

Jacques Lacan and the Intrinsic (Un)translatability of Names: “Name” in the English-Chinese Translation of Winterson’s *Art & Lies*

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this essay is to highlight the significance of a heuristic usage of psychoanalytical and critical theories in the production of creative translation. Regarded as both a feminist and a postmodernist novelist, Jeanette Winterson’s preoccupation with the (un)translatability of proper names and the consequent theme of gender ambiguity marks the difficulty of translating some of her work in gender sensitive languages. Focusing on the example “name” in “Say my name and you say sex” in *Art & Lies* (1995), I investigate the nature of proper names through the application of Jacques Lacan’s “Schema L” and Jacques Derrida’s essay ‘Des Tours de Babel’ (2002). The act of naming and the designation of proper names are also examined, which explicate how gender instability leads to the direct impossibility of naming, hence destabilizes the relationship between language and sex and problematizes the process of translation.

KEYWORDS: gender ambiguity, Jeanette Winterson, Jacques Lacan, literary translation, proper names, psychoanalysis to translation

1. Introduction

This essay considers the production and interpretation of translations, especially English-Chinese translation through the lens of psychoanalysis and other critical theories. In order to demonstrate the possibility of translation as a means of text analysis, I examine a complex sentence from Jeanette Winterson’s *Art & Lies* (1995). One of the major themes of this novel is the role of language as a medium to a deeper access and understanding of the body. In the Sappho chapters of *Art & Lies*, Winterson accentuates the intimacy between names and sex through the repetition of a crucial sentence, “Say my name and you say sex” (1995:55). In this paper, I will highlight multiple layers of interpretation of this line, and show how a Lacanian interpretation of this sentence would further amplify the relationship between language and sex.

Moreover, my task is not only to analyze this relationship of name and sex in Winterson through the use of psychoanalysis, but more importantly *preserve* these layers of interpretations in translation, especially Chinese. The reason why I have chosen this sentence in particular is that the application of Lacanian theories on “name”, and my experimental Chinese translation of “name” as 姓名 (literally: sex/gender-name), *xìngmíng*, further pushes the emphasis between language and body to a more philosophical and theoretical perspective, which I argue makes a connection among four crucial psychoanalytical issues: first, names as signifiers which bar the Subject

symbolically and reinforce the illusionary wholeness (mistaken identity) of the fragmented subject; second, sex as a form of symbolic suicide in sexual climax also leads to the effacement of the Subject; third, sexual relations anchor the empty signifier, the Phallus; last but not least, language as the condition of the unconscious as well as the big Other. Since these concepts require an acquaintance with Lacanian psychoanalysis, I shall investigate their definitions further in my discussion of the Lacanian interpretation.

I select proper names as the subject matter of discussion for numerous reasons: firstly, names play an important role in both Chinese and Western cultures, and are therefore academically interesting for the English-Chinese translation context. The second reason is that, as I will demonstrate in the following section, proper names feature significantly in Jeanette Winterson's novels. The third reason, which is also the most crucial one, is that the investigation of the nature of proper names, as raised by Derrida in 'Des Tours de Babel' (2002), could shed a new light on the (im)possibility of translation. The significance of proper names in Translation Studies lies in the fact that for Derrida, *untranslatability* is the fundamental attribute of proper names. This is something too unique to be ignored: proper names are important not (only) because they signify the alienation of the Subject, as Lacan claims in his seminars, nor because they are one of the major themes of Winterson's *Art & Lies* or even her entire oeuvre; the discussion of how to handle proper names, and "name", is extraordinarily significant in translation because names indicate not only the alienation of the Subject, but the otherness of *the entire system of language*, as I will explain more clearly in the relevant quotation from Derrida in the fifth section. If proper names are untranslatable, it will be important to contemplate the possible translation not only of any specific proper name but also of the term "name" itself, in a novel about text and body in which proper names are the carnal flesh and knowledge but remain forever alien and phantasmic to the (target) text and reader.

Since this paper focuses not just on the translation of proper names but also on Winterson's preoccupation with the (un)translatability of names as well as its intrinsic relation to gender ambiguity, I think it is unwise to focus only on proper names *per se*. Therefore in this article, I attempt to broaden the discussion to translational problems in Winterson's novels which are directly related to proper names and naming, the act to designate a name (or even a pronoun) to make direct reference to a person. When it comes to "problematic" texts in which gender identity is uncertain, it is not rare for translators to fail to designate not only a proper name but also a

pronoun (as well as other linguistic components, such as adjectives and verbs) in gender sensitive languages. Winterson's nameless and genderless protagonist in *Written on the Body* (1992) belongs to this category, and we will investigate this example in the Jeanette Winterson section.

This paper starts with a brief introduction of Jeanette Winterson and her recurring theme of the significance and (un)translatability of proper names. I will refer to a selection of her novels and focus on *Written on the Body*, a story of an anonymous narrator with unspecified gender, which functions as an example to show how the unstable, problematized relationship between language and sex, the intrinsic correspondence between the impossibility to name and unstable gender identity, may fully be revealed in the process of translation. Then, through the discussion of the culturally prevalent stories and the phenomenon of acquiring multiple proper names in ancient China, I argue that names function as both a celebration and a limitation of identities. After that, I will introduce the Lacanian theorization of proper names; with the aid of the Lacanian "Schema L" and Derrida's argument in 'Des Tours de Babel', I highlight the arbitrariness as well as the untranslatability of proper names, which will help us further interpret Winterson's *Art & Lies* and explain why a plain, usual meaning-to-meaning translation of the word "name" is inadequate. Finally, I shall introduce the Lacanian perspective on sexual difference, which will then refer back to the exquisite relation between language and sex in Winterson's narration, and I will explain how my experimental Chinese translation of "name" as 姓名, *xìngmíng*, may both preserve the general semantic meaning of 姓名 (name) and simultaneously highlight the intimate relation between names and sex.

In other words, I am offering a new translation of "name" and investigating its relevance to various theories that I am pursuing. Through applying Lacanian psychoanalysis and Derrida's notion of "Babel" to Winterson's line, I argue that a creative, experimental and thought-provoking translation of the term "name" as 姓名, *xìngmíng* may not only draw the readers' attention to Winterson's parallel of (the articulation of) name and (the articulation of) sex, but also highlight the philosophical and psychoanalytic discussion of the intrinsic untranslatability and emptiness of proper names.

