On the Merits and Logical Validity of Foreignizing Translation

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Abstract

The modern state of translation in the United States and other English speaking countries is a system of domestication, in which the foreign elements in a translated work are removed or subdued for the sake of the target audiences. This approach is based on a humanist perspective that believes languages to be simply different ways to communicate the same ideas. A humanist view such as this is logically untenable because language defines concepts; it does not simply communicate them. Not only is the logic informing domesticating practices unsound, but this approach also has significant cultural and political implications. Domesticating translations contribute to the cultural imperialism that English speaking countries are exerting on the rest of the world.

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In principio erat Verbum et Verbum erat apud Deum et Deus erat Verbum.

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and God was the Word.

John, 1:1

Introduction

Since September 11th, 2001, there has been a push in the United States for an improved education and understanding of foreign language and culture. The attacks and subsequent struggles with organizing a response revealed to many people in the government and military the depth and import of America's woefully inadequate understanding of other cultures, and the individual groups within them. In response to this revelation, the government has begun to increasingly emphasize the study of language and culture, and many non-governmental organizations have mirrored this change. However, the absence of any significant change in America's approach to translation over the past decade suggests that this overhaul may be purely superficial; that America's treatment of the foreign has been updated for efficiency and effectiveness but remains the same in motive and perspective.

The motive, as always, seems to be the ability to handle another culture, but not to understand and certainly not to empathize with it. Even more concerning, the perspective is nearly always the foreign in the terms of the domestic. For decades, the United States, and other English speaking countries as well, have favored a style of translation in which readability and comprehensibility in English are emphasized, rather than adherence to the original. Comprehensibility is not limited to just the language either, but extends to injecting the cultural tropes of the target audience into the text, so that the English speaking audiences can recognize something of themselves in what they are led to believe is the foreign. This perspective is indicative of America's treatment of the Other in a variety of contexts because there is always an element of translation in any interaction between two disparate groups. The English speaking world powers are effectively acting on some illusory idea of Anglo-humanism (to coin a term),

thinking that every group shares some linguistic and cultural foundation with themselves. There is little evidence to support this assumption; it stems more from blind ethnocentrism than from any thoughtful analysis of difference and similarity.

In this thesis, I first devote significant space to building a logical argument to call into question, and perhaps refute, this particular notion of humanism. Structurally, this theoretical portion of the thesis progresses in specific steps, each step building on the previous ones. These steps are divided into labeled sections for clarity and the convenience of the reader. A significant portion of the argument is devoted to refuting the traditional idea that a translator's goal is to find the words and phrases that reproduce the reaction of the "original readership." I begin by discussing in depth why there is no contiguous entity constituting an original readership, and even if there was one, why its reaction would not be imitable in the readership of another culture. The initial steps in arguing this idea seemingly have little to do with translation, but they provide the philosophical foundation upon which the entire argument rests. Following this section, I discuss why authorial intent is an equally poor standard upon which to base a translation. My counter-proposition is that one should translate for the text itself, in all of its intricacies. This approach entails an extremely literal translation because every element of the original contributes to its nature as an entity; therefore, every element is indispensable for the perfect transfer of meaning to the foreign language. Of course, the preservation of every element is absolutely impossible, so the perfect translation is impossible. I would go so far as to say that nearly every element of a text could not be preserved in translation, so even an adequate translation is impossible. This impossibility does not mean that translation should not occur; it is, after all, indispensable to the modern world. The translator should simply attempt to preserve the original to the best of his or her ability, knowing that success is quite out of reach.

After my discussion on the philosophy of language, I provide some examples of various translated works juxtaposed with their originals, and often different translations of the same work. The purpose of this thesis is not to provide a comprehensive definition and set of examples of what constitutes a good or bad translation choice. The determination of the quality of a certain choice is far too case specific, and relative to other choices, to allow for broad generalization. Rather, I try to give a few examples of choices that are better or worse than others, more for the illustration of my theoretical arguments than for the construction of a rule book for translation. I include a few translations, such as the Middle English of *The Canterbury Tales*, that are exceptions to the standard work because they inform and elucidate the practices of translation as a whole. All of the specific examples should be understood as illustrative or explanatory of the theory that preceded them.

Finally, the thesis concludes with an analysis of the consequences and implications of Americans' current views on translation. There can be no doubt that America exerts an ethnocentric and culturally imperialistic influence on the rest of the world. Translation practices are only one manifestation of this covert imperialism, but they both inform and reveal the others. Cultural and linguistic variety across the planet is in decline, and it is not a stretch to link that destruction with American imperialism. English is by far the language most translated out of, and English speaking countries translate very few works into English (Venuti 14). There is clearly an imbalance of cultural exchange, which would certainly contribute to the diminished cultural variety. I believe that this largely ignored issue is of the highest importance. The homogenization of humanity is horrifying; consider the prevalence of dystopian novels, in which a homogenous populace is a primary characteristic of the disturbing culture. Diversity is an

invaluable attribute of human beings, and American translation practices must be radically updated or reconfigured to help ensure that this diversity is not lost.

