IDEAS: JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LITERARY STUDIES
RESEARCH ARTICLE – ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ
DOI: 10.62352/ideas.1767641
2025, VOL. 5, NO. 2, 135–148

English Language and Literature
Research Association of Türkiye

The Translator in Limbo: Angela Carter's "The Loves of Lady Purple" as a Metaphor of Translation

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Abstract: This article proposes a reading of Angela Carter's short story "The Loves of Lady Purple," often studied through feminist and psychoanalytic lenses, as a metaphor for the act of translation. Through the eerie symbiosis between the inarticulate marionette and the puppet master whose articulating fingers animate her, the paper investigates the interdependence between source and target languages. The puppet, lifeless yet suggestive of autonomy, becomes a simulacrum of the original text, while the puppet master performs the translator's role, poised in a liminal space between the real and the semblance of the real. Drawing on Walter Benjamin's concept of pure language, this article explores the marionette's language beyond language as an echo of the utopian linguistic essence underlying all translation, an original language of grunt and bark that gestures toward the kinship of tongues. This study also examines the strange duet between the puppet and her master as a metaphor for George Steiner's hermeneutic model of translation; this model offers a compelling framework for interpreting the relationship between the marionette and her manipulator. This article ultimately argues that "The Loves of Lady Purple" does not simply illustrate translation but rather enacts it, embodying the translator as a spectral figure who inhabits the no-man's-land between presence and absence, voice and voicelessness, the living and the dead.

Keywords:

Angela Carter,
"The Loves of Lady Purple,"
Metaphor of translation,
Walter Benjamin,
George Steiner

Article History:

Received:
18 Aug. 2025

Accepted:
1 Oct. 2025

Araftaki Çevirmen: Bir Çeviri Metaforu Olarak Angela Carter'ın "Leydi Mor'un Aşkları" Öyküsü

Öz: Bu makale, Angela Carter'ın, çoğunlukla feminist ve psikoanalitik bakış açılarıyla incelenen "Leydi Mor'un Aşkları" öyküsünü, çeviri eylemi için bir metafor olarak okumayı öneriyor. Bu çalışma, dilsiz kuklanın ve onu canlandıran kuklacının parmakları arasındaki tuhaf simbiyotik ilişki üzerinden, kaynak ve hedef diller arasındaki karşılıklı bağımlılığı araştırıyor. Ölü ama özerk olduğu izlenimini veren kukla, kaynak metnin bir simülakrına dönüşürken, gerçek ile gerçeğin taklidi arasındaki sınırda bir konumda duran kuklacı da çevirmenin rolünü üstlenir. Walter Benjamin'in saf dil kavramından yararlanan bu makale, kuklanın dil ötesi dilini, tüm çevirilerin temelinde yatan ütopik dilsel özü yansıtan bir yankı olarak, hırıltılardan ve bağırış-çağırışlardan oluşan, dillerin akrabalığına işaret eden bir ilksel dil olarak irdeler. Ayrıca bu çalışma, kukla ile kuklacı arasındaki tuhaf düeti George Steiner'ın hermenötik çeviri modelinin metaforu olarak da inceler; bu model kukla ile manipülatörü arasındaki ilişkinin yorumlanması için güçlü bir çerçeve sunar. Sonuç olarak bu makale, "Leydi Mor'un

Anahtar Sözcükler:

Angela Carter,
"Leydi Mor'un Aşkları,"
Çeviri metaforu,
Walter Benjamin,
George Steiner

Makale Geçmişi:

Geliş Tarihi:
18 Ağustos 2025

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Kabul Tarihi:
01 Ekim 2025

How to Cite: Albayrak, Gökhan. "The Translator in Limbo: Angela Carter's 'The Loves of Lady Purple' as a Metaphor of Translation." *IDEAS: Journal of English Literary Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2025, pp. 135–148. doi:10.62352/ideas.1767641.

