“What’s in her names?”

Exploring Strategies on the Translation of Personal Names in Angela Carter’s Literary Works; Symbolism and Hermeneutics in the Polysystem of Translation.

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Summary

The translation of personal literary names is a challenging task in the framework of the Greek translations of works by Angela Carter. This essay focuses on the novel Heroes and Villains (Ηρωες και Κακοί, tr. Sarafianos G., 1996) where the amount of information through
symbolism, which is carried by main names used as vital elements of the Source Language Text (SL text), does not abide to inappropriate translation choices; inappropriate choices would mean that equivalence (in all its forms but first and foremost functional equivalence) is affected in the Target Language Text, consequently affecting the perception of the TL reader.

Within the frame of the Polysystem Theory (Even-Zohar 1990), the essay tries to suggest possible choices and solutions which were not favored by the Greek translator, after an analysis of the translation units examined through the prism of Hermeneutics.

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Key words: equivalence, hermeneutics, intertextuality, translation of personal literary names, translation unit.

Introduction

Angela Carter exploits universal myth, fairy-tales plus more recent literary genres, to expose them under different light and demolish perennial clichés. The way she uses names and personal names is part of this intention, as they themselves carry a great deal of powerful symbolic representation in her post modern feminist simulacra.

Heroes and Villains (1969), which is mainly discussed in this paper, consists her first attempt to enter the realm of sci-fi (Gamble, 1997) and is not an exception. Strewn with allegorical images drawn from universal myth, the Bible, Shakespeare, Milton’s Paradise Lost and the sixties’ camp aesthetics (Gamble, 1997), it is a futuristic sci-fi bricolage of all civilization elements pre-existing an imaginary nuclear holocaust. The literary personae are futuristic reminiscences of a pre-holocaust world.

On the assumption that Carter uses names as essential tools in her well-crafted instants and endows them with symbolic power, it cannot but become of undisputed importance that this symbolism is rendered in the TL text for the reader to become informed of what Carter is trying to communicate via the SL text.

Following Steiner’s model (1975) who argues that we need to look into the hermeneutic motion represented by the translation process on a communicative basis (on the assumption that sense is to be extracted and retrieved from the SL text), Carter’s ‘codes’ may
be far from easy to break, but at the same time one can not ignore the need to disclose the clues available to the SL reader, in order for the TL reader to achieve what Roland Barthes calls ‘the death of the author’, a notion based on the idea that texts are not produced by the author, but by intertextuality and other texts; in the case of translated texts “the death of the author” inevitably transforms into ‘the death of the translator’.

As far as the usage of names in literature is concerned, it is apparent that they do not belong to a specific cultural community, neither a national one but to literary personae who are part of the global tradition, as they become inextricable essentials of the narrative structure, often carrying symbolic meaning over and above any culturally specific limitations; thus they need to be rendered in terms of their semantic content, semiotic significance in both form and content, and finally their stylistic effect as part of their overall function.

Regarding the above, the translator has the following options according to Newmark (1988):

1) To transliterate names phonetically in the Target Language (TL) text, whilst he/she explains in a translator’s note their possible inherent sense if they are seen as an integral part of the text (i.e. to transliterate Aurora, whilst explaining that the semantic meaning that is αυγή/ Sleeping Beauty, or Benvolio explaining that the semantic meaning is καλόβολος/ Romeo and Juliet).

2a) To translate names, which is the case in most universal fairy-tales (i.e. the Grimm Brothers, Andersen, Wilde etc.), allegories, or literary works belonging to the universal canon; this is achieved by either adjusting them phonetically, culturally, or in terms of their prominent semantic content, for the text to be assimilated and become part of the TL culture since the referent in the TL is imminently perceived as part of the TL culture (e.g. Snow-white/ Χιονάτη).

2b) In the case of names that are of phrasal structure, to translate in a way that he/she would do in any other case of rendering an expression (as it would be the case in Native American names, i.e. Sitting Bull/ Καθισμένος Ταύρος).

3) To translate names by reproducing the allusions insinuated or forwarded by names in the SL text (e.g. in Carter’s the Passion of New Eve, Tristessa could be transferred as Τεθλιμμένη).

In this paper, the use, and consequently the rendition of names in the TL (Greek) is being discussed, on the basis of the equivalent effect (Baker ed. 1999) within the more general point of view of the Polysystem Theory (Even-Zohar 1978a, 1978b, 1990) based on the assumption that a given literary system needs to take into consideration the network of subtexts of literary works, on the assumption that a new text is connected to
all preceding literary production which appears in the form of textual fact (Shuttleworth and Cowie, 1997); the question that arises is whether the Greek reader is in position to conceive the implicature of the original proper names on the basis of the translation strategies the translator of Heroes and Villains (George Sarafianos) has opted for in his attempt to render the original.

