

The Unbearable Lightness of Naming – Translating Humour in Percival Everett’s *The Trees*

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Abstract: *Names and naming are of primordial importance in the African American tradition, in connection with a multitude of implications. It is common knowledge that during the period of slavery, names were imposed by slave-owners. This resulted in the loss of African names and their connection with African identities bespoke an alienation to the master’s power to define. In the literature of African-American authors, and especially in Percival Everett’s, this comes to add more often than not a humorous effect to his fiction. The Trees features another dimension of naming, the imposition of toponyms on the land as a symbol of the colonization of the continent by predominantly white settlers.*

Keywords: *compensation; irony; undertranslation; satire; translation loss;*

Introduction

The idea for the current analysis of Percival Everett’s humour in the novel *The Trees* stems from two previous articles, Protopopescu (2015) and Protopopescu (2022) in which we analyzed the vocabulary in P. G. Wodehouse’s works as a means of conveying humour. The correlation between the two authors is not coincidental since Everett is the recipient of the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for Comic Fiction for his “powerful and important” novel *The Trees*, which is claimed to best evoke the Wodehousian spirit of “witty characters and perfectly-timed comic phrases” (Bayley n.p.).

With this idea as a starting point of discussion, our analysis is going to look at all forms of humour/satire in the novel, be it in the form of wordplay, puns and so on, delving into the specifics of how Everett employs the various modes of humour. The analysis covers the manner in which instances of specific word use, creative word-formations, synonyms, slang, and expressions are translated into Romanian. We wish to see the effect/impact, both negative and positive, translation has upon the satire contained within *The Trees*. We are going to look into how words and expressions have been translated, what their counterparts mean, and whether the translator’s solution reflects the intention of the source text or strays too much from its intended meaning.

To this end, we are going to adopt Alexander’s point which is relevant to the current analysis:

the manner in which particular aspects of humour and accordingly, too, their appreciation are ‘keyed onto’ the culture in which they are found

... entails us asking, in the case of English verbal humour, how far a knowledge of more than the systemic properties of English in the narrow sense must be presupposed; in short, how far sociocultural and pragmatical knowledge is also required. (Alexander, 8-9)

Names and naming are of primordial importance in the African American tradition, in connection with a multitude of implications. As known during the period of slavery, names were imposed by slave-owners. This resulted in the loss of African names and their connection with African identities bespoke an alienation to the master's power to define. In the literature of African-American authors, and especially in Percival Everett's, this comes to add more often than not a humorous effect to his fiction.

Context is important

To better understand the origins of Everett's humor in *The Trees*, one needs to have some sort of background on the timeline of the events reported in the novel. The timeline of the novel is set in contemporary US. However, the plot of the novel starts from the lynching of a young teenager by the name of Emmett Till in a small town in Mississippi in 1955. This young man is originally from Chicago, but during a holiday in the South finds himself accused of disrespecting a White woman, Carolyn Bryant. Several nights later, her husband, Roy Bryant, and his half-brother J. W. Milam kidnap, beats and shoots the teenager in the head before throwing his dead body into the Tallahatchie River, having previously hung a huge metal fan tied to his neck with barbed wire for added weight.

The criminals are acquitted by a local, all-White jury, but later confess their crime in a paid magazine interview. The result of these events leads to outrage which proved instrumental in the advancement of the Civil Rights movement. This eventually leads to the end of legal segregation in the South.

Fast forward to present day, i.e. 70 years later after the murder, three relatives of the lynchers are found dead. Two of them in small town in Mississippi, one in Chicago. Their deaths are very similar to the Emmett Till killing. The investigation into these crimes is led by the Mississippi Bureau of Investigation, or MBI. Special Detectives Ed Morgan and Jim Davis are on the case, with the help of FBI agent Herberta Hind. All federal law enforcement officers are African American, which creates tensions with the local residents and police and even quarrels over jurisdiction which add racial strains.

