, Albania, 8.

⁸ Ibid 1989: 18

reflecting the spirit of the official editorial policy of the time, and the preface by Fatos Arapi in *Poezi* – constitute key documents for understanding not only editorial policies but also the ways in which the paratext influenced the construction and transformation of the author's image within Albanian culture.

In Gérard Genette's (1997) terms, the paratext, which includes prefaces, editorial principles, titles and other accompanying elements, is not a secondary or accidental component of the work, but rather a "threshold" of interpretation that mediates the relationship between the text and the reader, guiding the latter toward a particular mode of reading (Genette 1997: 1–2). Through this "threshold", the reader is provided with an interpretative key that directly shapes how the figure of the author and the meaning of the work are perceived.

In this sense, prefaces contribute to the formation of what Hans Robert Jauss calls the "horizon of expectations", by predefining the reader's aesthetic and ideological anticipations (Jauss 1982: 22–24). At the same time, as Wolfgang Iser also observes, the act of reading is guided by orienting signals that channel interpretation toward privileged meanings (Iser 1978: 34–38, 167–168). In the context of literary translation in socialist Albania, these signals assume a markedly ideological function, transforming the preface into an active instrument of interpretive control.

3.1. Historical and Publishing Context

The preface to *Zgjuhu druvar!* belongs to a period in which socialist realism was the official method of art and literature in Albania; translations were closely controlled by the state apparatus and served a pronounced ideological function. In contrast, the preface accompanying *Poezi*, translated by F. Arapi at the end of the 1980s, emerged during a phase of limited liberalisation, when translators and publishers gained greater space for aesthetic choice. The preface to this edition, which includes poems translated from the finest works of Pablo Neruda's entire oeuvre, reflects, in Lefevere's terms (1992: 14–15, 59–61), a shift from the ideological "manipulation" of the text toward a form of mediation closer to the original author.

3.2. Ideological Discourse versus Poetic Discourse

The preface to the 1958 translations presents Neruda above all as a "poet of the revolution", privileging elements that reinforce the image of a politically committed writer and framing poetry primarily as an instrument of collective struggle. In this sense, the paratext functions as a mediating filter that guides interpretation along a clearly defined ideological axis (Lefevere 1992: 7–9,

14–15, 59–60). At the same time, such framing should not be understood as entirely external to the poetic texts themselves. A significant part of Pablo Neruda's production during the 1940s and 1950s is indeed characterised by explicit political engagement. What the Albanian paratext does, therefore, is less to impose an alien reading than to stabilise and foreground one dimension of a broader and internally diverse poetics.

He [Pablo Neruda] is a brave and invincible fighter for the cause of the people, for peace throughout the world, for the happiness of ordinary people. (Editorial 1958: 3)

From the rostrum of the Senate, Pablo Neruda sang the praises of the Communist Party, saying: *druvar!* All the communists of Chile, women and men who have been persecuted... I greet them and tell them: our party is immortal; it was born from the sufferings of the people... Thus, Pablo Neruda became a true tribune of the people. (Editorial 1958: 5)

In contrast, the preface by Fatos Arapi reorients the reader toward the aesthetic and formal dimensions of Neruda's work – metaphor, imagery, rhythm – without necessarily negating the political dimension. Rather than replacing one reading with another, it expands the interpretative horizon, allowing previously less visible aspects of the poet's work to emerge within the Albanian context.

3.3. The Status of the Author of the Preface

Zgjohu druvar! is accompanied by an editorial preface that essentially represents the voice of official policy. This model of preface functions as an ideological guide for the reader, presenting Neruda as a poet of the proletariat and of world revolution. The text of the preface portrays Neruda as a tribune of the masses and as a friend of the Soviet Union, placing him entirely within an ideological framework. The selected quotations in the preface, such as "Glory to he who fights... I greet all communists" (Editorial 1958: 5), leave no room for an aesthetic reading. This is a typical example of an instrumentalised paratext, in which the Albanian reader was clearly directed toward a political interpretation.

