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ETHICS IN TRANSLATION:
AN EXPLORATION THROUGH ART, DRAMATIZATION,
LITERARY AND POLITICAL TEXTS

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Abstract

Ethics in Translation:
An Exploration through Art, Dramatization, Literary and Political Texts

Noga Barokass-Emanuel

In Foucauldian theory, any interpretation is an act of violence, since no text is ever stable and fixed in its meaning. Underlying my thesis is the idea that all *translation is interpretation*. As such, an ethics of translation can only be found in and measured by the amount of violence, which a translation enacts upon its Source Text. Translation Theorists such as Antoine Berman and Lawrence Venuti have produced useful terms by which to define the kinds of textual violence involved in the translative process: "potentiation", "mythical transformation", domestication and "resistancy". I have applied these terms as parameters in attempting to isolate and analyze the translative process in areas other than textual, namely in Visual Arts and Television dramatizations. In these areas, the violent element in the translation from one medium into another is readily perceptible, as compared with linguistic translation, where violence can take place without the reader's awareness of it. From that point onward, the thesis looks at prominent texts from history and literature, which in translation misinterpreted their sources, and their consequences. One such case is the story of Shylock, initially a translated character, who gained mythical notoriety through dissemination in translation in many cultures. Other examples involve other historical, mainly anti-Semitic icons whose integration into public consciousness owed its success to their politically-motivated *mis*translation of authoritative texts. In my conclusion to the question of ethics in translation, I put the onus on the translator by equating him/her with what is generally understood to be Chomsky's moral intellectual. My ethical translator will be responsive to the need of the source text to remain inviolable through translation. That would compel the translator to excavate the source text until fully acquainted with it, thus making sure that its translation would be as close to its authentic essence as possible.

Acknowledgements

To
Periel Emanuel
my beloved son

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1 Introduction

The process of translation can best be described, defined and understood as a cultural system of forces closely associated with the intellectual, aesthetic and ethical trends of the day. The study of an ethics of translation these days has to pass through a modern sensibility that takes into account the obligation of mainstream cultures to provide intellectual space, validity and dignity to a cultural multiplicity of many competing colors and flavors. The mainstay of this movement in translation is the respect owed to the authenticity of source texts. Thus, *otherness*, the different*ness* of the original must be somehow present in the translation of that same text. If a translation fails this dictum or disregards it, all sorts of predictable and unpredictable results and sometimes mischief may ensue.

It is important to specify at this time the underlying principle in my thesis, which might be characterized as Foucauldian. A translation, any translation, is always an interpretation. Foucault often sounded deep reservations about the possibility of a truly ethical interpretation. No text can ever have a moment when it is stable and fixed in meaning. An interpretation, being a text itself, requires further commentary. Everything is already interpretation. No sign, no word, holds a precise interpretation for Foucault, "Between word and image, between what is depicted by language and what is uttered ... the unity begins to dissolve; a single and identical meaning is not immediately common to them. And if it is true that the image still has the function of speaking, of transmitting something consubstantial with language, we must recognize that it already no longer says

the *same thing.*[1] And interpretation is always a violation of the underlying text, i.e. the

original message. In this perspective, all translation is achieved through a violation of the

source text. The question remains, then, how do we define and analyze this translative

violence with a view to containing it and minimizing its harmful consequences. In other

words, how do we arrive at an ethics of translation?

In searching for a satisfactory answer, I am going to fit the question of Ethics in

Translation within a broader context of Art, Literature and popular culture, as well as cast

a look at political translation. The constitutive elements of culture are language, art,

literature, religion, politics, tradition, geographical affiliation, common friends, common

enemies, music, songs, folklore, food, etc. Translation draws upon all of them, while at

the same time, works in each of these areas on a micro level, as a matter of inevitability. I

have chosen four areas in which to make my inquiries: Visual Art, Dramatization,

Literature, and Politics. In analyzing examples in these domains to define and explain

ethical nuances in the translative process, I have decided to make use of four principal

translative terms. These four terms are derived from the writings of two important and

lucid translation theorists: Antoine Berman and Lawrence Venuti. *"domestication"* and

"resistancy"[2] are Venuti's inventions in trying to define the different ethical attitudes and

practices of translators. *"Potentiation"*, and *"mythical transformation"*[3] are terms created

by Antoine Berman, describing certain movements of thought in translation embraced by

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[1] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason,* translated by Richard Howard, New York: Random House, 1965, p. 18.
[2] Venuti, Lawrence, *The Translator's Invisibility,* Routledge, London, 1995
[3] Berman, Antoine, *The Experience of the Foreign,* Translated by S. Heyvaert, State University of New York Press, 1992, pp. 106, 126

German Romantic translators, which can be applied to translation in a universal way. All of these terms will be utilized in the following analyses.

In a process of translation, five major participants have to be considered:

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┌─────────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ An existing, pre-translated │        │ The post translative product,│
│ knowable created achievement│        │ equally distinct, recognizable│
│ in its primary form, as     │◄──────►│ and appreciable in its new   │
│ produced by its conceiver   │        │ form; and                    │
│ and seen, perceived and     │        │                              │
│ understood by the viewer,   │        │                              │
│ which stand in relation to: │        │                              │
└─────────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────────┘
           ▲ │                                    ▲ │
           │ ▼                                    │ ▼
┌─────────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ The Original Language in    │        │ The Target Language          │
│ which the work is written   │        │                              │
└─────────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────────┘
              ╲                              ╱
               ╲                            ╱
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ The translator as the messenger, the re-creator of form and contents│
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Figure 1. Configuration of the five factors in translation

There is a crisscross of interior nervous tensions among these five factors. An obvious tug of war exists between the underlying work and the text that is being written by the translator. Both texts are decisively pulled away from each other by the language, culture and expectations of their prospective readerships. Also each text stands in a somewhat tense distance from its own language. The underlying text[4] is not easily contained in the

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[4] "Underlying text", "original text" and "source text" are three more or less interchangeable terms that are used here to indicate the text on which the translator works from, the text being translated.

language it uses; it strains away from it. The same dynamic is mirrored in the way the Target text wrestles with the boundaries of its own language. Another factor, the target readership, imposes its own set of expectations upon the translator with its demand for a lucid, readable, familiar linguistic and cultural landscape. Translators act as arbiters for the conflicting interests of their source and target languages, having to settle disputes at every sentence that is being studied and translated. Each of these decisions is a compromise, a choice of one alternative over the other. They are never final, absolute solutions. They are always either an approximation or a substitute. Herein lies the ever-present angst of our Scrupulous Translator. This quasi-creator is forever bound by the textual limits of the work, his/her own textual production always relative, ancillary in nature, serving two masters who will not let the translator speak in his or her own voice.

It is safe to conclude, I think, that translators are always flawed messengers. A gnawing suspicion besets their target clients: whom do these messengers serve? What is their secret agenda? I realize that it may look as if I subscribe to a rather bleak view of the translation possibility. I wish to disabuse my reader of any such notion. I consider Translation to be a primary underpinning of cultural and intercultural exchange and growth, without which our world would look definitely different and more ominous. Imagine our modern consciousness without translation: no bible, no Homer, Dante, Sheherezade, Erasmus, Galileo, or even Marx, Freud, Foucault. The world would be made up of hermetic national-ethnic entities, linguistically isolated from each other, unable to communicate. There would be no osmosis of ideas and information. Each consolidated group would be viewing the other as a totally alien and inherently hostile

society. Indeed, God tried this formula once, in Babel, but His experiment failed, because humankind cannot subsist without the companionship of constant, energetic bartering of culture, economics, ideas, information. No, Translation, a highly flawed craft (or art), is a major force in the communication of narratives in the marketplace of free-floating ideas.

2 Translation Metaphors

Before getting down to the nitty-gritty of my thesis, I would like to take you on a little

detour, not too far away. I wish to indulge myself a little by trying to find some material

way of demonstrating what the translation process is like. I have brought three yarns for

you to spin, the first involves a very domestic scene, the second – a sensual image, and

the third is an allegory from fairy tale lands. Here they are:

Rothschild and Bill Gates

William Brown is a typical eleven-year old boy who hates school and loves candy. My

own eleven-year old boy, for whom William is a trusted ally and a kindred spirit, keenly

identifies with William's insouciance about life and the strangeness of adult rationality.

He is so enchanted with this friend that he talks like him, thinks like him and

wholeheartedly embraces his philosophical views on the pointlessness of schooling and

the delights of candy. It does not matter to my boy that William Brown fictionally lives in

the early decades of the twentieth century in a rural area in England. Their interests and

feelings converge in spite of the enormous gap in time, culture, technological

development and historical realities that separates them. My son is very receptive to

whatever grievances or joys William experiences. William's story travels well over time,

at least for this young member of the book's target audience. Richmal Compton's

character and story do not require translation into present day vernacular.

One day, enjoying a freshly arrived book on William's exploits, my son's idyllic relationship with his friend screeched to a halt- temporarily. In that story, William earns a sixpence for helping someone and goes to his favorite candy store to buy himself a treat. William is described as eyeing the array of sweets on the counter "with an air of a Rothschild". "Who", my son asked, at a complete loss, 'is Rothschild?" His father, surprised by this generational gap, proceeded to explain what that name stands for (for him!): Fabulously rich and influential family that lived, still does in England, etc. William's real life friend was clearly dissatisfied with the explanation. It gave details but did not convey to him why William mentions him. "Rothschild" plus explanation *did not make him feel like William does*. He turned to his mother. Taking the easy way out, I shortly (and rather irresponsibly) explained: "Rothschild at the time William lived was like Bill Gates to you." My son's face cleared. All fell into place. William once more became a lucid persona for him.

Rothschild and Bill Gates? Can one name be substituted for the other with impunity? On one hand, for the person who is familiar with both names, the two are nothing like each other: they inhabit different spaces of times, cultures, social spheres and languages (based on George Bernard Shaw's truism that Americans no longer speak English.). On the other hand, for the fresh, uncluttered mind of a schoolboy, the exchange is welcome. The translation does the job, so to speak. It does what the reader expects it to and allows him to enjoy reading a text uninterrupted by puzzling, exotic pieces of information.

However, what might be a "good" translation for the reader, because of its transparency and lucidity, is not necessarily a valid or an ethical translation for the scrupulous translator. Attempting to intra-translate the books of "Just William" from its Roaring Twenties kind of upper middle class, rural British-English into an early Third Millennial North-American kind of English, translators would be hard-pressed to compromise their professional integrity and ethics in favor of clarity and smooth reading. Should our ST (Scrupulous Translator) risk "offending" their young target audience by clinging to old-fashioned grids of reference? What would be the point of translation if the result were that very few kids read the book? On the other hand, what is the point of reading if not to spur young minds to explore unfamiliar, uncharted territories? [5] This tiny example, innocuous and insignificant as it is, reveals a host of problems baffling translators, as they plod through a text.

Kissing through a Veil

A Hebrew adage much liked by Hebrew writers maintains that translation is akin to kissing through a veil. If we stretch the imagery implied here, we could say that the thickness of the veil is a measure of the successful translation. However, even when the veil is gossamer thin, still it is an obstacle to genuine intimacy. It does not mean that the parties might not derive some degree of pleasure or clarity from the activity, only that it would be a polluted experience, almost a facsimile of the real thing. Translation, in and of

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[5] Upon the much ado'ed arrival of the seventh installment in JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* saga, a mini linguistic storm erupted when it was found out the book has been "Americanized" to fit young readers's familiarity with their own brand of the English language. Canadian kids got the original, unadapted British version. Obviously, American kids were spared the extra mental exertion that reading a few unfamiliar idioms and spellings would entail, while Canadian kids were adjudged to be up to the challenge.

itself, also separates the writer of any given text from their target audience. The translator inserts him-or-herself between the message giver and its would-be recipients to act as mediator. And mediation, like the veil, diminishes the intensity and the quality of the message.

Shadows in the Mirror

> "And moving through the mirror clear
> That hangs before her all the year,
> Shadows of the world appear.
> But in her web she still delights
> To weave the mirror's magic sights."
>
> From: *The Lady of Shalott*,
> By Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Tennyson's 1832 poem "The Lady of Shalott" summons Arthurian mythology as its setting. It is the story of Elaine, a beautiful maiden who lives on an isolated island. Her life is fettered by a curse that forbids her forever to look out of the window on real life and nature. To circumvent the curse, a mirror, placed in front of the window, reflects on its surface the images of life outside. The lady sits before the mirror, looks at these reflected images of life and weaves them onto the fabric of her embroidery. One day this unfortunate damsel falls in love with Lancelot, a shining knight of the round table, whose reflection darts across her mirror as he rides his horse on his way to Camelot. Love struck by this splendid specimen of masculinity, she turns to the window to have a direct look at him, without the mediation of the mirror. Her thoughtless action triggers the mechanism of the curse, and she dies. She does not know what the reader knows about Lancelot, that

he was Arthur's most cherished knight who had betrayed his trust by committing adultery with Arthur's wife, Guinevere.

As an allegory, this poem contrives to illustrate the antagonistic, though *inter*dependent, relationship between nature and art. But the poem goes beyond the rather cliché metaphor of art imitating nature. The allegory can be further unfurled to better understand and illuminate the process of translation. Elaine is both artist and translator. On her embroidered art she captures images of life – that makes her an artist. But those images are not life experienced at first hand. They are reflections of life – deemed "shadows" by the poet - which flicker across the shiny surface of a framed mirror. What's more, this particular artist is exposed to fractions of life, and not life in its entire existential knowledge. The edges of the mirror enclose the images reflected on its surface, rendering them measurable, predictable and incomplete. They are measurable by virtue of their proportionality to the frame; predictable, because the mirror is fixed and therefore reflects the same landscape at all times; incomplete, because the watcher can only observe what is reflected within the boundaries of the mirror, and excludes the possibility of knowing what happens immediately outside the frame. It is not life that Elaine of Shalott depicts on her fabric but framed images – that makes her a translator. The essence she captures on her fabric – the medium of her art, has traversed through two agencies: the mirror, and Elaine's own sensibility and talent. Her final product is twice removed from life. Elaine is placed in a unique position, of being both artist and translator.

What is the distinction between the two? The simple answer is: an artist looks upon life and depicts it in artistic form; a translator looks upon artificial representations of life and recreates them in different form. However, isn't translation intrinsic to the artistic creation? An artist translates his/her own intensely personal perceptions into a certain tangible, knowable aesthetic form. By the same token, a writer translates his/her impressions and ideas of life into a text, circumscribed within certain pre-determined boundaries, producing a beautiful, coherent, communicable fabrication. In both artist and writer, there is a movement from one point to another; this movement is the translative movement.

