

Translation as a Political Tragedy: A Study of the Political Function of Signs in Literature

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Abstract

In today's world, literature does not seem to be merely a piece of art for human's spiritual excellence, but is something likely controlled subtly and already planned for a specific purpose and specific audience. Through many literary works Harry Potter series seem to be the most effective work that took the lead. It is officially turned into a phenomenon for all generations. This article attempts to dig deep through the probable conducting ideologies which lead today's literature, specifically the children's literature with the aim of creating a new unite generation in near future. This study benefits the theory of Semiotics and Socio- Semiotic by D. Chandler and other scholars in the same field. Furthermore, Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis is applied for a better understanding. Also, the method of this paper is a mixed qualitative- interpretive one. The findings of this paper revealed that literature is becoming and already has become a device to transfer some political ideologies conducted by some groups that subsequently enters other languages and cultures by the use of translation that accordingly transfers the same ideologies and functions in another way which needs a perceptive and alert translator to recognize and handle these ideologies equipped with signs.

Keywords: Translation, Semiotics, Socio- Semiotics, Political Function.

1. Introduction

As a translator when translating a literary work you might face many different political, ideological and semiotic concepts that makes you wonder *if it is possible to avoid hidden ideologies at all*. Yet presenting a solution seems to be a controversy as it is not that much known, at least in Iran. Some may claim on censoring intended parts or ignoring it thoroughly. But don't you think the lacking parts may be too much foregrounded to many subtle readers or critics?

This paper is focused on fantasy literature which is highly popular among children and young adults who seem to be easily manipulated to learn hidden ideologies unconsciously comparing other target audience. J.K.Rowling, the author of phenomenal Harry Potter series books which is still among the best-selling ones, has recently revealed her eighth and last volume of these series on July 31st 2016 in the form of a stage play script that was played earlier on stage on June 2016 co-authored by John Tiffany and Jack Thorne.

It shows Harry Potter and his friends' lives after nineteen years. It is mainly focused on Harry's youngest son, Albus and his friend's adventures. On the very first day heading to Hogwarts Albus meets Scorpius, Draco Malfoy's son in Hogwarts Express which ends to their inseparable bond after they both are sorted in Slytherine House by Sorting Hat. The book reviews the fourth book's adventures and Cedric Diggory's death which is followed by Albus and his friends' mission to bring him back to life by the last Time-Turner, secretly survived and kept in Ministry of magic.

The most proper theory that digs the deepest parts of these series may be Semiotics that is applies in the previous researches by the researchers (Salmani and Khalili, 2015). For Pierce we interpret symbols according to a "rule" or "habitual" connection. The symbol is connected with its object by virtue of the idea of the symbol- using animal, without which no such connection would exist. It is constituted a sign merely or mainly by the fact that it is used and understood as such (Chandler, 1995/2014. p. 6). Turning to icons, Pierce declared that an iconic sign represents its object 'mainly by its similarity'. A sign is an icon 'insofar as it is like that thing and used as a sign of it. Indeed, he originally termed such modes, 'likeness'.

2. Method

This paper is arranged in a qualitative mode, which examines in-depth "purposive samples" for a better understanding towards signs by resorting to experts opinions. Therefore the analysis in this research is an interpretation towards the most important signs and symbols in Harry Potter series, specifically the last volume by J.K.Rowling and the Persian translation by Ms. Vida Eslamiyeh.

2.1 Theoretical framework

The interpretation of this object is based on Daniel Chandler's Semiotics who believes 'understanding of semiotics is essential for anyone studying the mass media or communication or cultural studies and his focus is on humanities. He adds contemporary social semiotics has moved beyond the structuralist concern with the internal relations of parts within a self-contained system, seeking to explore the use of signs in specific social situations. Modern semiotic theory is also sometimes allied with a Marxist approach which stresses the role of ideology (Chandler 1995/2014. p. 6).

2.2 Instrumentation

Fairclough's Discourse Analysis

The researcher applied Critical Discourse Analysis for a deep interpretation of the data. In "Language and Power" N. Fairclough arranges discourse analysis in three inter related dimensions including texts, interactions, and contexts (1989, p. 25).