**Heroes and Villains “revisited”**

The setting of the story depicts a world formed after a nuclear war, where the survivors are divided into two major communities: The Professors who, with the help of the Soldiers and the Workers live in sterilized fortresses trying to reconstruct civilization and history lost, and the Barbarians, who are a kind of nomadic tribe living in chaotic superstition;iii

The translator transliterates the names of the protagonists in the TL except in one case; in terms of Kaindl’s model of translation strategies which has been used as a means of analysis here (1999, Target 11:2)iv, the translator performs formal repetitios (repetitions) and preserves their foreign origin (to be more precise its Anglo-Saxon origin- Schleiermacher 1838/1963, 1838/1977, Venuti 1995).

Although he could opt for the Greek versions of names (e.g. Ιωσήφ for Joseph, Μαριάννα for Marianne), or in the case of the ones revealing a distinct inherent sense opt for their semantic equivalents (κα Πράσινη or Χλωρή for Mrs. Green depending on the type of information he wishes to render, Μπλε for Blue), he chooses to translate only one name based on its semantic equivalence, which is Precious as Πολύτιμος.

Since the ‘think aloud protocol’ of the translator is not available here (i.e. the thought process that led the translator towards choosing certain strategies), we can only base our speculations about this inconsistency on the translator’s decisions as textual facts; Precious, carries prominent, immediately perceived semantic meaning, and finds its exact semantic/grammatical equivalent in Greek. The translator feels compelled to “fill the TL reader in” by rendering the name semantically.

Nevertheless, he does not use the same strategy in order to render the name ‘Jewel’, preferring instead to transliterate it phonetically, although he is dealing with a similar case (Jewel meaning Στολίδι).v The translator chooses to perform an adiectio according to Kaindl’s terms, adding the ‘missing’ information that the phonetic rendition of the name conceals from the TL reader, on p. 42 of the TL text, by explaining the content of the name ‘Jewel’ (Αναρωτήθηκε πως κι έγινε να τον λένε Τζιούελ, στολίδι δηλαδή·), as he obviously realizes that the symbolism of the name is a vital as integral part of the story. Consequently, the stylistic impact of the repetition of the name in the SL text is lost.
In the case of the rest of Jewel’s half-brothers the translator chooses to transliterate as previously mentioned, apart from the case of Precious. Seven brothers are mentioned in the story, forming allegorical couples drawn from the universal literary tradition, whereas Jewel stands alone.\textsuperscript{vi}

*Joseph* and *Precious* could be the first couple and alludes to the story of the Old Testament; the fact that *Precious* is the *beloved brother* in the novel, makes the assumption more likely to be true, as he could be a reminiscence of *Benjamin*; *Johnny* and *Jacob* are even more obvious and can be recognized as an echo of the New Testament brothers that became Christ’s Disciples, nevertheless common, universal names of the Jewish/Christian tradition. As far as *Johnny* is concerned, Carter deploys irony by using the diminutive of *John* and secularizes the name in the frame of its Anglo-Saxon/Anglo American and universal usage in an everyday context (i.e. Τζώνης, Τζώνυ in Greek).

*Annie* possibly implies Carter’s obsession with the name *Marianne* (*Mary* or *Ann*) in terms of its feminine symbolic connotations, whereas *Jen* is one of the female forms of *John*, with underlying Biblical allusions, since this little girl is depicted as a parody of John the Baptist, dressed in rags, covered with skin defects, hurling insults and threats, prophecies perhaps, that never materialize.

*Bendigo* and *Blue* is another couple, created by Carter’s love of dualism and word-play, an instant of the feminist writing characteristic of invented onomatopoeia (Lomax, 1994, p.19).\textsuperscript{vii}

*Indigo blue*, (pragmatically purple-blue in English), is described by use of two words, so symbolically one entity is described by two other entities (indigo\textsuperscript{viii} and blue). Carter is probably making a pun to:

\begin{itemize}
\item[a)] Comment on the idea of dualism and wholeness, plus the feminist issue of the blurring of boundaries (Lomax, 1994), or
\item[b)] suggest questions abiding in existential matters by echoing fundamental (and ever quizzical) notions such as ‘I’ and ‘Be’, substituting ‘I’ for ‘Be’ and thus turning *Indigo* to *Bendigo*; this SL unit as textual fact, could also stand as a representation of the archetypal idea of positive and negative in battle with each other, two ever conflicting forces, their boundaries blurred in Carter’s world. It can also be considered a binary opposition implied by the positive prefix *Ben-* in *Bendigo* and the symbolic negativity of the blue color in the English.
\end{itemize}

Whatever Carter’s intentions, they are not implied in the TL text and are not accessible to the TL reader by the phonetic rendition of the text in the TL.
In the case of Dr. Donally and Mrs. Green, as well as the surname of the brothers Lee Bradley, Carter is probably using common surnames as manifold representations/reminiscences of remainders of a pre-holocaust “normality”.