3 Translation, Art and Drama

Translation negotiates between media of art, between literary genres, between discourse and visual art. My position is that these modes of translation mirror each other; understanding one genre can help illuminate the others. The better to dissect and figure out the dynamics of translation, I have tried to identify and isolate what I call *the translative process* in areas not immediately recognized as translation: art and dramatization. Going into these other modes of cultural transfer and mediation, I shall look at the way certain translative characteristics involved in the artistic and dramatic process stand out and are readily perceivable; much more so than in the regular field of linguistic translation. For this purpose, I will first look at how translation is an important muscle in the creative process of visual art. Secondly, I will attempt to show how the ever-popular dramatizations of classical novels are in fact translations of the written/reading experience into the audiovisual/viewing experience, subject to all the usual problems and illuminations that beleaguer regular translations.

For the visual art analysis, I have chosen to look at a certain creative practice, wherein an object in one art form inspires the artist to try re-creating it in another art form. For my second study in novel/ TV dramatization, I have chosen to examine two adaptations for television of my favorite author Jane Austen's novel "Pride and Prejudice" (P&P). Following these analyses, I will turn to Antoine Berman and Lawrence Venuti, my two venerated theoreticians in Translation Studies, in order to extrapolate from the arts and drama examples into the translation process in its traditional form.

Figure 2. Horse's Head, by Bertha Shenker
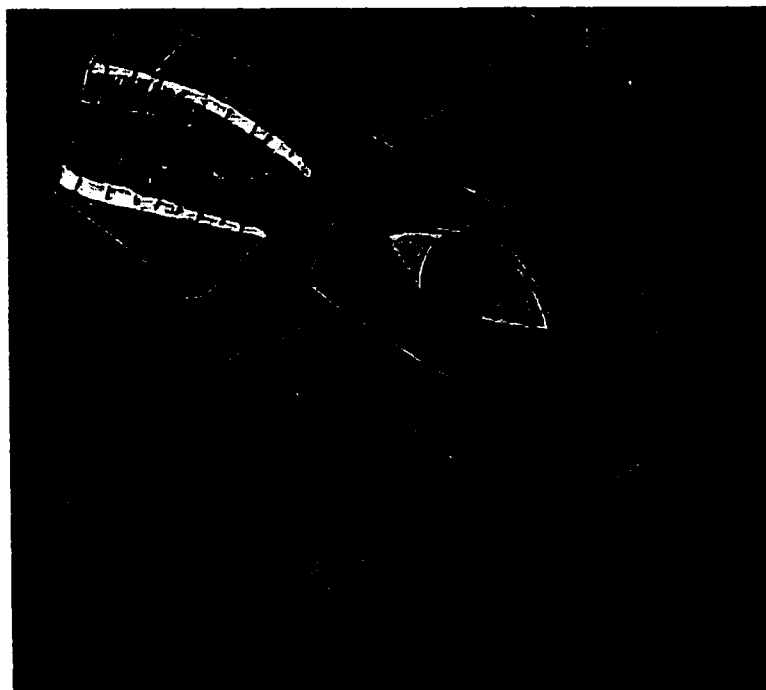
Figure 3. Wooden figurine

Translation as Mediation in Visual Art

An artist creates an abstract idea that exists in his/her mind in matter (rock, bronze, marble, plastic, wood etc.) A painter looks at this sculpture, seizes upon its idea and tries to recreate it in painting. When we look at the sculpture, what we see is the translation of a disembodied image into tactile form, a tangible representation of an idea, which exists in the artist's mind. When we look at the painting, we see a secondary translation, an ancillary reproduction of the materialized idea expressed in the sculpture. Is it the sculpture that inspired the painting or is it what the painter perceives as the idea that originally inspired the sculptor, or is it a purely new creation, an original?

Equus

Bertha Shenker is a Montreal painter, whose unfussy paintings (empty spaces, few objects, mostly understated colors with the occasional splash) suggest an unlikely pairing of humor and dread. One of her paintings is that of a horse's head shown in profile against a greenish solid backdrop, its mouth open, its teeth – large and strong- are partly colored in bright red. The painting has a somewhat menacing allure. Intrigued, I asked the artist what was the meaning of this painting. The red painted teeth, obviously suggestive of blood, prompted my difficulty: horses are not animals of prey. She told me that she had painted the head from a small wooden figurine of a horse, a piece of Thai handicraft that she had at her home. What had struck her most about the figurine was its implied violence, which she tried to bring out in her own rendition of the image. The

"bloody" mouth of the horse was her own interpretation of the red painted teeth of the wooden figurine.

Three interesting points emerge from this story: **a.** that looking at the painting, I was immediately struck by its sinister aspect; **b.** that the artist herself had been similarly impressed as she looked at the original horse figurine, the underlying object, which she had translated into a painting; and most importantly, **c.** that the artist chose to paint only a fraction of the original figurine. In order to convey the idea of the horse's violence, it was not necessary to depict all of it; only the part that best represented that quality.

Later, when I saw the original figurine for myself, I found it was quite appealing and not at all menacing. It was a decorative piece of handicraft, clearly folkloristic in style. The horse itself was not one of those graceful, slim and sleek specimen, which would normally be associated with art (Degas' race horses come to mind). It looked more like a workhorse, broad, heavy and docile, with one leg extended forward, as if prancing. The mouth, wide open, teeth painted red, looked like a grin rather than a snarl. Bertha Shenker's painting of the horse's head was indeed accurate in its details. While translating the small sculpture line for line to her canvass, she had managed to saturate it with her own sense of apprehension. The artist's painting is by no means folkloristic. It is a product of someone firmly planted within the cultural context of her time. In Western literature and art, when a horse shows up, it generally implies vigor, masculinity, potency and power.[6] The horse is also strongly associated with female angst about sexuality and

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[6] Acherman, Diane, *A Natural History of Love*, Vintage Books, New York, 1995 pp. 196-217

the repressive legacy of patriarchy.[7] Within this context, I, as a viewer, am a sympathetic recipient of her representation. Her rendition of the horse intersects with my own predisposition to understand it.

What is compelling about the artist's interpretation can be extended to all translations. She looked at a certain object, yanked it not only from its three-dimensional form but from its cultural berth, first mutilated and then recreated the severed head by painting it in terms of colors and two-dimensionality, voided it of its folkloristic meaning and refilled the empty icon with her own culturally-bound fears. The finished product was not an accurate, viable translation of that figurine. It was a creation of her imagination. The original product served only as a mechanism to trigger off her creative genius. Translation took place, but only as a means of getting to the end result of artistic creation. The bottom line is that the artist, a mediator between ideas and art, completely took possession of the meaning and form of the figurine and then modified it.

The Ladies of Avignon

Every translation does violence to the original creation, be it textual or visual. In art, our response to this kind of violence ranges from toleration and appreciation to admiration. Picasso took a look at French painter Jean Ingres' (1780-1867) painting "In the Seraglio"

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[7] John Menard, in *Charlotte Bronte and Sexuality* illustrates this point very aptly by bringing up the case in *Jane Eyre*. The first time that Jane sees Rochester, he comes galloping on a strong horse. Typically and prophetically, she manages to upset the horse, and Rochester is thrown off. This scene is a miniature representation of the sexual politics and the power struggle between the patriarchal Rochester and the free-spirited Jane, which subversively sustains the entire action of this remarkable novel. The conclusion of the novel makes the man/horse equation very clear: there is no longer any mention or even a possibility of horse riding for the blind and maimed Rochester who is led by the hand by Jane.

and translated it into his celebrated groundbreaking painting "Les Demoiselles

d'Avingon" (1907). The women, ostensibly prostitutes, in Picasso's rendition, had faces

like African masks, devoid of any expression. He removed all the trimmings that could

consign the painted room to a distinct cultural location. He solidified the background and

twisted the women's poses almost out of shape. Gone were Ingres' classical loving

details of female mystique and plump sensuality. In his painting, Picasso ushered in the

harsh, unflattering reality of sexuality as a wasting profession; hideous, unacknowledged

women as furniture claustrophobically piled into anonymous, empty space. Picasso's

translation of the classical painting was again laden with the violence associated with the

process. Picasso, true to his ravenous nature, absorbed the original product and produced

his interpretation of the theme. Ingres' painting was the embodiment of the aesthetic

school lauded by the Académie Française. Picasso translated the masterpiece into

modernistic aesthetics, fashioning new modes of expression as he was working.

Translation was necessary to achieve an aesthetic, as well as social, revolution in art. The

finished product was not so much in the spirit and fashion of the times, as it was a

trendsetter[8]. It did not take long for Picasso's new aesthetics to rule the day in the art

world. The translation took precedence over the original, which proves again that in art,

we are much more inclined to accept and even admire transforming translation,

celebrating them as authentic achievements. We are much less likely to follow suit when

textual translation takes place. In linguistic translation, ethics is a dominant constituent in

its purpose. There is an implied agreement between the original work and the translator

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[8] The painting, or a version of it, makes an interesting appearance in the grandiose and otherwise not too subtle 1996 movie "Titanic". It was a recent acquisition by Rose, the young heroine of the film, which was to symbolize both her modernity and her inner turmoil upon being thrust, as a virgin offering, into a marriage of convenience with a rich brute.

that the product of translation will reproduce its authentic message. Deviation from this agreement exposes the translator to criticism and maybe requests for revision. Translation almost never achieves a final, absolute status. Translation, in its textual mode, is as ethically measurable as any other literary form. By comparison, in art, we are predisposed to accept the artist's (displayed) creation as immutable, as the direct product of the artist's genius. There is no pact between the artist and that, which had triggered the production of that particular work of art. Artists are allowed the freedom to feed their inspiration where and when they choose, without being obliged to acknowledge or revere their sources. In that respect, art seems to stand outside morality.

Between the Written Word and Visual Drama:
Pride & Prejudice on Television

Why is it useful to look at translation in the context of a television dramatization, and what is the primary difference between the two processes? By comparing and contrasting the act of translation and the act of dramatization, it is easier to highlight the difficulties and solutions inherent in both, but much more discernible in the latter. People watching a dramatized version of a novel are generally familiar with the novel or will become familiar with it afterwards, when they proceed to read the novel as a result of the movie. In this sense, both the original work and the dramatized version are equally known and knowable. Not so in textual translation. Very few people who read a book or a document in translation will try to revert to its original form. For most readers, the language barrier is insurmountable. As a direct consequence of this difference, a dramatized interpretation

of a novel is always only one version among others, just as likely, interpretations. Every novel reader has already formed an imaginary adaptation. Therefore, the relationship between the underlying text and the post-translative product – the visual dramatization – is much more explicit and visible than the one existing between the source-target texts. The latter relationship is probably best known by the translator who performed the work and a handful of reviewers who may be familiar with the original.

Dramatizations of Jane Austen's *Pride & Prejudice* (P&P) have been attempted many times, on the stage, in the movies and for television. The two versions I have chosen to analyze were both made by the BBC, and are probably the best known adaptations for the novel. The earlier version was done in 1982. Fay Weldon, an Australian-born British writer who, besides writing scripts, is also a novelist in her own right, did the dramatization. The second version was done in 1995. Andrew Davies, an English Literature professor as well as a dramatizer, wrote the six-hour script. By his own account, P&P has always been his favorite novel. These two equally capable dramatizers had set out to translate a Jane Austen novel for television and bring her into the living rooms of millions of people. Both working from the exact the same material, in English, managed to produce two vastly different dramatizations.

The Betrayal of Elizabeth Bennet

In her adaptation, Weldon used the text of the novel as source material to build up the dialogues in the series. As the text was divided among the various characters to be used as conversation fodder, it became possible to retain in discourse some of the wit, charm and information of the underlying text. The major drawback of this strategy is that at times it becomes self-defeating: the wordiness of the production emulates the literary

source, but does not do justice to the new medium into which it has been translated. In film, the engine of the action should be: show, don't tell. Another downside result of too much reliance on dialogue to move the action forward is the unwieldiness of many of the conversations. Moreover, some of these conversations not only have never taken place in the novel but they could not have taken place in the world Jane Austen created and wrote about. Some characters are chatty, irresponsible and always revealing confidential information. But when this sort of mindless chatter is applied to the responsible characters, which are usually in control of their emotions and speech, it creates a distortion in the way we are meant to relate to them. A good example is the scene in which Elizabeth is playing croquet with a relatively new acquaintance, George Wickham (who turns out to be a cad!). It transpires just after Elizabeth's sister has been dumped (or so it seemed) by her erstwhile beau, Bingley, and is pining and trying to come to terms with her disappointment. In this scene, Elizabeth tells Wickham about Jane's sorrow and disappointment. By placing Elizabeth in that fabricated scene, Weldon betrays Elizabeth's complete and unquestionable loyalty to her sister and her social savvy, thus presenting her in unflattering colors. This betrayal of Elizabeth's quintessence cannot have been done randomly. Weldon seems to detect in her a certain recklessness of behavior, a flouting of decorum, which indicates a heroine who is at odds with society. According to the Weldon script, Elizabeth Bennet is a provocative girl, who maintains a mocking self-composure throughout the production. A smile of superior intelligence and understanding never leaves her face. She is not only irresponsible but also defiant. In Fay Weldon's adaptation she seems to disregard the basic moral underpinnings of the novel: she is seen exchanging confidences with her friend Charlotte about her family's failures, even after

Charlotte has proved herself to be a manipulative, self-seeking female. Jane Austin makes

a point of telling us in the novel that Elizabeth never again trusted her friend as she had

done before, but the Weldon script ignores this qualification. It seems that Charlotte was

to be reinstated as Elizabeth's intimate friend in spite of the author's intent. Elizabeth

seems to defy the basic rules of moral behavior of her times: she is seen visiting on her

own a bachelor in his home, she receives a letter from a man and responds to it, in a way

that no genteel woman of the time should have done. Jane Austen's Elizabeth is very

much a woman planted within her society, with its values and rules of decorum. We

could easily find out what Jane Austen thought of such behavior as Weldon gives her

heroine if we look for it in her other novels. In *Sense and Sensibility"*, the author makes it

quite clear what she thinks of a young lady indulging in such self-ruinous conduct. There

is no true liberation for a young lady at the mercy of her raging hormones, as far as Jane

Austen is concerned. Elizabeth is the opposite of that. Her independent freethinking

happens when she deems the circumstances justify breaking the rules. She does deviate

from social norm, when she takes a three-mile walk across muddy, rain-soaked fields to

visit her sick sister who is confined to a stranger's house. Her love and anxiety for her

sister endorse what seems to be an unusual action. This action does not generate from

defiance of society but from common sense. That is why it stands out in the novel as a

moral achievement. The Weldon script diminishes Elizabeth's ability to discern and

judge. This in turn diminishes the stature of the narrative and its achievement.

