

***Fairy Tales about Flowers* by Anna Sakse: Proper Names in Their Latvian Original and Lithuanian Translation**

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Abstract

Personal and place names used in fiction pieces and their translations are one of the ways to reveal the world-view of a nation, to get acquainted with the culture of other nations. For translators of fiction texts, it is very important to perceive the rules of rendering proper names so that the original does not lose its value and the translation reader does not face any difficulties in understanding the meaning of proper names in the text.

The cycle of tales “Tales about Flowers” (“Pasakas par ziediem” [1966]) by Anna Sakse is peculiar in its abundance of proper names. This cycle of tales (33 in total) is characterised by the use of anthroponyms reflecting different cultural environments because the action takes place in various locations around the world, e.g. India, Japan. As the title shows, the author links anthroponyms (both real personal names and personified appellatives) with phytonyms.

Proper names are presented in the Lithuanian translation (“Pasakos apie gėles” [1969], translated by Renata Zajančkauskaitė) in various ways. Usually, Lithuanianised anthroponyms matching the Latvian original ones are mentioned (Latv. *Kamēlija* – Lith. *Kamelija* ‘camellia’). Still, in some cases anthroponyms are changed. Such changes are based on the fact that genders of appropriate titles of plants in Latvian and Lithuanian differ; that is why it is not always possible to simply transfer a Lithuanianised character’s name based on the plant’s title (Latv. *Ķirsis* – Lith. *Vyšnia* ‘cherry’; Latv. *Hiacinte* – Lith. *Hiacintas* ‘hyacinth’). The cycle encompasses some tales where the Lithuanian equivalent of names of characters reflects not the direct translation of the plant’s title but is based on plot turns or special associations (Latv. *Lotoss* ‘lotus’ – Lith. *Lota*). Some cases of cultural shift can be noticed as well (Latv. *Ūdensroze* – Lith. *Vandens lelija* ‘water lily’).

Proper names (personal and place names) used in fiction pieces and their translations are one of the ways to reveal the world-view of a nation, to get acquainted with cultures of other nations. For translators of fiction texts, it is very important to perceive the rules of rendering proper names so that the original does not lose its value and the translation reader does not face any difficulties in understanding the meaning of proper names in the text. The aim of this study is to find out personal and place names in the Latvian original of the cycle of tales *Fairy Tales about Flowers* (*Pasakas par ziediem* [1966]) by the Latvian writer Anna Sakse (1905–1981) and their translation into Lithuanian. The first edition of the fairy tales by Sakse in Lithuanian was published in Lithuania in 1969 under the title *Pasakos apie gėles*; the second edition came out in 2005. The translation was performed by Renata Zajančkauskaitė, an experienced translator who admits she is a fan of the fairy tale genre (she has also translated fairy tales from French) and considers the author’s rich and beautiful language a decisive factor for the selection of a text to be translated (Kanopkaitė 2009). The flower tales appear to be a lucky choice. The visual image of the book is the first to capture the reader’s attention. Both the Latvian and Lithuanian editions analysed have been illustrated with photographs, whereas the original edition in Latvian contains illustrations by the famous Latvian painter Kārlis Sūniņš.

This cycle of tales (33 in total) is characterised by the use of anthroponyms reflecting different cultural environments because the action take place in various locations around the world, e.g. India, Japan. One of the proper name groups – personal names (anthroponyms) and appellatives – is plant names that are related to them (phytonyms). Each fairy tale in the cycle is dedicated to one or several personified flowers and therefore it is of great interest to

analyse the personal names given to the fairy tale characters to see and compare how the translator has reconstructed them in Lithuanian. As the title shows, the author links anthroponyms (both real personal names and personified appellatives) with phytonyms.

This study is based on literary onomastics, i.e. the theory and practice of using anthroponyms, toponyms and other proper names in fiction. Literary anthroponyms perform a specific function: they characterise story characters, relationships among them, give a locally temporal characterisation, etc.

However, so far relatively few studies have been carried out on the translation of anthroponyms. The theoretic statement that anthroponyms (as well as other proper names) need not be translated in fiction but only adapted to the grammatical system of the target language is too simplified and not always applicable or even grounded. “Reproduction of anthroponyms in a literary text cannot be examined separately from the introduction of the word in the original; that is why both the translator’s strategy and the hierarchy of equivalents in reproducing literary proper names are closely linked with the author’s intentions. The translator’s tasks (for instance, when translating fairy tales, children’s books, different literary texts) include also developing the ability to sense connotations related to proper names” (Bormane 2006, 16).