Modes of humour

In what follows we are going to refer to those modes of humour which unmistakably set out to ridicule and make fun of people. This is also discussed in more detail in Protopopescu (2022, 417-418) commented from Alexander (11). These types of modes usually appeal to those sharing similar views, particularly in the social, cultural and political sense. In such cases the meaning irrespective of whether they are witty depends on “personal taste, politics, inclination and a whole host of further considerations and factors” (Alexander, 11). The modes included in this group are: ‘irony’, ‘satire’, ‘lampoon’, ‘caricature’, ‘parody’, ‘impersonation’, ‘sarcasm’ and ‘sardonic’. For all intents and purposes of the present analysis, we are interested in irony and satire as the main modes of humor in Percival Everett’s *The Trees*.

It must also be said from the very beginning that although in the translation of humour, the traditional strategy is domestication, Vișan (68) demonstrates that verbal humour can be translated by means of foreignization as well.

Defining the satire in *The Trees*

The Trees can easily be categorized as satire (Feith, 2021, 1). Maus places Everett’s fictional project within the narrower scope of Menippean satire, which is a mode of writing at once similar to and dissimilar from satire. The classical definition of satire is the derision of the “general follies and foibles of humankind, or more pointed social criticism through the indirection of humor” (Maus, 54). The ethos is ironic, and the point of view of the satirist is often one of isolation and moral normativity. Menippean satire, on the other hand, is characterized by its “Harlequin-like variety of literary forms and genres, attacks on various philosophical ideas and attitudes to life and strong hints at the limitations of human understanding” (Maus, 54). Menippean satire often “produces caricature” (Frye, 153) which goes along with the observation that Everett consciously uses clichés in his work where he appears to overturn stereotypes or fixed ideas. At the same time, Everett repeatedly resorts to characters who switch from one idea to another without much coherence as a form of Menippean satire, aimed at mocking.

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT
<p>“At least there’s some color in this joint. I mean besides us.” Jim looked at the walls. They were covered with photos from the fifties and sixties and old tin product signs: Nehi soda, Blue Ribbon biscuit mix. There were also weirdly colorized</p>	<p>– Măcar e un pic de culoare în localul ăsta. În afară de noi, vreau să zic. Jim s-a uitat la pereți. Erau acoperiți cu poze din anii cincizeci și șaizeci și embleme vechi de tinichea cu nume de produse: apă carbogazoasă Nehi, biscuiți asortați Blue Ribbon. Mai</p>

<p>photographs of Elvis Presley and Billy Graham. “So, are we clichés too?” Jim asked. “No, we’re dinosaurs, but we’re not clichés.” (Everett, 2021, 38-9)</p>	<p>erau și niște fotografii colorizate ciudat înfățișându-i pe Elvis și Billy Graham. – Deci și noi suntem niște clișee? a întrebat Jim. – Nu, noi suntem dinozauri, dar clișee nu. (Everett, 2023, 51-2)</p>
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The excerpt above is an illustration of this form of satire aimed at mocking. However, not all cultural references necessarily enrich the Romanian translation. The references to “Nehi soda”, “Blue Ribbon biscuit mix” are lost on the target Romanian audience, since the Romanian readers are not familiar with these two brand names, as they are with Elvis Presley or even Billy Graham. It would have been better if the Romanian translator had opted for translation loss here as in many other cases. A more generic reference to just soda and biscuit mix might have been a better solution. Adding the brand names makes the reading and interpretation more cumbersome, since the target audience does not have a reference of these brands. However, the entire point of this excerpt is contained in the final punchline where the reader is supposed to laugh with the characters and not at them, since the character himself seems to laugh at the entire situation describe in the fragment.

Menippean satire does not encourage a consistent moral point of view. It rather places the author’s voice and the reader within the general flux and bedlam of the world and text. The humor is thus both medium and message.