Fay Weldon is a feminist writer. In her novels, such as *Splitting* and *Darcy's Utopia* she

likes to portray misleadingly demure women who do and say outrageous things, as a way

of upsetting the smug power of patriarchy. Her heroines are subversively soft spoken and tractable. They show themselves prone to brazen behavior and shocking expressions. They are very obviously not in control of their lives. In *Splitting,* this leads to a splintering of the heroine's psyche. Eventually, she ends up regaining her faculties, acquiring a direction in her life and opting for sensual fulfillment with a red-blooded, working-class male, definitely not English. The despondency that besets Weldon's central female characters reverberates throughout her adaptation of *Pride & Prejudice.* For her, Elizabeth is not a strong female personality, nor is she very wise; but rather a young woman who lives on the brink of perpetual fear facing a bleak future. There is a modernist, helpless, angry feel to Weldon's Elizabeth, which is in remarkable contrast with Austen's own reflection on the novel as *"light and bright and sparkling".* This adaptation is a violent translation of the novel, in so far as the writer/translator has distorted the characters, adding to some, detracting from others, made up scenes that are nonexistent in the original novel. Weldon's script clashes with Austen's narrative and beefs up its feminist undertones. This kind of translation engages the text of a well-known beloved novelist in a cause of feminist ire. The process by which this was done can only be described as violent. Weldon's rendition of *Pride & Prejudice* abrades and reduces the novel.

The Outing of Fitzwilliam Darcy

While Weldon's adaptation can only be described as straying from Jane Austen's spirit and intent, Andrew Davies 's translation to the screen stays true to Jane Austen. Closely

working with Sue Birtwisle, the program' s producer, he has opted for a strategy, which is very different from his predecessor's. The 1995 version of P&P is a drama for television. The action is seen, rather than told via conversations. Important letters are not read in a voiceover but dramatized as flashbacks. This gives an impetus to the action and makes good use of the advantages offered by this medium. The characters are not meddled with but bear remarkable resemblance to the way Austen portrayed them in her novel. Elizabeth, as a character, is perceived through her actions, her behavior and her interaction with the other characters. The viewer does not gain a direct line of communication with her through a voiced soliloquy. The premise being that no one writes Jane Austen as well as Jane Austen, this dramatization is felicitous in its choice to follow Austen's direction in adhering as closely as possible to the plotline and the portrayal of her characters.

The acclaim, which greeted this dramatization, has not been completely unanimous. Some critics have protested that Darcy, a major character in the novel, is given too much prominence. Indeed, the authentic novelty of this translation lies in the treatment given to Darcy. In the novel, we hardly ever gain access to his thoughts or his life offstage. Jane Austen, though, does give us enough clues and bits of information to construct a complete portrait of the man. Davies follows Austen's clues and gives them substance by projecting them in visual images, and not just textual notes spoken by some character. Davies' Darcy has a chance at pleading his case directly to the viewer, allowing us to better understand the seeming transformation that takes place in his behavior. Davies has brought Darcy out into the open, so to speak, by looking at the underlying text,

penetrating its surface and peeling away the layers of irony and second-hand reporting that partially conceal Darcy from the reader. This was a stroke of first-rate creativeness: the reconciliation of the two media, the novel and the film, through a compassionate manipulation of the text. While the novel uses novelistic techniques to achieve Darcy's allure, the dramatization mimes it by using filmic technique to bring out the same insight. This practice is what Antoine Berman calls the potentiating movement in a translation, not a violent maiming of the text.

4 Violence in Translation

"He is a translation's thief that addeth more
As much as he that taketh from the store
Of the first author"
Andrew Marvel, 1651

In giving all this space to the translation factor in artistic production and dramatization, I have been trying to understand and clarify several issues concerning translation: What is meant when scholars of translation talk about the violence involved in the process, the intrinsic quality of treachery that accompanies the process and the translator? What happens in a translation? How does the consciousness of the performer intrude upon the work carried out? What is lost and what is gained? The translative process in art can be described as a recycling of former themes and renditions. Such an approach, then, allows the ethical component in the artistic production to be suppressed, subdued and negligible. Maybe this is so because of the strong stamp of the artist's genius on his/her creation, which lays absolute claim to the finished product. Maybe the value given to art in our culture is of such high order that our ethical reason is overwhelmed and eventually discarded. In textual translation, as well as in its visual variant, the dramatization, ethics becomes a primary issue. There is either an implicit or explicit understanding between the author and the translator, which is designed to preclude the possibility of misrepresenting the work in the new language or medium. In textual translation the main concern has evolved from formal and aesthetic to ethical. And the ethics of translation mainly depends upon the degree to which violence is performed on the original text. A translation is not *"purely literary and aesthetic activity, even when it is intimately connected with the literary* practice of a *given cultural realm ... [Translation] get[s] its true sense only from the ethical aim by which [it is]* governed. In *this sense, translation is*

closer to science *than to art - at least to those who maintain that art is ethically*

irresponsible."[9]

I realize that using the term *violence* in describing the process of translation may be

problematic. *Violence* carries an onus of condemnation. Perhaps I should try to explain

and defend my use of the term before I continue. The word *violence* derives from the

Latin noun *vis* meaning *force, energy*. The *violence* I mean when I employ this word

within the context of the translation process is *the premeditated use of deliberate*

intellectual force to either dislodge certain meanings from a source text or inject

extrinsic meanings into a target text. However, in *violence*, the driving factor is potency

and dynamism. In translation, these can be used to boost intrinsic meanings in an

underlying text, leading to a qualitative intensification of the original message. This is the

benevolent strategy espoused by Berman, an optimistic scholar, in his book *"The*

Experience of the Foreign" as "potentiation". A different attitude is adopted by

Lawrence Venuti in *"The Translator's Invisibility"*, in which he expresses a profoundly

disenchanted view of the great emphasis placed on "fluency *and* transparency"

(aesthetics) in translation, leading to a violation of the authentic message in a process he

calls "domestication". The term assumes its negative significance in translation when the

original message is reduced by means of removal, abuse or misinterpretation, resulting in

an injury to the original text. In the context of my thesis *violence* is a continuum, where

the negative "domestication" is on the one end, and the positive "potentiation" on the

other.

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[9] Berman, Antoine, *The Experience of the Foreign*, translated by S. Heyvaert, SUNY Press, p. 3

Experiencing the Foreign through Translation

Translators, Translation Studies scholars and Translation reviewers tend to worry all the time about what gets lost, how the completed product of translation is never equal to the source text. All this fretting is a result of what Antoine Berman terms as translation "ancillary position". Translation is not an authentic self-generating form of art. It is viewed as repressed, subordinate, and inferior. So much so that it is *"hardly possible these days to make an autonomous discipline of this practice"*.[10]

But the whimsicality of translation is further aggravated by the traditional view of translators as intrinsically suspect. Since translators serve two masters, "fidelity and treason" are always the parameters by which they are judged, and by which they evaluate their own achievements. Antoine Berman's book on translation *"The Experience of the Foreign"* is impressive in describing and circumscribing the essential possibility of the process of translation.

According to Berman, in Romantic Germany, translators and critics were striving to reach the horizon of intellectual accomplishment, and even go beyond it. This meant treating Translation as though it were on a par with literature, and could be subject to the same critical criteria. This attitude evolved in Germany at a time when German*ness* was in the fluid state of becoming and defining itself. National traits were acknowledged and

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[10] Berman, p. 5

elaborated upon. An important part of the German identity-in-being of the time was the belief in its moral distinction: German*ness* meant a rare combination of cosmopolitanism and "the most *vigorous individualism*".[11]

Every culture resists translation even as it has an essential need for it. The very aim of translation - to open up in writing a certain relation with the Other, to fertilize what is one's Own through the mediation of what is Foreign - is diametrically opposed to the ethnocentric structure of every culture, that species of narcissism by which a society wants to be a pure and unadulterated Whole.[12] These are the circumstances under which the translation of foreign literature into German became a rich vein that fed cultural expansion. German worldliness not only allowed but also encouraged bringing outside influences into its culture. It was a way of appreciating and ingesting outside aesthetic values while endowing them with a certain German meaning that transcends the original to an even higher level of excellence. This is how Schlegel's translation of Shakespeare into German was crowned as *"better than the English"*. A good translation, in Romantic Germany, is a translation that outshines the underlying text. Only the German language possesses the agility to fertilize itself as it is used in translation, at the some time elevating the foreign text. A translation is not good enough if it only achieves equivalence with the source. In such case, it is merely an interpretation, hence an approximation, of the text. In order to reach a real equality with the source text, the German translator must pierce through the linguistic barrier in order to get to the core of the translated work, that is, "the *Idea of the Work which the Work wants to be*, tends

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[11] Berman, p. 105
[12] Berman, p. 4

towards (independently from *the author's intentions* ...)" [13]. That is what Berman means

when he uses the term *"potentiation"* - a translation that goes to the idea, to the origin of

the original. In this way, translation can occupy a space adjacent to poetry, since poetry is

"essentially a *going* beyond, a *potentiation of 'natural language".* [14]

Beyond the ethnocentric complacency that celebrates this idea of translation as a way of

reinforcing the moral superiority of German intellect, I find this insight into the potential

of translation extremely pertinent. It is a level achieved by many translators in history.

However, this recommendation alone does not automatically spell out ethical

dependability.

Mythical Translation

The highest level of *"potentiation"* occurs when a translation achieves mythical

proportions, a *"genuine metamorphosis of the work... the elevation to the state of mystery*

(to the state of strangeness, *of interpretation of the known and the unknown)... The*

movement by which the work becomes 'mythical' is made possible by the work itself: [it

is that production] by which translation becomes an activity full of meaning." [15]

Translators of the Bible can be included in this category, where the translated work takes

absolute precedence over the original, which in turn grows increasingly obscure, and

insignificant, as a result. This is the translation that accounts for the myth of Judas

Iscariot in Christian theology, whose case will be explained later in this thesis. The

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[13] Berman, p. 107
[14] Berman, p. 108
[15] Berman, p.127

relatively simple and vague figure of Judas of the original Greek gospels assumed a

whole new meaning when it was translated into Latin and later on into other languages.

Another famous case is that of the creation of the Elizabethan archetypal Jew, Shylock.

From the Italian tale *"il Pecorone"* in which a bloodthirsty Jew makes an appearance in

1378, Shakespeare took the plot and created *"The Merchant of* Venice". The dominant

figure in this play is indeed Shylock, whose creator, de facto, made him into what he has

represented and what he still represents today. The Jewish Moneylender, in the hands of

his potentiating translator, became a powerfully negative representation of all Jews. And

the evolution of this myth into a justification for historical abuse has been understood by

many a scholar. [16]

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[16] Shylock's case will be discussed later on, followed by a discussion on Judas Iscariot.

Poetical Potentiation

A process of translation as "potentiation" governed the translation of the following very short French poem: [17]

"Le père. Le prédicat.	"The father. The predicate.
La famille. Parfois,	The family. Sometimes,
la viande."	the shambles."

The short poem is very effective in French. It captures unflinchingly the power configuration and the messiness of family life. The metaphor inserted at the end *"la viande"* brutally and effectively lays bare the rawness of familial relationship. At first reading, the English translation is a puzzling choice. We can easily understand the first two lines. They are quite equivalent in both languages. The third line, though, is somewhat of a mystery: *"shambles"* indicates a mess, a muddle, disorder, a fiasco, all of which are indeed pertinent in family life but do not instantaneously connote with "meat". The choice seems an oversimplification of the Source Language metaphor. The inspired translator, however, instead of reproducing the metaphor term-for-term opted for calling up an earlier meaning of the word *"shambles"*, one that signifies it as the butcher's block in a slaughterhouse, a place of cut-up meat and carcasses. Such a shocking image, when

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[17] The poem is from Normand de Bellefeuille's *"Categoriques 1 2 3"* and is translated by Doug Jones (D. G. Jones). For this example I am indebted to David Homel, who used it in his class on Literary Translation in the Translation Diploma course, Concordia University.

juxtaposed with "the family"- a space universally believed to be offering warmth and refuge for the individual – is so terrifying that the reader is engulfed in its implied implacable darkness of vision. Thus the translation carries the metaphor of the original poem but delays the reader's immediate gratification by partly suppressing its arcane meaning. By selecting this ambiguity, the poem becomes in translation even more powerful than the original, which rather serves it up explicitly. From a poetic point of view, the ambiguity as well as the interconnection of the translated metaphor attains a higher level of achievement for the poem. It is *"potentiation"* at its best.

Earlier in this paper, I have looked at the way *"potentiation"* took place in the translative process in art, in which the latent meaning of the horse finds expression in the work of Bertha Shenker's painting of the horse's head. The potentiating process, however, was accompanied by violence, which pertains directly to the question of ethics in art. Later, I Much admired the dramatizer of Pride & Prejudice for the way he managed to "potentiate" the character of Darcy, liberating him from his habitual obscurity through the medium of film. The translation onto the screen did not injure the original text, only illuminated Darcy's character it in a way I believe Jane Austen intended all along. However, when a flash of light is directed at shadows, it may disperse them, but then, other shadows are created. The intervention is assertive and energetic. This tallies with my earlier definition of violence in translation, and confirms that even when successful, translation between media is not entirely innocuous. Still, while the TV dramatization cannot be said to be better than the novel (no visual medium has as yet managed to

translate the *language* of the Austen narrator), it can be described as a best possible rendition of Jane Austen on television.

The Violence of the Invisible Translator

The acceptability of translations has always depended on two notions, which Venuti classifies as *fluency* and *transparency*. By *fluency* he means the usage of correct vocabulary (idiomatic, standard language) combined with the right grammar; by *transparency* he means the creation of a fantasy that the translation is not a translation but rather the original work itself. The created fantasy - when rendered in very flowing and vivid language and when values of the target-language culture are taken as known in the text - creates an illusion of an invisible translator while in fact it camouflages a process of reductiveness that had taken place throughout the translation. Venuti has termed this process of violent interference with the underlying text as ""domestication"".

For Venuti, no translation can ever be equivalent to its underlying text. All it can do is furnish a version of the original, into which the ambient factors of the target culture are implanted. Furthermore, it is not just the culture that plays a part in domestication but every element that goes into the making of the translator's identity: politics, ideology, sexuality, economics, geography, etc.