And in Corresponding to these three dimensions of discourse, he distinguishes three dimensions, or stages, of critical discourse analysis (ibid. p. 26):

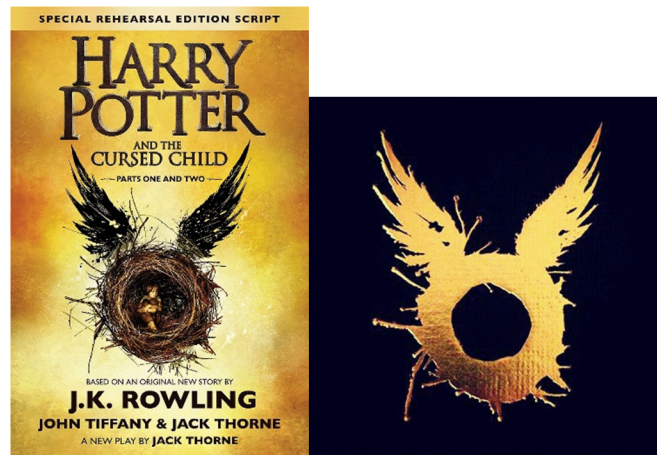
- Description is the stage which is concerned with the formal properties of the text.
- Interpretation is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction - with seeing the text as the product of a process of production, and as a resource in the process of interpretation;
- Explanation is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context - with the social determination of the processes of production and interpretation, and their social effects.

3. Results

The eighth Harry Potter book cover is decorated with an Augurey nest and two wings resembling the same creature which is known as 'Irish Phoenix'. In the book 'Fantastic Beasts and where to find them' by Newt Scamander (originally written by J.K.Rowling) an Augurey is described as a native of Britain and Ireland that is a thin and mournful- looking greenish black bird. It is intensely shy, nests in bramble and thorn, eats large insects and fairies, flies only in heavy rain, and otherwise remains hidden in its tear- shaped nests. Augurey's wail is believed as a death foreteller and it only sings at the approach of rain. Augurey feathers are useless as quills because they repel ink (Scamander 2001, p. 29).

Ms. Nilla Vala has translated Augurey as “اُگوری” (1380 A.H, p. 29) and Ms. Vida Eslamiyeh in her translation of the eighth book has translated it into “نشانک” (1395 A.H., p. 223). Appreciating Ms. Eslamiyeh for her creative translation, a reader can communicate and interpret what it exactly is. نشانک in Farsi means ‘a small sign’ which is in a direct connection with its English evaluation ‘Augury’ that Rowling made her own variation as Augurey.

In Merriam Webster Dictionary ‘augur’ (n.) is defined as 1: an official diviner of ancient Rome 2: one held to foretell events by omens and ‘augury’ (vt.) to foretell especially from omens (p.8). In her recent book it is a sign tattooed on Delphi’s back who claims to be the new past, present and future who came to make some changes, a clever choice made by Ms. Rowling to represent the darkest and the most cursed child who wants to revenge and bring her father back to life.



Recently on her official website Ms. Rowling wrote that a new edition of *Fantastic Beasts and where to find them* is going to be revised and published on 14th March 2017, including a new foreword and new magical creatures (Pottermore 2016). Therefore, until then we can't imagine how the illustration of this Augurey would be.

At first sight the circular nest and the two wings attached, reminds the readers of the golden snitch which is the most important ball to catch in Quidditch magical match. In a research done by the researcher s in 2015 the relevance between the golden snitch and Horus (the reverent god among ancient Egyptians) is thoroughly described with careful proofs (Salmani and Khalili 2015).

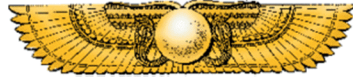
This resemblance is so strong that a blogger mentioned its resemblance to a snitch:" Despite the image's strong resemblance to a snitch, based on what happens in the play, it's safe to say that the black wings holding up the child in the nest are definitely the wings of an Augurey — and by extension, the nest itself is probably that of an Augurey as well (especially because of its thorny appearance) (Wilken 2016).

3.1 Winged Disk and Its Origins

The Egyptian figure called Behedti, with the wings of Horus, represents the omnipotence of the sun God Re (Ra), and the divinity of the Pharaoh. These two wings represent two Egyptian goddesses, Wadjat and Nekhbet who were companying Horus in the boat of a million years (Raefipour 2008. p, 38).

A similar figure, the Faravahar which is both an emblem of the Zoroastrian religion and of Persian identity, is descended from the Egyptian winged disk, a symbol of divine kingship (Symbol Dictionary 2010. p.1822). It once represented the Assyrian sun god Shamash, and may have represented the corona of a solar eclipse.