The Trees features another dimension of naming, the imposition of toponyms on the land as a symbol of the colonization of the continent by predominantly white settlers. The novel’s opening sentence is a satirical gloss on the location, the small town of Money, Mississippi, where the lynching of Emet Till occurred:

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT
<p>“<i>Money</i>, Mississippi, looks exactly like it sounds. Named in that persistent Southern tradition of irony and with the attendant tradition of nescience, the name becomes slightly sad, a marker of self-conscious ignorance that might as well be embraced because, let’s face</p>	<p><i>Parale</i>, Mississippi, arată exact cum sună. Agățat de localitate în acea persistentă tradiție sudică a ironiei, la care se adaugă la fel de tradiționala tinichea în coadă a neștiinței, numele se face parcă nițel trist, o pecete a ignoranței țanțoșe ce-ar putea, până la urmă, să fie primită cu brațele deschise, de vreme ce, hai să</p>

it, it isn't going away" (Everett, 2021, 3).	recunoaștem, de pierit n-o să piară. (Everett, 2023, 11).
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Corpus analysis

Our aim is to analyse the extent to which the Romanian translator managed to render the irony and humour of Everett's text. As can be seen from the few examples offered below, the sarcastic level of the irony seems to be lost in many cases on the Romanian translator who does not show any consistency in the translations of names throughout the book. Below, we offer an example of this inconsistency on part of the translator. These undertones also taint the farcical names given to the suburbs and streets of Money:

Table 1. Toponyms as a symbol of the colonization of the continent by predominantly white settlers

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT
"Small Change" (Everett, 2021, 3)	Mărunțiș (Everett, 2023, 11)
"Nickel Road" (Everett, 2021, 30)	Strada Nickel (Everett, 2023, 43)
"Dime Drive" (Everett, 2021, 65)	Dime Drive (Everett, 2023, 80)

This streak of funny, ridiculous names is pursued with the victims' names: Wheat Bryant, Junior Junior Milam and Granny C, Carolyn Bryant's nickname.

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT
Also at the gathering was <i>Granny C's</i> brother's youngest boy, <i>Junior Junior</i> . His father, J. W. Milam, was called Junior, and so his son was <i>Junior Junior</i> , never <i>J. Junior</i> , never <i>Junior J.</i> , never <i>J. J.</i> , but <i>Junior Junior</i> . The older, called <i>Just Junior</i> after the birth of his son, had died of "the cancer" as <i>Granny C</i> called it some ten years earlier. He passed away within a month of Roy, her husband and <i>Wheat's</i> daddy. (Everett, 2021, 5)	La reuniune era prezent și băiatul cel mai mic al fratelui lui <i>Buni C</i> , <i>Junior Junior</i> . Părintelui său, J.W. Milam, i se spunea Junior, așa că fiul rămăsese <i>Junior Junior</i> , niciodată <i>J. Junior</i> , niciodată <i>Junior J.</i> , niciodată <i>J.J.</i> , ci <i>Junior Junior</i> . Tătâne-su, numit <i>Doar Junior</i> după nașterea fiului, pierise de la „cancer d-ăla”, cum îi spunea, vreo zece ani mai târziu, <i>Buni C</i> . Plecase dintre cei vii la nici o lună după Roy, bărbatul ei și tatăl lui <i>Wheat</i> . (Everett, 2023, 13)

Some of the names in the fragment above are translated into Romanian: *Granny C* = *Buni C*, *Just Junior* = *Doar Junior*, although in this case the

alliteration Junior Junior / Just Junior is not preserved in the target text. The name Wheat on the other hand is left as such in the target text, thus missing completely the irony in the choice of the moniker for a white redneck.

In an additional turn of Everett’s satire, his humour is also targeted at institutions of the state such as the police, or the church. Thus, the local sheriff is *Red Jetty* (where *jetty* might refer either to zăgaz = bank or negru ca smoala = pitch dark), the medical examiner is called *Doctor Reverend Cad* (where *cad* means bādăran, mojić > redneck) and *Fondle* appears to come from the verb ‘to fondle’ = to handle tenderly, lovingly, or lingeringly: CARESS / to touch someone or something sexually, perhaps better rendered as ‘a dezmierda’ in Romanian. His assistant is *Jethro Tull* (recalling the English agriculturalist, who invented the seed drill). The sheriff’s deputies are *Delroy* (i.e. a person, usually a guy, who appears capable of carrying out a task assigned to him, states he is capable, in fact, maybe even brags he is capable, but who fails miserably, and secretly perhaps even covets the negative attention from the failure), *Digby* (ellipsis of Digby chicken. In fishing or cooking, it is a type of dried or cured herring caught at Digby, Nova Scotia and *Braden Brady* (clear alliteration and allusion to rednecks). All the while, the town diner is called *Dinah* the intended misspelling indicating illiteracy. We are going to look into the translation of such instances checking it against the traditional framework of loss and compensation in translation, in the vein of Hervey and Higgins.