Introduction

Angela Carter (1940–1992) stands out in twentieth-century literature as a writer who relentlessly dismantled the mechanics of storytelling. Blending feminist critique, poststructuralist theory, and the gothic imagination, she used intertextuality, pastiche, and metafiction to interrogate the ideological work of myth, gender, and language. Her fiction enacts a practice of rewriting: returning to fairy tales and myths not to affirm them but to reveal their constructedness and recode their symbolic economies. Carter's prose simultaneously enchants and unmasks, drawing readers into the fantastic while exposing its own artifice. Within this framework, "The Loves of Lady Purple" (1988), described as a "Gothic fable" (Gamble 104), becomes a particularly rich site for inquiry. The story not only narrates animation and agency but also stages the processes of textual mediation, spectral embodiment, and performative meaning. It can thus be read as an allegory of translation, dramatizing the translator's paradoxical position as both ventriloquist and vessel, originator and echo, suspended between languages and worlds.

In "The Loves of Lady Purple," Carter employs the "unsettling and mysterious atmosphere of the puppet theatre" (Atayurt-Fenge 78) to explore performance, creation, and autonomy through the figure of a traveling puppeteer, an Asian professor whose art lies in animating a marionette named Lady Purple. His act reenacts her sordid story of manipulation, abuse, and enforced sensuality, with every gesture dictated by his control. Yet over time, the puppet begins to resist her role: her movements grow fluid, her presence increasingly autonomous, until she ultimately breaks free of her strings. In this climactic metamorphosis, Lady Purple becomes a living woman, overturning the authority of her creator and claiming agency for herself.

Carter's story functions as an allegory of translation, dramatizing the fraught relationship between source and target. The professor's performance corresponds to the source text, while Lady Purple's transformation into a living woman evokes the target text's unpredictable autonomy. Like a translator, the puppeteer inhabits an in-between

space where meaning is both created and lost. Lady Purple's escape mirrors the paradox of translation: The more faithfully one seeks to reproduce the original, the more the result becomes independent, resisting full containment. Thus, "The Loves of Lady Purple" becomes not only a story of a puppet defying her master but also a meditation on translation as an act that inevitably generates something new.

"The Loves of Lady Purple" is a tale that resists simple categorization. Situated somewhere between gothic horror, philosophical allegory, and theatrical fable, the story tells of a lifeless puppet, who is gradually animated by the gestures, voice, and narrative of her puppeteer, until she transcends her wooden form and becomes alive. While the story has been discussed in terms of psychoanalysis and feminist rewriting that subverts the representation of women's bodies as fearful, monstrous and threatening (Creed 6) and of female power as "horrific" (Smith and Wallace 5), this article attempts to read it as a complex metaphor for the act of translation. In this reading, the relationship between the puppet and her master becomes emblematic of the intimate, often fraught symbiosis between a source text and its translator.

At the heart of translation lies a paradox: It is both reproduction and re-creation. The translator, like the puppet master, occupies a liminal role, neither sole creator nor mere conduit, animating a form that both precedes and exceeds them. The marionette mirrors the source text, silent until voiced; the puppeteer, like the translator, manipulates another's form in pursuit of articulation. This analogy resonates with Walter Benjamin's idea of translation as a striving toward "pure language," a primal unity beyond individual tongues (78). Carter's tale similarly gestures toward a pre-linguistic, bodily mode of expression, with the puppet's speech marking an uncanny eruption of this deeper language, echoing Benjamin's vision of kinship among all languages. Besides, George Steiner's hermeneutic model of translation, "portray[ing] the successive mental stages of the translator at work" (Hermans 83), illuminates the puppet–master dynamic. The puppeteer first believes in the puppet's potential (trust), disrupts its silence (aggression), absorbs it into his narrative (incorporation), and finally returns it transformed to the audience (restitution). This arc mirrors the translator's work, oscillating between fidelity and violence, mastery and surrender.

Through translation theory, this article reads Carter's tale not only as an allegory of authorship and performance or a feminist rewriting that disrupts male supremacy, but also as an uncanny figure of the translator's task. Translation here appears as a spectral act: animating the inarticulate, confronting alterity, and exposing language as never fully ours to command. Carter's story thus casts the translator as a liminal figure, voicing the unspeakable, mediating between the living and the undead, and forging a fragile bridge between language and its ghost.

