

Translating Derrida on Translation: Relevance and Disciplinary Resistance

1. *The unique and the exemplary*

This is the story of my struggle as an English-language translator and student of translation who questions its current marginality in the United States. Yet this can also be read as the story of your struggle, you who have an interest in translation, who wish to study and perhaps practice it and who therefore can be affected adversely by the cultural and institutional marginality that limits the opportunities to do both in this country, as well as elsewhere. For since American economic and political dominance sustains the global hegemony of English, insuring that it is the most translated language worldwide but relatively little translated into, the marginality of translation in the United States inevitably produces adverse effects abroad, notably by continuing unequal patterns of cultural exchange.¹ Thus, in the particular instance of translation, the “you” for whom I claim to speak—and hence the “I” who speaks—may be taken as universal.

Nevertheless, my shift from “I” to “you” must not be so rapid, must not appear so seamless, because my story is fairly unique, occasioned by a recent translation project. I want to discuss the circumstances surrounding my translation of a lecture by Jacques Derrida on the theme of translation. To be sure, translating the work of this contemporary French philosopher requires that one be a specialist in a certain sense, possessing a knowledge not only of the French language, but of Continental philosophical traditions, and not only of translation practices between French and English, but of the discursive strategies that have been used to translate Derrida’s writing over the past thirty years. Yet these different kinds of specialized knowledge are not sufficient for the task: one must also *desire* to translate Derrida. Indeed, scholars who admire his work, who teach, research, and edit it may decline to translate it, both because his playful, allusive writing poses numerous difficulties to the translator and because translation continues to rank low in the scale of scholarly rewards. Of course, if the hand is willing, it may still be tied by the legal factors that always constrain translation.²

Derrida's work has accrued such cultural and economic capital that academic presses tend to purchase exclusive world rights from the publisher of the French text and from the author himself. This means that a translator must not only receive Derrida's permission to translate his work, but must negotiate with presses to avoid copyright infringement. The many complicated factors that play into translating Derrida seem to make such a project so special as to undermine any effort to treat it as exemplary. How, then, can I presume to do so?

Derrida can help to answer this question. He has called attention to the "interbreeding and accumulating [of] two logics" (*croisant et accumulant*)³ that occur in any testimony seeking to be representative, the simultaneous co-existence of empirical individuality—in this case, a marginalized individuality—and universal exemplarity. "What happens," he asks,

when someone resorts to describing an allegedly uncommon "situation," mine, for example, by testifying to it in terms that go beyond it, in a language whose generality takes on a value that is in some way structural, universal, transcendental, or ontological? When anybody who happens by infers the following: "What holds for me, irreplaceably, also applies to all. Substitution is in progress; it has already taken effect. Everyone can say the same thing for themselves and of themselves. It suffices to hear me; I am the universal hostage."⁴

Derrida's answer to the question of exemplarity hinges on the critique of the linguistic sign embodied in his concept of *différance*. If meaning is an effect of relations and differences along a potentially endless chain of signifiers—polysemous, intertextual, subject to infinite linkages—then meaning is always differential and deferred, never present as an original unity, always already a site of proliferating possibilities that can be activated in diverse ways by the receivers of an utterance, and that therefore exceed the control of individual users.⁵ Language use, despite biological metaphors embedded in expressions like "native language" and "mother tongue," is not natural in its origins, but cultural; not only is it acquired from immersion and education in a culture, but that acquisition so infiltrates individual uses as to make them fundamentally, usually unwittingly, collective. And the relation between the individual and the collective in language is never an equality, but always weighted towards the "other" from which or whom one learns a language. As Derrida remarks,

We only ever speak one language—and, since it returns to the other, it exists asymmetrically, always for *the other*, from the other, kept by the other. Coming from the other, remaining with the other, and returning to the other.⁶

We only ever speak one language, but it is never our own and never simply one language. The point can be rephrased in more specifically social terms: a language is imposed by the exigencies of a social situation that is structured hierarchically, whether that situation be cultural

or political, whether it be a matter of addressing a specialized audience from the margins of an institution or a matter of submitting to the limitations and exclusions of a colonial project.

This resemblance between the cultural and political situations of language can be pursued only so far before it effaces the brutality of a project like colonialism. Still, it is worth pursuing a bit further here for the light it can shed on the marginality of a cultural practice like translation as well as the exemplary status of my own translation of Derrida. Taking his comments as a point of departure, then, we can recognize that the “other” that is a cultural institution or political authority may involve the imposition of a monolingualism, an academic or colonial discourse, that seeks to homogenize and limit language use. By the same token, the monolingualism imposed by the other may endow the specificity of individual use with a collective force and hence a transindividual and possibly universal exemplarity. An individual testimony can incorporate a double structure, “that of exemplarity and that of the host as hostage,” because “the structure appears in the experience of the injury, the offense,” here a restrictive monolingualism imposed on the group of which the individual is a member.⁷

This line of thinking can be illustrated, first, by Derrida’s lecture on translation. Entitled “Qu’est-ce qu’une traduction ‘relevante’?” (or in my English version “What Is a ‘Relevant’ Translation?”), the lecture was delivered in 1998 at the annual seminar of the Assises de la Traduction Littéraire à Arles (ATLAS).⁸ A French organization with approximately 800 members, ATLAS is dedicated to promoting literary translation and to protecting the status of the literary translator. The prospect of addressing an audience that consisted of professional translators, interested primarily in translation practices rather than theoretical concepts, imposed a certain language and mode of address on Derrida’s lecture. Not only does he open with an elaborate apology for speaking about translation to experienced translators, but he avoids a purely philosophical presentation of his ideas. Instead of resorting to a speculative commentary on a key text, as he has done elsewhere, he addresses one of the most practical themes in the history of translation theory, notably the antithesis between “word-for-word” and “sense-for-sense” translation that occupied such writers as Cicero and Jerome. He also grounds his remarks on an incisive interpretation of the role of translation in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*. Derrida’s effort to give specificity to his ideas, to locate suggestive applications, is most striking in his exploration of particular translation problems, especially those in which we glimpse him as translator. He proposes a French version for a line in Portia’s speech on “mercy” and recalls his own French rendering of a central concept in Hegel’s dialectics.