In contrast, in the preface to the 1989 edition, written by the translator himself – Fatos Arapi, also an established poet in Albanian literature – a 'poet-from-within' perspective is offered. His preface affirms Neruda as a master of metaphor, density of imagery, symbol, and lyricism, establishing a 'poet-to-poet' relationship and emphasising artistic rather than political authority. "Naturally, in Neruda's poetry there always remains an overload of metaphors:

his constant tendency toward cosmic conceptions and conquests, and hence a certain abstraction of poetic thought – this shows only that persistent elaboration, that inner development which the poet undergoes” (Arapi 1989: 19).

3.4. Effect on the Reader and the Horizon of Expectation

The editorial preface of the 1958 edition may be seen as orienting the reader toward a predominantly political mode of reading, contributing to the formation of a relatively narrow horizon of expectations in which Neruda is perceived primarily through the lens of ideological engagement. This orientation, however, operates in interaction with the selected texts themselves, many of which explicitly articulate themes of struggle, collectivity and political commitment.

In contrast, Arapi’s preface in the 1989 edition functions as a different kind of interpretative ‘threshold’ that expands the horizon of reading by reintroducing the aesthetic, metaphorical and formally complex aspects of Neruda’s poetics that had previously remained less visible in the Albanian context. In this sense, the shift between the two editions reflects not a simple movement from ideological distortion to aesthetic authenticity, but rather a transition between different modes of mediation and reception, shaped by changing cultural and historical conditions.

In Genettian terms, the paratext of *Zgjohu druvar!* may be understood as an ideologically charged ‘threshold’ that orients and stabilises a particular reading of the author, foregrounding the explicitly political dimension of his poetry. However, this framing should not be seen as entirely external to the texts themselves, since a significant part of Neruda’s poetic production of the 1940s and 1950s is already marked by a strong political and ideological engagement. In this sense, the paratext does not so much distort the original as it selectively amplifies and systematises one dimension of a heterogeneous poetic corpus. In Genettian terms, the paratext of *Zgjohu druvar!* constitutes an ideologically charged ‘threshold’ that filters and reshapes the author for the reader, whereas Arapi’s paratext functions as an aesthetic ‘threshold’ that brings the author closer to the original. This contrast reflects the transition from a policy of ideological selection to a more representative and aesthetic policy, clearly demonstrating the performative role of paratexts in the process of translation and reception of foreign literature.

4. The Case of the Translations of the Poet César Vallejo

In the case of César Vallejo, the concept of the paratext (Genette 1997: 1–2) is essential for understanding the way in which this author was translated and read in Albania. His texts reached Albanian readers filtered through a process of thematic selection and interpretative framing aimed at avoiding conflict with the ideological norms of the time. Poems connected to the Spanish Civil War and to Vallejo's political engagement were privileged and presented in introductions and prefaces as evidence of a revolutionary spirit, while his more modernist, metaphysical and sacred elements were moderated or bypassed (for example, the translation of *España, aparta de mí este cáliz* (Spain, Take This Cup from Me) (Vallejo 2002: 264).

This mode of presentation of the author, mediated by the paratext, constructed Vallejo as a politically more acceptable figure for the Albanian reader, yet the picture was less representative of the complexity of his poetics. From this theoretical framework, the analysis of the paratexts accompanying Vallejo's translations helps us understand how translation, accompanied by interpretative guidance, produced a specific horizon of expectation for this poet and influenced the manner in which he was integrated into the Albanian literary system.

4.1. Vallejo: A Literary Surprise in the Translations of the 1970s

The 1970–1979 period represents a distinct phase in the cultural history of socialist Albania, characterised by an increasingly deep political and cultural isolation from the outside world. This decade marked the intensification of ideological control over creative fields, including literature, art and the translation of foreign authors. In this climate, every manifestation of international cultural communication had to be rigorously filtered through ideological criteria, whereby the selection of works, authors and translators was conditioned by the directives of the Party of Labour of Albania.