Theoretical Background: Walter Benjamin and George Steiner

Translation has long functioned as a bridge between languages and cultures. Since antiquity, figures like Cicero (106–43 BCE) and Horace (65–8 BCE) treated it not merely as a technical task but as a matter of philosophical and aesthetic significance (Munday 7). Over the twentieth century, translation evolved into a deeply conceptual field, recasting the translator as an agent of cultural negotiation, political intervention, and ontological reconfiguration (Venuti 4). Linguistic and formalist approaches dominated the 1950s, but by the 1970s and 1980s, the cultural turn reoriented the discipline toward socio-political dimensions (Tymoczko 42). Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere argued that a text must be seen as "embedded within its network of both source and target cultural signs" (12). Feminist and postcolonial theorists complicated this further: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak interrogated the presumed transparency of speaking for the subaltern, while feminist scholars highlighted the gendered politics of translation. By the twenty-first century, deconstructionist, affective, and materialist approaches had destabilized traditional binaries such as source vs target and original vs copy underscoring translation as an inherently interpretive, creative, and ethically fraught act.

Benjamin's essay "The Task of the Translator" (1921) marks a foundational moment in translation theory. He argues that "we have to go back to the original" to understand translation as a form (76) and that "the kinship of languages manifests itself in translation," achieved through "the totality of their mutually complementary intentions: pure language" (78). For Benjamin, literary translation is not about communication but revelation: It uncovers the pure language hovering between original and translation. Neither source nor target language, he claims, but the act of translation itself gestures toward "the essential core" where languages are "reconciled and fulfilled" (79). Translation requires engagement with the "foreignness of languages to each other" (78–79), awakening "an echo of the original" in the target text (79). True translation, he asserts, is "transparent: it does not obscure the original . . . but allows pure language . . . to shine even more fully on the original" (81). This mystical vision of language profoundly shapes later translation theory.

Translation is paradoxical, both preserving and effacing the original. For Benjamin, it gestures toward a utopian "pure language" revealing the kinship of all tongues, making the translator a spiritual medium rather than a mere conduit. This mirrors Carter's puppet master in "The Loves of Lady Purple": Like a translator, he animates a figure not entirely his own, giving voice to what resists articulation, navigating a liminal space between presence and absence. The marionette's growing autonomy dramatizes the metaphysical labour of translation, haunted by the source text's alterity.

In *After Babel* (1975), Steiner frames translation as a hermeneutic practice, defining it as "an intentionally sharpened, hermeneutically oriented way of designating a working mode of all meaningful exchanges" (279). He outlines four movements in translation: initiative trust, aggression, incorporation, and restitution. Translation begins

with trust: The translator surrenders to the source text, believing it "to mean something despite its apparent alienness" (Robinson 97), an epistemologically exposed and psychologically risky act. This trust relies on deeper assumptions: the coherence of the world, the possibility of meaning across diverse systems, and the validity of analogy and correspondence. Granting significance to the "untried, unmapped alterity of statement" (Steiner 296), the translator enacts a human tendency to perceive the world symbolically, where one thing can stand for another, enabling meaning and structure. Initiative trust thus reflects faith in the symbolic richness of the world and the translatability of the source (297).

The second stage, aggression, urges the translator to penetrate the source text and extract its meaning: "the second move of the translator is incursive" (Steiner 297). Steiner notes that, following Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Martin Heidegger, all comprehension is a form of cognitive attack, as understanding entails "encirclement and ingestion" (298). The translator becomes an invader who "extracts, and brings home," leaving a visible mark on the textual landscape (298). While this image suggests plunder, it may signal false translation. Some texts are exhausted by repeated translation, whereas others are transformed so profoundly that the translation surpasses the original in order, coherence, or aesthetic impact, eclipsing it entirely (298).

The third stage, incorporation, involves absorbing the foreign into the target language and culture: It is "incorporative" in the etymological sense of the word (Steiner 298). Translation never occurs in a vacuum; the receiving language already possesses a dense semantic field. Introduced elements may be fully domesticated or partially resisted. Steiner invokes Heidegger: "we are what we understand to be," meaning each act of appropriation transforms the translator and the linguistic system (299). Translators "come to incarnate alternative energies and resources of feeling" yet risk being "mastered and made lame by what we have imported" (299). They return "home laden, thus again off-balance, having caused disequilibrium throughout the system" (300).