These individual cases, furthermore, come to assume an exemplary status in his exposition—exemplary of a universal concept of “relevant”

translation and of the cultural and institutional impact that any translation may have. The relevant translation, Derrida writes, is mystifying: it “presents itself as the transfer of an intact signified through the inconsequential vehicle of any signifier whatsoever.”⁹ Although he questions this mystification, he sees it as inevitable insofar as every translation participates in an “economy of in-betweenness,” positioned somewhere between “absolute relevance, the most appropriate, adequate, univocal transparency, and the most aberrant and opaque irrelevance.”¹⁰ He then applies this concept to his use of the French word *relève* to render Hegel’s term *Aufhebung*, a translation that was at first “empirically personal,” serving his own interpretive interests, but that ultimately underwent “institutional accreditation and canonization in the public sphere,” achieving widespread use as the accepted rendering, becoming “known as the most relevant translation possible.”¹¹

It is remarkable that Derrida’s lecture also *resists* the monolingualism imposed by addressing an audience of French translators. Although written in French, although cultivating a translatorly practicality by discussing specific cases, the text is in fact polylingual, incorporating English and German as well, and the argument takes a philosophical turn at points. Thus, Derrida apologizes for choosing a title that is “untranslatable” because the provenance of the word “relevant” remains uncertain: it may be French and therefore translatable into English, or English yet undergoing assimilation into French and therefore resistant to translation. As a result, Derrida argues, the word sheds light on the nature of translation today: because the unity of “relevant” is questionable, because the signifier potentially contains more than one word insofar as it produces a homophonic or homonymic effect, it derails the translation process and makes clear that the so-called relevant translation rests on a particular conception of language, one that assumes “the indivisible unity of an acoustic form incorporating or signifying the indivisible unity of a meaning or concept.”¹² Although Derrida tells his audience that he will forego any discussion “on the level of generality, in theoretical or more obviously philosophical or speculative reflections which I have elsewhere ventured on various universal problems of Translation,” his specific cases give rise to philosophical reflections and point to universal problems.¹³ In fact, his lecture answers to a second, more philosophical context: the commentary on Shakespeare’s play derives from a seminar on forgiveness and perjury which he taught earlier in 1998.

My translation project is likewise situated in two different, even conflicting contexts, straddling two fields, addressing two academic audiences, each of whom imposes a particular conceptual discourse on my work, each of whom demands a translation that is relevant in their terms. On the one hand is the field known as “cultural studies,” a loose amalgam of approaches that is nonetheless dominated by a theoretical

orientation, a synthesis of poststructuralism with varieties of marxism, feminism, and psychoanalysis. This synthesis has enabled scholars to range across different historical periods and cultural forms, both elite and mass, and to delimit such new areas of research as colonialism, sexual identity, and globalization.¹⁴ On the other hand is the field known as “translation studies,” an equally loose amalgam of approaches that is nonetheless dominated by an empirical orientation, a synthesis of such branches of linguistics as text linguistics, discourse analysis, and pragmatics with “polysystem” theory, wherein culture is viewed as a complicated network of interrelations among diverse forms and practices.¹⁵ This synthesis has enabled scholars to study the language of translated texts as well as the norms that constrain translation in particular cultural polysystems, resulting in research that at its most productive combines linguistic and systemic approaches.¹⁶

Cultural studies and translation studies are not necessarily opposed. My own translation research and practice have consistently drawn on work in both fields. Yet as these fields currently stand, they tend to reveal deep conceptual divisions that complicate any project with the goal of addressing scholars in both. The theoretical orientation of cultural studies has marginalized research into specific translations and translation practices, whereas the empirical orientation of translation studies has marginalized research into issues of philosophy and cultural politics. Because both fields are now firmly institutionalized—even if they occupy different institutional sites in different countries—and because they both involve international scholarly communities, they endow my translation project with a universal significance that exceeds the individual case. If I take my own work as exemplary, if I dare to speak for you who share my interest in translation, the reason is that we also share a basic set of institutional conditions, a double academic marginality: on the one hand, the neglect in cultural studies of the materiality of translation; on the other hand, the neglect in translation studies of the philosophical implications and social effects that accompany every translation practice.

2. Translation in cultural studies

To understand the peculiar marginality of translation, I want to turn to Pierre Bourdieu’s work on academic institutions, where he has located a “special form of anti-intellectualism.”¹⁷ For Bourdieu, academic anti-intellectualism, however oxymoronic the term may seem, consists of a “secret resistance to innovation and to intellectual creativity, [an] aversion to ideas and to a free and critical spirit,” which he has linked to “the effect of the recognition granted to an institutionalized thought only on those who implicitly accept the limits assigned by the institution.”¹⁸ To work in a field is to accept such institutional

limits by maintaining an investment in the materials and practices that define the field, even when a social agent aims to change it in a radical way. As Bourdieu observes, “wanting to undertake a revolution in a field is to accord the essential of what the field tacitly demands, namely that it is important, that the game played is sufficiently important for one to want to undertake a revolution in it.”¹⁹ Hence, attempts to introduce different materials and practices are likely to encounter resistance if they represent a fundamental challenge to the value of institutionalized thought, if they seek to shift the importance invested in it to another kind of thinking. The resistance can take the form of sheer exclusion, such as the refusal of publication by academic journals and presses, the rejection of applications for academic appointments, and the denial of tenure and promotion. The resistance can also take forms that are less drastic, such as negative book reviews, or more revisionary, such as the transformation of marginal materials and practices so that they can be assimilated to the current state of the field. The institutional fate of translation studies in the United States has involved many of these forms of disciplinary resistance.

For the fact is that translation has yet to gain a firm foothold in the American academy. Whereas European countries such as the United Kingdom and Germany, Spain and Italy have recently witnessed a substantial growth of translator training faculties as well as graduate degrees in translation research, the United States has lagged far behind, so that the translation program, even the odd course or dissertation in translation studies remains a rare exception.²⁰ Translation has encountered the disciplinary resistance that Bourdieu describes, first of all, because it runs counter to institutionalized practices in foreign-language instruction. Since the late 1960s, the most prevalent form of foreign-language pedagogy has been “direct communication” or “total immersion,” in which the goal of native proficiency leads to the suppression of any teaching methods that might require the student to rely on the mediation of English. Consequently, translation has been stigmatized and excluded as a method of foreign-language instruction, even though it served precisely this purpose for centuries. Translation has tended to enter the American academy by establishing institutional sites that are relatively autonomous from universities, like the Monterey Institute of International Studies, or cross-disciplinary, like the collaboration between modern foreign languages and applied linguistics that underlies the translation program at Kent State University.

The sheer practicality of translation—the fact that innovative research can shape practice while innovative practices can stimulate research—has played a part in preventing it from gaining wide acceptance within cultural studies. Here the disciplinary resistance seems to be due to the theoretical orientation that has dominated this field since the 1980s. Because much cultural commentary has taken a

highly speculative turn, some of the most distinguished academic journals tend to reject articles that, in the editors' eyes, lack theoretical sophistication or focus on particular works and historical periods without raising theoretical issues that are currently under debate. Translation studies can engage with such issues, but as a linguistic practice it will inevitably raise them in specific textual and social terms that qualify theoretical speculation and ultimately question its value. Theories of translation need an empirical grounding if they are to affect both translation practices as well as research into translation history and criticism. Yet this practical dimension has not been welcomed by journals. *Critical Inquiry*, for example, which has acquired enormous authority as a journal of theoretically based cultural commentary, did not publish an article on translation until my version of Derrida's lecture appeared in its twenty-seventh volume.