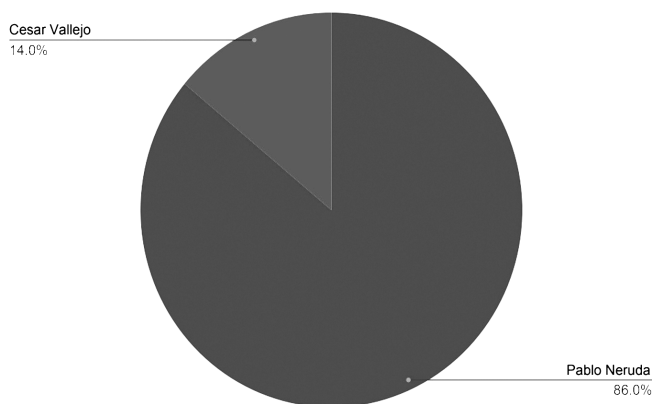


Figure 2. Chart of publications of translated poetry by Pablo Neruda and César Vallejo in periodicals, 1950–1990.

Source: Authors' own processing, based on data from the ELASOC II research database (Smajli et al., 2026a).

Accordingly, in our assessment, one of the literary 'surprises' of translation activity in Albania during the 1970s was undoubtedly the appearance of the Peruvian modernist poet César Vallejo.

Compared to the extensive and sustained reception of Pablo Neruda in Albania, the presence of César Vallejo is markedly more limited, both in terms of volume and editorial format. Rather than appearing in standalone volumes, Vallejo's poetry entered Albanian literary circulation through a small number of texts published in periodicals. This more restricted corpus shapes not only the modes of reception but also the possibilities of analysis.

From thematic spirit to stylistic expression, Vallejo stands profoundly outside the requirements dictated by socialist realist literature, which dominated the literary space of the time. His poetics did not conform to the figure of the engaged poet as this literature conceptualised and promoted engagement. Vallejo's oeuvre is deeply introspective and existential, as evidenced in works such as *Los heraldos negros* (Black Heralds) (1919) and *Trilce* (1922), where an inward, personal poetry emerges, permeated by metaphysical suffering and sensitivity to the existential crisis of being. These texts do not convey a direct political or ideological message; rather, they function as poetic reflections on absurdity, solitude and existential crisis.

Even in poems where a sense of engagement is present, Vallejo does not resort to rhetoric or ideological sloganising; his engagement is ethical and human rather than political in the dogmatic sense of the term. This is evident,

among other examples, in poems such: “España, aparta de mí esta cáliz” (Spain, Take This Cup from Me; Alb. “Spanjë, hiqma këtë pikëllim”), “Himno a los voluntarios de la República” (Hymn to the Volunteers of the Republic; Alb. “Himn vullnetarëve të Republikës”), “El momento más grave de la vida” (The Most Difficult Moment of Life; Alb. “Çasti më i vështirë i jetës”) and “Los desgraciados” (The Wretched; Alb. “Të mjeruarit”) (Nëntori 1974: 158–165), which were translated and published in Albanian. Nevertheless, in their Albanian translations of the time, these poems did not fully conform to the editorial line of the official journals and publishing outlets of the period.

Thus, for example, in the poem “El momento más grave de la vida” (“The Most Difficult Moment of Life”; Albanian *Çasti më i vështirë i jetës*) (Vallejo 1974: 162–163), which expresses a profound sense of existential anxiety and a kind of metaphysical fear regarding human fate, the translation attenuated the tone and philosophical sensitivity of the original text. This atmosphere of sadness, uncertainty, and anguish that permeates Vallejo’s poetry runs counter to the pathetic enthusiasm demanded of Albanian poetry of the time, which glorified the ‘positive hero’ and the figure of the ‘new man’.

From a stylistic perspective as well, Vallejo embodies a modernist and often dark poetics, with a strong emphasis on formal experimentation and a symbolically charged language. Such a poetic approach was entirely foreign – and even unacceptable – to the demands promoted by official literature in Albania at the time. This clash between Vallejo’s individual aesthetic and the norms of socialist realism becomes particularly evident in the poem “España, aparta de mí este cáliz” (Spain, Take This Cup from Me; Alb. “Spanjë, hiqma këtë pikëllim”) (Nëntori 1974: 160–162), which, although inspired by the Spanish Civil War, remains far removed from a direct ideological expression.

Already in the original title of this poem, the word *cáliz* (chalice, with a biblical association to the Holy Grail) imbues the text with a sacred symbolism. However, in the Albanian translation of the time, considering that Albania had been officially declared an atheist state, this symbolism was avoided and replaced with the more neutral, generic term, sorrow. This change not only directs the poem toward a different reading but also illustrates the way Vallejo managed to enter the Albanian literary system, i.e. through a careful, moderated translation that openly avoided confrontation with censorship.