Each of the tales has an original interpretation of the origin of various flowers or other blooming plants (bushes, trees) and their names. “Outer resemblance relates flower fairy tales by Sakse with aetiological folk tales and legends explaining the origin of various natural phenomena. Not only in legends, but in the writer’s fairy tales too, unseen flowers start blossoming in places where heroes have died in a futile attempt to attain their aims they have been striving for” (Daneberga 1990, 108).

The writer tells us about plants of local origin and foreign or exotic plants. The different cultural environments are revealed through anthroponyms as well as plants symbolising realities of a particular nation and its environment. “One can come across stories and motifs from both Latvian and foreign folklore (for instance: *Naktsvijole*, *Puķu zirņītis*, *Persijas ceriņš*, *Kurpītes*, *Hiacinte* and *Narcise*); characters from wonder fairy tales, for instance, dwarfs in the tale *Kurpītes* or a dragon in *Persijas ceriņš*...” (Daneberga 1990, 108).

1. Anthroponyms and phytonyms of foreign origin

When analysing the Latvian text and its translation into Lithuanian, one can see that the greatest challenge is posed by the gender difference between the anthroponym and phytonym (i.e. appellative). The differences can be seen in the fairy tales devoted to phytonyms of foreign origin: *Narcise* (PZ, 38–43) and *Hiacinte* (PZ, 44–49). The main characters of both fairy tales are boys – Narciss and Hiakints. The personal name *Narciss* has originated from the Greek language: “*Narkissos* [Greek *narkē* ‘sleep, numbness’] – a myth. A young man renowned for his beauty who saw his own reflection in a pool, madly fell in love with it, and wasted away to death; a flower called narcissus grew in that place” (Siliņš 1990, 246).

The name of the second man also comes from the Greek language: “*Hiakints* (-k: c-) Greek *Hyakinthos* – a handsome young man and lover of the god Apollo who, as the myth tells, was accidentally killed by Apollo when he was throwing a discus; a sweet-smelling flower grew from his spilled blood” (Siliņš 1990, 153). The plants that grew after the death of both young men have been used in the feminine gender forms (obviously, the Latvian nomenclature word for flower *puķe* has influenced this approach). Yet it should be acknowledged that the name of the flower *Narciss* is never mentioned in the text (either Latvian or Lithuanian); it is related to the personal name only in a descriptive way. In Lithuanian, however, the origin of both Greek anthroponyms and phytonyms corresponds: the word *Narcizas* (PG 2005, 37–43) and the name of the flower *narcizas*; similarly,

Hiacintas (PG 2005, 44–49) and *hiacintas*. That is why there are no difficulties in reproducing them in the translation.

For instance, the phytonym *lotoss* that comes from the Greek word *lōtos* has been used for the above purpose in the fairy tale *Lotoss* (PZ, 106–111). This is the name given to a water plant that is kindred to water lilies and has large leaves and magnificent blossoms (SV 1999, 444). The fairy tale tells about a girl who has been given this name; however, there is a grammatical contradiction as in Latvian *lotoss* is a masculine gender noun (most probably, the choice of the name is connected to the splendour of the blossom and the places where the plant grows).

From the use in the text, it is hard to understand how the anthroponym has been inflected. Judging from the various forms of inflections used throughout the text, it could be either the masculine gender noun of *(i)o-* origin or a feminine gender noun of *i* origin. Sometimes it is an undeclinable word – this is the case when it is used in a group of words where the basic component is inflected. In the text of the Lithuanian translation of *Lotosas* (PG 2005, 104–109), there is neither grammatical nor notional unconformity (in Lithuanian the phytonym *lotosas* is a masculine gender noun), since the translator has given the character a phonetically similar name that has no etymological relation: *radžos duktė Lota* (PG 2005, 104) [the daughter of rajah Lota], *gėlė, kuri primena princesę Lotą* (PG 2005, 109) [a flower resembling princess Lota]. As the female name *Lote* has originated from the name *Šarlote*, which, in turn, has originated from the male personal name *Šarls*, derived from *Karls* from Ancient High German *karl* ‘a decent man’, also Frank *carel* ‘a man’ (Siliņš 1990, 220; 300; 191), the direct link with the cultural environment described in the fairy tale has been lost. However, it is not the most important aspect in this case. The name of princess *Lota* (the dictionary of Lithuanian personal names does not list this shortened form) sounds alien; there is only a formal closeness between the anthroponym and the phytonym. However, since the name is shorter, this kind of substitution allows Lithuanian readers to perceive the text more easily.