When the system is unbalanced, the fourth movement—restitution—restores equilibrium: The hermeneutic act "must mediate into exchange and restored parity" (Steiner 300). The translator's appropriative "rapture," a form of "violent transport," leaves the original with a "dialectically enigmatic residue" (300). While some loss is inevitable, the translation can enhance the work, for the mirror "not only reflects but also generates light" (301). Steiner argues that framing translation as trust, engagement, embodiment, and restitution moves beyond the restrictive model of "literalism, paraphrase and free imitation" (303).

Both Benjamin and Steiner stress that translation is a creative, interpretive, and ethically charged act. Viewed through their frameworks, Carter's story becomes an allegory of translation: The marionette's autonomy, speech, and violent escape mirror the translator's paradox: animating a text while risking being overtaken by it. The narrative

thus reveals translation's uncanny economy, haunted and destabilized by the very voices it seeks to convey.

The Inarticulate Puppet and the Puppeteer with his Articulating Fingers

The Asiatic Professor, a mysterious puppet master, dwells in a liminal space where life and artifice blur. He "propagates the most bewildering enigmas" (Carter 27), animating marionettes that, though lifeless, enact an uncanny pantomime of human vitality. A "radical symbiosis" exists between his "inarticulate dolls" and "articulating fingers" (27), positioning him as "the intermediary" between the living and his "undead" creations (27). Though they "cannot speak or weep," his puppets convey recognizable signs of language (27). His art imbues "inert stuff with the dynamics of his self" (28), rendering them neither fully dead nor undead (28). Once having performed in several magnificent cities which have disappeared, he now wanders a shadowy, grotesque landscape akin to "a dark, superstitious Transylvania" (28). The Professor's language is as enigmatic as his craft, an "incomprehensible rattle" (29). His assistants, a deaf boy and mute girl, communicate through gestures, grunts, and whistles, resembling "the mating dance of tropic birds" (29). This "ur-language of grunt and bark" suits a man "indifferent to everything except the simulacra of the living he himself created" (29–30). His world, confined to the fairground, values "nuances rather than affirmatives" (29). Central to his craft is the "Shameless Oriental Venus," whose glass-ruby eyes, mother-of-pearl teeth, scarlet-nailed hands, and pulsating purple and crimson attire render her "the quintessence of eroticism," a "monstrous goddess" mesmerizing audience with "religious intensity" (31–33). The Professor's narration in his "impenetrable native language" amplifies the hypnotic strangeness of her tale (32).

Lady Purple's legend is one of desire and destruction. Abandoned as an infant, she seduces her foster father, murders her guardians, and rises like "a corrupt phoenix" in the pleasure quarters, becoming an "object on which men prostituted themselves" (Carter 34–37). Her lovers, drained by her "malign fantasies," decay as she consumes their wealth and souls (37). She becomes "the image of irresistible evil," until her own degradation reduces her to a marionette, her humanity trapped in wood and string (38–39). The Professor's bond with her mirrors a swordsman and his blade: "neither having meaning without the other" (40). One night, in a reversal, the puppet awakens; her kiss becomes voracious, her teeth "clashing against his," draining him of life (43). Freed from her strings, her hair "rooting back into her scalp," she moves independently, burns the stage in an "inferno" consuming the Professor, and strides toward the brothel, now a woman "animated solely by demonic will" (44–46).