Venuti supports his view with an interesting example from Robert Graves's translation of Suetonius "The Twelve Caesars". Graves' fluent translation removes the *"curiously disjointed and staccato diction"* of the original text, which could lead the reader to

vagueness, choosing *"Intelligibility in* order to *achieve ...a* more *coherent* position from *which the* Caesars can *be judged"* [18]. In other words, Graves provides a novelistic narrative. Where Suetonius' accounts often hinge on innuendo and doubtful hearsay instead of explicit judgment or reliable evidence, Graves, in his translation, energizes the text by offering more certainty and illumination. He both prettifies and simplifies the underlying text by using a vocabulary and a flowing prose that explain and instruct. His treatment of Caesar's life is not only biased, according to Venuti, but also downright homophobic. Using unmitigated language highlights features of the original text that allude loosely and uncertainly to what might have been Caesar's sexual practices. To illustrate this point, let's have a look at the following excerpt from Robert Graves' "The Twelve Caesars":

"When Thermus sent Caesar to raise a fleet in Bithynia, he wasted so much time at King Nicomedes's court that *a homosexual relationship between them was suspected,* and suspicion gave place to scandal when, soon after his return to headquarters, he revisited Bithynia: ostensibly collecting a debt incurred there by one of his freedmen". [19]

By choosing to translate the Latin "Prostratoe regi pudicitiae" ("surrendered his modesty to the king") into the anachronistic term "homosexual relationship", Graves inserts into the ancient text a fully recognizable English context that equates homosexuality with perversion. Other generalized, noncommittal nuances about Caesar's sexuality in the Latin text are intensified in Graves's translation by the use of English words that stigmatize same- sex sexual acts. Graves's interpretation of Suetonius, then, is greatly colored by his own prejudices, prejudices that reflect the taste and disposition of the English public at the time of the translation (1957).

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[18] Venuti, Lawrence, *The Translator's Invisibility*, Routledge, London, 1995, p. 3

[19] Gaius, Suetonius Tranquilus, *The Twelve Caesars*, translated by Robert Graves (1957)

Another translator of Suetonius's text is H.M. Bird who chose to call it: "Lives of the Twelve Caesars". Here is how Bird goes about translating the passage under discussion:

" Caesar served ...under the praetor, M. Thermus; and being sent by him into Bithynia to levy a fleet, he made his abode with King Nicomedes. His long sojourn there gave rise to the foul rumor that he entered into immoral relations with the king: which rumor he himself augmented by coming again to Bithynia within a few days of his departure, under the pretext of collecting money due to a freedman, his client." [20]

Graves's fluent, highly readable text, punctuated by the titillating words "Homosexual relationship", "suspicion" and "scandal" is replaced by Bird's more restrained, cautious and bumpy translation of the same text, respectively: "immoral relations", "foul rumor", and "which rumor he himself augmented". Bird's translation is un-sensational in tone, suspending judgment and colorful language in favor of a more straightforward rendition.

According to Venuti's definition, then, Graves' translation is a fully domesticated translation. It is not unlike the result of Fay Weldon's dramatization of P&P 1982, in which the feminist bias is extremely pronounced and sometimes made up.
Venuti maintains that the reason Graves' translation was such a popular success derives from the translator's use of the strategy of 'fluency' which is ideally suited to domesticating translation. Such a strategy can enforce the ethnocentric violence of translation while concealing this violence by producing an illusion of transparency "the

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[20] Gaius, Suetonius Tranquilus, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, translated by H.M. Bird, Wordsworth Classics, 1997

illusion that this is not a translation, but the foreign text, in fact, the living thoughts of the foreign author". [21]

As the most "moral" strategy of translation, Venuti advocates the use of "resistancy". The Resistant Translator is called upon to exert themselves twice in their search for the good translation: First, by choosing to translate a text which will initially impose a sense of uneasiness upon its potential reader; secondly, by choosing to employ an experimental language for the translation that will make the reader work harder at understanding it. Such a translation can best be called "resistancy", not merely because it avoids fluency, but because it challenges the target-language culture as it enacts its own ethnocentric violence on the foreign text.

By placing an onus of moral and linguistic demands upon his good translator. Venuti maintains that Translation is an ethical and aesthetic activity on the same level as literature. In this view he is very similar to the German romantic translator as depicted by Berman. The difference between the two approaches can be located in the space allocated to translation. For Venuti, the translative space is somewhere beyond language and culture, any language and any culture. It is a fantasy place created by the translator whose translation then will be stranger and more challenging than the underlying text. It is a space that can best be exemplified by the experimental writing of James Joyce in *"Finnegan's Wake"* and in art, by Picasso's *"Les Demoiselles d'Avignon"*.

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[21] Venuti, p. 61

What Venuti is asking for is awesome, and next to impossible. It can only work as an ideal for the translator, as a point of light to strive to but very rarely to reach. By comparison, the German Romantic Translation is placed very much within the target language and culture. In this space, the German language is stretched to its full extent and beyond, in order to attain a translation that will outshine its original, but will not mystify its potential readers to the point of discomfort. On the contrary, the reader of such a Translation should come out feeling exhilarated and enriched by a first-hand experience of a work of literature in which the linguistic achievement is a testament to the greatness of the German language. This experience, brought about by the "potentiating" strategy, is comparable to that of the reader of "La Viande" poem and the viewer of *Pride & Prejudice* 1995.

Translator as Intellectual

The notion of the translator's "resistancy" as defined by Venuti, and understood by me, places his translator within the same sphere as Chomsky's moral intellectual. According to Chomsky, the ideal intellectual resists every temptation to conform to current and widely held attitudes. He or she must always act as gadflies, applying the same standards of ethics to every person and society evenly and without flinching at the face of indignant opposition. The true intellectual never sides with the powers-that-be, however liberal those powers may seem. "Intellectuals are in a position to expose the lies of governments, to analyze actions according to their courses and motives and often hidden intentions. [They have the power that comes from political liberty, from access to information and freedom of expression... Western democracy provides the leisure, the facilities, and the training to seek the truth behind the veil of distortion, and misrepresentation, ideology

and class interest."[22] The intellectual gives voice to the weak and the disenfranchised. Every intellectual is a mediator aiming at creating a more coherent, equitable and fair communication of information, for the augmentation of the universal good in the world. Chomsky's intellectual opts for resistance to easily- adopted attitudes, challenging the mainstream's consensus, erecting obstacles before people in order to make them "work" harder at being moral, puncturing complacency and discouraging indifference.

The common ground between Chomsky's intellectual and Venuti's translator is clear from their respective stances: they are both in conflict with the commonly held views of their respective constituencies, and they both are engaged in striving for universalizable morality. The translator, who is securely planted within his/her culture and language, must exert great efforts to avoid the easygoing, facile linguistic and cultural translation in order to maintain the integrity and meaning of the underlying text. Being largely unknown and therefore suspect by the prospective readership, the foreign text is ownerless at the hands on its translator, and dependent on the ethical principles of this individual to convey its authentic message without dealing out some major injury. According to Venuti, then, the ethics of translation can be measured by the amount of violence done to the underlying text as it traverses through the translator on its way to new and -largely ignorant readers.

By comparison, Berman's translator, as articulated in the vision of German Romantics, is not in conflict with conventionally held truths. This exceptional individual transcends

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[22] *The Chomsky Reader*, "The Responsibility of the Intellectual", edited by James Peck, Pantheon Books, NY 1987, pp. 59-135

every day actuality, in favor of a higher principle. Consequently, so they believe, in some cases, German translations are better than their original works.

The ethical aspect of translations as *"potentiation"* is less important when applied to the process in art. That is because in art, we seem *"to deny that there are any supracultural, transcendental norms we might use as a base for aesthetic judgment and comparison, in terms of value, between different forms of artistic expressions"*. [23] The ethical principle becomes undeniably more conspicuous when it is applied to intellectual activities whose main conduit is language. Tolerance comes easy in art, perhaps because we think there is nothing logically wrong in the confrontation of different aesthetic criteria. We feel, however, more confused and threatened when linguistic and cultural confrontation takes place via translation.

Berman's potentiating translation works well when practiced in poetical and artistic expressions. The ethical factor in translation, however, is better served by Venuti's view of translation. Translations have been historically responsible for many cases of manipulations of public opinion, some of which causing atrocious torment, misery and injustice. The translator's invisibility, which Venuti rightly condemns, has been used as a means of perpetuating myths, distorting textual truths, inventing new facts, all in the name of some religion, ideology, or some fashionable philosophy. The translator's invisibility has been employed as a matchless guise for the dissemination of primarily harmful disinformation.

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[23] Kolakowski, Leszek, *Modernity on Endless Trial*, p. 20

5 Shylock: A Case Study

As we have seen, the German Romantics, Berman's chosen subject, viewed literary

translation as residing alongside the noble art of Poetry. Poetry may be defined as an

imaginative "creation" through the medium of language, involving some imitation. A

poem, therefore, cannot be "the real thing", even though it might be valued as higher than

reality. A poetic creation is bound to have form, shape, outline, that distinguishes it from

abstraction or chaos. Since Poetry is also a kind of imitation, it points symbolically in

two directions: an ideal order available only through the imagination, and material

experience. Consequently, Poetry, by demanding a transfiguration without being able to

struggle free of its mundane roots, is always an impure art[24]. Translation is also a kind of

imitation, through the medium of language, of the work. Translation, like poetry,

combines two movements simultaneously: one movement which traverses the work in the

source language in search of its "ideal" purity, and a second movement that tries to

contain the ideal order within the bounds of the target language. Therefore, as I said

earlier, translation can never be an absolute re-creation; it is always polluted (impure).

Its intrinsic relation to the work, then, restrains translation, as soon as the work comes

into being. Every work of literature stands in a problematic relationship to its language by

both fusing into and distancing from it. The strain of this interior struggle within the work

- of simultaneous belonging and alienation - is what makes translation feasible. For the

German romantic theorists, then, translation in this context becomes the destiny of the

work, a historical achievement, combining linguistic, cultural and psychological markers.

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[24] Pafford, Ward, "The Literary Uses of Myth and Symbol". *Truth, Myth and Symbol.* p. 130

The distance of the work from its own language is what makes it distinct, novel and strange and it is that uneasy space that makes translation essential. In this sense, while exterior to the work, translation also makes the work reach its ultimate destiny, that is, all that it can be. In cruder terms it can be said that for the German romantic translator, the work is just a stop on the way to the terminus: the translation. As the natural alienation of the work from its language is amplified by the strangeness of the foreign language, a metamorphosis takes place, in which the translated work ascends in intensity and novelty to a higher level than the original text. Berman calls this ascendant translation "mythical" or "transforming" as it is the highest form of translation.[25]

The process by which the work becomes mythical is made possible by the work itself. The metamorphosis occurs when a meeting of minds between translator and author is achieved somewhere outside the underlying text. Such a meeting of minds can happen even when the underlying text fails to captivate its target audience in any major way. The translation can then be a work so powerful that it completely eclipses its source that shrinks into obscurity and insignificance with the passage of time. A case in point, which I personally found fascinatingly appropriate as an example for the "Mythical" translation is William Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice* with its creation of the ever Mythical Jew Shylock out of the tatters of a forgotten Italian novella.

The Merchant of Venice was written no earlier than the late summer of 1596.[26] It is generally agreed that the plot is based on an Italian short story or Novella, the Tale of

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[25] Berman, 126-127
[26] *The Merchant of Venice*, Introduction by M.M. Mahood, Cambridge University Press, 1987

Giannetto of Venice and the Lady of Belmonte. This tale forms part of a collection of

short stories, written in the late fourteenth century by Ser Giovanni of Florence and

published at Milan in 1558. The collection is entitled *Il Pecorone*, which means

simpleton, the English literal translation being "the dumb ox". There is no known

English translation of this collection before Shakespeare's death, which means that he

either read it in Italian or in a translation circulating in manuscript. [27]

There are a few modern translations of the story available, cited by M.H. Mahood in his

introduction to *The Merchant of Venice*, out of which he proffers the following synopsis

of Ser Giovanni's short story:

"A rich merchant of Venice called Ansaldo adopts his orphaned godson Giannetto. When the young man wants to join in a trading expedition, Ansaldo provides him a splendid ship and rich cargo. On the voyage out, Giannetto is diverted to the port of Belmonte, whose Lady has let it be known that she will marry none but the man who is able to spend a successful night with her; those who fail this test must be prepared to lose all they possess. She for her part makes sure of her suitors' failure giving them drugged wine. Giannetto falls for the trick and duly loses his ship to the Lady. He returns to Venice where he hides in shame but Ansaldo seeks him out and, on being told the ship has been lost at sea, equips his godson for a second voyage. Everything, not surprisingly, happens exactly as it did the first time. To finance a third voyage, Ansaldo now has to borrow beyond his means, so, he pledges a pound of his flesh to a Jew in return for a loan of ten thousand ducats. This time, a 'damsel' warns Giannetto not to drink the proffered wine, and he is able to win the Lady. He lives happily as the Lord of Belmonte, and does not think about the bond until the day of reckoning comes round. Then he tells the Lady of Ansaldo's plight and she sends him off to Venice with a hundred thousand ducats. The Jew, however, is not to he deflected from his murderous intentions. The Lady herself now arrives in Venice, disguised as a lawyer, and having failed to

[27] Gross, John, *Shylock, A legend and its Legacy*, Simon & Shuster, New York, London, 1992, p.15

persuade the Jew to accept ten times the sum lent, takes the case to the open court. There she tells the Jew that he is entitled to his forfeiture, but that if he takes more or less than the exact pound, or sheds a single drop of blood, his head will be struck off. Unable to recoup even the original loan, the Jew in rage tears up the bond. The grateful Giannetto offers payment to the lawyer, who asks instead for his ring, which he yields after much protestation of his love and loyalty for the Lady who gave it him. In company with Ansaldo, Giannetto now returns to Belmonte, where he gets a very cool reception. Only when the Lady has reduced him to tears by her reproaches does she tell him who the lawyer was. Finally Giannetto bestows the obliging 'damsel' on Ansaldo in marriage."[28]

Any close comparison between the two works reveals similarities too great to be a coincidence. Both works tell the story of the pound of flesh, the rich lady and her suitors, and the story of the ring which lover swears to never part with and then finds that he is forced to give away.