2. Jeanette Winterson

Since the objective of this article is a *heuristic* application of Lacanian psychoanalysis to the interpretation and translation of the term "name", I do not intend to over-investigate the biography

of Winterson or the very details of each novel. Yet, I would briefly explain the significance of the notion of proper names and gender ambiguity in Winterson's oeuvre.

As a contemporary novelist, Winterson attracted the interest of feminist critics in the 1980s and 90s. She was traditionally classified as a feminist (and queer) writer until the 2000s, at which time a number of literary critics such as Lucie Armitt, Helena Grice and Tim Woods started to trace across the development of her oeuvre and argue that Winterson had gradually committed herself more and more to a postmodern "genderlessness" through an "increasing 'severance' from feminist storytelling" (Andermahr 2007:8). However, regardless of the label of a feminist or a postmodernist author, there is no doubt that Winterson creates a series of fables which interrogate and challenge the conventional and frequently binary definition of gender. Naming, or the difficulty to do so, is one way to register the impossibility to confine gender and sexuality for Winterson.

Since her debut *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), Winterson has maintained an interest in interrogating the boundary of names. In *Oranges*, Winterson names her protagonist and her alter ego respectively as Jeanette and Winnet Stonejar, an anagram of Jeanette Winterson, so as to highlight the semi-autobiographical nature of this *Bildungsroman*. During Winnet's adventure in the forest, she is spied upon by a sorcerer and worries that he may know her name. "Naming meant power. Adam had named the animals and the animals came at his call" (Winterson 1985:138). Noticing that Winnet is suspicious and afraid, the sorcerer comforts her. She could trust him, he says, because "[he doesn't] know [her] name. If [he] did, [he]'d have spirited [her] over [t]here already." The two of them end up betting on the Hangman name-guessing game: "if you can guess my name, I'll be yours," is Winnet's dangerous wager. Based on her riddle, the sorcerer spells out her full name correctly and she becomes his apprentice, and gradually even believes everything he told her, including her new identity as his biological daughter (Winterson 1985:138-40). In another early Winterson novel *The Passion* (1987), Winterson names the female (-androgynous) protagonist Villanelle so as to echo with the artistic story structure. In this very special novel, not only the plot of the two main characters, but also the (fragmented) storylines and the narrative structure are intertwined like the structure of a villanelle with two refrains and two repeating rhymes.

Clearly, Winterson expresses skepticism about dominant social values on gender difference through the characterization of Villanelle in *The Passion* and also in other works, such as *Written on the Body*. In *The Passion*, gender ambiguity is registered by Villanelle's possession of biological male sexual characteristics (her webbed feet, which is exclusive to men in her family line) and her performative cross-dressing in male attire, which marks her as an androgynous character with an unstable identity, living the life of both genders like the intertwined structure of a villanelle. In *Written on the Body*, Winterson continues exploring the intrinsic relation between names and gender through an obscure narrator. Unlike *Oranges* and *The Passion*, *Written on the Body* received very diverse and contrary reception from critics. Winterson's supporters contend that this project is a successful union of feminism and postmodernism in which "all gender-based relations of domination and postmodern discourse which seek to deconstruct Enlightenment-derived beliefs" are challenged and destroyed (Rubinson 2005:140). Through a deliberate refusal to name the story's protagonist, Winterson highlights the correlation between proper names and gender. As Rubinson argues, the particular non-naming and the elision of sexual reference "defies essentialist ideas and readings of gender" by "criticizing our need to apply gender stereotypes when reading" (2005:130).

As we can guess, Winterson's depiction of gender ambiguity, especially when it involves an anonymous narrator of unspecified gender in *Written*, has created huge difficulty for translators who work with gender sensitive languages. As Kauer suggests in his article in *Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading* (1998), the temptation to sexualize the genderless protagonist in reading and in translation "reinforces false gender stereotypes rooted in male-authored scientific 'knowledge' about sexed bodies" (ibid.) and we, as translators, "fall prey to Winterson's design in trying to trace the gender of the narrator" (Kauer 1998:50). In other words, the instability of gender in *Written* results in, and reveals, the difficulty of "naming" (the impossibility to apply a proper name or to designate a pronoun) which confirms the intimate correspondence between gender and naming in a direction different from *Art & Lies*. Yet, as "a far more inaccessible novel than *Written*" (Carpenter 2007:73), *Art & Lies* also received much negative criticism for its "apparent lack of narrative cohesion and immoderate intertextuality" [which] "both alienate and frustrate the reader" (Lambert 1998:4). Journalist Angela Lambert denounced the novel as a text with an "impenetrable quality" and castigated it for "being boring or incomprehensible" (ibid.). Nevertheless, both *Written* and *Art & Lies* are concerned with the intimate relationship between

the physical body and the textual body, and they do shed light on the issue of naming and gender, especially of how gender ambiguity leads to difficulty in naming and translation.

In *Art & Lies*, or, to give its full title, *Art and Lies: A Piece for Three Voices and a Bawd*, Winterson tests the boundary of language and the nature of desire by drawing a specific linkage between corporeality and desire. The novel is constituted by initially fragmented stories of the three principal characters: Handel the priest, who is also a breast cancer consultant and, exposed at the end, as a castrato whose illegal surgery was operated by his elderly mentor and lover in the Catholic church; Picasso, the young woman painter who was born of rape and becomes a constant victim of sexual abuse in her adoptive family; and Sappho, both the Classical poet and the twentieth-century namesake who fell in love with Picasso and witnessed the father pushing Picasso from the roof to silence her from voicing the routine rape. As gradually revealed, the fate of the three characters is complexly intertwined and their journey to escape from the past is accompanied by Doll Sneerpiece's story, *The Entire and Honest Recollections of a Bawd*.