Benjamin's Pure Language in "The Loves of Lady Purple"

Carter presents Lady Purple as a meticulously crafted, grotesquely sexualized puppet, mute yet expressive, motionless yet suggestively animate. Her paradoxical presence mirrors the translator's engagement with a source text: simultaneously authoritative and

incomplete, meaningful yet inert without mediation. In Benjamin's terms, Lady Purple embodies the afterlife of an untranslated text. Once animated, she gains autonomy, reflecting the independent yet derivative life of translation. She sustains "a vital connection" with the master, who lives on in her (Benjamin 76), and stands as the echo of an inaccessible origin. Her silence evokes Benjamin's language beyond language, requiring the translator or performer to enact her meaning. The Professor, a wandering, linguistically liminal figure, embodies the translator as nomad and outsider, speaking only in borrowed voices. His identity is porous: he and Lady Purple infiltrate each other, blurring the boundary between translator and text. Translation becomes a spectral possession; the translator is consumed by the work, and once animated, the text may escape control, assert autonomy, rendering the translator obsolete.

Lady Purple's final act, her awakening and her incomprehensible speech, is the climax of Carter's metaphor. The puppet, now alive, utters inarticulate cries of passion and gibberish, a pre-linguistic utterance that transcends comprehensible language. This is not communication in any strict sense, but a phenomenon that aligns with Benjamin's notion of the pure language into which all translations strive, but none fully reach. The translator-master descends into the pre-linguistic, essential core, the inaccessible domain, characterized by a radical symbiosis between the puppeteer and the puppet, and the annihilation of the linguistic difference between self and other, subject and object. His articulating fingers get in touch with the inarticulate dolls in the asymbolic world of no-man's land, where he speaks his incomprehensible native tongue; language becomes voided of its linguistic signifiers and is replaced by grunts and whistles; they comprehend one another like dancing birds. This language beyond language is "so delicately distanced from humanity" that the master looks like a peculiar visitor from another world, who seems to be uninterested in the realm of the living and indifferent to the symbolic realm of linguistic signifiers (Carter 29). They inhabit an extra-linguistic realm where they employ an embodied language that does not signify through words but conduct nuances through whistles and grunts. They are "all natives of the fairground and, after all, all fairs are the same" (29). The natives of the fairs speak their native tongue; perhaps they had descended from an "original fair which was inexplicably scattered long ago in a diaspora of the amazing" (29). They are perhaps fragments dissociated from an immemorial, inaugural fair, where everyone speaks the same language; all fairies speak the same language in the land of the marvelous or within the circus of the amazing. This inaugural fair resonates with Benjamin's inaccessible realm of linguistic harmony where all fairs and fairies speak the same language. The natives of the fairground speak "a language beyond language, or, perhaps, in that ur-language of grunt and bark, which lies behind all language" (30). Their language taps into a primal, original tongue of grunts and growls that predates all languages. The master-translator descends into this extra-linguistic realm and brings back "the seeds of pure speech to maturation in translation" (Benjamin 80) and represents "that kernel of pure language" in his performance as he speaks by means of the doll that he manipulates, like a ventriloquist (81). He recuperates the pure

language as he tells the tale of Lady Purple; he sets free the pure language during his performance as he mimics the voice of Lady Purple, embodies her, so expresses his emotions through the medium of his creation. He fills her with a vitality that he himself appears to hold precariously. The source text (the Professor) morphs into the target text (Lady Purple). As he impersonates her, he returns to the primeval language of grunts, moans, and bodily sounds that underlie all semantic systems. This may also echo Steiner's notion of the translator's aggression, the idea that language must be penetrated to reveal something deeper than meaning: a pulse of life, of affect.

The Hermeneutic Motion in "The Loves of Lady Purple"

Steiner's fourfold model frames translation as an active, interpretive, and ethically charged process, a framework mirrored in the dynamic between the Asiatic professor and Lady Purple. The first phase, trust, aligns with the professor's belief that the puppet can be animated and convey meaning; his faith in her story initiates the translational act.

Steiner's second movement of aggression and penetration is symbolized by the master-translator's manipulation of the strings and the aggressive gesture that breaks the silence of the marionette. In other words, the second phase is manifested in the professor's manipulation of Lady Purple's body and narrative. His control over her limbs mirrors the translator's intrusion into the text: shaping, interpreting, and, ultimately, imposing meaning. The professor does not merely interpret Lady Purple; he inscribes a culturally coded identity onto her. In this gesture, he penetrates the very subject he claims to animate, a gesture of interpretive violence akin to what Steiner describes as the translator's penetration into the original.