Submissions in translation studies had previously been made to the journal but were rejected. Of course they were not made by an author who possesses Derrida's cultural capital in American academic institutions. In 1989, for instance, I submitted a manuscript entitled "Simpatico," an early draft of a chapter that would appear in my 1995 book *The Translator's Invisibility*. The manuscript addressed what I believed to be the theoretical issues involved in my translations of a contemporary Italian poet: it explored specific translation choices by examining their implications for the philosophical themes that the poet had drawn from Nietzsche and Heidegger; and it considered, with the help of such theorists as Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the larger questions of why and how the translator should signal the foreignness of the foreign text in a translation. According to the letter of rejection from the managing editor, "there was quite some interest in [my] essay. The general consensus, however, is that it is best suited for a different journal."²¹ I was recommended to send it to *Translation Review*, the journal of the American Literary Translators Association edited by Rainer Schulte, who was mentioned in the letter. Under Schulte's editorship, this journal has generally avoided scholarly articles, especially those that engage in theoretical commentary, in favor of belletristic essays that address problems of translation practice. Hence, it was clear that the editors of *Critical Inquiry* had rejected my manuscript mainly because they did not find it theoretical enough or sufficiently theoretical in their terms.

Those terms have come under scrutiny. *Critical Inquiry*, it has been argued, has not been equally open to every variety of literary and cultural theory that has been imported into the American academy since the 1970s.²² On the contrary, in Sande Cohen's view, the journal "has stressed French theory only when it serves a more rigorous humanism," in fact "the classical subject of liberalism," whereby "the Nietzsche line is all but refused," including not only Nietzsche, but

thinkers he has influenced, such as Heidegger and Deleuze and Guattari.²³ This line figured prominently in late twentieth-century Italian poetry, particularly in the tendency of Italian poets to decenter the liberal subject, but it also informed my effort to question the communicative dimension of translation, notably its ability to reproduce a foreign poet's voice. My article ultimately appeared in 1991 in *SubStance*, which bills itself as "a journal of theory and criticism" and has long been receptive, not only to translation studies, but to the Nietzschean line in European theory.²⁴

With the emergence of such areas of research as colonialism, translation has increasingly become a topic of discussion in cultural studies. And rightly so: the colonization of the Americas, Asia, and Africa could not have occurred without interpreters, both native and colonial, nor without the translation of effective texts, religious, legal, educational. Yet what I shall call the *theoreticism* of some research in this area, the emphasis on the construction of theoretical concepts to the exclusion of textual analysis and empirical research, has limited the attention given to translation.

Homi Bhabha, for instance, one of the most influential theorists of colonial discourse, opens his essay "Signs Taken for Wonders" by discussing the charismatic quality that the English book acquired in such British colonies as India. As Bhabha notes, it is "a process of displacement that, paradoxically, makes the presence of the book wondrous to the extent to which it is repeated, translated, misread, displaced"; to demonstrate his point, he quotes a lengthy passage in which an Indian catechist describes a huge crowd outside of Delhi reading "the Gospel of our Lord, translated into the Hindoostanee Tongue."²⁵ Bhabha acknowledges that "in my use of 'English' there is a transparency of reference that registers a certain obvious presence: the Bible translated into Hindi, propagated by Dutch or native catechists, is still the English book" to the colonized.²⁶ And this acknowledgement occasions an exploration of colonial authority, in which he relies on a productive synthesis of such poststructuralist thinkers as Derrida and Foucault. Yet the exposition remains on a very high level of generality, and absolutely no effort is made to consider what implications the translated status of the text might carry for the theory of colonial discourse that Bhabha formulates so powerfully.

An analysis of Hindi translations of the Bible is likely to reveal linguistic and cultural differences that support and deepen Bhabha's notion of the inherent ambivalence of colonial discourse. Vicente Rafael's work on Spanish colonialism in the Philippines bears out this likelihood: Rafael shows how Tagalog translations of religious texts at once advanced and undermined the Spanish presence.²⁷ In Bhabha's case, however, the theoreticism of the commentary preempts any close textual analysis, whether of literary texts or of translations. Within

colonial studies, his work has been criticized for stressing discourse at the cost of neglecting the material conditions of colonialism.²⁸ Ironically, the stress on discourse does not include any attention to the discursive strategies employed in translations.

Even when cultural theorists have themselves produced translations of literary and theoretical texts, their acute awareness that no translation can communicate a foreign text in an untroubled fashion does not lead them to provide a searching examination of specific translations, whether those made by others or their own. Gayatri Spivak's important essay, "The Politics of Translation," offers an incisive understanding of translation, at once postcolonial and feminist, informed by poststructuralist theories of language and textuality. But her exposition quickly shifts from interlingual to "cultural" translation, from a discussion of the specific linguistic and cultural differences that complicate translating between languages—especially those that are positioned in a hierarchical relation—to a speculative commentary on several literary and theoretical texts. Here she construes translation as adaptation or parody (in *Foe* "Coetzee as white creole translates *Robinson Crusoe* by representing Friday as the agent of a withholding"), as oral transmission ("the change of the mother-tongue from mother to daughter" in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*), and as ideological critique and political appropriation ("to limn the politics of a certain kind of clandestine postcolonial reading" in Peter de Bolla's *The Discourse on the Sublime*).²⁹ Spivak expresses the hope that this commentary will "pass on a lesson to the translator in the narrow sense," the interlingual translator, but the attention given to the texts under examination, especially de Bolla's, is much more detailed, much more focused on extracts, than the brief consideration of actual translation choices in the first part of the essay.³⁰

Similarly, Spivak's translations from the work of the Bengali fiction writer Mahasweta Devi are accompanied, not by any explanation of her translation choices, but by essays that draw on various theoretical concepts to illuminate the political dimensions of Devi's writing. This omission becomes more noticeable when Spivak reports a suggestive criticism of her work. After asserting that the translations are "going to be published in both India and the United States," she mentions that the Indian publisher and translation scholar Sujit Mukherjee has criticized their English for not being "sufficiently accessible to readers in this country [India]."³¹ Spivak acknowledges that her English "belongs more to the rootless American-based academic prose than the more subcontinental idiom of [her] youth"; she even admits that whether Indian texts should be translated into Indian English "is an interesting question."³² But notwithstanding a generally phrased "Translator's Note," she does not address the question with the sustained attention she gives to Devi's themes.

What makes the language of Spivak's translations all the more intriguing is the fact that it is richly heterogeneous, far removed from both academic prose and a subcontinental dialect, hardly "straight English." Here are two extracts from her version of Devi's story "Breast-Giver":

The boy got worried at the improper supply of fish and fries in his dish. He considered that he'd be fucked if the cook gave him away. Therefore on another occasion, driven by the Bagdad djinn, he stole his mother's ring, slipped it into the cook's pillowcase, raised a hue and cry, and got the cook kicked out.³³

Then Kangali said, "Sir! How shall I work at the sweetshop any longer. I can't stir the vat with my kerutches. You are god. You are feeding so many people in so many ways. I am not begging. Find me a job."³⁴

This mixture of current standard usage with colloquialism and obscenity, of Britishisms with Americanisms, of orthodox with unorthodox spelling to signal differences in pronunciation inevitably raises the question of how and to what extent Spivak's translating has recreated or transformed Devi's textual effects. Such abrupt shifts in dialect, register, and style need to be examined against the Bengali texts so that Spivak's discursive strategies can be compellingly linked to the cultural values and political agendas that she so ardently espouses in the commentaries that accompany her translations.