The first translation and presentation of Vallejo for the Albanian reader was carried out by Ismail Kadare, one of the most important reformist figures of 20th-century Albanian literature. Kadare, with his aesthetic sensitivity and diplomatic mastery of writing under complex political circumstances, succeeded in bringing to the Albanian reader this powerful voice of modern world poetry. To navigate the filters of censorship, Kadare selected poems

thematically linked to the Spanish Civil War, which helped Vallejo to be perceived as a 'progressive' poet, a term used to legitimise foreign authors in official publications of the time. This strategy paved the way for Vallejo's inclusion in the Albanian literary circulation, albeit often through a moderated or adapted reading.

The analysis of these two cases – Pablo Neruda and César Vallejo – clearly shows that the translation of Latin American literature in Albania during the socialist realist period was not a neutral process, but a mediation controlled by cultural policy and ideology. Through paratexts and selections, Neruda was initially presented as a revolutionary poet and political tribune, reduced to an ideological function, while Vallejo entered in an even more filtered way, primarily through poems on the Spanish Civil War, with his modernist and metaphysical dimensions either softened or left in the background. Nevertheless, the complete publication of Pablo Neruda by Fatos Arapi (1989) represents a significant turning point, showing that paratext can also serve as a tool of aesthetic liberation, not only as an instrument of ideological control. The comparison of these two authors allows us to understand the mechanisms through which cultural policy shapes the horizon of expectations and the image of foreign authors in Albanian culture, as well as how this image can change when the ideological and editorial context shifts.

The differing reception trajectories of Neruda and Vallejo are also linked to the unequal availability of translated material, which conditioned both their visibility in Albanian culture and the scope of their critical interpretation

Conclusion

The study of the translation of Pablo Neruda and César Vallejo into Albanian during the period of socialist realism highlights the ways in which translation, closely intertwined with the ideological and cultural policies of the time, influenced not only the reception of these authors but also the broader discourse on foreign literature in Albania. In this context, translation did not constitute a free act of cultural mediation, but rather a controlled and selective process in which the choice of texts, the modes of translation and the accompanying paratexts contributed to shaping particular ways of reading.

In the case of Neruda, Albanian readers were introduced predominantly to the politically engaged phase of his work, which was itself an important and constitutive dimension of his poetic production. At the same time, this reception was structured through a selective process of translation and circulation, whereby texts aligned with ideological engagement were more readily published and disseminated, while other phases of his poetics, particularly earlier lyrical and

more introspective works, remained for a long time less accessible. As a result, the Albanian reader's encounter with Neruda developed within a relatively restricted horizon, where the poet was perceived primarily through the lens of political commitment.

The publication of the 1989 volume marked an important moment in this trajectory, not so much by replacing one image of the poet with another, but by broadening the range of texts available and, consequently, the possibilities of interpretation. Through both selection and paratextual framing, this edition contributed to a more diversified understanding of Neruda's poetics, bringing into view dimensions that had previously remained in the background.

The case of Vallejo presents a more limited and fragmentary form of reception. His work entered Albanian literary circulation through a small number of poems published in periodicals, without a dedicated book edition during the period under study. This more restricted presence not only reflects the selective mechanisms governing translation at the time but also helps explain the more concise nature of his analysis in this study. At the same time, the inclusion of his poetry, even in a moderated and carefully framed form, represents a meaningful point of contact with a poetic voice that did not fully conform to the dominant literary norms of the period.

In both cases, paratexts – prefaces, editorial interventions and modes of presentation – played a central role in shaping the encounter between text and reader. In line with Gérard Genette's understanding of the paratext as a 'threshold' of interpretation, these elements functioned not simply as additions to the text, but as guiding frameworks that oriented the reader toward particular modes of understanding.

Ultimately, this study suggests that translation, far from being a merely linguistic operation, functioned as a space of mediation in which textual features, ideological frameworks and cultural institutions intersected. The Albanian reception of Neruda and Vallejo thus illustrates how literary works are not only translated, but also selectively introduced and framed, producing historically situated readings that continue to shape their place within literary memory.

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