Next comes incorporation: the professor integrates Lady Purple into his world, making her the centerpiece of his theatrical enterprise. She becomes a spectacle, a performed artifact whose power is shaped by and dependent on his narration. He lives through her, much as a translator might internalize and reproduce a text within the contours of their own language and cultural logic. Through repeated performances, he incorporates her into his own bodily routine, merging the puppet's gestures with his voice. The Professor's marionette is known as the "Shameless Oriental Venus" and the title of her performance is the "Notorious Amours of Lady Purple" (Carter 32). Everything about the performance is strikingly foreign and exotic. The master-translator foreignizes himself as he transforms himself into Lady Purple; he does not domesticate the source text for his audience. The figure that he embodies and impersonates could only be foreign and exotic as she oozes out of the essential core where the puppet and the puppeteer coalesce into one another. The ritualistic, spell-like nature of the drama immediately sweeps away "the rational" and transports the audience into a world of enchantment, where nothing feels even remotely familiar (32). When the Professor narrates her story in his obscure "impenetrable native language," the mesmerizing unfamiliarity of the show only deepens (32). The master-translator penetrates the mysteries of the source-text-to-be, so he descends into the impenetrable core of his own story as they speak his

incomprehensible native tongue. The uncanny language that permeates the language of the performance is so strange that it hypnotizes the audience. The non-human language of grunts and whistles enchants the audience with its obscurity. As he is guiding his puppet's movements, he recites a rhythmic monologue in a voice that clangs, rasps and swoops up and down, forming an eerie duet with the instrument from which the inarticulate girl draws strange, haunting melodies (Carter 32). When the puppeteer speaks in the character of Lady Purple, his voice modulates "to a thick, lascivious murmur like fur soaked in honey" (33). Lady Purple embodies raw passion, and every gesture she makes is a deliberate, sharply defined expression shaped by the "geometry of sexuality" (33). People flock to see "the famous prostitute and wonder of the East" who has "unappeasable appetites" and to be beguiled by the doll that is "pulled only by the strings of *lust*" (33). Her performance is a "unique sensation" and bewildering; it possesses "the rapt intensity of ritual" (33). The enraptured audience almost believes that "the bizarre figure" who dominates the stage is in fact "the petrification of a universal whore" (34). This figure of *jouissance* is a figment of the puppeteer-translator's imagination.

In her story that the master narrates and impersonates her, Lady Purple is described as a siren, temptress who is as deadly as she is beautiful and alluring; she is defined as a fragrant yet predatory, rapacious flower. She kills her foster parents. She sets the house on fire to erase the marks of her guilt (Carter 34–35). She thus obliterates the memories of her own childhood along with the home where it began. From the flames of her crime, she emerges like "a corrupt phoenix" which rises "again in the pleasure quarters" (35). The brothel where she works is an "inverted, sinister, abominable world" that gratifies the pleasures of the senses (35). All perverse desires are gratified in "the halls of mirrors . . . the cabarets of nature-defying copulations and the ambiguous soirées held by men-women and female men" (35). The images of the corrupt phoenix and those men-women and female men embody the themes of death and rebirth, metamorphosis, transformation and translation. In these quarters, the figures of desire showcased within wicker cages sit "motionless as idols" and their gestures are as stylized as if they were "clockwork" (35–36). They embody the ineffable essence of woman as an idea, "a metaphysical abstraction" of the feminine (36).

Lady Purple's talents as a courtesan bordered on the unimaginable. Indeed, she is not a true courtesan for men debase themselves for her; she is the object of desire, men prostitute themselves for her and sell their souls to her (Carter 37). She is desire incarnate, spinning dark dreams and proliferating "malign fantasies" wherever she walks. However, Lady Purple's career ends in desolation; she eclipses the horrors she has spawned. She is now a Circe who has turned herself into a swine, haunting the streets "like a desiccated shadow" (38). In the final scene of her ruin, she sheds her last shreds of humanity, reduced to wood and hair. Lady Purple becomes "a marionette herself, herself her own replica, the dead yet moving image of the shameless Oriental Venus" (39). The master who manipulates her and articulates her story begins to feel the toll of age. However, the mime of Lady Purple grows even more remarkable as the years went by, as