3. Translation in translation studies

Within translation studies, discursive strategies are paid a great deal of attention, but they tend to be treated in such a way as to reveal a different form of academic anti-intellectualism: a focus on the data yielded by textual analysis at the expense of the various philosophical, cultural, and political issues raised by translation. Here the disciplinary resistance seems to be due to the empirical orientation that has dominated the field since the 1960s, driven largely by the varieties of linguistics that provide the analytical tools. Thus, research that is less empirical and more speculative, or that uses different categories of analysis which are more pertinent to cultural studies, is likely to be not merely misunderstood, but questioned for not providing detail that is sufficient or representative. In a recent survey of linguistic perspectives on translation, the linguist Mona Baker took this position in relation to my work:

Apart from analysing poetic devices such as metre, rhyme, alliteration, and so on, Venuti draws on categories which a linguistically oriented researcher would consider too broad and too restricted to the traditional levels of vocabulary and syntax: archaisms, dialect, regional choice, syntactic inversions. A linguistically oriented scholar would typically want to provide analyses which offer finer distinctions at the levels of lexis and syntax and which also incorporate other levels of description, such as infor-

mation flow, cohesion, linguistic mechanisms of expressing politeness, norms of turn-taking in conversation, and so on.³⁵

Conspicuously absent from Baker's comment is any indication that I was analyzing the literary effects of literary translations, and that the selection of linguistic features was guided by a particular interpretive occasion, an effort to link the effects of specific translation strategies to patterns of reception and to cultural values. Since my analysis used relatively few of the tools that linguists generally bring to translation studies, it implicitly raised the question of whether the "finer distinctions" produced by such tools are necessary for an exploration of literary and cultural issues or even for the development of translation practices. More generally, Baker's comment points to an incommensurability between two current approaches within translation studies, one informed by linguistics, the other informed by literary and cultural theory.

Indeed, from this theoretical standpoint, the results of linguistically oriented approaches can seem trivial, inconsequential not only for translation research but for translator training. An American linguist, for instance, conducted a study to investigate the connection between "unwarranted transcoding," translating that reproduces the structures of the foreign text, and the level of translating proficiency that the translator has attained.³⁶ The text was the Spanish title of a recipe, "Pastel de queso con grosellas negras y jengibre," with some ineffective renderings taking an ambiguous form, "Cheesecake with black currants and ginger," compared to a more accurate version, "Black currant and ginger cheesecake." The study was intended to test a hypothesis formulated by the translation theorist Gideon Toury, namely that "language students would show the most instances of unwarranted transcoding, while professionals would exhibit the fewest cases" because the latter have absorbed professional norms against this kind of translating.³⁷ The result—"the number of cases of inappropriate transcoding decreased as experience and/or education in translation increased"—was unremarkable and wholly predictable, so much so as to question the need for an elaborate survey that involved faculty and students at several American universities.³⁸

What is questionable here is not the use of empirical research, which remains valuable to document and explore the factors that figure into the production, circulation, and reception of translations, but rather an *empiricism* that focuses narrowly on minute linguistic materials and practices to the exclusion of such decisive social considerations as the commission that the translator has received and the prospective audience for the translation. As Louis Althusser argued, empiricist epistemologies claim direct or unmediated access to a reality or truth, but this claim mystifies a process of "abstraction" in

which essential data are distinguished from inessential on the basis of a privileged theoretical model, and a real object is reduced to an object of a particular kind of knowledge.³⁹ The empiricism that prevails in translation studies tends to privilege analytical concepts derived from linguistics, regardless of how narrow or limited they may be in their explanatory power. And from the vantage point of these concepts the essence of a translation is an abstracted notion of language.

This is most evident in the many university programs that take a linguistics-oriented approach to translation research and translator training. A book that receives many course adoptions in such programs is Basil Hatim and Ian Mason's *The Translator as Communicator*, which brings together an array of linguistic concepts to perform close analyses of translations in different genres and media. For instance, they analyze the subtitling in a foreign-language film with the aid of politeness theory, a formalization of speech acts by which a speaker maintains or threatens an addressee's "face," defined as "the basic claim to freedom of action and freedom from imposition" as well as a "positive self-image and the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of."⁴⁰ Their analysis of the subtitling demonstrates that the foreign dialogue undergoes a "systematic loss" of the linguistic indicators that the characters are satisfying each other's "face-wants."⁴¹

The authors, however, go no further than this conclusion. "Far more empirical research would be needed," they state, "to test the generalizability of these limited findings to other films and other languages."⁴² Yet one wonders about the implications of their analysis for this particular film. No consideration is given to the impact of translation patterns on characterization, narrative, and theme in the film as a whole or on the audience's potential response to these formal features. Such considerations would require rather different theoretical concepts that take into account but extend beyond the linguistic analysis, a theory of how characters are formed in film narrative, for example, and a theory of audience reception or cultural taste. In Hatim and Mason's analysis, linguistic indicators of politeness function as an empiricist essence abstracted from both the foreign film and the subtitled version.

From the translator's point of view, the empiricism that currently distinguishes the linguistic approach to translation carries at least two serious limitations. First, because this approach devises and deploys such complex analytical concepts, it always yields much more detail than is necessary to solve a translation problem, threatening to annex translation studies to applied linguistics. Here we can glimpse an instance of what Bourdieu calls "the most serious epistemological mistake in the human sciences," the tendency "to place the models that the scientist must construct to account for practices into the consciousness of agents" who carry out those practices.⁴³ In translator

training, this mistake transforms translators into linguists by requiring them to learn and apply in their translating a wide range of the analytical concepts that linguists have formulated. In translation research, furthermore, these concepts tend to become standards by which translations are judged. For despite Hatim and Mason's denial that their "objective had been to criticize subtitlers or subtitling," their analysis lays the groundwork for a judgment that the subtitler who produced their examples failed to establish an equivalence with the foreign dialogue: "in sequences such as those analysed," they assert,

it is difficult for the target language auditors to retrieve interpersonal meaning in its entirety. In some cases, they may even derive misleading impressions of characters' directness or indirectness.⁴⁴

Thus, the linguistic analysis of translations is potentially laden with an uncritical prescriptivism, which reveals a second limitation: the translator is given the deceptive idea, not only that such an analysis is impartially descriptive, but that it will be sufficient for developing, explaining, and evaluating translation decisions. Because such decisions are usually made on the basis of the textual effects, cultural values, and social functions that translations possess in target situations, a linguistic analysis that is primarily concerned with equivalence will fail to encompass the factors that are so consequential for translating. Why, we might ask, do the subtitles in Hatim and Mason's examples necessarily give the viewer "misleading impressions" of the characters in the film? Can we not view the impressions as effectively different interpretations, shaped partly by the technical constraints on subtitling (e.g. the limitation on the number of keyboard spaces that can appear in the frame) and partly by the translator's discursive strategies as they are developed for an audience in a different culture? In the long run, the empiricism in translation studies resists the sort of speculative thinking that encourages translators to reflect on the cultural, ethical, and political issues raised by their work.