Winterson's preoccupation with the correspondence between corporeality and textuality is addressed by the eighteenth century bawd Doll Sneerpiece. As Ginette Carpenter argues in her article "Reading and the Reader", prostitution and self-education are compared as two extraordinarily similar activities for this bawd. By "arching her cotton in a calculating manner, [Doll] could prop her forearms on the bed and continue to read undisturbed by the assaults on her hypotenuse". She continues reading while serving her customers whose tediousness presumably inspires her to "delight in the elevating works of Sappho" (Winterson 1995:29). In addition, Doll adopts a precious book as the metaphor of the body of the unrequited sexual object: for Ruggiero who refuses to return her affection, Doll desires to "turn the pages of that gentleman one by one, and to run her fingers down his margins, and to decipher his smooth spine, and to go on her knees to enjoy his lower titles, and to upturn that one long volume that he keeps so secret to himself" (Winterson 1995:6). The text and the body in *Art & Lies* are, in Carpenter's words, "inextricably linked, not the same but analogous, experience of one allowing easier access to and understanding of the other [...]. Reading and (sexual) desire become metaphors for each other, while the relationship between reading and the text is as intimate, as visceral, as that between lovers." (Carpenter 2007:74-75)

In *Art & Lies*, Winterson constantly emphasizes this relation between language and sex by comparing the body to text and vice versa. In the beginning of the first Sappho section, Winterson draws the intimacy between proper names and sex in the manifestation of the delicacy of the body through the repetition of the lines: “Say my name and you say sex. Say my name and you say white sand under a white sky white trammel of my thighs.” (Winterson 1995:55) These two lines recur in the later part of the same chapter: “The word and the kiss are one. Is language sex? Say my name and you say sex. Say my name and you say white sand under a white sky white trammel of my thighs” (Winterson 1995:66). For Winterson, language is not only a tool to comprehend, to communicate, to understand emotions and the self, but also a tool to desire and to mourn; more precisely, language *is* desire and the onset of desire, for language creates texts and therefore the body. This notion of languages preceding reality is exactly how Lacan conceptualizes our perception of the internal and external “reality”. But, before we move into Lacanian psychoanalysis, I would like to examine the roles of proper names in Chinese and Western cultures in order to stress the significance of names in identity construction and restriction.

3. Proper names as both a celebration and restriction of identities

Proper name(s), the specific signifier which superficially stands for the existence or autonomy of the Subject, can also function as a means of limitation. This is not an innovative notion proposed by either Winterson or Lacan but a prevalent concept in both the source and the target cultures. Examples can be found in various well-known Asian and Western myths: In *Journey to the West* (西遊記), one of the four great classical novels of Chinese literature, there are two characters whose assaults are based on the knowledge of proper names. The first one is the Pagoda Bearing Heavenly King (托塔天王), Li Jing (李靖), who possesses a pagoda which absorbs the antagonists who answer him when their proper names are called. Equivalently, one of the antagonists, the Golden Horned King (金角大王), controls a purplish-reddish Gold Wine Gourd which works in the exact same way as Li’s pagoda. Similar ideas of the articulation of names as power restriction also permeate children’s stories in the West. For instance, in the story Rumpelstiltskin from the renowned Brothers Grimm collection, the imp Rumpelstiltskin has the queen’s promise of claiming her first baby but is forced to leave the child uninjured once she demonstrates certain knowledge of his proper name.

Moreover, the concept of naming as power can be traced back to the social reality. In ancient China, proper names were a means to emphasize and differentiate multiple roles that a certain

person possessed simultaneously. A man acquired various names in different stages of his life because proper names are the direct reflection and representation of various social roles and hierarchy. People from different social statuses had to address the same person with diverse proper names: for instance, the given names adopted from the parents could only be used by those in the upper hierarchy. When a boy started school, the acquisition of another name, the school name (學名 or 訓名), would be necessary for classmates to use at schools. Educated males, the superiors in gender and in class, usually acquired “style names” (字) or “courtesy names” (表字) when they grew up. Style names were used by peers who belonged to the same hierarchical level, and were commonly used on formal occasions as well as in writing. Some people would acquire an extra pen name particularly for formal writing, and some royalty and respectful personages would even possess a posthumous name (諡號) as an honorary title selected after death. This phenomenon implies the close relation between the acquisition of proper names and the acquisition of social power - the number of proper names that a person acquired was proportional to his social status. The more prestigious he was, the more names he possessed. The violation of this norm, for example, by addressing an individual of the upper hierarchy with his parental given name, was considered extremely disrespectful. Conceivably, the articulation of the given name is a sign, an implication, of the parental authority which older family members possess over younger individuals.

We can draw a conclusion that in both the Chinese and the Western cultures, proper names function as a form of celebration of identities but simultaneously a sign of restrictions. From a psychoanalytical perspective, this celebration, also known as a *re(-)presentation* of identities, can only rest on the ego, the consciously thinking subject. When a subject thinks, speaks or generates him/herself a pen name, it is the ego which is at work. However, according to Lacanian psychoanalysis, the existence of the ego as a consciously, free-thinking autonomous being is a pure fantasy. As Bruce Fink argues in *The Lacanian Subject* (1995), the ego “arises as a crystallization or sedimentation of ideal images, tantamount to a fixed, reified object with which a child learns to identify, which a child learns to identify with him or herself” (Fink 1995:36). The ego stems from the internalization of spectacular images from mirrors and the o/Other such as parental figures, hence is more of an alien construction fundamentally based on the outside. The ego, according to Bruce Fink, is “by its very nature a distortion, an error, a repository of misunderstanding” (Fink 1995:37). However, this ego, the consciously thinking subject, is not the Lacanian Subject. The Lacanian Subject is the opposite of the ego, which is the unconscious.

4. A Lacanian Interpretation

In order to investigate a deeper layer of interpretation of Winterson's text before our discussion in Chinese translation, we must first understand Lacan's three registers of I-S-R: the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. We will also have to understand the Lacanian definition of the Subject and its relation to languages, which will be illustrated by "Schema L".