Lee maybe echoing of the pre-holocaust American civil war, since the brothers are sons of the late chief of the tribe, General Lee (-the defeated General Lee). There, also, a world was divided in two as it is the case in Heroes and Villains.

Mrs. Green may be of multiple symbolic function herself; she has a name which also carries symbolic weight, alluding maybe to Shakespeare’s Green World of enchanted forests (The Tempest being a subtext of the novel), whilst Carter’s story of Heroes and Villains is set in a Shakespearean Green World.

Green carries implications of femininity and fertility (Graves, 1998), being one of the colors of the ancient carnival goddesses An and Marian which would not be an interpretation out of place within the novel’s carnivalesque setting; although Mrs. Green ironically does not have any children of her own, she is the nanny, and thus the most prominent mother figure in this topsy-turvy, broken world.

In between these aspects of manifold interpretation, she appears to be -even sporadically- naïve, a trait metaphorically implied by her name.

Green is a common surname that could be used for a sense of continuity between pre- and post-holocaust worlds to permeate the novel’s setting, a sense of fake, everyday, mundane comfort.

This is also the case of the name of Dr. Donally, the dandy, the shaman, and professorix, who, based on a mish-mash of the pre-holocaust science, religion and arts and crafts, takes up the role of the spiritual leader or puppeteer of the barbarian tribe. Carter gives him a neutral, secular name that could belong to a scientist of the pre-holocaust world; it is nevertheless, still, overloaded with information as don is either a Cambridge or Oxford professor or a mafia chief in the English Language (elm.wictionary.org, 15/1/17).

Finally, Marianne is a name which carries immense symbolic power and encapsulates the very totality of the female essence in all its forms and aspects; a name of the mythical Female Goddess.

According to Robert Graves (p.495) the etymological origins of the name Marianne, which are broken down in two pieces (Mary and Ann), are Sumerian, ‘an’ meaning ‘celestial’ and ‘ma’ mother. ‘Ma-ri’ means ‘fruitful mother’, derivative of the word ‘rim’ that means ‘to carry a child’; so, Marianne has triple sense meaning ‘fruitful celestial mother’. According to Graves if we seek for a simple and compact name for the ‘Great
Mother’ this would be ‘Anna’, who for the Christian Mystics is the grandmother of God (p.495).

The name Marianne carries both positive and negative connotations as a benevolent deity or a destructor, connected through myth to all female deities ranging from the Moon goddess Minerva to Themis, the ‘Great Queen’ Morrigan and the Black Anis or ‘Cat Ann’ of Leicester of the British Folk Tradition, and of course the Virgin Mary of the Christian Tradition. (Graves, 21·15-16-17, p.493). The literary persona who carries the name in Heroes and Villains is depicted both in good and bad light by Carter, the aspect of her name alluding to motherhood, expressed via her pregnancy.

It is also an alliteration of Miranda which recalls the Shakespearean heroine of The Tempest who finds herself in a whole new Green World the way Marianne finds herself in the Barbarian camp in the forest, something Dr. Donally comments on (‘Marianne’, he said warmly. He gestured round the room and company smiling. ‘However, you must feel more like Miranda’ –p. 50).

Suggestions

There are four categories of names in the SL text in terms of the translation strategies used to transfer the originals in the TL (Greek).

The proper names Marianne, Joseph, Jacob, Johnny, Annie and Jen can be phonetically rendered into the TL, transferred in their English versions to keep the foreign style of the original which is the choice of Sarafianos, or become culturally adapted in their Greek versions, an option leading to their deforegnisation (Μαριάννα, Ιωσήφ, Ιάκωβος, Γιαννάκης, Αννούλα και Τζένη). Should the first suggestion be opted for, the implications of intertextuality are still obvious.

As far as the surnames Dr. Donally, Mrs. Green and Lee Bradley are concerned, them being common English surnames, they can be transliterated, which is again the option of the translator; in the case of the name Mrs. Green, which carries also semantic meaning, we could translate on this basis, deforegnising thus the text.

Donally, on the other hand, could also be rendered as Δόναλλυ/Δόναλης which is both deforegnisation and cultural adaption, achieving stylistic and functional/pragmatic equivalence in the TL. Should one opt for transliteration, a translator’s note could be useful to reveal the names’ semantic content to the TL reader, as a think aloud protocol.

The case of Bendigo and Blue (the names being neologisms) verges on untranslatability; Sarafianos’ decision is to transfer the names phonetically; nevertheless, including a translator’s note that would explain the substitution of I- in
the original form of the expression *Indigo Blue* with *Be-* in *Bendigo Blue*, would have disclosed Carter’s intentional wordplay to the TL reader.