The divergences from Ser Giovanni's story in *The Merchant of Venice* are an attestation of Shakespeare's own genius in carving out of his source an eternally intriguing plot securely planted in and fertilized by Elizabethan English ethos and morality. Portia's character is morally superior to her former incarnation as the lady of Belmonte. Wooing her, Bassanio (Gianneto's counterpart in *The Merchant*, and no less dissolute a character) has to grow up to her level of insight, cunning and righteousness. Impelled forward in his suit both by love of a her beauty and greed for her fabulous wealth, he has no qualms about involving Antonio, the titular Merchant of Venice and Ansaldo's counterpart, in a deal that might, and did, prove hazardous to the latter's life. Gianetto and Bassanio are both cads, neither of whom credibly interesting or attractive as characters. The difference,

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[28]*The Merchant of Venice*, Introduction by M.M. Mahood, Cambridge University Press 1987, pp. 2-3

however, between Ansaldo and Antonio is instructive: while Ansaldo's motivation for helping out his adopted son is fairly uncomplicated, Antonio's motivation remains something of a mystery, and has elicited many scholarly speculations. Since Bassanio is only a friend, albeit a good one, it has been repeatedly suggested that Antonio was secretly nursing a homosexual desire for him, which would account for his on going melancholy and maybe even a certain death wish on his part after he hears about Bassanio's marriage to Portia. Trust Shakespeare, inventor of the human, to amalgamate these powerful fuels of the human engine, love, sex and money, into a tale from which nobody emerges morally triumphant.

And Shylock? In the Italian story, the moneylender is a Jew, named: The Jew. Forfeiting any attempt to give him any individuating characteristics, the author renders him in a one-dimensional, cartoonish way. The Jew's interior reasoning is hardly dwelt upon except for religious berating: Jewish obduracy and commercial mendacity. His creator had no problem in accepting that 'he wished to commit this homicide in order to be able to say that he had put to death the greatest of the Christian merchants' [29], even though the text does not suggest that there was any particularly adverse relationship between Ansaldo and the Jew prior to their deal. Ser Giovanni's Jew, by being such a monochromatic, predictable character, very much *in sync* with the prevailing wisdoms of the day, is not at all an interesting or even a memorable character. In the story, he acts as a plot device, serving an unpleasant function, which would be perfectly acceptable by a readership familiar with the common practice of dumping horrid roles and duties on real as well as fictional Jews.

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[29] *The Merchant of Venice*, Introduction by M.M. Mahood, Cambridge University Press 1987, p. 4

Nonetheless, the idea that set off Shylock can be found in *Il Pecorone*. It is my assumption here that Shakespeare, upon reading Ser Giovanni's story, had seized upon some elemental power in it which induced him to rewrite the plot as an English version and in a different medium - dramatization. The translative "potentiation" of his underlying text yielded this play with its remarkable Jewish character who overshadows all the others by his forceful personality, his passionate quest for what he considers his due justice, his deep-seated hostility and finally, his colossal defeat. In a way, this reminds me of Andrew Davies's rendition of *Pride & Prejudice*, in which the audience gains access into Darcy's character. This achievement is what qualitatively elevates this dramatic version to an almost seamless interpretation of the novel. When talking about 1995 *Pride & Prejudice* TV dramatization, it is Darcy that people remember. He simply dominates the production. The same effect can be said to apply to Shakespeare's rendition of the Jewish moneylender. One mentions *The Merchant of Venice* and immediately it is Shylock that springs to mind. Of all the characters Shakespeare picked from Ser Giovanni's novella for his play, whose personalities are deepened, complicated and individuated, it is Shylock who assumes the mythical proportion. It is Shylock's figure that has dominated the play and inflamed the mind of generations upon generations of theatre lovers. When we look at the mere surrounding facts of his provenance, we cannot escape the conclusion that he is a translated character. What makes his case interesting to a student of ethics and translation is the fact that in translation from one language into another, from one genre into another, from one culture into another, he has undergone such a change as to render him almost unrecognizable. Who today remembers Ser Giovanni's stereotypical Jewish moneylender? And indeed why should we remember

him? He was nothing but a plot device, a minor character in a minor tale of greed and revenge. Tales with miscreant Jews were abundant. None has achieved this epic notoriety, this monumental symbolism of Jewish menace. Shylock sprang from that stereotypical moneylender and went on to personify not only the archetypal moneylender but also the very representation of the Jew. And it was Shakespeare who transformed him into this mythical figure.

Figure 4. Shylock was sharpening a long knife [30]

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[30] This illustration is taken from a children's book: *Tales from Shakespeare* by Charles and Mary Lamb, illustrated by Arthur Rackham, first published 1807

Professor of Humanities at Yale University and author and editor of many books, Harold

Bloom observes in his last but one book " *Shakespeare – The Invention of the Human*"

that "One would have to be blind, deaf and dumb not to recognize that Shakespeare's

grand equivocal comedy *The Merchant of Venice* is nevertheless a profoundly anti-

Semitic work". [31] He also claims that Shylock is a completely irredeemable character, a

fact responsible for the play being branded anti-Semitic. It is also a failed comedy. *The*

Merchant, Bloom contends, was intended as a romantic comedy, with Shylock as a

farcical figure, a classical buffoon. Shylock, however, who makes an appearance in only

5 scenes in the play, seems to break away from his designated role. Seething with vital

energy and palpable forcefulness, Shylock is given such a talent for verbal wit and poetry

that he exceeds the comic requirements of his role within the action and spirit of the play.

Consequently, the premise of the romantic comedy tradition caves in, and the audience

tranquility, which accompanies such a premise, is disrupted. When we decide to watch or

read a romantic comedy, we have certain expectations of lighthearted fun leading to a

morally satisfying, happy denouement. Therefore, the pathos of a character like Shylock,

who is in essence uncontrollably tragic, is in direct contradiction with the Apollonian

validation of the prevalent order at the end of the comedy. Shylock's character is that

dark, implacable element in the play that cannot be effortlessly eliminated by being

absorbed into the prevailing "good" civil order. His assimilation is brutally enforced by

the good Christians of the play as he is stripped of all his assets and forcibly converted at

the conclusion of the play. He staggers off the stage in stunned silence even as the others

are preparing for their celebration. Such violence as permeates the trial scene, from the

direct threat to Antonio's life to the direct threat to Shylock's life to his final breakdown,

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[31] Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare - the Invention of the Human*, Riverhead Books, New York, 1998, p.171

cannot be accommodated within the boundaries of a romantic comedy. It does not lead to an atmosphere of good-natured fête. This is mainly the reason why *The Merchant* is so problematic as a comedy; it cannot reasonably contain the tragedy of Shylock's character.

Why is Shylock so disruptive a character? I would say, because he is so antithetical to his originator, Ser Giovanni's Jewish moneylender. He assumes this magnitude not for being a stereotypical Jew such as the anonymous moneylender, but for exploding the stereotype. The stereotype is manipulated not by a reversal of its meaning by presenting a surprisingly good Jew; it is done by rendering a Jew who has power to wield, eloquence to express and intensity of feelings that will not be swept away by obsequious fears of his Christian neighbors. He is, I think, an intensification of the worst fears Christians had about Jews, because of the realization that even a Jew – after being baited, humiliated, assaulted and demonized for centuries – has not lost his capability for developing such murderous rage and lust for revenge. Shylock is a nightmarish scenario for all those theatregoers, which probably explains his rise in public awareness to such mythical proportions.

Maybe Shakespeare did not mean him that way, maybe he was just trying to flesh out Ser Giovanni's Jew, give him a credible personality with rational motivation. Maybe, like Darcy's potentiator Andrew Davies, he meant only to make his character and behavior more comprehensible to his audience. There is no denying, however, that what Shakespeare created was a monster of sorts, the ultimate alien nursing his grievances with the diabolical intensity. His own victimhood, augmented by his sense of the historical injustice done to his tribe and to his financial survival, creates a scary specter for the

average Christian watching the play. I would think that from the time of Shakespeare and subsequent generations, audiences were very unsettled by this vision of a powerful Jew with his boiling hatred. Centuries of Church preaching about the Christ killing Jews, Judas, ugly images of Jews as shit eaters, as ghastly hooked-nosed deformed faces, myths of the ritual killing of Christian children for the Passover bread, the mystery of the Jewish circumcision ritual, all of these and more, were in the background, floating around, as people watched Shylock preparing for his pound of Christian flesh. And I truly believe that their horror stemmed from their own subconscious fear of admitting that they recognized his rage, and were surprised by it, because apparently the many centuries of vilification and persecution did not purge these very human urges from Jewish hearts. Shylock was a reversal of the audience's expectations from their typical fearful, stooped-shouldered, sycophant Jew. The movement from Shylock's "Still I have born it with a patient shrug, for sufferance is the badge of all our tribe " to the unrelenting "That pound of flesh which I demand of him / Is dearly bought; 'tis mine, and I will have it" is an unexpected leap for the audience. To the Elizabethan audience this was a new revelation of the Jew, and they feared the monster that they created.

Shylock may have been born in the rather unimpressive stereotypical Jew whom we meet in *Il Pecorone*, but Shakespeare's deviation from it created the myth of the all-powerful evil Jew. Shylock's character may have been fictional, but after he makes his first appearance on stage, he became, in the mind of people, a real person, representative of all Jews and their international cabal, the Jews that Christians had to fear instinctively, and avoid at all costs, for their survival. The myth endured, and overtime has reverberated in European literature with significant constancy.

Shylock in Europe

Once *The Merchant* was deemed a classic, it was only a matter of time before audiences other than the British would be introduced to Shylock. John Gross, in his book *Shylock, a Legend & its Legacy* provides a comprehensive look at the way the play was translated, interpreted and received in different cultures, from European to East European to non-European. The following examples are taken from this book.

In choosing Shylock, it was my intention to indicate how easily he went from a rather banal Jewish stereotype to hold a mythical place in the pantheon of Western prejudices and xenophobia. His translatability into the different European cultures among which he thrived made him an authentic character, which every European nation could claim as its own. Even though I would have liked to explore Shylock in detail in every European culture, the scope and subject of this thesis do not allow it. In this segment I have decided, instead, to look at a sampling of Shylock in culture, for which I have chosen to describe in short German and French responses to *The Merchant*, as they were more or less typical of most European countries.

Germany was the first country outside England where Shylock became well-known. The Germans had developed almost a cult of Shakespeare worship, and *The Merchant*, translated by Wilhelm Schlegel in 1797, ranked among Shakespeare's "Most perfect works". Schlegel, who was also the most notable Shakespeare critic of his time, singled out Shylock as one of the Bard's "inconceivable masterpieces of characterization." He specifically admired the subtle way in which Shylock's Jewish*ness* was profiled:

"Shylock... is anything but a common Jew; he possesses a very determinate and original individuality, and yet we perceive a light touch of Jewishness in everything which he says and does... In tranquil situations what is foreign to European blood and Christian sentiments is less perceivable, but in passion the national stamp appears more strongly marked". [32] "European blood" and "Christian sentiments" are inevitably pitted against Shylock's uncanny other*ness* and Jewish intransigence. Even as Schlegel's words are mildly spoken, he cannot steer clear of the rebuke implicit in them: "[Shylock] insists on severe and inflexible justice, and it at last recoils on his own head. Here he becomes a symbol of the general history of his unfortunate nation". Schlegel, with his German Romantic fastidiousness, marks Shylock for posterity as a symbol of the Jewish people, a people who, even when socially refined, seem to share certain unshakable tribal characteristics. A Jew is a Jew, in effect says Schlegel, no matter how elevated and civilized he might seem, somewhere in him lurks Shylock, with his literal-mind and inflexible pursuit of cold-hearted justice.

It is interesting to note that for German intellectuals, Shylock was always an unalloyed villain. By contrast, on the stage audiences were allowed to explore his nuances and general complexities. Is it safe to assume, then, that the German intellectuals failed their constituencies, in a way, by insisting on Shylock's darkness and by not searching for openings in his personality so as to relieve his mythic inhumanity? There is a certain chilling single-mindedness in the way these intellectuals morally aligned themselves with the so-called good Christians and the Duke, the arbiters of power in the play, without any attempt to look beyond Shylock's foreignness.

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[32] Gross, pp. 235-236

Gross continues with the French, who seem to have been much less interested in *The Merchant* and it was not until 1917 that a worthy actor portrayed Shylock. However, Shylock's name was well known, as the proverbial hard-hearted creditor. François-Victor Hugo, who translated the play into French, wrote in his book about Shakespeare that Shylock brings together the extremes of the Jewish character: " Shylock est la juiverie, il est aussi la judaïsme". *Juiverie* meaning "Jewish swindle" at the time, as well as a collective name for Jews, what Hugo means to say is that Shylock's mythic stature derives from him comprising the faith as well as the duplicity of the whole Hebrew nation.[33] In both German and French sensibilities, Shylock comes out not as an individual, but a manifestation of the perfidy of an entire nation. Shakespeare's genius may have exploded one stereotype, to supplant it with another, more powerful and more dangerous instrument of xenophobia: a myth.

By the end of the nineteenth century, *The Merchant* had been translated into at least twenty languages.[34] In Europe, Shylock seems to have grown more mythical in stature, with minor variations in tone and accent among the different European languages he was translated into. Europe's entrenched anti-Semitism was a fertile ground for Shylock's myth. When nations are strong, successful and confident, they need not ascribe mysterious power and sinister purposes to their *others*. No recourse to myth is necessary. It is when people within their polity are struggling to maintain themselves and explain the collapse of old world order and failure to adapt to new realities, that the enemy can no longer be accommodated by rationality. This condition, which many nations suffered and still suffer from, gives birth to mythical enemies, enemies so powerful and diabolical that

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[33] Gross, p. 245
[34] Gross, p. 249

they can subvert the entire course of history for their own gain. Old archetypes

materialize and swell to such volume as to leave no room but for primal fear and religious

hatred. For all the social and political degradation that Shylock's myth had wrought upon

the heads of Jews since its conception until the middle of the nineteenth century, it was

still containable. The myth, however, broke out of its boundaries in the twilight of the

nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. In the wake of

enlightenment and emancipation, with industrialization, capitalism and nationalism in full

swing, Jews gained more visibility and prominence. As the turbulent nineteenth century

was drawing to an end, the popular Shylock myth is potentiated to the point where it

cannot be separated from the myth of the "International Jew", who now has a name. And

the rest, as we know, is history.