Lacan theorizes human reality into three registers: the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. Since the symbolic is the most important order for psychoanalysis and most related to our discussion, I will start with the symbolic order. Inspired by Levi-Strauss' concept of the social world and Saussure's theory of signifiers, the Lacanian symbolic order is essentially the realm of language, the symbolic dimension which involves signifiers with no positive existence. The symbolic order, first, contains structures defined by the linguistic dimension which are unthinkable without language, and second, dictates the rules which construct the complex network of structures. Culture and the law are good examples of the symbolic order. The symbolic order is also a dimension of radical alterity which Lacan calls the Other. The big Other is the personification of the symbolic in a single agent which "hides behind the screen and pulls the strings" (Žižek 2006:8) while we, subjects of language, talk and interact like puppets and perceive ourselves as autonomous agents of free will. God and the Cause in the disguise of Freedom, Communism or the Nation are some of the personifications of the big Other. To simplify, the symbolic order is the "society's unwritten constitution", and "the second nature of every speaking being: it is here, directing and controlling my acts" (ibid.).

The Lacanian imaginary register is mostly constituted by the process of ego formation in what Lacan refers to as the mirror stage. Lacan believes that the ego is formed by the identification with the mirror image, which can be the specular image of oneself or the counterpart which is similar to the ego (for example, siblings and friends). However, since the specular image is not the self, this identification is built on a misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) which Lacan argues is the locus of alienation in "Seminar I" (1953-54): "Although based on the recognition of the specular image, the ego can be conceived as 'a capacity to fail to recognize (*méconnaissance*)'" (Lacan 1988:153). In other words, the imaginary is about identification and deceptive appearances which lead to mistaken identity. A similar relationship can be noticed between the small other, *a'*, and the ego, *a*,

in “Schema L”. I will explain this in further detail below, in my discussion of the “Schema L” diagram.

The last register for the Lacanian I-S-R triad is the real, the most abstract order among the three. In simple words, the real is the void created by the failure of signification in the symbolic. It is what language cannot describe or confine. Situated outside language, the real resists symbolization. The impossibility to symbolize the real defines its traumatic, which associates this register with trauma and loss.

The movement between the two registers of the symbolic and the real yields *jouissance*, which Lacan theorizes as a lethal, perverted pleasure in displeasure itself. As the real source of enjoyment, the sole “purpose” of *jouissance* is not the goal but the aim: repetitive, meaningless and unconscious acts such as biting the nails or tapping the feet on the ground are typical actions which yield *jouissance*. Meaningful, conscious enjoyment, on the other hand, is more regulated by the pleasure principle of the symbolic in order to keep a safe distance from The Thing (*das Ding*). The Thing and *jouissance* are considered as two sides of the coin: where *jouissance* is the radical pleasure in displeasure, the Thing is the terrifying aspect which evokes abject horror in the loss of physical or ideological form. In real life, the real is perceived as the kernel of unpredictability in contingency which provides both radical attraction and radical resistance.

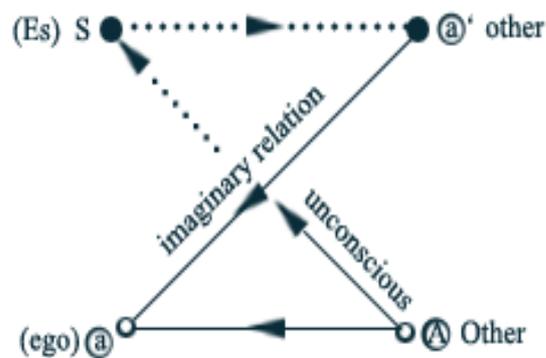
To provide a short summary of the I-S-R triad, we can look at a clear but insightful analogy that Žižek adopted. In *How to Read Lacan* (2006), he illustrated the three inter-tangled levels of human reality by the game of chess:

The rules one has to follow in order to play are its symbolic dimension: from the purely formal symbolic standpoint, ‘knight’ is defined only by the moves this figure can make. This level is clearly different from the imaginary one, namely the way in which different pieces are shaped and characterized by their names (king, queen, knight), and it is easy to envision a game with the same rules, but with a different imaginary, in which this figure would be called ‘messenger’ or ‘runner’ or whatever. Finally, the real is the entire complex set of contingent circumstances that affect the course of the game: the intelligence of the players, the unpredictable intrusions that may disconcert one player or directly cut the game short (2006:8-9).

After understanding the three Lacanian registers, we may investigate Lacan’s “Schema L”, an elucidation of the inter-subjective dialectic of the Subject. In his Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’, Lacan divides the human psyche into four interrelated components: Subject, *S*; the ego, *a*; the small other, *a*’; and the big Other, *A* (Figure 1):

Figure 1: Schema L.

Source: Lacan, Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter', *Écrits*, p.40.



The S in the top left-hand corner is the Lacanian Subject whose existence can never be demonstrated. As clearly reflected by the way the word *Sub-ject* is constructed, while *sub-* is the prefix for “under” and *-ject* is eject, to be forced or thrown out in a violent manner, a *subject* is an unknowing stupid (non-)existence which is thrown under tides of forces from the small reflective others (*a*) and the unconscious big Other (*A*) at the right hand side of the schema.

The lower right-hand corner is the big Other, an abstract and impersonal projection of the small other. As mentioned in my introduction of the symbolic order, the big Other is an abstract, unconscious force which holds the symbolic order together and dominates the Subjects. Conceived as notions such as God, the fatherland or morality, the big Other controls and influences the Subjects’ thoughts even though it does not exist ontologically. As Žižek has argued in *Enjoy Your Symptom!* (1992), countless wars and deaths have been caused by the fierce conflicts between cultures and religions, even though they are merely notions which have no actual entity. “We cannot explain the very material reality of fights and sufferings without reference to it” (Žižek 1992:60), and this is what the big Other is. In a more concrete sense, the big Other is an “amassed collection of social conventions and laws” (Hook 2011:4). It can be

manifested as various kinds of ideology such as religions, geo-politics and cultural norms, and they “exist” not in the objective reality but in the human mind intersubjectively, as a kind of collective and abstract “power” which is strong enough to construct, shape and restrict the way we perceive ourselves and the world (social and symbolic reality).

Both *a'* and *A* are from the first letter of the French word *autre*, other. They are the small and the big other, but they do not represent the external reality as we may presume. Instead of the actual human beings *other* than me, such as my parents and teachers, the big and the small other are the *introjected outsiders* who influence the subject’s self-perception as the ego, *a*. As explained earlier in our I-S-R triad, the big Other is the inter-subjective, abstract force which has no ontological existence but pulls the string of the Subject. On the other hand, the small other is an alienated, usually more ideal reflection with which the ego (mis)identifies. It can be understood as what the ego lacks and what it strives to possess through the imaginary register. The imaginary relation between the ego and the small other can be indicated by the mirror stage.