*Jewel* and *Precious* are used as first names having prominent semantic contents. Their connotations are too strong to be ignored; *Jewel* is treated as the equivalent of the female object of desire, parodied at the same time by Carter, occupying the place of a female character in a traditional patriarchal text. Rendering it in the neutral form gender-wise in Greek (το Στολίδι), echoes of the descriptive names used by the Native American tribes; the Barbarian camp carries many similarities to them in terms of structure (the military leader and the shaman are two of them, not to mention the physical appearance and the attires of the tribe).

It also alludes to nicknames used for both women and men in neutral gender in the TL (i.e. «το σπουργίτι» for Edith Piaf); with Jewel occupying the female position in the process of Carter’s casting of the literary personae in terms of their, often, reversed gender qualities (he is the one tortured by an ailing disease like former romantic ‘damsels in distress’ whilst Marianne will be the new cruel leader of the tribe), the symbolism of Carter’s ‘blurring of the boundaries’ finds another form of expression in the TL.

In the case of *‘Precious’, the Beloved Brother*, on the other hand, communication has been achieved; the TL reader can make his/her associations.

**Conclusion**

It is apparent that phonetic transliteration of names is not enough when they carry symbolic loads, as it does not guarantee the production of a TL text which respects equivalence on as many levels as possible. A hermeneutic approach towards the translation of the SL text is needed (Steiner 1975/1992), one that will enable access to information as close as possible to the information available to the SL reader, allowing thus the TL reader to make inferences and assimilate the text in a way that ensures that his/her access to it is not hindered by the translator’s inappropriate choices.

Taking into consideration any kind of implication existing in the SL text, could involve a translator’s note or a translation, when the translator decides that the semantic, functional, stylistic or any other aspect of the names is of communicative importance in the SL text. This idea complies with the Polysystem Theory notion of
the critical/hermeneutic point of view of the SL text, which is to be used to produce a TL text of an equivalent effect.

One is certain though; if neither of the two strategies is applied when names include inherent sense revealed on a semantic, pragmatic or stylistic level, functional equivalence is affected and communication between the SL author and TL reader is breached, preventing thus the TL reader to make the original text his/her own.

Notes

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i

Steiner divides the process into four multiple stages; a) trust or faith that there is sense in the SL text to be communicated, b) aggression, penetration or decipherment in which the translator ‘invades, extracts and brings home’ the meaning of the original (1975/1992:314), c) incorporation, embodiment or appropriative use by introducing new elements into the TL cultural system, and d) compensation, restitution or fidelity; through this last stage the TL text’s imbalances are rectified by a translation product that would do justice to all the aspects of the original, or even augment the SL’s effect.

ii

Other examples might be Puss in Boots/Παπουτσωμένος Γάτος, Rapunzel/Ράπουνζελ etc (Cultural translation, Nida and Taber 1969/1982:134), or in their TL culturally adapted version (Jean Val Jean/ Γιάννης Αγιάννης, Cosette/Τιτίκα, Gavroche/Γαβριάς).

iii

The protagonists are Marianne (a Professor’s daughter that finds herself being abducted and carried to a barbarian camp), Jewel (the leader of the Barbarian tribe who marries Marianne in a parody of a wedding), Jewel’s half brothers, Jen (a barbarian spiteful little girl who is Jewel’s relative), Annie (a barbarian woman who, again, is Jewel’s relative), Dr. Donally (a kind of shaman and spiritual leader of the tribe, who manipulates and controls them), and Mrs. Green who is the basic mother figure of the story (an ex-Professors’ camp lady who defects to the Barbarians). There is also another protagonist who is not given a name by Carter, and this is Dr
Donally’s son, who is apparently a boy of special needs, often referred to as Donally’s son or the half-wit.

Kaindl’s model of translation strategies uses the terms repetitio, transmutatio, deletio, detractio, adiectio and substitutio to describe translation products. In this essay we come across repetitio, which describes 1-1 correspondence in terms of form and semantics between the SL and the TL text, and adiectio which involves additions the translator inserts in the TL text and which do not exist in the SL text.

The Greek term is a neutral noun gender-wise that would not be used for a male character, unless as nickname; on the other hand, the translator ignores that the tribe alludes to the Native American ones, where using a neutral noun to describe either male or female would be totally acceptable.

To assume that Marianne and the seven brothers might even be a parody of Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs set in less enchanted nevertheless equally dangerous- post-holocaust woods would not be that risky taking into consideration Carter’s exploitation of fairy-tales.

The names are allegorical, and again we could only guess, but we could not ignore the alliteration of the expression indigo blue. In fact, it is a slight alternation in form which substitutes the prefix i- for be-.

Indigo derives from India etymologically (Eken, www.mekenart.com, 16/1/2017).

Dr Donally is totally aware of the display techniques he is manipulating the Barbarians with, taking advantage of their ignorance and naivety, and promoting thus their regression to primitivism. Under this light, he can be also seen as a controlling mafia chief.

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