2. Conformities between the phytonyms of local and foreign origin

The motivation of using the phytonym of foreign origin in the fairy tale *Gladiola* (PZ, 146–151) is not rooted in the characters’ names but in their occupation. There is a difference between the appellatives in Latvian and Lithuanian. The fairy tale tells about two young men – Teress and Sevts – who became gladiators and were later killed because they rebelled. From the swords that they stuck into the ground there grew flowers. The name of the flower comes from the Latin word *gladiolus* ‘a small sword’ (after sword-shaped leaves), botanically a genus of perennial bulbous flowering plants in the iris family (around 200 species), caulescent plants with large, beautiful blossom spikes (SV 1999, 250). In the Lithuanian translation, the fairy tale has a similar title – *Gladiolės* (PG 2005, 146–151), most probably with the aim to preserve the foreign environment and atmosphere, as well as an occupation characteristic of the Roman Empire (comp. *gladiatorius*).

The names of the flower in many dialects are connected with swords (in Lithuanian *kardas*, *kalavijas*) due to the plant’s long and narrow leaves. The initial source of such motivation was the Latin language. Taking into consideration the fact that flowers grew from swords stuck into the ground, it would be inaccurate to relate their name with the word *kardas* by adding the diminutive element *-elis* that gives a certain connotation of warmth. However, Lithuanians use the local word *kardelis* ‘a little sword’ more often than the foreign word *gladiolė*; a reference to *gladiolė* žr. *kardelis* exists, for instance, in the dictionary of the modern Lithuanian language (DLKŽe), whereas the dictionary of foreign words gives *ntk. (neteiktinas)* – ‘undesired’ (TŽŽ 2001, 271). Bilingual dictionaries display a similar

picture: *gladiola* “*bot. kardelis, gladiolè (Gladiolus)*” (LLŽ 2003, 213) and *kardelis – gladiola* (LLV 1995, 215).

3. Difference in the phytonym genders

When analysing the translation of the Latvian text into Lithuanian, one must take into consideration the grammatical peculiarities of the two related languages; one of them is the difference in noun genders. Sometimes, an unsuccessfully chosen word in the translation destroys the image coded in the fairy tale, in such a way ruining the system and logics in the story development. This has happened to the translation of the fairy tale *Ķirsis* (PZ, 28–31) – *Vyšnia* (PG 2005, 29–31). The main character of the tale is a boy who in the course of events is converted into a cherry tree. This kind of a change is provoked by the boy’s naughtiness. The cherry tree named after the boy is connected with the grammatical system of the language as *cherry* in Latvian is a male gender noun.

In Lithuanian, the phytonym *vyšnia* is a female gender noun and therefore it does not suit for a boy’s name. The translator chooses to tell a story about a girl, yet the perception of the fairy tale does not benefit from the transformation of the kind, since there is a sound stereotype in the reader’s mind: activities undertaken by the characters of the story are usually typical for boys. It is difficult to link the equivalent name of the character in Lithuanian with the events described in the fairy tale. Probably, it would have been wiser to use a word coining possibilities: from the Lithuanian word *vyšnia* and the diminutive *-ukas*, that is one of the most productive endings. Thus, the diminutive male form *Vyšniukas* could have been an option (it would correspond to the Latvian *ķirsītis*). One cannot miss the diversity of diminutive forms used in the translation. They prove the potential of word formation in Lithuanian: *Vyšnia – Vyšnelė – Vyšnaitė*. It is interesting to note that the diminutive is not used once in the original fairy tale, even though the author might have called the tree *ķirsītis*. At the end of the tale, the name of the tree is emphasised pointing to its origin and link to the title of the fairy tale which is a characteristic feature of all the tales in the cycle. In the translation, the gardener respectively addresses his beloved daughter.

Conclusions

After summarising observations about the fairy tale cycle *Pasakas par ziediem* by Anna Sakse and its translation into Lithuanian *Pasakos apie gėles* (translator Renata Zajančkauskaitė), it can be concluded that in the original text the anthroponyms and their phytonyms depict cultural environments of various countries of the world.

There are tales including anthroponyms linked with phytonyms directly: the names can be either actual personal names or personified appellatives, for instance, *Ķirsis*. In other fairy tales the link is indirect.

The translated texts present the same personal names and/or plant names as the source texts, for instance, in the fairy tale *Gladiolēs* (*Gladiola* in the original).

Occasionally, the names in the translation differ from those in Latvian; this approach is justified and necessary because of the grammatical gender distinction in Latvian and Lithuanian which makes a literal translation impossible. For instance, in the fairy tale *Lotoss* the translator tells about princess *Lota* instead of *Lotosas*; a gardener’s daughter who is called *Vyšnia*, instead of a son (fairy tale *Ķirsis*).

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