4. An interventionist translation

Bourdieu remarks that "the structure of the university field is only, at any moment in time, the state of the power relations between agents," so that "positions held in this structure are what motivate strategies aiming to transform it, or to preserve it by modifying or maintaining the relative forces of the different powers."⁴⁵ In Bourdieu's account, the power in the university is mediated by the different forms of capital assigned to the fields in which academics work: not only are the fields arranged hierarchically, with some (law, medicine, the sciences) assigned greater economic and cultural capital than others (the arts), but the capital assigned to the materials and practices

within particular fields is also distributed unevenly. In American universities, translation undoubtedly occupies a subordinate position, not only in relation to socially powerful fields like law and medicine, but also in relation to fields that are affiliated to translation, such as linguistics, literary criticism, and cultural theory. In my argument thus far I have tried to be more precise: translation has undergone a double marginalization in which its understanding and development have been limited both by the theoreticism of influential work in cultural studies and by the empiricism of the prevalent linguistic approaches to translation studies.

It was this marginality that motivated my decision to translate Derrida's lecture. I viewed the project as a means of challenging the subordinate position and reductive understanding of translation in the American academy. To intervene effectively, however, my presentation of the lecture—not only my translation strategies, but my very choice of the text—had to answer to the two rather different conceptual discourses that have limited translation, even as I sought to transform them.

Translation has always functioned as a method of introducing innovative materials and practices into academic institutions, but its success has inevitably been constrained by institutionalized values. Foreign scholarship can enter and influence the academy, although only in terms that are recognizable to it—at least initially. These terms include translation strategies that minimize the foreignness of foreign writing by assimilating it to linguistic and discursive structures that are more acceptable to academic institutions. Philip Lewis has shown, for example, that because of structural differences between French and English, along with the translator's announced "aim to anglicize," the first English version of Derrida's essay "La mythologie blanche" suppresses the "special texture and tenor of [his] discourse" by using "an English that shies away from abnormal, odd-sounding constructions."⁴⁶ In this domesticated form, the essay significantly influenced the English-language reception of Derrida's thinking, which from the very start had been assimilated to American academic interests.⁴⁷ The recognizable terms that permit the foreign to enter the academy may also include authors and texts that have already achieved canonical status, as well as issues that are currently under scholarly debate. Hence, my choice to translate Derrida's lecture was strategic: it invited recognition but at the same time aimed to precipitate a defamiliarization that might stimulate a rethinking of the institutional status of translation.

Within cultural studies, Derrida has long been a canonical figure, an author of foundational texts in the field. Not only would a previously untranslated work by him be certain to attract a large academic readership, it would immediately interest the editors of leading journals. Following Derrida's recommendation, I proposed my translation to the editor of *Critical Inquiry* who quickly accepted it on the strength

of a brief summary. The lecture, furthermore, addresses the theme of translation in the context of such currently debated issues as racism and political repression. Derrida interprets the characters in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* according to the code of translation, showing how Portia aims to translate Shylock's Judaic discourse of "justice" into the "merciful" discourse that underwrites the "Christian State."⁴⁸

This is an unprecedented interpretive move in the critical history of the play, which may now be read differently by Shakespearean scholars who are interested in theoretical approaches. Yet for American readers of Derrida the most unfamiliar move is likely to be his own recourse to translating. He offers not only an exposition of his interpretation, but an unusual French rendering of Portia's line, "when mercy seasons justice," in which the word "seasons" is translated as *relève*, the term that he used for the Hegelian *Aufhebung* to highlight the contradictions in the dialectical movement of thinking. In Derrida's philosophical lexicon, *relève* signifies "the double motif of the elevation and the replacement that preserves what it denies or destroys, preserving what it causes to disappear."⁴⁹ By rendering Portia's line with a word that has acquired such a conceptual density, Derrida indicates the assimilative force involved in her translation of Shylock's demands for justice into the Christian discourse of mercy. At the same time, he provides a remarkable demonstration that translation too can perform exactly the sort of interrogative interpretation that scholars in cultural studies have come to associate with his work.

Within translation studies, Derrida has carried considerably less weight than a linguist like Halliday or a philosopher of language like Grice. This comes as no surprise: Halliday and Grice have provided the conceptual and analytical tools that have informed the empirical orientation of much translation research, fostering ideas of textual stability and cooperative communication that have in fact been questioned by poststructuralism.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, even within translation studies, translating Derrida's lecture can be an effective intervention because he addresses relevance, a concept that came to dominate translation theory and practice during the twentieth century. Eugene Nida, for instance, a theorist who has exercised an international influence on translator training for several decades, championed the concept of "dynamic equivalence" in which the translator "aims at complete naturalness of expression, and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture."⁵¹ More recently, Ernst-August Gutt has developed a cognitive approach to translation based on the branch of pragmatics known as "relevance theory."⁵² Gutt argues that "faithfulness" in translation depends on communicating an interpretation of the foreign text through "contextual effects" that are "adequate" because they take into account the receptors' "cognitive environment" and therefore require minimal

“processing effort.”⁵³ The relevant translation, then, is likely to be “clear and natural in expression in the sense that it should not be unnecessarily difficult to understand.”⁵⁴

Derrida’s lecture is particularly challenging in this context because although he admits that relevance is the guiding principle of most translations, he also questions it. He calls attention to its ethnocentric violence, but also to its simultaneous mystification of that violence through language that is seemingly transparent because univocal and idiomatic. The effect of transparency in translation is illusionistic: accessibility or easy readability, what Gutt calls “optimal relevance,” leads the reader to believe that the signified has been transferred without any substantial difference. Yet the fact is that any translating replaces the signifiers constituting the foreign text with another signifying chain, trying to fix a signified that can be no more than an interpretation according to the intelligibilities and interests of the receiving language and culture. Derrida goes further than simply demystifying relevant translation: he also exposes its cultural and social implications through his interpretation of Shakespeare’s play. Portia’s translation of Shylock’s demand for justice seeks an optimal relevance to Christian doctrine which ultimately leads to his total expropriation as well as his forced conversion to Christianity. Derrida thus shows that when relevant translation occurs within an institution like the state, it can become the instrument of legal interdiction, economic sanction, and political repression, motivated here by racism.

5. Translating with abusive fidelity

Whereas my choice to translate Derrida’s lecture aimed to establish a relevance to institutionalized thought which also questioned the subordinate position and limited understanding of translation within academic institutions, my translation strategies risked irrelevance: they were uncompromising in their effort to bring his writing into English so as to demonstrate the power of translation in shaping concepts. More specifically, I sought to implement what Philip Lewis has called “abusive fidelity,” a translation practice that “values experimentation, tampers with usage, seeks to match the polyvalencies and plurivocities or expressive stresses of the original by producing its own.”⁵⁵ Abusive fidelity is demanded by foreign texts that involve substantial conceptual density or complex literary effects, namely poetry and philosophy, including Derrida’s own writing. This kind of translating is abusive in two senses: it resists the structures and discourses of the receiving language and culture, especially the pressure toward the univocal, the idiomatic, the transparent; yet in so doing it also interrogates the structures and discourses of the foreign text, exposing its often unacknowledged conditions.