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT	TRANSLATION STRATEGIES SUGGESTED TRANSLATION
<i>Red Jetty</i> – the local sheriff	<i>Red Jetty</i>	Translation loss, the target text keeps the English name as such Our suggestion would be towards domestication <i>Roșu Smoală</i>
<i>Doctor Reverend Cad Fondle</i> – the medical examiner	<i>Doctorul reverend Cad Fondle</i>	Partial translation, preservation of the proper name leading to translation loss. The name might also be a possible allusion to the more recent sex scandals plaguing religious figures, especially in the Catholic church, even if Fondle’s flaw is the KKK version of white supremacy rather than pedophilia. Our suggestion would be for domestication and some sort of

		alliteration <i>părintele doctor Mojic Mângâială</i>
<i>Jethro Tull</i> – assistant of the medical examiner	<i>Jethro Tull</i>	Preservation of the proper name leading to translation loss. Given his occupation, our suggestion would be along the lines of <i>Jet Mortoiu</i>
<i>Delroy Digby</i> – sheriff’s deputy	<i>Delroy Digby</i>	Preservation of the proper name leading to translation loss. Again, given the occupation of this character and the meaning explained above this table, we would suggest something along the lines of <i>Gogu Găman</i> .

These names cover a whole array of onomastic humor corresponding to some of the main themes of humor in general, allowing one to draw a crude typology of humor. *Wheat*, *Jetty* and *Tull* (an obsolete form of *till*) (Grâu, Zăgaz/negru ca smoala, Argilă/Tejghea), referring to concrete, prosaic elements, seem to allude to the literal, boorish mores of the rural community of Money. The doubling of the initial consonants in the names of the sheriff’s assistants, *Delroy Digby* and *Braden Brady*, seems to point to intellectual stuttering and lack of imagination. However, these names connect with the derogatory satire of redneck country which Everett achieves in *The Trees*. Critics have noticed that the author usually depicts regional stereotypes about the West and South with lesser intensity (Stewart, 173), but in *The Trees* the satire is ruthless. This seems to be on a par with Thomas Hobbes’s view of the main function of humor as the contempt towards the Other and the creation of a feeling of superiority (Hobbes, 52). It boils down to the traditional distinction between humor and irony. Humor means to laugh with another, irony means to laugh at the other (Feith, 3).

The Black FBI agent in charge, *Herberta Hind*, is nicknamed *Herbie Hind*, a rather lewd suggestion, whereas three Asian American police men and women met in California are called *Ho*, *Chi* and *Minh* (Everett, 2021, 225).

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT	TRANSLATION STRATEGIES SUGGESTED TRANSLATION
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<p><i>Braden Brady</i> – sheriff’s deputy</p>	<p><i>Braden Brady</i></p>	<p><i>Brady</i> is short for <i>Braden</i>, so the repetition in the name is lost on the Romanian translator who preserves the English name. Our suggestion in keeping with the repetition and alliteration would be: <i>Brad Brăduț</i></p>
<p><i>Dinah</i> – the local diner</p>	<p><i>Dinah</i></p>	<p>The irony present in the illiterate spelling of <i>Diner</i> is again lost in translation, which keeps the English name. Our suggestion in keeping with the illiteracy aspect would be: <i>Birtu’</i></p>
<p><i>Wheat</i> – one of the victims</p>	<p><i>Wheat</i></p>	<p>As already explained, there is a prosaic meaning behind the word <i>wheat</i> = grâu We are dealing again with translation loss in the target text. Our suggestion is: <i>Neghiniță</i> which means ‘black sesame’, in opposition to ‘wheat’ which is white, precisely because the character <i>Wheat Bryant</i> is white. His would compensate for the loss of irony in the target text.</p>
<p><i>Herberta Hind</i> – African-American FBI agent in charge</p>	<p><i>Herberta Herbie Hind</i></p>	<p>The meaning of <i>Herbie</i> is that of an unsophisticated person, one who has no knowledge of street life; thus <i>herbette</i>, the female equivalent from Green’s dictionary of slang. <i>Hind</i> is the female of the red deer, or of or forming the part that follows or is behind: REAR / either way the name is humorous, and mildly lewd pun which hinges on the polysemy of phonetic chains, both the double entendre of ambiguous words and the semantic possibilities of alternative parsing.</p>