Reflection is the mirror image — the inverted image, the “false image” in the mirror stage which directly (mis-)influences the perception of the Subject. This reflection, of course, is also the ego, the false sense of conscious self. In “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function” in *Écrits* (2006), Lacan discusses the nature of identification. The mirror stage, which Lacan theorizes as “a particular case of the function of images, which is to establish a relationship between an organism and its reality”, is a process of (mis)recognition. Rather than identification, he theorizes the Subject’s recognition of self in the mirror image as misrecognition. It is, in Lacan’s words,

a drama whose internal pressure pushes precipitously from insufficiency to anticipation -- and, for the subject caught up in the lure of spatial identification, turns out fantasies that proceed from a fragmented image of the body to what [he] will call an ‘orthopedic’ form of its totality -- and to the finally donned armor of an alienating identity that will mark his entire mental development with its rigid structure (2006:78).

As for the ego, it is the way that we perceive ourselves, and also the consciousness. Whenever I use the term “I”, e.g., I want to sleep, I like this movie, I love you, it is always the ego which is at work. The ego and the Subject are like the consciousness and the unconscious, together they form the complete human psyche. We, as subjects, see ourselves occupying the position of the ego (instead of the hopeless, idiotic Subject who knows nothing but is spoken through) and this is what Lacan terms as “a structural anamorphosis of human’s psychology”. Lacan has at once put it

in a tactful and ironic tone that “[the subject] may believe the ego is him”, a structural misrecognition in the human psyche.

To summarize the “L-schema”, the two o/Others dominate the subject through the manipulation of the ego. But, how is language at work here? Lacan theorizes the invisible big Other as originating from language and the Symbolic order, which is how language comes into picture. The Other controls the subject by functioning as his/her unconscious, which results in the alienation of the divided subject. The split subject is situated between ‘being’ and ‘thinking’: either S is not thinking — thinking in the sense of unconscious thought, and thus results in a false being — or S is not. As one of Lacan’s mottos says, “the unconscious is structured like a language” (‘Seminar XX’, Lacan 1999:55). Language, the unconscious, alienation and castration are therefore all in one. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, they are complexly intertwined so that it is almost impossible to explain these concepts without referring them to one another. To Lacan, it is language which divides and castrates us — not only males but all speaking subjects are castrated. This symbolic castration is the price that we must pay in order to enter the realm of language, the symbolic, because there is always an inevitable slippage between the signifiers and the signified. Every articulated signifier fails us, for they can never completely symbolize their signified. Therefore, the Lacanian “Schema L” demonstrates the effect of the otherness on the subject in both the imaginary and the symbolic layers. It helps us understand, symbolically, how language structures and bars the subject; and imaginarily, how the ego (the subject’s self-perception) is an unstable, mistaken construction based on misrecognition. Hence, opposite to the dominant social values of very solid self and gender identity (as well as gender difference), our perception of who we are fluctuates easily. This unstable identity, I argue, is revealed in the process of translation of Winterson’s problematized relationship between language and sex in the form of the (un)translatability of proper names.

Among all the signifiers which alienate the Subject, proper names are the very special ones which stand for the *absence* of the Subject. The Lacanian scholar Bruce Fink argues in his book *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language And Jouissance* (1995) why a proper name, different from any other terms that we come up with in a language, is an *extraordinarily* unique signifier which restricts us as subjects more than any other:

The empty set as the subject’s place-holder within the Symbolic order is not unrelated to the subject’s proper name. That name is often selected long before the child’s birth, and it

inscribes the child in the Symbolic. A priori, this name has absolutely nothing to do with the subject; it is as foreign to him or her as any other signifier. But in time this signifier — more, perhaps, than any other — will go to the root of his or her being and become inextricably tied to his or her subjectivity. It will become the signifier of his or her very absence as subject, standing in for him or her (1995:53).

In other words, proper names grant the subject the husk of presence as the ego. A similar idea is found at work in the mindset of the ancient Chinese when they acquire a number of proper names — a list of different names to represent their different identities and hierarchical relations with the O/other (people). This is the reason why, from a Lacanian perspective, proper names are both the celebration and limitation of identities. Whenever someone tries to celebrate an identity, it is always the ego, the consciousness, that s/he wants to inscribe. This celebration of the identity, i.e. this establishment of the ego, *reassures* the limitation of the subject. Upon this reassurance of the ego, the subject is ever-increasingly divided and alienated. In other words, the celebration and limitation of identity exist simultaneously in the idea of naming, but in two very different dimensions: while the celebration of the ego-identity nonetheless exists in naming, the restrictions of the Lacanian subject are also at work in the unconscious layer. In other words, a proper name signifies emptiness because this very special signifier directs to nothing but a stupid, unknowing subject who misunderstands itself as the ever-knowing ego, the ego who is completely conscious and in control of the mind and the speech. From this aspect, the identification with a proper name, an external, empty and arbitrary signifier, is arguably the utmost alienation of oneself.

5. The (Un)Translatability of Proper Names

In the previous section, I have demonstrated how Lacan theorizes proper names and how names may function as a limitation from a psychoanalytical perspective. In this part, I will explain how Derrida has given us a solution to liberate the subject from the restriction, and to highlight the importance of proper names in translation.

Jacques Derrida raises a point on the nature of proper names from a translation perspective in 'Des Tours de Babel'. In this article, Derrida denies the translatability of proper names thus: the translation of proper names "comments, explains, paraphrases, but does not translate. At best it reproduces approximately and by dividing the equivocation into two words that where confusion gathered in potential [...] 'Peter' in this sense is not a translation of Pierre, any more than Londres is a translation of 'London'." Derrida argues that proper names are rebellious signifiers which resist a total submission to the Symbolic. They do not belong to any system of language, and

therefore when it comes to the translation of proper names, the idea of a good or a bad translation does not apply. Instead, there is *no* translation. No name is a translation of any other name, and not even the primordial proper name “Babel”, which is “at once proper name and common noun”, has ever been translated (Derrida 2002:109-10). “Babel”, on the other hand, also signifies confusion, which may be understood as not just the metaphor of the confusion among those who speak different languages in the Babel tower, but also proper names as a confusion itself: the arbitrariness of names, the Lacanian problem of the barring of the Subject, and the confusion of the fragmented subject as an imaginary whole. “Babel” the primordial proper name signifies that “confusion also becomes proper name and common noun, the one as the homonym of the other, the synonym as well” (ibid.).