In Freemasonry the sun fits most appositely to the symbolism of the sovereignty of the Master (The Great Architect, God). Thus G. Willim Says: "The sun is the symbol of sovereignty, the hieroglyphic of royalty; it doth signify absolute authority!" In the Orphic Mysteries, it was taught that the sun generated from an egg, burst forth with power to triplicate himself by his own unassisted energy. The sun is then presented to us in Freemasonry first as a symbol of light, but then more emphatically as a symbol of sovereign authority (Mackey G 1914. p. 737).



Behedti

Farvahar



The Sun god Shamash
Temple of the Sun'

A Masonry Temple called 'The

3.2 Winged Disk in Tarot deck

The most significant figure to be discussed is 'The Aeon'; twenties card of Tarot Deck in *the Book of Thoth, the Egyptian Tarot* by Aleister Crowley (1995) which depicts the golden Disk understood as the egg containing Horus the child to be born and sit on the throne in near future.



The picture above depicts card number twenty of these series, the Aeon. Around the top of the card is the body of Nuith, the star-goddess, who is the category of unlimited possibility; her mate is Hadit, the ubiquitous point-of-view, the only philosophically tenable conception of Reality. He is represented by a globe of fire, representing eternal energy; winged, to show his power of Going. As a result of the marriage of these two, the child Horus is born, who's got the solar characteristic. (ibid. p. 116)

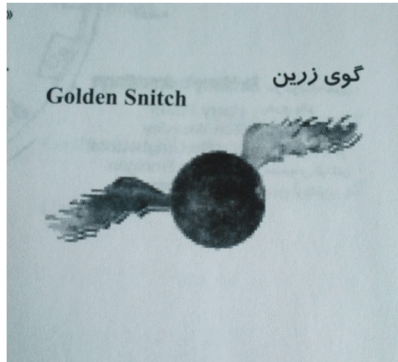
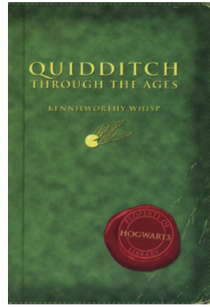
4. Discussion

As mentioned earlier the eighth book of Harry Potter series narrates Harry and his friends' children adventures. Certainly these adventures would not be amusing without any vicious character to face. Therefore, Ms. Rowling introduces Delphi, who pretends to be Cedric Diggory's cousin but actually is Voldemort and Bellatrix Lestrange's secret daughter who tries to save his father back to life and power by the Time- Turner based on a prophecy. Albus and Scorpius unaware of this fact trust her and attempt to steal the Time- Turner from the Ministry of Magic which is managed by Hermione Granger the present Minister. By travelling in time, Albus and Scorpius find out they can't change the situation to a better one by saving Cedric's life which ends in Voldemort's era and Harry Potter's death and consequently Albus's absence. Thus they decide to destroy the Time- Turner which becomes unsuccessful when Delphi steals it and cast a spell on them.

Here for the first time Albus sees her tattoo on the neck and she says it represents the wings of an Augurey which reminds her that the future is hers to make (Rowling 2016, p.235). Hearing 'Augurey' reminds Scorpius of Voldemort's era the last time he travelled in time, and someone called Augurey beside Voldemort. But it's too late and Delphi (now Augurey) bounds them together and introduces herself officially as: "I am the new past. I am the new future. I am the answer this world has been looking for" (ibid. p. 237).

4.1 The Resemblance Between Sun Disk, Golden Snitch, and Winged Nest

As discussed above and earlier in the researcher's previous paper the winged Sun Disk has much resemblance to the golden Snitch and eventually to the winged nest surrounding the cursed child on the book cover.



Whisp (originally by Rowling) 2001

Baroutkoob 1383 A. H., p. 58

The golden Snitch was actually inspired by a bird called Snidget which is mentioned in the book *Quidditch through the ages* written by Rowling (*Whisp 2001*).



Fig. B

Whisp 2001. p. 23

As mentioned in previous part the circular disk is a solar symbol, the most reverent one among ancient Egyptians and some societies. This sun is mostly depicted with two wings which are Horus's wings, the falcon deity in Ancient Egypt myths (Symbol Dictionary 2010. p. 690).