if the Professor's long-focused energy, distilled over time into a single, flawless essence, is now poured wholly into the puppet (Carter 39). In this symbiotic relationship, there is no longer any distinction between self and other. The master-translator penetrates the deep mysteries of the puppet, delves into the metaphysical idea of the woman that he harbors deep in his psyche; he metamorphoses into her during their performance as he pulls the strings aggressively, narrates her story, impersonating her voice and incorporating her into himself or himself into her. This marvelous relationship between the human and the non-human is free from any humanizing illusions and "entirely free from the anthropomorphic" (40). All the same, the master-translator initially trusts that she has something to tell, a story to communicate, and that she will be animated.

Finally, restitution, which is the ideal act of ethical return in Steiner's model, follows the phase of incorporation. It is possible to interpret the final phase in two ways within the confines of this story: the initial trust bears its fruits as the Professor morphs into Lady Purple, or the phase of restitution fails because the Professor is annihilated. It is better to explore both options. José Ortega y Gasset mentions the melancholy of the translator who has failed, yet success is also tinged with a subtle sadness, "the Augustinian *tristitia*" that arises from the intertwined "acts of erotic and of intellectual possession" (Steiner 298). In either case, the translation is haunted by the source text. Steiner also reminds us that "there are borderline cases" since some texts are exhausted by translation, negated by transfiguration while others are surpassed, elevated by translation (298). I investigate both interpretations of Steiner's final stage in the section below. Steiner's hermeneutic model refers to the metaphors of "sacramental intake or incarnation and that of infection" (299). However, I believe that reading "The Loves of Lady Purple" as a metaphor of translation and transformation fits in well with borderline cases, where the source text haunts the target text, incorporating one another. They will remain cognates of each other, seeping through the pores of one another.

The initial trust comes to fruition at the end of the story when the master-translator is restituted as Lady Purple. As the Professor undresses her to mend her dress "like a good housewife" (Carter 41), he speaks idly his native tongue and rattles away "an intimacy of nothings" and faint breezes set her in a slow, sad waltz and the mist thickens around them (41). When he finishes mending, he is "seized with the childish desire" and longs to behold her once more, clad in full elegance, so he clothes her gently, speaking to her like a child, her limp limbs making her seem a six-foot baby; when he places her wig on her head, the ritual is over and Lady Purple is "complete again" (42). As he kisses her tenderly one night, she comes to life, her teeth clashing against his, her breath warm, her face shifting through every human emotion. She embraces him with a vitality surpassing his frail body, her kiss drawing his breath into her as if she entered the world through some metaphysical breach, an eerie "loophole" where desire takes form (43). Then, she bites into his throat, draining him instantly, his body collapses to the floor. She frees herself from the strings, unravels her hair and warps herself in his shawl. She now moves by her will, looking like

a beautiful woman with a corpse-like pallor. She sets fire to the stage, leaving the Professor's corpse to burn and walks away without looking back, heading to the brothel.

The master-translator follows Steiner's hermeneutic motions, trusting Lady Purple and penetrating her mysteries, descending into the essential core, the inaccessible domain, where they speak the incomprehensible, the language beyond language, Benjamin's pure language, where their kinship allows them to metamorphose, incorporating one another, ingesting one another, and ascending to the surface, to the world of humanity, where the master-translator undergoes restitution, returning to the symbolic world of words as metamorphosed into Lady Purple; hence, the source text transforms into the target text.

The phase of restitution fails since, instead of giving back voice, autonomy, or meaning, the professor is annihilated. The failure of restitution suggests a profound failure of the translational project itself: the translator has so distorted and colonized the text that no act of reparation is possible. Lady Purple's murder of her manipulator becomes the violent metaphor for a translation so invasive it ultimately provokes the collapse of the original relationship. In this light, the professor's tragic fate dramatizes the paradox at the heart of Steiner's model: to translate is to move toward the other with good faith, but that approach is always shadowed by the risk of appropriation. The translator in limbo, like the professor, hovers between creation and violation, between fidelity and betrayal. Steiner reminds us that the process of importation has the potential to disrupt or reposition the entirety of the native structure because every act of linguistic import carries the risk of transformation and the act of importation and embodiment is never "made in or into a vacuum" (298–299). Translation is incorporative and contagious for both parties. The dialectic of embodiment implies the possibility that the translator may be overwhelmed and may metamorphose into the translated. The source text comes to incarnate the target text; the former survives in the afterlife of the latter. The residue is always positive.