However, Derrida is only partly correct in this argument. Although it is true that the translations of proper names are, most of the time, transliterations based on the pronunciation of names, phonologically-based translation is not necessarily a “distorted” or “incorrect” translation. Granting privilege to semantic rather than acoustic based translation, Derrida’s notion of the untranslatability of proper names can be reduced into the core concept of metempsychotic translation, the problem of which has been discussed thoroughly by Robinson (1996) and Chamberlain (1992) from a religious as well as a gender perspective. To promote expansion of the definition of translation, Maria Tymoczko focuses on the interaction among language systems as the essence of translation. In *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* (2007), she argues that the interrogation of translation through the lens of transmission may help us develop a broader view of translation:

Like other forms of transfer, translation can take many forms. It can involve the transmission of substance on the macrolevels of the text, most commonly semiotic meanings, discourses, or elements having to do with the content or structure of the source text or utterance. But translation can also involve *transfer on the microlevels* of the text [...] Even more obvious forms of transfer on the microlevels of a translation take the form of *word-to-word transference, including borrowings, which import (some of) the meanings of source language words into the translated texts* (2007:117, italics mine).

After identifying word-to-word transference as translation which nonetheless imports a certain degree of meanings from the source text to the target text, Tymoczko argues for the existence of a translation which involves little or even no transfer, in which the equivalence among the source and the target texts rests not in the semantic or semiotic but perhaps the acoustic dimension. It is not impossible, Tymoczko suggests, to have a translation which involves “almost no transfer or

transmission of content” (ibid.), and the transliteration of proper names may be a form of such a translation.

Under Tymoczko’s definition, any writing under the influence of, under the company of, with or against another language, can be considered a translation, and this includes transliteration. In fact, the transl(ite)ration of proper names can particularly highlight the influences between languages. For instance, the state of Virginia was previously translated as 維珍尼亞, *wēi⁴ dzēn¹ nei⁴ a³* (in Cantonese phonetic transcription as provided by 廣州話普通話速查字典, the *Guangzhouhua Putonghua Dictionary*) by all Hong Kong media, but is nowadays coercively changed into 弗吉尼亞 (Mandarin pinyin: *fújīníyà*), the Mandarin transliteration (transliteration transcription) of Virginia.¹ Both Chinese terms, 維珍尼亞 *wēi⁴ dzēn¹ nei⁴ a³* and 弗吉尼亞 *fújīníyà*, did not exist or signify anything previously in the Chinese language and culture. However, they, especially the latter, are now considered as functioning semantic terms so that when I type in the character 弗 (*fú*), 吉尼亞 (*jīníyà*) is one of the recommendations which shows up immediately in word processing softwares. In other words, transliteration can have a significant impact on the target language by creating new vocabularies. Some new terms may even become popular and integrated into the Chinese (or any other target language) corpus, like 弗吉尼亞 *fújīníyà*. From this perspective, the transliteration of proper names, although not carrying any specific semantic meanings, is translation. However, as I mentioned previously, the arbitrariness of languages, especially of our mother language, is rarely or arguably impossible to be felt. Most of the time, the use of proper names appears to be a natural reflection of the reality. For instance, many Hong Kongese² thought it absurd when 維珍尼亞 *wēi⁴ dzēn¹ nei⁴ a³* was suddenly changed into 弗吉尼亞 *fújīníyà* — while, to start with, even 維珍尼亞 *wēi⁴ dzēn¹ nei⁴ a³* makes no sense to us in

¹ Both Chinese translations of Virginia, 維珍尼亞(Cantonese) and 弗吉尼亞(Mandarin), are created under the criteria of phonetic similarities. In the West, such an activity of “translating” a name by spelling out the pronunciation in the target language to the smallest linguistic unit (i.e. letters in English) is “transliteration”. However, there are no letters in Chinese and we can only voice or write (new) names in existing Chinese characters, which is usually considered as “transcription”. Yet, they both share the same objective of re-creating the pronunciation by using the smallest possible linguistic unit in the target language. This means of translation, which is very similar to transliteration in the West, should not be confused with morpheme-to-morpheme translation, which is based on the semantic meaning (rather than pronunciation) of every Chinese character.

² “Hong Kongese” (n, and adj), similar to “Hongkonger” (n), is a term adopted by Hong Kong people to specify their very special identity. It is both my intention and advocacy to use this term in this context, as it signifies a stance in national/cultural identity in a struggle between China (Mandarin) and Hong Kong (Cantonese). These two terms, “Hong Kongese” and “Hongkonger,” are newly included in Oxford English Dictionary in 2014. (<http://public.oed.com/the-oed-today/recent-updates-to-the-oed/march-2014-update/new-words-list-march-2014/>)

Cantonese. Proper names, in this sense, are a *reflection* (distorted identification) of the external reality. However, we must not reduce the significance of a mother language into the sheer matter of arbitrariness, especially when our discussion includes very complicated issues of intranational colonialism compounded with notions of ethnicity, identity and class. If we survive on the partially objective view of the arbitrariness of (mother) languages alone, postcolonialism would have never existed. The same applies to proper names that they are *both* alienated and intimate, both external and inseparable to us.

Now, we should go back to how language works for Lacan which is related to sexual difference. For language to function, Lacanian theories suggest that we must submit to the slippage between the signifier and the signified, signaled by a bar in between. Lacan equates this barrier with the phallus, theorizing that it leads to “a great deal of slippage between what I say I want in words or tell myself I want and the actual object I aim at” (Fink 2002:37). This is why Lacan believes that desire never sits still and why we may never fulfill our desire. The bar, the phallus, forever bars my desire (formulated in signifiers S) from what may fulfill it since there is no way for desire to be fully articulated (and therefore satisfied). To Lacan, desire is aroused by *objet a*, which must not be confused as the small other *a* but stands for a lack which emerges (with *das Ding*) in conjunction with the intrusion of language.