Shylock in Japan

In Western thought, Shylock cannot be divorced from his Jewish*ness*. It is a constitutive

key to the understanding of his character and the myth that he evolved into. In non-

Christian or non-Western cultures, however, his Jewish*ness* is far less important, so much

so that oftentimes it has been edited out of the script. Japanese readers first got to know

of *The Merchant of Venice* in the form of a fully domesticated story, *The Strange Affair*

of the Flesh of the Bosom (1877). The anonymous translator completely transferred the

action to Sakai, a seaport near Osaka in Japan. Shylock became Yokubari Gampachi,

("Stubborn Close-fist"), the three thousand ducats became three thousand ryo, Portia

became Kiyoka, ("Odor of Purity"), Matsugae - Antonio. The Japanese translator-narrator

vividly depicts the characters as authentically Japanese as can be: "Correctly holding her

fan, Kiyoka then spoke movingly of the quality of mercy", Gampachi's hauteur is stingingly imaged as he replies to Matsugae's pleadings, "with arrogant puffs at his pipe." There is nothing to isolate the moneylender from his adversaries in terms of religion or social background, he has no quarrel with Matsugae over whether it is right or wrong to charge interest, and there is no suggestion that he has past injuries to avenge. In a way, he resembles the Jewish moneylender in Ser Giovanni's novella more than he does Shylock in that respect. The subtraction of these elements from his motivation makes his character act out of purely gratuitous malignity. [35]

Diminished as it is, the story nevertheless captured the imagination of readers and playgoers alike. *The Strange Affair of the Flesh of the Bosom* was the first Japanese tale based on Shakespeare to appear in print, and *The Merchant of Venice* was the first of Shakespeare's plays to be staged in Japan in 1885. In 1911 Japanese theaters began to present authentic productions of Shakespeare, but by that time a tradition of Japanese-style productions had been firmly established. This was in large part thanks to Kawakami Otojiro, an actor-manager whose most famous adaptation, *Othello*, substituted Tokyo and Taiwan for Venice and Cyprus. Kawakami's company visited London in 1900 and presented *The Merchant of Venice*, with Kawakami as Shylock and his wife, Sada Yacco, as Portia. A lingering impression of their performance was their extraordinary emphasis on the physical, where it "seemed credible that a pound of flesh was actually going to be cut from a man's breast before our eyes".[36]

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[35] Gross, pp. 253-254
[36] Gross, pp. 254-255

Shylock in Africa

For non-Europeans, Shylock was a universal type, but that did not necessarily prevent

them from fitting him into a European context. In 1896, a young South African native, a

Tswana started reading Shakespeare's plays, beginning with *The Merchant of Venice*, and

then re-counted the stories to his friends. The characters were so realistic, he wrote, "that

I was asked more than once to which of certain speculators then operating around

Kimberley, Shakespeare referred as Shylock." What he neglected to add, but must have

been fairly obvious to him, was that many of those speculators were Jewish. [37]

In Africa, however, in general it was customary to domesticate the story to indigenous

storytelling traditions, sometimes with startling results. Karen Blixen in *Out of Africa*

(1937) describes a conversation she had with her Somali steward, Farah Aden, in which

she explained the plot of *The Merchant* to him. Farah was a Muslim, and knew that

Shylock was a Jew, but that was not what interested him about this particular situation.

Instead, he saw the conflict between Shylock and the Christians purely as a battle of wits:

"Here was a big, complicated business deal, somewhat on the verge of the law, the real thing to a Somali. He asked me a question or two as to the pound of flesh. It obviously seemed to him an eccentric, but not impossible agreement. And here the story began to smell of blood- his interest in it rose. When Portia came upon the stage, he pricked up his ears; I imagine that he saw her as a woman of his own tribe, Fatima with all her sails set, crafty and insinuating, out to outman man. Colored people do not take sides in a tale. The interest to them lies in the ingeniousness of the plot itself; and the Somali, who in real life have a strong sense of values, and a gift for moral indignation, give these a rest in fiction. Still, here Farah's sympathy was with Shylock, who had come down with the cash; he repugned his defeat.

"What?" said he, "Did the Jew give up his claim? The flesh was due to him, it was little enough for him to get for all that money."

"But what else could he do," I asked, "when he must not take one drop of blood?"

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[37] Gross, p. 255

"Memsahib," said Farah, "he could have used a redhot knife. That brings out no blood." [38]

Blixen pointed out to Farah that there was also the problem of having to take exactly one pound of flesh, neither more nor less. Farah had a ready answer for that, too: he could have taken one little bit at a time, weighing the individual bits as he did. "Had the Jew no friends to advise him?" Generations of theatergoers, readers and critics regarded Shylock as the embodiment of shocking craftiness; Farah, however felt sorry for the poor devil for not being nearly crafty enough in this battle of the wits. He was a pitiable trickster indeed who allowed himself to be outfoxed quite so easily. No doubt about it, he should have cut away the pound of flesh a bit at a time. In Blixen's story, when she eventually remonstrated with Farah, he had given it up: "Yes that was a great pity, Memsahib," said Farah." [39]

In African lore, the trickster is a familiar participant in stories, a basically powerless individual who could not only hold his own in a battle of wits but also turn the tables on those more powerful than himself. Turning the tables, I suspect, cannot always be achieved by fair means, so people are willing to give him some latitude in that respect. They are interested to know what the trickster will do next, given this freedom to act outside the strict moral compass. That explains Farah's nonchalance in face of Shylock's pursuit. And disappointed in his performance, Shylock had shrunk in stature in his eyes. Quite the reverse of what happened to Shylock in Europe.

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[38] Gross, pp. 255-256
[39] Ibid

In an aside from this thesis, and encouraged by Farah's attitude, I am asking myself: what if Shakespeare, in creating Shylock, had in mind just a good yarn to tell, with the intention of pitting one talented individual (Shylock) against another (Portia) in a battle of wits, and may the clever person win? They are both tricksters in their way, both are witty, wily, passionate, both are subjugated by the social order of their day, he by being an alien and she by being a woman, both have wealth that gives them an illusion of being in control, and both at different times in the play gain an upper hand over the existing powers that be. Come to think of it, Shylock would have made a far more interesting and challenging consort to Portia than that playboy husband, Bassanio. In the 1973 Jonathan Miller's production of "*The Merchant*", Laurence Olivier was Shylock and Joan Plowright played Portia. They were later married and lived happily until his passing away. So in a way I got my wish.

Shylock in Our Times

After WWII, when it became clear that centuries of European slandering of the Jews yielded their evil fruit, *The Merchant* has become a very problematic play to produce as well as a lot more challenging. Shylock's Jewishness is the main sticking point, in a way that it had never been before. Directors struggle with the intrinsic anti-Semitism of the play, and ask how they can still produce it and downplay Shylock's villainy. How can it be played for pure comic affect when it contains the now heartbreaking plea "Hath not a Jew eyes... etc." There have been many attempts to deal with the new reality surrounding the play, and directors came up with all kinds of ideas. Olivier's semi-assimilated Shylock was a tormented soul, as only Olivier could play it, ending with Shylock's wrapped in his prayer shawl, and the "Kadish", the prayer for the dead, intoning in the background. This was not a comedy. In another production, the play was set against extreme circumstances, and designated for irony: the setting was a concentration camp, where a group of Jewish prisoners played the good Christians and a Nazi officer played Shylock.[40] Such an interpretation aims for the ultimate paradox. What could it mean: That Shylock was a Nazi-like figure? That the Nazi had a Shylock-like motivation? That all are human and fallible? It may seem like a clever idea but when probed, it does not yield any coherence and does not help any better in deciphering Shylock's enigma. In the documentary film on Shylock, one director is quoted as saying that he would produce *The Merchant* as a comedy provided there were thirty Jews sitting in the audience, laughing. He meant to say that the play is unplayable today and should

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[40] *Shylock*, produced by The National Film Board of Canada, directed by Barry Edelstein

not be attempted. Exclusion of one segment of the public from enjoying what most others do is no longer allowed, or is it? However, I don't think Shylock is doomed for oblivion. For too many generations he has been too powerful a symbol to fade quietly away. Instead of the evil myth, he is now better known for his plea for respect on the basis of universal humanity. With capitalism and bank loan interest as the way to fulfilling people's dreams of prosperity, he is no longer alone. Shylock makes his appearance in books and movies in comic or dramatic contexts and nobody is offended. I would like to mention a few cases in point, to illustrate the affability of the new Shylock.

Avanti Popolo is a 1987 Israeli film by director Raffi Bouk'ai. The action takes place in the aftermath of 1967 Six-Day-War in the just occupied Sinai Desert. Two Egyptian soldiers are separated from their unit and wander about the desert with no drinking water or any other supplies. One of them is an actor who was playing Shylock just before being recruited to go to war. They stumble upon three Israeli soldiers who had lost their way too but do have water, some food, and radio connection with their unit. The Israelis spot the two Egyptians and try to shoo them away by shooting at their feet. Undeterred, the two approach the three soldiers. The Arab actor notices a canteen full of water and lunges at it. He is roughly pulled away. He tries again; he is pushed away again, and again. Finally, exhausted and beaten, he lets out an agonized scream: "I am a Jew" and proceeds to recite: "Hath not a Jew Eyes?" in a heavily accented, funny sort of English, much to the amazement of the Israeli soldiers. He finishes the monologue. One of the soldiers asks: "What is he babbling about?" The other answers: "Nothing, he got his roles mixed up." Nevertheless, they allow him and his friend to share in their water. The five men

march together in the desert, singing the Italian "Avanti Popolo". This is not the end of the movie, only halfway through. The end is commensurate with the devastation and stupidity of war, in which people are what their uniforms make them to be: this side or the other side.

It is a poignant scene, in which the desperate Egyptian soldier manages to communicate with the Jewish soldiers by proclaiming himself Shylock, and insisting on their common humanity, on his right for their respect, for their help, for their water. It is doubtful whether he would have gotten through to the battle-weary soldiers if he made up his own plea. It is the clever use of the famous Shylock's speech that pierced through the fog of resentment. He was holding a mirror to his enemies. And who knows, maybe he too, for the first time, realized the true meaning of that monologue.

My second example comes from Elmore Leonard's novel *Get Shorty* which was turned into a movie of the same name in 1995. John Travolta plays Chili Palmer, an irresistible, film-obsessed Miami Loan shark, a self-proclaimed shylock. Following an unpaid debt, he goes to Hollywood and finds himself agreeably embroiled in the movie industry. He has an idea for a script, based on his own recent experiences, which he proposes to a star played by Danny DeVitto:

"What happened? The pressure got to you?"
"Pressure? I'm the one applied the pressure."
"That's what I mean, the effect that must've had on you. What you had to do sometimes to collect."
"Like have some asshole's legs broken?"
"That, yeah, or some form of intimidation?"

"Whatever it takes," Chili said. "You're an actor, you like to pretend. **Imagine you're the shylock.** A guy owes you fifteen grand and he skips, leaves town."
"Yeah?"
"What do you do?"
Chili watched the movie star hunch over, narrowing his shoulders. For a few moments he held his hands together in front of him, getting a shifty look in his eyes. Then gave it up, shaking his head.
"I'm doing Shylock instead of a shylock. Okay, what's my motivation? The acquisition of money. To collect. Inflict pain if I have to."

...

"Hold it," Chili said. **"I was a shylock - what do I look like?"**
"That's right, yeah," Michael said, staring at Chili, his expression gradually becoming dead- pan, sleepy.
"You the shylock now?"
"Guy owes me fifteen large and takes off, I go after him," the movie star said. "The fuck you think I do?"
"Try it again," Chili said. "look at me."
"I'm looking at you."
"No, I want you to look at me the way I'm looking at you. Put it in your eyes, 'you're mine, asshole,' without saying it."
"Like this?"
"What're you telling me, you're tired? You wanna go to bed?"
"Wait. How about this?"
"You're squinting, like you're trying to look mean or you need glasses. Look at me. I'm thinking, you're mine, I fuckin own you. What I'm *not* doing is feeling anything about it one way or the other. You understand? You're not a person to me, you're a name in my collection book, a guy owes me money, that's all."
"The idea then," the movie star said, "I show complete indifference, until I'm crossed."
"Not even then. It's nothing personal, it's business. The guy misses, he knows what's gonna happen.
"How about this?" the movie star said, giving Chili a nice dead-eyed look.
"That's not bad."

It is strange how much we can learn about the real Shylock from a petty Miami shylock in a Hollywood movie. The novelist draws a distinction between them, both in the way the actor deals with them, and their motivation. The grim, shifty look of the classical Shylock indicates feeling, pain, and vengefulness. That Shylock has no role to play in this scenario. He feels too much. He has a motivation other than collecting money. Chili's shylock is the real loan shark, emphasizing his lack of feeling or interest in his guy:

"What I'm *not* doing is feeling anything about it one way or the other. You're not a person to me, you're a name in my collection book, a guy owes me money, that's all." This is how our Shylock should probably have behaved, had it not been for his constant

persecution, humiliation. A feeling shylock, says Chili, is no good at what he is doing. He should be doing something else.

I have chosen these two examples where a disembodied Shylock makes a brief but meaningful appearance to indicate that Shylock need not be put to rest. From the first Jewish moneylender surfacing in *Il Pecorone*, he had been translated once into Shylock, after which he developed and grew in tenor in an arc from Shylock the buffoon to Shylock the farcical villain to Shylock the villain to Shylock the arch-villain, to Shylock the International all powerful evil Jew, at which point he had reached the maximum of the curve. After the catastrophe of WWII, the myth could no longer be sustained, and he went into a decline in his mythical stature. At each stage, he was translated into the needs, the expectations and the fears of the prevalent order. It would have been better for the last four centuries of the Jewish people if Shakespeare had never read that Italian novella, had never gone beyond the mediocrity of that work to recreate it in his own image. Still, in the post-colonial, postmodern world, where nations are no longer ethnically pure, Shylock can be fitted, however uncomfortably and ambiguously, into a niche as representative of the evil of oppression, persecution and intolerance. His language, which one critic defined as the language of terrorism, should teach us that people deprived of their dignity and liberty for too long are not ennobled by their suffering and humiliation, they more likely than not turn into Shylocks.

6 Translation and Prejudice

I have chosen to dedicate the majority of my thesis to studying the ethical subtleties of mainly literary translation along the lines provided by Translation Theorists. The terms I borrowed from Berman and Venuti have been very useful when applied to literature, art and drama. They are all, however, concerned with the extent to which the integrity of the work is preserved in translation. Roughly put, the translator's main worry is how to safeguard the authenticity of the original source, under the assumption that what is there is worth preserving. These measures, however, fall short when applied to the studying of political translation. Politics is about power play, about getting a point home to constituencies in order to gain certain advantages in public opinion, advantages that would impel very real actions concerning people's lives. Within such a context, linguistic ethics are not everybody's main concern. The accuracy and truthfulness of authentic messages are widely manipulated, with emphases on certain features and silences on other. Politicians spin the truth all the time, to fit in with their vision of the world. Translation in such an environment is a natural instrument of manipulation. Since translators occupy a position of possessing knowledge, which is largely unavailable to their prospective readership, then by controlling and screening it are able to manipulate the thinking and opinions of their readers. This imbalance can, and sometimes does, lead to subversion of textual messages, distortions, misinterpretations and fabrications, in the service of political aims, a social idea or an ideology.