		This is once again lost in translation. The target text opts for preservation of the English variant, completely missing the irony in the naming. In keeping with the humour and alliteration we would suggest, <i>Fraiera Funduleț</i>
<i>Helvetica Quip</i> – medical examiner	<i>Helvetica Quip</i>	In this case, we are faced with the pairing of the name of a typographic font and a witticism. The target text preserves the English variant missing the irony. Our suggestion would be <i>Helvetica Zeflemea</i> .

Once again, we notice a possible preference for translation loss as strategy, although, given the translator’s inconsistency in translating names throughout the text, this appears to be more a case of not grasping the author’s humour, satire and irony.

The fragment below is yet another illustration of translation loss, lack of familiarity with historical facts. As already mentioned, there are also three Asian American policemen and women ironically named Ho, Chi and Minh. Below we have an illustration of what the translator does or rather, fails to do with the names:

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT
<p>“You won’t be for long,” a deputy sheriff said. “You the guys from Orange County?”</p> <p>“Ho.”</p> <p>“Chi.”</p> <p>“Minh. Riverside Sheriff’s Department.” The woman shook their hands. “Can you spell grisly?” (Everett, 2021, 225)</p>	<p>– O să-ți treacă repede, a zis o ajutoare de șerif. Sunteți din districtul Orange?</p> <p>– Ho.</p> <p>– Chi.</p> <p>– Minh. Biroul șerifului din Riverside, s-a prezentat femeia întinzându-le mâna. Măcel, știi ce zic? (Everett, 2023, 244)</p>

Ho Chi Minh was a Vietnamese communist revolutionary, a nationalist, and a politician, who served as prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam from 1945 to 1955 and as president from 1945 until his death in 1969.

The accepted Romanian equivalent is *Ho Și Min*. This is also well known among Romanian speakers, especially those who lived before 1989 as a bus station in Bucharest had been named after the Vietnamese revolutionary. Therefore, it comes as a surprise that the translator, who lived through those times, misses this point and opts for the preservation of the English version of the names.

A very humorous situation occurs around the mentioning of death in the excerpt below:

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT
<p>“We do have a pauper’s coffin. We sell them to the county for unidentified and unclaimed corpses.”</p> <p>“How much?”</p> <p>“Four hundred.”</p> <p>Daisy whistled.</p> <p>“Three hundred dollars.”</p> <p>“<i>I can live with that.</i>”</p> <p>“I guess <i>Junior Junior</i> will have to as well,” Easy said.</p> <p>“Damn straight,” Daisy said.</p> <p>“I have someone waiting, Mrs. Milam. I am very pleased that the <i>Easy Rest</i> is going to see you through this.” He stood up.</p> <p>“Yeah, right,” Daisy said.</p> <p>“Sylvia out there will help you with the paperwork.”</p> <p>Outside <i>Easy’s</i> office, Daisy looked at Charlene in her yellow halter.</p> <p>“What was it like?” Charlene asked.</p> <p>“Creepy,” Daisy said. “Good luck.” (Everett, 2021, 86-7)</p>	<p>– Avem și coșciuge destinate celor pauperi. Le vindem celor de la administrația publică locală pentru cadavre neidentificate și nerevendicate.</p> <p>– Cât îi?</p> <p>– Patru sute.</p> <p>Daisy a șuierat printre dinți.</p> <p>– Trei sute de dolari, atunci, a spus Easy.</p> <p>– <i>Cu asta mă mai împac.</i></p> <p>– <i>Cred că și Junior Junior va trebui să o facă.</i></p> <p>– Păi, chiar c-așa.</p> <p>– Mai așteaptă cineva, doamnă Milam. Mă bucur nespun că <i>Somn Ușor</i> vă va asista în aceste momente grele.</p> <p>Antreprenorul s-a ridicat de pe scaun.</p> <p>– Mda, în fine, a zis Daisy.</p> <p>– Sylvia, dincolo, vă va ajuta cu hârtiile.</p> <p>La ieșirea din biroul lui <i>Easy</i>, Daisy a dat cu ochii de Charlene, în bluza ei galbenă.</p> <p>– Cum fu, mă? a întrebat Charlene.</p> <p>– De groază, a zis Daisy. Baftă. (Everett, 2023, 99-100)</p>