This Lacanian notion of desire, originating from the lack in the symbolic order, may explain the intimate relation between language and sex in Winterson’s text. “Say my name and you say sex”, for both my name and sex, as both desire and sexual difference, cannot be fully articulated. Sex, in terms of desire, originates from the lack beyond signification; sex as sexual difference, on the other hand, is based on the empty signifier, the Phallus, which according to Lacan does not exist (as I will explain in the next section). Therefore, there is the intrinsic similarity between names and sex: say my name and you say sex, as both of them are caught in the symbolic deadlock which may never be fully symbolized, in the lack (because of the slippage between the signifieds and the signifiers) that always persists, like the otherness in a target text, and they haunt the symbolic as the haunting real, the forever remainder.

In other words, there is the intrinsic untranslatability in proper names even though they are translatable to a certain extent. They are translatable because transliteration, I argue, is a form of translation (e.g., Virginia as 維珍尼亞 *wēi⁴ džen¹ nei⁴ a³* or 弗吉尼亞 *fújǐnyà*). However, we

cannot deny the nature of proper names as a husk, an alienation in Lacanian terms, for names are nothing but a patent manifestation of the symbolic deadlock. Even when proper names are translatable, they are still new coinages in the target languages which are, and will always remain alien and foreign to the target readers. There is always a certain degree of otherness which may never be totally translated and assimilated into another language, for the two linguistic and cultural systems are never completely identical to each other.

Let me provide a short conclusion at this point. For Lacan, proper names are signifiers which are (partly) responsible for the alienation of the barred subject; for Derrida, proper names are the indication of the alienness and the otherness of *not the subject but the entire system of language*. Due to the symbolic deadlock which makes the proper name “forever untranslatable, [one may be led] to conclude that [the proper name] does not strictly belong to the language, to the system of the language, be it translated or translating” (Derrida 2002:109-10). For Derrida, untranslatability is the fundamental attribute of proper names. Names are not just usual signifiers but the stains which mark the improper and riotous elements of language. The existence of proper names in languages reminds us of the defect of the imperfect symbolic order; they are something which remains forever foreign, alien, and other, something located outside the system of languages and beyond the symbolic order. They, again, symbolize both a restriction and a rebellion, and a very similar phenomenon can be found in the matter of sex/gender. In the following section, I will explain this similarity and demonstrate how it can be preserved in my experimental Chinese translation of “name”.

6. The Symbolic Deadlock of Proper Names and Sex

To accentuate the intimacy between proper names and sex, I translate the term “name” as 姓名, *xìngmíng*, which is both a Cantonese and a Mandarin homophone of the vocabulary item 姓名, *xìngmíng*, “name”. My experimental coinage 姓名 *xìngmíng* is formed by two characters: the first one is 性 *xìng*, sex/sexuality and nature, or temperament, but is also gender in the vocabulary 性別 *xìngbié* (literal: sexual difference). This character 性 does not denote any specific gender, but signifies a kind of identity as gender identity in general. To express “male” or “female”, we need to add the characters for man or woman in front of 性, as in 男性 (literal: man-sex/gender) and 女

性 (literal: woman-sex/gender). The second character 名 *míng* is name, as adopted from the original term for name, 姓名 (literally: surname-name),³ *xìngmíng*.

In my experimental translation, 性, *xìng*, sex or gender, while gender is sexual difference in the literal sense, is a constituent of 姓名 *xìngmíng*. In other words, sex or gender, or even sexual difference, is a component of a proper name. But what is the nature of proper names? As mentioned in the previous sections, names both give definitions to and restrict subjects, but surreptitiously resist a total submission to the Symbolic. This is the same for sex, gender, and sexual difference from a psychoanalytical perspective.

In ‘Seminar XVII’ and ‘Seminar XX’, Lacan proposed one of his most famous formulas for the heterosexual relationship: *Il n’y a pas de rapport sexuel* (There is no such thing as a sexual relationship), or more precisely, “there is no relation between the sexes” (Lacan 1991:134). This is one reason for Žižek’s counter-normative definition of masturbation: rather than masturbation as the fantasy of sexual intercourse with a partner, he theorizes sexual activities with living partners as, vice versa, a fantasy, a kind of masturbation. As Suzanne Barnard argues in *Reading Seminar XX* (2002), Lacan explains “the obstacle to such a [sexual] relation as a function of the Other, where the Other comes between men and women in the form of a signifier; he designates this as the phallic signifier” (Barnard 2002:10). For Lacan, the difference between masculine and feminine subjects is based on the phallic signifier, ϕ . As Lacan himself has argued in “Seminar XX”, sexual difference, if any, is merely a constructed fantasy whose consistency is based on the phallic signifier, an empty signifier. Contrary to what the patriarchal culture may expect or idealize the phallus to be, the Lacanian phallus does not denote any positive meanings. It is theorized instead as an empty signifier which “effects a ‘difference’ [...] between the One and the not-one. In other words, the phallic signifier does not signify essential sexual difference but is *an empty signifier that stands ultimately for the impossibility of signifying sex*. As such, it can be understood to represent both *a traumatic failure of meaning and the impossibility of ever fundamentally anchoring or positivizing the symbolic order*” (ibid., italics mine). It is the signifier of the lack, a symbolic stopping point before symbolic loss. As a result, instead of a biological fact or a cultural construct as gender is usually made to be, sexuation is a trauma of symbolization, an

³ Name, 姓名, is composed by two characters, each of which individually means “surname”, 姓, and “name”, 名.

eternal deadlock which implies the impossibility of symbolization. This logic resembles that at play in the functioning of proper names.