The violence at the story's end suggests a deeper allegorical message. Translation is not a passive mirror of authorship, but a generative, volatile, vertiginous act. The source text does not remain untouched in the process; rather, it is reanimated, re-embodied, and, in a sense, reauthored by the translator's interpretive labor. Carter, whose own writing has been translated across cultures and whose fiction often draws from myth and fairy tale traditions, understands translation as a ghostly inheritance: one that both honors and disrupts its origins. Peter France points out that Steiner "sketches an *ideal* of translation . . . in which the translation meets the original as an equal" (6). It is possible that this supposedly equal relationship may be undermined by the act of appropriation, performed first by the puppeteer, then by the puppet. The Professor's incorporation of Lady Purple within himself is followed by Lady Purple's ingestion of him at the end of the story; perhaps they are now even as they appropriate one another; both venture a leap. This account of evenness may mean that the final state of Steiner's hermeneutic model is intact;

balance is restored. The source text translated and transformed is enhanced. The "'rapture' of the translator", like the rapture of the mother, "leaves the original with a dialectically enigmatic residue" (Steiner 300). There is, without question, an element of loss and rupture. However, the residue is always positive, always affirmative. This interpretation of the story highlights the inherent ambiguity of translation: the stage of restitution may lead to either success or failure, and it is within this uncertain, liminal space between the two that the translator resides.

Conclusion

Carter's "The Loves of Lady Purple" transcends a macabre tale, allegorizing the translator's predicament. The puppet and master enact a linguistic, ontological, and ethical drama, inhabiting a liminal space between living and undead, original and copy, said and unsayable. Differing from the feminist and psychoanalytic interpretations of the story, this article rereads "The Loves of Lady Purple" as a metaphor of translation. The translator, like the puppet master, inhabits a threshold: between the living and the undead, the original and the copy, the said and the unsayable. In Carter's narrative, this threshold is not a stable bridge but a space of haunting, a no-man's-limbo where identity, authorship, and language are all called into question.

Through Benjamin and Steiner, the study frames translation as generative and spectral: Lady Purple's final utterances evoke Benjamin's pure language, while Steiner's four hermeneutic movements illuminate the interpretive complexities of the translator's labor. Benjamin's notion of pure language resonates in Lady Purple's final inarticulate utterances, which suggest both a prelinguistic origin and a post-linguistic excess. Steiner's four hermeneutic movements unfold within the evolving dynamic between puppet and puppeteer, illuminating the interpretive complexities of the translator's labor. Hence, this study conceives of translation as a creative act rather than a simple act of transfer, offering significant insights for both literary analysis and translation studies, while also laying the groundwork for further inquiry into the metaphors of translation in literature.

Carter's tale rejects the illusion of perfect equivalence or transparent translation, portraying it instead as creative possession: the translator mediates an uncanny voice that cannot be fully mastered. Translation entails both loss and transformation, negotiating the otherness of language. In naming the translator in limbo, this article emphasizes the disquieting but productive instability at the heart of translation. Like the puppet master undone by his creation, the translator animates texts not to control them, but to let them speak in altered, ghostly forms. This vision casts the translator not as a technician, but as a tragic artist, bringing the dead to life and listening, with care and awe, to what they reveal.

Acknowledgements

I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Dr. Zeynep Z. Atayurt-Fenge for her brilliant translation of Angela Carter's short story "The Loves of Lady Purple" and for her inspiring lecture on this translation.

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Disclosure Statements

- The author of this article confirms that this research does not require a research ethics committee approval.
- The author of this article confirms that his work complies with the principles of research and publication ethics.
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