Let us take a closer look at the punch line “*I can live with that.*” / “I guess *Junior Junior will have to* as well,” translated as – *Cu asta mă mai împac.* / – *Cred că și Junior Junior va trebui să o facă.* The translator captured the meaning, but failed to render the play-upon-words, the use of the verb ‘live’ about a person, Junior Junior, that is already dead. The verb ‘a se împăca’ meaning ‘to make peace’ obviously does not capture the pun used about life and death, so in this instance, the translator faces another translation loss of the humour of the situation.

Incidentally, this paragraph also makes use of another instance of play-upon-words in the case of *Easy*, proper name of the owner of the funeral parlour *Easy Rest*. As in other cases, the translator fails to capture the pun, since he preserves the proper name in its English version, but translates the name of the funeral parlour, as *Somn Ușor*, an equivalent of the phrase ‘sleep tight’. Of course, one might argue that the adjective *ușor*, also means easy in English, however the literal interpretation of *Somn Ușor* as ‘Sleep Easy’ would be completely lost on the target audience. This leads one, once again, to the issue of inconsistency in the translation of names throughout the novel. Why would the translator choose to render the name of the funeral parlour into Romanian but leave the name of the owner, who chose that name for obvious reasons, untranslated?

One better example of rendering the humour in the novel is the fragment below, where there is again talk about the body of the black person that keeps on popping up at the crime scene of each crime just to mysteriously disappear and the reappear at the following crime scene, holding in his hands the removed genitals of the following victim. The detectives discuss the scene in front of their eyes and upon referring to the body of the black man one of them questions his state of death so the other detective humorously replies that the guy is dead ‘on and off’, a scientifically impossible achievement, but since the same body keeps on appearing, disappearing and then reappearing, the statement ‘on and off’ starts to make more sense.

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT
“Lord, have mercy. What’s that?” “That’s a human being,” Ed said. “Somebody did that to another human being. Do you recognize him?” The second man shook his head. “He must be dead. Is he dead?” “ <i>On and off</i> ,” Jim said. (Everett, 2021, 79)	– Doamne apără și păzește. Ce-i colo? – Colo e o ființă umană, i-a explicat Ed. Cineva i-a explicat asta altei ființe umane. Îl recunoști? Al doilea barman a scuturat din cap. – Musai că-i mort. Îi mort? – <i>Cu unele întreruperi</i> , a zis Jim. (Everett, 2023, 91)

The target text correctly renders the meaning ‘of on and off’ into Romanian, but there is an awkwardness linked to its humorous interpretation in the context of the guy being dead. Perhaps, a better solution to this puzzle would have been a reply along the lines of ‘Este mort? / Uneori da, alteori nu. // Este mort? / Cât de cât.’ Meaning that sometimes he is dead and some other times he is not, which would obviously be a paradox and that in turn leads to the humorous interpretation intended by Everett.

Another instance of double entendre is given by the use of the verb ‘exude’ with either the meaning of ‘exude charm’ or ‘exude an unpleasant smell’. The verb is marked as formal, it is used in scientific discourse, so the translator made the right choice of a similar, scientific and formal term in Romanian ‘a emana’ meaning ‘to emanate’.