In practice abusive fidelity meant adhering as closely as possible to Derrida's French, trying to reproduce his syntax and lexicon by inventing comparable textual effects—even when they threatened to twist English into strange forms. The possibilities are always limited by the structural and discursive differences between the languages and by the need to maintain a level of intelligibility and readability, of relevance, for my English-language readers. I knew that my translation strained the limits of academic English because of the reactions that it received from the editorial staff at *Critical Inquiry*. Thus, I wanted to preserve many of Derrida's telegraphic, sometimes elliptical syntactical constructions in English, but the copyeditor tended to recommend insertions that expanded these constructions into grammatically complete units. Here is an example with the copyeditor's insertions in square brackets:

[It is] As if the subject of the play were, in short, the task of the translator, his impossible task, his duty, his debt, as inflexible as it is unpayable. [This is so] At least for three or four reasons:⁵⁶

Sometimes the copyeditor recommended the insertion of connective words to increase the cohesiveness of the English syntax:

mercy resembles justice, but it comes from somewhere else, it belongs to a different order, [for] at the same time it modifies justice,⁵⁷

Derrida's lexicon is even more abusive of academic discourse. Instead of clear, unambiguous terms, he favors complicated wordplay that cannot always be reproduced in translation because of irreducible linguistic differences. Readers of Derrida in English now expect to confront a page punctuated by foreign words, so I took advantage of this expectation by inserting Derrida's French within square brackets wherever a particular effect could not be easily achieved in an English rendering. These occasions included his play on *grâce* in the senses of "gratitude," "pardon," and "grace," as well as his play on *le merci*, meaning "thanks," and *la merci*, meaning "forgiveness."⁵⁸ In other instances, however, I was able to imitate the wordplay in English. Thus, the French "marche"/"marché" (step/purchase) became the English "tread"/"trade," while in an alliterative series that required an English choice beginning with the consonant cluster "tr" the French "trouaille" (windfall, fortunate discovery, lucky break) became "treasure trove":

surenchère infinie, autre marche ou autre marché dans l'escalade infinie⁵⁹

an infinite extravagance, another tread or trade in an infinite ascent⁶⁰

une de ces autres choses en *tr*, une transaction, une transformation, un travail, un *travel*—et une trouaille⁶¹

one of those other things in *tr*, a transaction, transformation, travail, *travel*—and a treasure trove⁶²

The fact that my effort to reproduce Derrida's wordplay tampered with English usage also became apparent in the copyeditor's queries. In one instance, Derrida himself directs the reader's attention to a pun through a parenthetical remark:

Ceux et celles à qui l'anglais est ici familier l'entendent peut-être déjà comme la domestication, la francisation implicite ou, oserai-je dire, l'affranchissement plus ou moins tacite et clandestin de l'adjectif anglais *relevant*⁶³

Those of you who are familiar with English perhaps already understand the word as a domestication, an implicit Frenchification or—dare I say?—a more or less tacit and clandestine enfranchisement of the English adjective *relevant*⁶⁴

To reproduce the pun “francisation”/“l'affranchissement” in English, I chose “Frenchification”/“enfranchissement” and avoided the expected rendering, “Gallicization.” Yet the copyeditor responded that the pun was more apparent in the French than in the English: “I only found it,” she wrote, “after you alerted me to it, and only after rereading the French—and others in the office had the same experience.”⁶⁵ She recommended that both French words be included within square brackets after the English ones, and I accepted her recommendation so as to retain a rendering that not only sounded unusual, but would recreate the pun.

Another of my renderings was sufficiently odd-sounding to draw similar comments from the staff. Here Derrida is interpreting Portia's famous speech on the “quality of mercy”:

Elle sied au monarque sur le trône, dit donc Portia, mais mieux encore que sa couronne. Elle est plus haute que la couronne sur la tête, elle *va* au monarque, elle lui sied, mais elle *va* plus haut que la tête et le chef, que l'attribut ou que le signe de pouvoir qu'est la couronne royale.⁶⁶

Mercy becomes the throned monarch, Portia says, but even better than his crown. It is higher than the crown on a head; it *suits* the monarch, it becomes him, but it *suits* him higher than his head and the head [*la tête et le chef*], than the attribute or sign of power that is the royal crown.⁶⁷

The copyeditor responded that the staff had some difficulty in puzzling through the meaning of this passage. “We're unclear on ‘suits higher,’” she wrote, while recommending more idiomatic alternatives: “It sits higher than his head? It suits more than his head?”⁶⁸ I explained that the unusual construction results from Derrida's effort to tease out the transcendental logic in Portia's concept of mercy, a logic that is signalled here by her comparative, “becomes [. . .] better than.” Hence, “suits higher” means that the monarch's mercy suits the divinity from which monarchy is said to receive its authority. In line with Derrida's interpretation, my rendering of this passage actually creates an instance of wordplay where none exists in the French: the phrase *la tête et le chef* is an idiom which can be translated simply as “the head,” yet I saw in it an opportunity to draw the political distinction—to

which Derrida refers elsewhere in the lecture—between the king's two bodies, the king as a private person (*his own head*) and as a political figure (*the head of the state, the crown*).

The editorial staff of *Critical Inquiry* permitted my abuses of English as well as the *Chicago Manual of Style*, which is generally applied in copyediting articles for the journal. Among the most important editorial decisions was to retain the polylingualism of Derrida's text, often without bracketed translations and even in places where only a minute difference in spelling indicated a linguistic difference. Not only does Derrida use various languages in the lecture, but he varies the spelling of *relevant/relevante* to express his uncertainty about its status as an English or French word and thereby to point up the problem that it poses to relevant translation. Retaining the polylingualism of the lecture is essential for the strategic intervention I had planned: it foregrounds the issue of translation in a most effective way by turning the reader into a translator.

Lewis is careful to note that an abusively faithful translation does not merely force "the linguistic and conceptual system of which it is a dependent," but also directs "a critical thrust back toward the text that it translates and in relation to which it becomes a kind of unsettling aftermath."⁶⁹ If my translation abuses the English language and an English style manual, it also has an interrogative impact on Derrida's text. This emerges, for example, in my handling of the key term *relève*, which Derrida describes as "untranslatable," and which Alan Bass left untranslated in his English versions of other texts by Derrida.⁷⁰ For the most part, I have followed their lead by retaining the French word and thus forcing the reader to perform repeated acts of translation. In some instances, however, I rendered *relève* expansively, making explicit the range of meanings that it accumulates in Derrida's discussion:

Je tradurai donc *seasons* par "relève": "when mercy seasons justice", "quand le pardon relève la justice (ou le droit)".⁷¹

I shall therefore translate "seasons" as "relève": "when mercy seasons justice," "quand le pardon relève la justice (ou le droit)" [*when mercy elevates and interiorizes, thereby preserving and negating, justice (or the law)*].⁷²

le pardon *ressemble* à un pouvoir divin au moment où il relève la justice⁷³

mercy *resembles* a divine power at the moment when it elevates, preserves, and negates [*relève*] justice⁷⁴

Such expanded translations interrogate the French text by exposing the conditions of Derrida's interpretation. Because, as he observes, his use of *relève* to render the Hegelian *Aufhebung* has become canonical in academic institutions, the retention of the French term throughout my translation would silently participate in this canonization and work to maintain the relevance to Shakespeare's play of what is in fact an irrelevant anachronism, a deconstruction of Hegel. The expanded

translations, however, produce a demystifying effect by revealing the interpretive act that is at once embodied and concealed in Derrida's French.