Just as translation in history brought about the dissemination of humanistic ideas, of the basic rights of humanity, to the general benefit of entire populations, it was also responsible for inventing, multiplying and propagating entrenched prejudices. The case of Shylock, which I have looked at, is one such example. However, no one can dispute the fact that Shylock is a made up character, or claim that Shakespeare had any idea of mischief in mind when he created him. It was the genius of his talent that injected so much meaning into the character, and, to this day, there is no one definite interpretation that can strip Shylock of his ambiguity. Moreover, it is this very ambiguity that should absolve Shakespeare of any complicity in what Shylock had been made into as a result of his appearance. The real evils translations come from different sorts of mind and create different discourses. Here I would like to describe such two examples, which differ in essence from the Shylock case.

The first is the infamous "translation" of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. The second example is a relatively recent controversial interpretation of the story of Judas Iscariot, in which translation seems to have played a major part.

The Case of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion

The "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" draws on popular anti-Semitic archetypes, which have been prevalent in European anti-Jewish imagination since the time of the Crusades. The libel that Jews used Christian children's blood for their Passover Feast, poisoned wells, and spread the black plague were closely associated with mass-circulating tales of rabbinical conferences whose aim was to subjugate and exterminate the Christians.

The direct source for the "Protocols" was a composition by a French satirist, Maurice

Joly, published in 1864. It was entitled "Dialogues in Hell Between Machiavelli and

Montesquieu", and attacked the political ambitions of Napoleon III using as metaphor a

diabolical plot in hell. Though intended as a political satire, Joly's composition was soon

plagiarized by a German anti-Semite named Herman Goedsche, who, writing under the

pseudonym of Sir John Retcliffe, adapted the "Dialogues" into a mythical tale of Jewish

conspiracy, as part of a series of novels entitled "Biarritz", which appeared in 1868. In a

chapter called "The Jewish Cemetery in Prague and the Council of Representatives of the

Twelve Tribes of Israel", he tells of a secret centennial meeting of Jewish Rabbis taking

place at midnight, in which the past one hundred years is reviewed and plans are made

for the next century.

In 1872 Goedsche's plagiarized work [41] was translated into Russian. A consolidation of

the "Council of Representatives" under the title "Rabbi's Speech" appeared in Russian in

1891 the two works were soon adopted by the secret Russian police and served as means

of discrediting the reforms suggested by liberal sectors in Russian politics, which were

sympathetic to the Jewish plight. During the Dreyfus case between 1893-1895, agents of

the secret Russian police in Paris edited the earlier works of Joly and Goedsche into a

new synthesis, which they called "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion". The new

manuscript was brought to Russia and printed privately in 1897.

The "Protocols" were made public in 1905 by a mystic priest named Sergius Nilus, after

the success of the first socialist revolution in establishing a Russian parliament and a

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[41] Plagiarism could be described as an extreme case of "domestication", where the translator totally controls a source text to the extent that the source text no longer has a right to exist. It is like committing a textual murder.

constitution. A reactionary organization seeking to stir up hostility against the Jews,

whom it blamed for the revolution, used the "Protocols" as part of the propaganda

campaign, which accompanied the pogroms of 1905. Following the 1917 Bolshevik

revolution, many Russians fled to Western Europe, bringing with them the Nilus' version

of the "Protocols" which served as the basis for many translations. In 1920, the

"Protocols" appeared in English in London. In 1921, the London Times published a series

of articles, which exposed the "Protocols" as a forgery and a plagiarism. Another book,

documenting the history of the "Protocols" was published in the United States.

Such was the sway and the potency of this infamous document that it continued to

circulate widely, and formed an important part of the Nazis' justification of genocide of

the Jews. [42] An example of the way this myth manipulated and consolidated public

opinion can be found in a conversation between two poorly dressed elderly women,

overheard in the mid-1930's in a cheap Vienna coffee house. The first woman announced

that there would be another world war in five years, and that it would completely destroy

Austria "and all the countries." Her companion was skeptical and asked her how she

knew. The answer (which was apparently convincing) was as follows: Ninety-five years

ago, the great Emperor Napoleon had called the leaders of the Jews of the World to a

secret meeting at Schloss Schonbrunn in Vienna. At that meeting, the Jews laid out the

history of the next hundred years and wrote it down in a secret book. They planned for

one Great War in 1914; at the end of these hundred years, there was to be the greatest war

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[42] Larsson, Goran, *FACT OR FRAUD? The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, AMI - Jerusalem Center for Biblical Studies and Research, Jerusalem, Israel, 1994, pp. 15-23

yet. After that war, they would meet again and lay out the history of the next hundred years. [43]

While the story refers to historical events, they are utterly mixed-up. Napoleon did stay at Schonbrunn, though not in the 1830's (he died in 1821). He entered Schonbrunn for the first time in 1805. Napoleon did meet with the so-called Paris Sanhedrin, an assembly of rabbis of France (not of Jewish leaders) whom he instructed to establish legal principles for the administration of Jews in France. The Sanhedrin never met in Schonbrunn of course. The two historical facts, Napoleon's stay at Schonbrunn and his meeting with Sanhedrin, are linked in the woman's account with the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," which were believed to be genuine. The result is an "historical account" which "explains" the First World War, the collapse of Imperial Austria in 1918, the Great Depression, the bloody civil uprisings in Austria of 1927 and 1934, catastrophes which the women had witnessed but could not possibly understand in terms of cause and effect. The story "explains" the past, the present, and the future by a simple mechanism (a world conspiracy by powerful, immensely wealthy Jews, the ultimate Others). The dimly remembered genuinely historical elements give it credibility. The story, flimsy and incredible as it seems, does manufacture and maintain a feeling of solidarity within the body politic by pointing to a traditional foe – the alien figure among the ethnically homogeneous. The myth of the "Protocols" helped people, especially in Germany and

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[43] Sebba, Gregor, *Truth, Myth and Symbol*, "Symbol and Myth in Modern Rationalistic Societies", pp. 151-152

Austria, to "understand" social and political instability that was at once mysterious and

threatening.[44]

As with the Shylock Myth, after WWII the "Protocols" ceased to be popular or credible

in Europe and in the United States. However, such very good material could not be

neglected for long. With the onslaught of the Israeli-Arab conflict, the "Protocols"

became part of a state-sponsored anti-Semitism in the Arab world, where the Arab

translation of the book appears to these days as authentic, without any introduction to

inform the reader that it is a forgery. The "Protocols" also figures in the ideology of

Islamic militants who mention it explicitly by name: "...The Zionist Plan is limitless.

After Palestine, the Zionists aspire to expand from the Nile to the Euphrates. When they

will have digested the region they overtook, they will aspire to further expansion, and so

on. Their plan is embodied in the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" ("Brutukulat Hukaa

Sayuun" in the Arabic original).[45]

Most recently, The "Protocols" was translated into Polish and published in Poland by

Polish historian Janusz Tazbir as part of a study called: "Protocols of the Elders of Zion:

Truth or Fraud?" A Czech publisher is planning to publish a Czech translation of the

book, to the dismay and protestation of the Jewish community there.[46] Though the book

concludes that the "Protocols" is a fraud and a forgery, it does contain the entire text, and

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[44] Ibid, p. 152
[45] Mitbaq Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya - Filastin (Hamas). English Version: *The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance movement*, 18 August 1988, p. 45
[46] From: Internet page on Protocols: *1995 San Francisco Jewish Community Publications*, Jewish Bulletin of Northern California

the prevailing fear among Jewish critics is that readers of the book might be inclined to give as much credence to the tract itself as to the historian's assessment of its credibility.

This issue invokes the whole issue of responsibility on the part of the translator who serves a certain work to a public. When a public or prospective readership is historically known to be more vulnerable to certain premises which underlie a text to be translated and published, does the translator who has chosen to do the job take that into consideration, and act upon it? There may be two alternative motivations for a translator to take on something like that: The one would be that the translator has confidence in the truth of the textual premise, and feels it is incumbent upon him or her to publish this truth in order to prevent future harm. The second motivation runs counter to the first one: The material to be translated is so unjust and unfounded that the translator feels its contents ought to be made public in order to expose the fraud and undo whatever damage the material has done. In the second instance, such a translation would be invariably surrounded by extra textual notes that would argue the case and make it explicitly clear to the reader that the translation is that of a fraudulent source.

Translators of the "Protocols" come from either side of this equation. The early translators, as well as their more modern reincarnation in the Arab world, had in mind the dissemination and incitation of anti-Jewish feeling by manufacturing a text that was bound to appeal to its prospective readers. The more recent Polish and Czech translators seem to be interested in rebutting the premises that had originally instigated the formation of the "Protocols", and which are still evident among their respective peoples. The Jewish critics are opposed to any attempt to revive, in any form or under any circumstances a

text that has been so virulent, persistent and tenacious that, as far as they are concerned, had better be buried for good.

The issue is very difficult to resolve. From an ethical point of view, there is no doubt that the original translators of the "Protocols" were not interested in the truth and were working from an eliminationist standpoint. Have they forfeited their right to claim a legitimate place at the table? Their kind of motivation is rarely condoned in the modern liberal world. The recent translators are motivated by a desire for understanding and knowledge of how hatred is textualized and legitimized. By disseminating this knowledge, they hope to expose these premises for what they are. They do follow an ethical course, because they try to contribute to a more general good. Having said that, I would still like to emphasize that the Jewish critics opposed to any publication of the "Protocols" should not be dismissed offhandedly. This piece of text has proved enduring and resistant to total confutation. The premise of the "Protocols" is so entrenched in European identity, that it is being cited and echoed over and over again.

Three years ago, "The New Yorker" magazine, in a special Europe issue, ran two lengthy articles, in which references, strongly reminiscent of the message in the "Protocols", were made.

The first article dealt with the complicated question of Swiss accountability, Nazi Gold and Holocaust survivors. The following quotation is taken from there: *"Robert Holzach, at U.B.S. wanted to reassure me that with one possible exception there were no Jews "at the top" in any of the three public banks. He said that the banking scandal was really a*

war. It had to do with a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world's "Prestige financial markets", something he told me is already happening in New York, London, and "even Frankfurt".[47]

The second article was a profile of French Ultra nationalist leader Jean-Marie Le Pen. In a National Front Weekly *"National Hebdo"*, the writer of the New Yorker article found some food for thought: *"A lot of attention was paid to a famous interview, in which Le Pen was reported to have said that President Chirac was controlled by international Jewry and the Freemasons, through the agency of B'nai Brith. National Hebdo claimed that Le Pen was misquoted, but elsewhere the paper maintained that such Judeo-Masonic cabal does exert great influence over the French Government. Under the heading "IS FRIENDSHIP POSSIBLE WITH THE JEWS?" the paper's editorial director, Martin Peltier, explained that it is not just reasonable but prudent to believe in conspiracies, and that Jews are behind the worst of them. But while Jews are generally "globalists and communists" and "individuals mired in the trickery of dual allegiance ... friendship with national Jews is possible...I read on, tripping over words and phrases- "cosmopolitans" 'vagabonds" "non-civic" "Judaism perverted by global organizations".[48]*

Both quotes attest to the enduring power of the ideas entrenched in the *"Protocols"*. By bringing together all these elements and unifying them into one coherent discourse, *the Protocols* still occupies a place of predominance and legitimacy in European thinking. So much so, that images from it can be used as a grid of reference. What is the world to do with the "Protocols" then? What should be the moral accountability of any translator who

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[47] Kramer, Jane, "Manna From Hell", *The New Yorker*, April 28 and May 5, 1997, p. 89
[48] Philip Gourevich, "The Unthinkable", Ibid, p. 139

takes on this text for whatever reason? This ethical dilemma cannot even begin to be resolved. There are too many variables involved in making that kind of judgment It seems any resolution on this issue will have to go beyond the ethics of democracy and the freedom of knowledge and flow of information. How do we go beyond these principles, without rendering them void or at least damaging them? Is there, or can we formulate in language, a preexistent code of ethics by which we know what is the right thing to do?

Judas Iscariot - A Deliberate Myth-translation?

Judas Iscariot's name is synonymous with the notion of unmitigated treacherousness. By betraying Jesus for a paltry sum of 30 pieces of silver, he took his place right next to Satan, that arch enemy of Christ, and began the process that would seal his own people's fate as eternally damned and deserving of any kind of calamity that would befall them. The story of Judas is told in the four Gospels. However, contradictions and important missing pieces of information have left biblical scholars puzzled as to who exactly Judas was and what his role was in Jesus' life. One such scholar is William Klassen, research professor at the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem, who published a book about Judas's life called: " *Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?"*. In a letter to the *London Review of Books* (Feb.20, 1997) Klassen insists that he approached his mandate to write a life of Judas *"with the firm conviction that Judas was a traitor and that all the Gospels were unanimous in portraying him as such'.* One of the most difficult discoveries of his life was the realization that his previous convictions did not stand up to the evidence uncovered in his research. By the time he reached the end of his journey to find the

historical Judas, he came to believe that the Christian tradition had misrepresented and vilified the man, all the more readily so because Judas' name so vividly suggests his Jewish*ness*.

The great Catholic theologian St. Augustine articulates this tendency well when he pronounces that *"The true image of the Hebrew is Judas Iscariot, who sells the Lord for silver. The Jew can never understand the scriptures and forever will bear the guilt for the death of Jesus"* (St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, Father of the Church).[49]

The accounts in the Gospels are fractured and inconsistent. A full story emerges more or less from an amalgamation of all the details that appear in the four different gospels, but the final product is still deficient. Too many contradictions and lacunae require a great deal of extra- textual interpretative material to settle the contradictions and account for them. These elaborate interpretations, creating the myth of Judas Iscariot's archetypal villainy, took place in the early years of Christianity, soon after the Jewish rebellion against Rome failed in the year 71 C.E. It was necessary then for the fledgling new Christians, already persecuted and hounded by the mighty Roman Empire, to distance themselves as much as possible from their Jewish brethren, so as to avert any suspicion of shared interests and feelings with them. A political agenda required that the Jew be made into the Christian's archenemy, and a figure of mythical magnitude was called for to give that image of the Jew a specific name and individuality. It is far easier to hate a well-formed monster than an abstract notion, however evil that notion may be. Judas Iscariot's fumbling tale in the four Gospels was an ideal choice as the incarnation of the Evil Jew,

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[49] Kimell, A., "Source of Hatred, anti-Semitism", http://haven.ios.com/~kimell19/antisem/html

the Antichrist. Even though the story and the historical data did not add up to an evil Judas, he could be made into one, with some creative imagination and some textual manipulation with a little help from the translation process.