To summarize, there is a similar logic of symbolic (mal)functioning between proper names and sex(uation), which may justify the experimental translation of “name” in *Art & Lies* as 姓名. First, both proper names and gender are co-conspirators in the alienation of the Lacanian Subject, insofar as this alienation is constitutive of the formation of the subject as such. By reinforcing the illusionary wholeness of the fragmented subject, proper names and gender simultaneously grant the subject a (mistaken) symbolic identity which always restricts. Second, proper names and gender are the essential constituents of the construction of a symbolic identity, but both of them produce aporetic holes in the Symbolic. Through their untranslatability, proper names refuse to submit completely to the symbolic order, while for the sex(uation) or gender (as sexual difference), they remain governed by the empty signifier which Lacan calls the Phallus. These two very basic components of an identity, names and gender, are both situated at the border of the Symbolic while also contemplating the verging on the fathomless Real, which yields *jouissance*. *Jouissance*, the lethal and perverted pleasure in the displeasure itself, is generated in the movement between two registers, the Symbolic and the Real. *Jouissance* in French has a very strong connotation of the pleasure in sexual orgasm, the little death (*la petite mort*) in which the Lacanian Subject disappears for a split single moment. In other words, *jouissance* is an indispensable follow-up between proper names and sexuation for both of them defy the Symbolic. Sexuation, gender as sexual difference, or even sexual pleasure itself (i.e. *jouissance*, *la petite mort*, a symbolic death, a symbolic suicide) are intrinsically tied with language. “Say my name and you say sex”, because names are the ever-resisting, untranslatable signifiers and sexuation is based on an empty signifier, hence both are the constructions of the Symbolic which yearns for a minimal escape from the big Other, to the abyss of the fathomless Real. “Say my name and you say sex”, because both names and sex need to be said for them to exist (in the Symbolic), yet both of them can never be fully articulated. “Say my name and you say sex”, because if one does not speak, i.e. articulate oneself in the Symbolic (even though one may never be completely symbolized), names as a husk of rebellious signifiers and sex as *la petite mort* cannot exist.

To recap, Winterson’s line “Say my name and you say sex” provides a fruitful connection with Lacanian psychoanalysis. Winterson embodies an approach and understanding of sex in relation to language which, in my opinion, can be further illuminated by a Lacanian perspective. This

analysis could be taken further with regards to Winterson, but it is beyond the scope in this paper to do so. Much of Winterson's work is still not translated into Chinese and when this work has been achieved, it may be possible to provide a more lengthy explication of the interplay between Lacanian theories and Winterson's creative brilliance. But, the task of translating Winterson is inherently difficult as the content and wordplay are very complex to capture in a very different linguistic system such as Chinese.

In *Art & Lies*, Winterson continuously compares (the use of) language to the body (and bodily experience). Language, analogous to sex, not only incites pleasure and pain but also reproduces – the expansion of meanings as the extension of family line. “This is the nature of our sex: She takes a word, straps it on, penetrates me hard. The word inside me, I become it. The word slots my belly, my belly swells the word. New meanings expand from my thighs” (Winterson 1995:74). The application of Lacanian psychoanalysis to *Art & Lies* casts a new light on the novel: a Lacanian interpretation of Winterson defeats the reading of language as a simple and direct representation of desire. Instead, to articulate is to create; language does not reflect desire but is desire in its purest sense. The same logic applies to reality: contrary to the common notion of language re-presenting reality in a biased, inconsistent way (which means, there is a non-biased, actual, unchanging reality with no deadlock of impossibility out there), language creates reality and *is* reality, and beyond this inconsistent reality there is only the Lacanian real. “The word and the kiss are one. Is language sex? Say my name and you say sex”. To express something in language is to create. To talk about sex is like having sex. Construct and confine my unstable identity with an alienating term, like the way we define gender, and you will incite (sexual) desire. “Don't you call me a Sexualist? Then I have to practice what I preach. I call myself a poet, I have to invent what I practice. After loss of Identity, the most potent modern terror, is loss of sexuality, or, as Descartes didn't say, ‘I fuck therefore I am.’” (Winterson 1995:69) My identity is incomplete and inconsistent, again similar to my gender roles and desire. However, it is impossible to obtain an(y) identification without symbolic deadlock by improving or casting away languages, since when we abandon language (the symbolic network) we abandon reality. Language is our reality.

Analogous to translation, proper names and gender urge for a flight from the lukewarm familiarity to the fertilizing, enchanting yet terrifying otherness of the new, the unknown, the unspeakable, which on the other hand is similar to the sexual climax, a Symbolic death. The desire to translate,

therefore, may be interpreted as the desire to yield to *jouissance*, to lose one's symbolic identity and hence to commit a symbolic suicide. Symbolic suicide need not be read exclusively as death. It can be read as productive madness. Counter-normative translation is often criticized as deviant, incorrect, fragmented, or even crazy — most non-scholars and conservatives tend to accuse translators of being hysterical and insane when translators adopt puns, such as translation of the “proper name” as 姓名 rather than 姓名. Analogous to sex, not everyone finds sexual orgasm enticing (some found it horrifying, or both alluring and intimidating); and it is the same for counter-normative translation.

7. Conclusion

This essay has discussed the philosophical and psychoanalytic implications of an experimental translation from English into Chinese of the concept of proper “name” in Winterson's *Art & Lies*, a novel which narrates the intimacy between language and sex as text and body. Through the investigation of the notion of proper names in Winterson, in Lacan and in the source and the target cultures, I argue that names stand for both a celebration and a restriction of identities, but in two different dimensions, i.e. the ego (consciousness) and the Subject (unconscious). I introduce the Lacanian theory on names, the Subject and the Other as well as on sexuation, in order to further explain the importance of proper names and of their relation to the body in Winterson's writing and in the perspective of critical theories. Then, I adopt Derrida's argument on the untranslatability of proper names, so as to further complement the notion of proper names as empty signifiers in Lacanian psychoanalysis, and most importantly to demonstrate the significance of rethinking the translation of proper names, and the translatability of arbitrary signifiers from a foreign culture and language.

Apart from rethinking the possibility of translation, I attempt to investigate possible means other than metempsychotic translation to translate literature. In order to do so, I translate “name” creatively as 姓名, which is not merely a homophone but semantically manifests in Chinese the intimacy between textuality and corporeality. “Say my name and you say sex”: to say name in 姓名, one literally articulates sex, 性. As demonstrated in the theoretical discussion above, there are a number of similarities between proper names and sex(uation) which can only be detected under the lens of psychoanalysis. In this article, I highlight that both names and sex(uation) constitute a symbolic deadlock which may never be totally symbolized, and would always resist translation, just like identities which can never be fully inscribed and represented by names.

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