Another abuse in my translation hinges on the recurrent choice of the English word "travail" to render the French noun "travail" and the verb "travailler." At one point, Derrida himself uses the English form "travailing" to pun on the English word "traveling":

Ce mot ["relevant"] n'est pas seulement *en* traduction, comme on dirait en travail ou en voyage, *traveling*, *travailing*, dans un labeur, un *labour* d'accouchement.⁷⁵

The word is not only *in* translation, as one would say in the works or in transit, *traveling*, *travailing*, on the job, in the *travail* of childbirth.⁷⁶

Following Derrida, I decided to make use of the English word "travail," but my uses far exceeded his: they amount to thirteen instances, which occur at the beginning and the end of the translation and are therefore quite noticeable to the reader. Some were determined by Derrida's characteristic wordplay, such as the alliteration of the consonant cluster "tr":

le motif du *labour*, du *travail* d'accouchement mais aussi du *travail transférentiel* et transformationnel⁷⁷

the motif of *labour*, the *travail* of childbirth, but also the *transferential* and transformational *travail*⁷⁸

Other uses were solely my decision, such as turning "un travail du négatif" and "un travail du deuil" into "a travail of the negative" and "a travail of mourning,"⁷⁹ even though in the latter case Derrida's translator Peggy Kamuf might have chosen the more familiar word "work" as she did in her version of his book on Marx.⁸⁰ My use of "travails" is abusive in a number of ways. It deviates not only from the practices of a previous translator, but, more generally, from current standard English, since the word has become a poetical archaism. It also constitutes a deviation from the French text, because the French words "travail" and "travailler" are neither poetic nor archaic, but very much part of current French usage.

My abusive rendering can be seen as consistent with a distinctive feature of Derrida's writing, his tendency to favor literary effects, to blur the line between philosophy and poetry. Yet the recurrence of "travail" is also interrogative of the French text, particularly since it appears in the phrases that Derrida uses to describe relevant translation. Because "travail" has acquired the status of an archaism in English, the word adds a temporal dimension to his critique of relevant translation, situating it in the past, suggesting that it did not originate with him, that in fact it has a long history in translation theory. In 1813, for instance, Friedrich Schleiermacher had in mind relevant translation when he questioned the translator who "leaves the reader

in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author toward him.”⁸¹ For Schleiermacher too, relevance was suspect because it meant assimilation or domestication, an erasure of the foreignness of the foreign text by rewriting it in the terms of the receiving language and culture. More recently, Henri Meschonnic has attacked the prevalence of relevant translation because it masks a process of “annexation” whereby the translated text “transposes the so-called dominant ideology” under the “illusion of transparency.”⁸² Of course, the theoretical genealogy of Derrida’s critique can be no more than vaguely suggested by the recurrent use of an archaism in my translation. It is only when this abusive choice is juxtaposed to my editorial introduction, where Schleiermacher and other theorists are cited, that the historical conditions of Derrida’s treatment become clearer.

6. Translation and the politics of interpretation

As this last point indicates, even if translation is regarded, not simplistically as an untroubled transfer of meaning, but as an act of interpretation in its own right that works on the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text and thereby alters its meaning, a translation requires yet another interpretation to make explicit its own interpretive force. Thus, in translating Derrida’s lecture, I wanted to suggest, on the one hand, that a more materialist approach to translation can contribute to theoretical speculation in cultural studies and, on the other hand, that a more philosophical and socially aware approach can contribute to empirical research in translation studies. But despite the fact that Derrida’s texts, in any language, are generally read with the closeness reserved for literature, a translation itself cannot achieve these goals. The translator must still rely on a commentary attuned to the issue of translation, whether an editorial introduction or this very essay, risking the cynical charge of self-promotion that tends to be leveled at any translator who attempts to describe the choices and effects of his or her work. And if this cynicism should be preempted here by a Derridean argument that a unique translation project can nonetheless exemplify the academic marginality of translation today, then the effort to criticize the circumstances of that project, its institutional trials and obstacles, faces another, equally cynical charge: sour grapes. The peculiar marginality of translation is such that not only is invisibility enforced upon it through a widespread preference for fluent discursive strategies that produce the illusion of transparency, the effacement of the second-order status of the translated text, but the translator is expected to remain silent about the conditions of translation.

As a result, an intervention that takes the form of a translation can have an impact only if others take up the task of commentary, only if this version of Derrida’s essay is submitted to the interpretive practices

that are performed in academic institutions. It would need, first of all, to be judged worthy of inclusion in the English-language canon of his writing and so worthy of the close attention that canonicity enforces upon texts. It would then need to play a role in cultural studies teaching and research, would need to be included in reading lists and syllabuses for courses in literary and cultural theory and in philosophy. It would also need to be judged worthy of reading within translation studies, to be included among the empiricist theoretical texts that dominate translation research and to find a place in courses devoted to theory in translator training faculties and in translation studies programs. In these institutional contexts a translation that implements abusive strategies might well bring about changes because there it can solicit interpretation, prompting further discussion that will ultimately encompass the very institutions in which it circulates.

What institutional changes, then, can possibly be expected from translating Derrida's lecture abusively for academic audiences? Perhaps the first and most crucial change is an increased visibility for the translator and the act of translation. In pursuing a fidelity to the French text that abuses current English usage and an authoritative style manual, in deviating from the choices that previous translators of Derrida's texts have made for his key terms, a translation highlights its own discursive strategies and thereby demands to be read as a translation, as a text that is relatively autonomous from the text on which it depends. Within cultural studies, this increased visibility can alter interpretive practices by leading scholars to focus on translations the interrogative forms of reading that are now routinely applied to literary and philosophical texts, among other cultural products. Within translation studies, a more visible discursive strategy can alter translation research and translator training by leading scholars and teachers to be more receptive to innovative translation practices and to question the enormous value that continues to be placed on fluency and uncritical notions of equivalence.

Yet these changes assume that a very different approach will be taken to the interpretation of theoretical texts in translation. The approach that currently prevails is to read translated theory for meaning by reducing it either to an exposition of argumentative points or to an account of its conceptual aporias or to both in succession. This communicative approach, however necessary in processing any text, assumes the simplistic notion of translation as an untroubled semantic transfer. And indeed such an approach is invited by fluent translating whereby a foreign text comes to seem unmediated by the translator's labor of rewriting it in a different language for a different culture. Translating that pursues an abusive fidelity resists this illusion by directing the reader's attention to what exceeds the translator's establishment of a semantic equivalence. To be sure, an excess is present in

every translation: a semantic equivalence must be established by deploying dialects and registers, styles and discourses that add to and alter the foreign text because they work only in the translating language and culture, that make the foreign text intelligible by linking it to language usage and cultural traditions among the receptors and thereby limit and exclude foreign usage and traditions. Yet only a translation of abusive fidelity foregrounds—by challenging—its linguistic and cultural conditions, which include the language of instruction and research in the academic institution where the interpretation occurs. Clearly, this form of reading translated theory requires some knowledge of foreign languages and cultures. But this knowledge is not enough: the reader must use it to interrogate the linguistic and cultural materials on which the translator has drawn to rewrite the foreign text.