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT
“I’m telling you to be careful,” Ed said. “I can’t help it if I <i>exude</i> charm.” “Well, do me and yourself and maybe Dixie there a favor and try <i>not to do so much exuding</i> .” “I’ll do my best,” Jim said. “You just <i>control your intake of fatty foods</i> .” (Everett, 2021, 39)	– Eu îți zic să ai grijă, și-a prevenit Ed colegul. – N-am ce să fac dacă <i>emana</i> șarm. – Hai, mă, fă-mi un favor mie, ție și poate și lui Dixie, și <i>încearcă să nu te întreci cu emanatul</i> . – O să fac tot ce pot, a zis Jim. Tu numai <i>controlează câtă mâncare slinoasă bagi în tine</i> . (Everett, 2023, 52)

Not the same can be said about the last line in the excerpt above. The tone is formal, the author uses medical terms such as ‘intake’ and ‘fatty foods’. In the Romanian translation, we have a sudden change in register. Thus, the noun ‘intake’ is changed into a verbal phrase ‘a băga în cineva’, which means to gobble down large amounts of food, or to stuff one’s face. The term ‘fatty foods’ becomes ‘mâncare slinoasă’. The adjective ‘slinos’ may refer to the idea of ‘fat/fatty’, but it is actually associated with the idea that something is either ‘unkempt’ if used about clothing, or ‘greasy’, and it is a highly colloquial word. So, in this context, ‘fatty foods’ being translated by an equivalent of ‘greasy food’, leads to a change in register from highly formal/medical to highly informal/colloquial.

A final excerpt, where translation loss is incurred, is illustrated below:

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT
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<p>“The State of Mississippi thinks we’re just a bunch of <i>rednecks</i> can’t take care of ourselves or our business,” Fondle said.</p> <p>“Well, we <i>is</i> just a bunch of <i>rednecks</i>,” one of the men said, and the others chuckled. “<i>Peckerwood Power</i>.” He raised his fist. (Everett, 2021, 101)</p>	<p>– Statu’ Mississippi ne cred-o mână de <i>mârlani</i> care nu-i în stare să avem grijă de noi și de daravelele noastre, l-a lămurit Fondle.</p> <p>– Păi, iote, <i>așa și îi</i>, a zis unul dintre bărbați, făcându-i să chicotească. <i>Mârlănia la putere!</i> A strigat cu pumnul ridicat în aer. (Everett, 2023, 116)</p>
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Here, Everett employs two slurs related to white rural men in the Southern United States: redneck and peckerwood. ‘Redneck’ is a derogatory term mainly, but not exclusively, applied to white Americans who are perceived to be crass and unsophisticated, related to rural white people of the Southern United States.’ Peckerwood’, on the other hand is an alternative term used for a ‘woodpecker’ which is also used in the Southern United States. It is also used as a racial epithet for white people, especially poor rural whites. Interestingly, the term was in use as an inversion of ‘woodpecker’ with the meaning referring to white people in the second half of the nineteenth century. Here, Everett seems to pay homage to the African-American folklore in the that put the white ‘peckerwood’ bird in contrast with the African-American ‘blackbird’.

In this case, the Romanian translator ironically chose consistency, both redneck and peckerwood being translated as *mârlan/mârlănie*, so the entire lore of the two terms discussed above is completely lost on the Romanian reader.

Conclusions

The translator fails to capture the irony/satire present in the naming of both characters and places in *The Trees*. As shown, there are some feeble attempts to translate some of the names, but the translator fails to understand the cultural and ironical hints in many cases. This obviously leads to a form of translation loss where the reader cannot grasp the level of irony and satire conveyed in the source text.

Apart from the weak understanding of cultural references, the source text displays a large amount of inconsistency throughout the translation of names. Some are translated, while most are not, which leads one to wonder not only about the translator’s choices, but also on the editor’s revision of the text.

Failure to render the humor and double entendre, resulting into translation loss, even omissions in certain cases, leads us to believe that while attempting to preserve the colloquial flavour of the novel, the translator missed

on the more important contextual clues of names throughout the novel. To his end, we have attempted to offer our own solutions to make up for the constant translation loss or undertranslation experienced by the target reader who is faced with this Romanian translation of the text.

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