In her article Helen Valborg (1976) describes the sun shining from Loka Chakshuh, the Vedic "Eye of the World". She adds The Egyptians symbolized the birth of the sun through descriptions of the infant sun-god Horus, This sun was the "Eye of Ra," the "good eye of heaven" as the Samoyeds say. (p.1)

As seen below Horus is always illustrated with a sun and its spread wings in various depictions.



Ra (Horus)

4.2 Who is the Cursed Child?

The only thing that seems to remain unsolved to the fans and readers of Harry Potter series is the Cursed Child itself! Some believe he is Albus, Harry's son who is affected by his father's legacy and suffers being the only strange member of the family in Slytherine House instead of Gryffindor.

And some believe that she is Delphi, Lord Voldemort's daughter being an orphan from the beginning and suffering the burden of being Voldemort's daughter and growing with guardians who keep an Augurey crying and anticipating her death which reminds readers of Harry Potter's past spent with his death prophecy and the hard times he had with his aunt's family.

Albus: "I didn't choose, you know that? I didn't choose to be his son" (Rowling 2016. p.29).

Albus:" No! I just wish you weren't my dad".

Harry (seeing red): "Well, there are times I wish you weren't my son" (ibid. p. 44).

Following the hints you might go for Delphi. Besides the book cover is decorated with Delphi's tattoo with Augurey's wings and nest surrounding a young boy who seems to be sorrowful Albus. Delphi is the new character introduced, so the title of the book refers to her as the previous books were titled with a new character, an event, and element.

Some examples are provided below:

Delphi: "I am the Augurey to your Dark Lord, and I am ready to give all that I have to serve you" (ibid p. 307)

Some might also say Harry Potter himself could be the cursed child as he still carries a part of Voldemort after the battle he had with him and was haunted on his fifth year.

Harry: "You know, I thought I'd lost him – Voldemort – I thought I'd lost him and then my scar started hurting again and I had dreams of him and I could even speak Parseltongue again and I started to feel like I'd not changed at all – that he'd never let me go –

The part of me that was Voldemort died a long time ago, but it wasn't enough to be physically rid of him. And that – is a lot to learn for a forty-year-old man (ibid. p. 326).

5. Conclusion

It seems everyone could be cursed in the last book by hearing Auguries wail, but the significant point which draws the attention might be the cover of the book which seemingly resembles the golden snitch and its background that was discussed.

For Ronald Barthes various codes contribute to reproducing bourgeois ideology, making it seem natural, proper and inevitable. One need not be a Marxist to appreciate that it can be liberating to become aware of whose view of reality is being privileged in the process. Many semioticians see their primary task as being to denaturalize signs, texts and codes. Semiotics can thus show ideology at work and demonstrate that 'reality' can be challenged (Barthes 1957, as cited in Chandler, 1995/2004. p. 15).

The frequently occurrence of an idea in a text, which is the *golden snitch* here in these series, makes it highly significant to the audience. It seems it has something to say, but it somehow wants the readers to find it out. Thus, it does not shout out loud its ideologies, rather it attempts to make the audience admit it themselves and not get imposed. Chandler discusses this in his book *Semiotics for Beginners* that a social semiotician would emphasize the importance of the significance with readers attach to the signs within a text (ibid. p. 7).

It is very common to use ambiguous illustrations on the book covers and make it clear through the text. Barthes used the term relay to describe text/image relationships which were 'complementary', instancing cartoons, comic strips and narrative film. Further the 'illustrative use' of an image provides anchorage for ambiguous text (ibid. p.14).

The purpose of a discourse analysis is to dig down the text and unriddle the ideologies and signs within the words and illustrations. As discussed in the other part in Aleister Crowley's (a great magician in his time) Tarot card number twenty depicts the baby Horus waiting to be born, hatch outside the circular winged egg and sit on the throne in near future.

Yet the clear connection between winged Disk, all the birds mentioned in these series and their relations to the nest and the golden snitch is not determined and would remain mysterious as the author intended to. Base on Fairclough's Discourse Analysis, it is concluded that the target audience is manipulated by some unspecified purposes that are made to decide consciously and voluntarily read and interpret what they choose. Ideological dimensions are supported by some illustrative means to make sure they would serve their purpose.

Therefore the translators' responsibility is to recognize such ideologies a literary work is equipped with and by recognizing socio-political intentions of a work, try to do their best to solve such problems in Translation Studies instead of banning or censoring them which seems impossible in today's world.

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