In the United States, a more visible translation practice can point to the global dominance of the language that prevails in teaching and research: English. An English translation that makes readers aware of its abuses, namely its transformation of the current standard dialect in its interrogative work on a particular foreign text, will expose the limitations and exclusions of the translating language, showing that “English” is an idealist notion that conceals a panoply of Englishes ranged in a hierarchical order of value and power among themselves and over every other language in the world. Thus, a translation practice can turn the interpretation of translated texts into an act of geopolitical awareness. In fostering changes in pedagogical techniques and research methods, more visible translating constitutes a concrete means of forcing a critical self-reflection upon both cultural studies and translation studies, opening them to the global asymmetries in which they are situated and with which—in their use of English—they are complicit. A translation practice might not only advance theories of culture and translation, but join them to a politically oriented understanding that can potentially extend their impact beyond the academic institutions in which these theories are housed. This is not to say that translation, especially the translation of specialized theoretical texts, can change the world in any direct way. Rather, the point is that translation can be practiced, in various genres and text types, so as to make their users aware of the social hierarchies in which languages and cultures are positioned. And with that awareness the different institutions that use and support translation, notably publishers, universities, and government agencies, can better decide how to respond to the cultural and social effects that follow upon the global dominance of English.⁸³

Notes

- 1 For translation figures, see Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 12–16, and *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 88.

- 2 The legal constraints under which translators work today are discussed in Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation*, chapter 3.
- 3 Jacques Derrida, *Le monolinguisme de l'autre: ou la prothèse d'origine* (Paris: Galilée, 1996), 40.
- 4 Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Menash (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 19–20.
- 5 See especially Derrida, “Différance,” *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 1–27.
- 6 Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other*, 40.
- 7 Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other*, 20, 26.
- 8 Derrida, “Qu’est-ce qu’une traduction ‘relevante’?” *Quinzièmes Assises de la Traduction Littéraire* (Arles 1998) (Arles: Actes Sud, 1999), 21–48, and “What Is a ‘Relevant’ Translation?” trans. Lawrence Venuti, *Critical Inquiry* 27 (2001): 174–200; hereafter abbreviated QR and WR respectively.
- 9 WR, 195.
- 10 WR, 179.
- 11 WR, 183.
- 12 WR, 181.
- 13 WR, 178.
- 14 See, for example, the selection of materials in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).
- 15 See Itamar Even-Zohar, *Polysystem Studies, Poetics Today* 11 (1990).
- 16 See, for example, Basil Hatim and Ian Mason, *The Translator as Communicator* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), and Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1995).
- 17 Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, trans. Peter Collier (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988), 94–95.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 95.
- 19 Bourdieu, *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 78.
- 20 See *Translating and Interpreting Schools*, ed. Brian Harris (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1997). An updated list can be found at <<http://www.fut.es/~apym>>.
- 21 Letter from James Williams, 5 March 1990.
- 22 See William Spanos, *Heidegger and Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 182–184, and Sande Cohen, “Critical Inquiry, October, and Historicizing French Theory,” in *French Theory in America*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer and Sande Cohen (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 191–216.
- 23 Cohen, 201, 204, 202.
- 24 Venuti, “Simpatico,” *SubStance* 65 (1991): 3–20.
- 25 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 102–104.
- 26 Bhabha, 108.
- 27 Vicente Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988).
- 28 See, for example, Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 96, 179–180.
- 29 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “The Politics of Translation,” *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 195, 200.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 197.
- 31 *Imaginary Maps: Three Stories by Mahasweta Devi*, ed. and trans. Gayatri Spivak (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), xxiii, xxviii.
- 32 *Ibid.*, xxviii; Cf. Mahasweta Devi, *Breast Stories*, ed. and trans. Spivak (Calcutta: Seagull, 1997), 16, where Spivak states that “I have used ‘straight English,’ whatever that may be.”
- 33 Devi, 40.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 44.
- 35 Mona Baker, “Linguistic Perspectives on Translation,” in *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*, ed. Peter France (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 23.
- 36 Sonia Colina, “Transfer and Unwarranted Transcoding in the Acquisition of Translational Competence: An Empirical Investigation,” in *Translation and the (Re)Location of Meaning*:

- Selected Papers of the CETRA Research Seminars in Translation Studies, 1994–1996*, ed. Jeroen Vandaele (Leuven: CETRA, 1999), 375–392.
- 37 Colina, 382; See Toury, “Monitoring Discourse Transfer: A Test-Case for a Developmental Model of Translation,” in *Interlingual and Intercultural Communication: Discourse and Cognition in Translation and Second Language Acquisition Studies*, ed. Juliane House and Shoshana Blum-Kulka (Tübingen: Narr, 1986), 79–94, and Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, 275–277.
- 38 Colina, 383.
- 39 Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1970), 34–43.
- 40 Penelope Brown and Steven Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 61.
- 41 Hatim and Mason, 84.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 96.
- 43 Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*, 133.
- 44 Hatim and Mason, 96.
- 45 Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, 128.
- 46 Philip E. Lewis, “The Measure of Translation Effects,” in *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph Graham (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), 56.
- 47 See Rebecca Comay, “Geopolitics of Translation: Deconstruction in America,” *Stanford French Review* 15.1–2 (1991): 47–79.
- 48 *WR*, 183–194.
- 49 *WR*, 196.
- 50 See, for example, Mona Baker, *In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), and the critique in Rosemary Arrojo, “The Revision of the Traditional Gap between Theory and Practice and the Empowerment of Translation in Postmodern Times,” *The Translator* 4 (1998): 25–48.
- 51 Eugene Nida, *Towards a Science of Translating, with Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 159.
- 52 Ernst-August Gutt, *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991). For the linguistic theory, see Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).
- 53 Gutt, 101–102.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 102.
- 55 Lewis, 41.
- 56 *WR*, 183.
- 57 *WR*, 195.
- 58 *WR*, 175, 191.
- 59 *QR*, 35.
- 60 *WR*, 188.
- 61 *QR*, 46.
- 62 *WR*, 198.
- 63 *QR*, 24.
- 64 *WR*, 177.
- 65 E-mail from Kristin Casady, 6 September 2000.
- 66 *QR*, 41.
- 67 *WR*, 193.
- 68 E-mail from Kristin Casady, 6 October 2000.
- 69 Lewis, “The Measure of Translation Effects,” 43.
- 70 See Bass’s discussion in Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 19–20, n. 23.
- 71 *QR*, 42.
- 72 *WR*, 195.
- 73 *QR*, 45.
- 74 *WR*, 197.
- 75 *QR*, 24.
- 76 *WR*, 177.
- 77 *QR*, 23.

78 *WR*, 176.

79 *QR*, 47; *WR*, 199.

80 Derrida, *Spectres de Marx: l'état de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle internationale* (Paris: Galilée, 1993); *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

81 Friedrich Schleiermacher, "On the Different Methods of Translating," in *Translation/History/Culture: A Sourcebook*, ed. and trans. André Lefevere (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 150.

82 Henri Meschonnic, *Pour la poétique II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 308; my translation.

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