According to William Klassen, the manufacturing of the Judas' myth turned on the translation of a single word: the Greek *paradidomi*, which means 'to hand over' and according to traditional biblical scholars can also mean *to betray*. Disputing the traditional translation of the word, Klassen maintains that there is no precedent in either classical Greek or the Greek of Josephus Flavius, all **contemporary** with the Greek of the Gospels, to suggest that the word indeed means *to betray*. Yet, in the 44 times that the word *paradidomi* appears in connection with Judas, the King James Bible erroneously translates it as *betray* on all but four occasions.[50]

William Klassen claims that a critical reading of Greek texts reveals without any doubt that the word *paradidomi* simply does not mean *betray*. Many scholars have noted before the difficulty in this translation, but the point was never pursued or carried to its logical conclusion in the case of Judas.[51] Klassen explains the transaction between Judas and *'the Jews who want Jesus arrested'* as something quite traditional and standard for Jews who inform on someone to the High Priest. He goes on to suggest that Judas was acting as a faithful Jew, carrying out God's will as understood by Jesus. Perhaps Judas retained his loyalty to the High Priest as guardian of the Temple, in which case there is little room to speak of *"betrayal"*. The only textual support for *"betrayal"* appears in only one place

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[50] Kermode, Frank, "My Man", *London Review of Books*, 2 January 1997, p. 23
[51] Klassen, William, "Gospel Truth", *London Review of Books*, Feb. 20, 1997

where the precise Greek word for "*traitor*" is used. This sense of betrayal may have arisen from an aggrieved early Christian community, which might well have regarded Judas as the first defector from their community. According to Klassen, there is nothing in the New Testament to suggest that Jesus felt himself betrayed, and what it was that Judas was supposed to have betrayed has never been defined.[52]

In *"Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil"*, Hyam Maccoby meticulously dissects the origins of the legend of Judas, and concludes that at first the identification of Judas with the Jewish people as a whole would seem to be unconscious, as far as the New Testament is concerned. It is only in later Christian literature, notably the writings of Jerome (c.340-420) that this identification is made explicit.[53] Jerome, Patron saint of translators, was translating the Greek bible into Latin as Christian theologians and historians were laying down the main lines of Christian anti- Semitism. Indeed, Jerome was one of the participants in the polemical literature that was being written against Jews and Judaism.[54] It is only reasonable to expect him to render a translation and an interpretation that would tally with his own beliefs and aims.

Most Christians today probably find all these speculations pointless, but the mysteries of Holy Week and Easter, a source of luminous promise for Christians, were for centuries a source of terror for the Jews of Europe. On Good Friday, after hearing the story of Jesus' betrayal and death, Christians would rush from their churches to vent their outraged feelings upon the miscreant Jews. The inspiration for these Easter pogroms was the figure

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[52] Ibid
[53] Maccoby, Hyam, *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil*, The Free Press, New York, 1992, p. 81
[54] Ibid, p. 82

of Judas. Christians associated their earthly enemies with the absolute evil incarnated in Judas, who therefore could expect no mercy.[55]

The mistranslation in the Judas story has reinforced mythical fears and instigated untold damage to humanity, damage repeated and multiplied over the ages. It was the foundation for an organized, powerful hatred, forever seething and forever present, even today. The issue of ethics or justice or a search for a pure truth never entered into the considerations of all those translators who engineered the myth and colluded in promulgating anti-Jewish hostility. It is interesting to watch with what indifference and even worse, aversion, the new information and enlightenment of modern researches is met. It is next to impossible to let go of authoritative texts, albeit translated ones. The passage of time has rendered them sacred and inviolate. How can anybody suggest a revision of these texts without causing an outraged uproar? Doesn't that explain and fully justify the Judaic law, that only the Hebrew text is the authoritative one, and no translation can ever replace it, not under any circumstances? Wasn't this risk of distortion and mistranslating exactly why this law was established in the first place? And wouldn't it have been for the benefit of humanity in general, and Christianity in particular, had that same law been applied in the Christian tradition as well?

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[55] Armstrong, Karen, "No More Mr. Bad Guy", *The Observer Review*, 30 March 1997, p. 20

7 Nuances of Translation in Political Context

In politics, words are never well-defined units of meaning; they assume a particularly

fluctuating essence when mouthed by politicians. In a 1950 essay by George Orwell he

says *"political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable,*

and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind".[56] It is easy to understand how,

within such a context, translation can serve as a definite manipulative device. To

illustrate my point, I would like to describe two examples in which certain terms in

controversial contexts have been modified in translation so as to render the texts more

palatable to prospective audiences. The one example comes from Middle East politics:

the second harks back to the Nurenberg Trials in the aftermath of the Second World War.

In both cases, an attempt is being made to modify in translation certain terms that have

gained highly disreputable connotations. In both cases, the euphemistic translation aims *a*

priori at mollifying the outraged feelings and certain expectations of the prospective

readers and listeners.

Zionism in the Palestinian Charter

For many years after the establishment of the state of Israel as a legitimate entity in the

Middle East, the Arab world refused to acknowledge its existence. When a reference to

Israel was made in official speeches and journalistic articles, the term used to describe it

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[56] Orwell, George, "Politics and the English Language", *A Collection of Essays*, New York, Doubleday Anchor, 1954, p. 177

would be: *The Zionist presence.* So for an Arab audience, this reference has come to

signify what the name Israel signifies to the rest of the world. When in 1969, the

Palestinian National Charter (or Covenant) was formulated, outlining the program to

achieve statehood, the nucleus of this plan - defined in Article 15 and translated into

English by Leila S. Kadi (Palestinian Research Centre, Beirut, December 1969) [57] reads

as follows: "The *liberation of Palestine is a national duty and it attempts to repel the*

Zionist and imperialist aggression against the Arab homeland, and aims at the elimination

of Zionism in Palestine" (my emphasis). The English translation has reduced the original

message by the translator so as to render it more congenial to a Western audience. The

precise translation of that phrase is: *"...the liquidation of the Zionist presence..."* [58]

Considering that *"Zionist presence"*, used in the underlying text automatically signals to

an Arab audience *"the present State of Israel"*, the intent of this plan becomes clear: the

elimination of Israel. In mistranslating this particular term, substituting *"Zionism"* - an

ideological movement - for *"The state of Israel"*, a political presence and actuality (land

citizens, etc), the translator, quite possibly aware of the impact such wording would have

on Western audiences, was deliberately trying to blur the starkness of the original text. In

so doing, she hoped to bypass an idea that would not be allowable even to countries

sympathetic to Palestinian causes.

Judged from a purely ethical point of view, the translator tamed, domesticated her

original text so as to shield her potential target readership from a distasteful idea. The

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[57] The Palestinian National Covenant, *Basic Political Documents of the armed Palestinian Resistance Movement*, pp. 137-141
[58] Israel information Centre P.O.B. 1301 0, Jerusalem, Israel: The document provides the original phrase in Arabic before giving the correct translation

uniqueness of this situation is twofold: First, this translator, unlike most of the other translators I have looked at thus far, owes her allegiance to the culture and language that produced the source text. She is actually placed in a position where she is no more than a political tool. She does not in the least resist the powerful pull of the target culture; resistance, which Venuti insists is the essence of the ethical translator. On the contrary; she makes use of her knowledge of the sensibilities of her target audience so as to soften the message. Secondly, her very attentiveness to what might be palatable to her readers signals an awareness of the radicalism of what was being avowed in the original document. This could be an implicit indication of, if not tolerance, at least a muted understanding of the expectations of her readers.

Final Solution or Total Solution?

In the Nurenberg Trials, Translation played a crucial role in communication, due to the large variety of nations represented in the proceedings. Skilled and professional translators were employed to try and help the judges get as close to the truth as possible. In spite of this, when the Nazi Propaganda Minister Goering was questioned. he managed quite successfully to cast doubts as to the way certain terms, quoted from official Nazi documents, were translated from the German. In seeking to mitigate the damage done to his defense by those documents, he kept arguing that many quotes were mistranslated, and that the correct translation would account for a different story than the one unfolded during the trials.[59] I will describe one such attempt.

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[59] Bowen, David and Margareta, "The Nurenberg Trials (Communication Through Translation)", *META XXX. 1* pp. 74-77

When cross-examination turned to the persecution of the Jewish population, the prosecution presented as evidence a short letter from Goering to Heydrich in which *"the final solution to the Jewish problem"* was the main issue. Goering challenged the translation, claiming that the correct term should have stated *"the total solution"* to the Jewish problem, and not the *"final solution"* as it came to be known in contemporary Western media. This example testifies to the complexity of an ethics of translation, which cannot apparently be divorced from the context in which it occurs. Goering the translator, unlike the translator of the Palestinian Charter, seems to have adhered to Venuti's principle of *"resistancy"*: He is intent on keeping close to the authentic term supplied in his Native German in attempting to deal with the question of Jewish persecution. However, it is doubtful whether concern with linguistic accuracy guided him in this instance. In a way, he was aiming at achieving the same impact as that of the Palestinian Charter translator, namely, to mutate the understanding of his target audience. Fully aware of the heavily emotional charge that had accrued to the term *"final solution"* he wanted to lessen the burden by suggesting that another term be used instead. A euphemistic variation such as *"the total solution"* would have divested the concept of its immediate connotations, blunting the sharpness of the allusion and thus maybe softening its impact, to Goering's advantage in court. In this case, the court may have conceded certain linguistic points to the accused, yet was fully aware that in the context of historical evidence, any term selected to describe the genocidal plans would have eventually assumed the same emotionally-charged meaning.

8 Conclusion

We have learned from Antoine Berman's book that German Romantic theory of translation defines a good translation by its essentiality, being the only one possible interpretation of the translated work, to the exclusion of all other interpretations.

I would like at this point to recall once again some Foucauldian perspective. I find that Foucault's attitude about the possibility of interpretation underscores this view while vexing it at the same time. Foucault often complained about interpretation. When he criticized interpretation, he was disengaging himself from a procedure close to the heart of the modern humanities, which fall between the interpretative methodologies of historicism on the one hand and hermeneutics on the other hand.[60]

Hermeneutics regards interpretation as necessary because it assumes that texts and events lose their original meaning as time goes by and in the process of communication. Historicism supposes that texts and events conceal and are ordered by an absent structure, a context that a good reader can bring to light as a true meaning. Foucault's argument against interpretation goes like this: No text can ever have a moment when it is present to itself. An interpretation, being a text itself, requires further commentary. It is always too late to *"uncover an original meaning"*, a stable context, a unifying schema through which we can make overall sense of an author's work[61]. Everything is already interpretation. The search for original meanings has institutional consequences. It allows "good readers"

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[60] Foucault, Michel, *The Order of Things*, Forward to the English Edition, Preface, Vintage Books. NY 1973
[61] *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, Edited By Gary Gutting, pp. 1-2

to form into groups and schools that develop uniquely approved procedures and exclude others.

If we accept Foucault's view, then we must see that the desire of German Romantic theorists of translation to reach an ultimate level of translation is doomed and misguided from the start. I would suggest even further that while the desire is indeed commendable as a guideline for translators, the claim that a translator can achieve the only one possible perfect and final interpretation of a work is ethically irresponsible. Why? Because it is a totalizing view that imposes silence on other possible interpretations. Under this paradigm, literary and cultural translations reconstitute the truth of past events and given texts in an attempt to establish and consolidate a cultural patrimony, instead of diluting nationalistic feelings and circulating different, possible kinds of information.

However, I like this theory of the German romantics. It imposes an onus on translators, even if the goals it sets up for them are illusory in nature. In some ways, the German Romantics are quoting Foucault when they expect the translator to get to the work, the text, while by-passing the author and his/her presumed, explicit or implicit intentions. The work, the text is out there, and its potential translator, subordinate as he is, takes over it, claims it in a way that is uniquely his, uses it to gets at the ideas that had originally generated this text in its author. In a way, such a translator performs a small feat of textual decolonization. Instead of bowing in awe to the author, and being subjugated by the text, the translator ups the table and claims certain equality, precarious and short-lived as it is, with the author.

What a triumph! But can it be done? And what would be the consequences of such a feat?

In my opinion, such translations are at their most successful when performed on ancient, or at least time-honored texts, such as the Biblical writings or Shakespeare. Indeed, we have seen it done in this thesis. These translations take absolute precedence over the original, which in turn grows increasingly obscure and insignificant.

Lawrence Venuti, our other translation sage, maintains that translation has always been dependent on two notions: that it be fluent by using correct, idiomatic language, and that it be transparent, that is, to create a fantasy that the translation is not a translation, i.e. only an interpretation, but rather the original itself. It is not just the translator's responsibility but also the reader's. When reading a text, a reader usually does not want to have this nagging doubts at the back of his her mind: Is this what I paid for? Am I getting the real thing here? When a text is beautifully written, the reader is seduced into accepting it as truth. After all, didn't Keats, with great ironic insight into human perception, tell us that Truth is Beauty and Beauty - Truth? Aesthetics, however, is closely related to culture and fashion. A text can read beautifully to someone because it feels familiar and comfortable, it re-affirms one's existence and moral opinions. This kind of translation is a domesticated translation, and therefore a transgression. An ethics of translation, Venuti says, demands that the original text be discernible and palpable through the translation. A translation must resist its own language and culture, and a translator must suppress his/her own biases while translating. In Venuti's view, we can

see Foucault's own insistence to resist the need for interpretation, to crown any one discourse as better or higher than another. If a discourse represents a culture, than the closer we stay to this discourse, the less violence is done to whatever message is out there. The least violence done, the better, the more relevant, a translation becomes. There is an ethical risk of the translator taking over the underlying text without accountability: the risk of distortion that can cause damage to the powerless and the voiceless.

In a way, then, Venuti's view of translation is Foucauldian: he advocates as little interpretation as possible, because he does not trust interpreters. He does not trust interpreters because any interpretation is violence. Not interpreting a text requires the translator to dig deeply into the underlying text, in order to get to the very essence of it. If the translator does not do that, how will he/she know that their translation is not just an interpretation? It seems I have come a full circle here: the translative process requires a meeting of minds between the writer of a text and its translator. a meeting that takes place outside the text. Both German Romantic "potentiation" theory and Venuti's "resistancy" converge easily at this point, and they coincide with my own personal view on this issue.

So I guess I can now conclude with impunity that an ethics of translation demands honest textual excavation on the part of the translator as well as a soaring of intellectual imagination in order to achieve as much understanding as possible of the underlying text. The next step would be to developing an awareness of the traps of transparency in order to create a translation that will resist the pull of the target language and culture, and thus resist interpretation. It is actually very simple: the less violence done on a text, the more

relevant the translation becomes. This is the fundamental ethic of translation. The ancillary condition of the translator cannot serve as an excuse for putting aside an innate understanding of the principles of morality in the service of an evil master. In the final analysis, it is a question of personal choice. Choices of course are always motivated by strong powers at work in our everyday life and our obvious as well as subconscious psychological drives. We, as translators, can and should find out about them. look at history, and learn our way.

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