Part 1: Theory

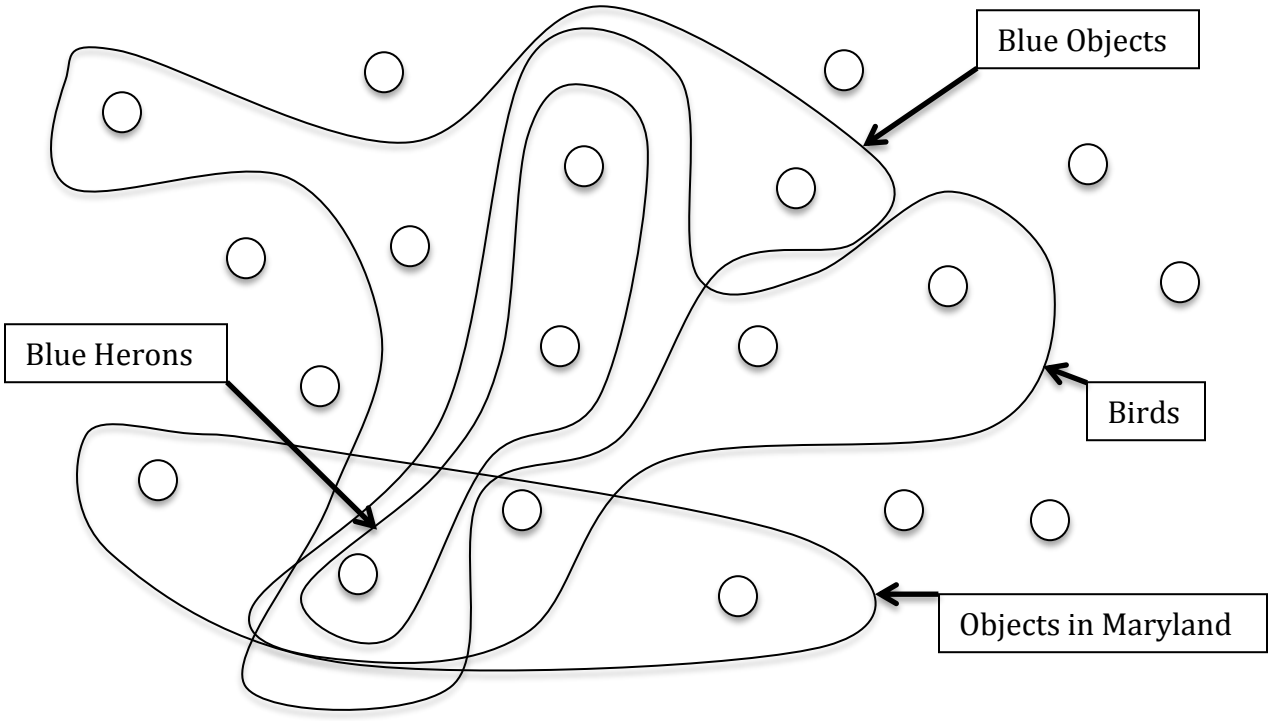
1.1

There is an expression, often used in political science or anthropological contexts, that states, "There is no great blue heron." This means that there does not exist a singular entity that embodies the concept of a great blue heron, but rather that humans categorize a large number of unique individuals under the label of great blue heron. We can break down this label in an effort to find the fundamental essence of what we call "great blue heronness." That term encompasses a large number of individual birds, and each bird is different from the next in a wide variety of ways, so already we begin to see the multiplicity inherent in such a singular label. If each individual is separate and different in this way, we must begin to examine what exactly it is about the nature of these birds as a collective that inclines us to classify them under the eaves of a single term or name. Upon being asked that question, the vast majority of people would quickly reply that it is one or several of the many similarities common to all of them that makes possible their categorization under one label.

Biologists, and indeed many laypeople, would proffer the traditional notion that the members of a species are defined as such by their ability to reproduce, and have fertile offspring, with each other. This initially seems to be a valid definition of what constitutes a great blue heron and all other species as well, but this definition is by no means universally agreed upon. For example, some biologists argue that one should determine species by tracing some common ancestry rather than by the ability to reproduce. Without going any further into biology, one can see that the system of classification for species, one of the most rigorously and scientifically

defined terms, is not an inherent or natural attribute of the collectives that we name species. While a group of entities may share characteristics, the particular characteristics that we select to unite these individuals under one name are the result of an arbitrary human decision. The label is by no means self-evident; there is no reason why we could not classify blue herons according to beak length, geographic location, or appearance on the Discovery Channel in the year 1999. There is an effectively infinite set of traits common to a variety of entities that could be used to dictate classification; the selection of one out of those endless possibilities is an indiscriminate human process.

The diagram below should serve to help illustrate the concepts discussed above. Each point represents an individual entity. It is important to note that any physical separation seen in the diagram is the result of random scattering. It has no significance regarding any similarity between the entities.



This rather crude illustration is an attempt to show what has previously been mentioned, that people define classification in terms of relative similarity according to arbitrary standards. These classifications are by no means necessarily fixed. For example, as the diagram shows, the English language has a term for a group of entities called great blue herons, as well as a term for the group of entities called birds, into which the great blue herons also fall. A given language will contain innumerable overlapping categories; under the term bird, for instance, there are labels for songbirds and shorebirds, and within the shorebird label are herons, and then Blue Herons are contained within that name. Yet, even this incomprehensibly intricate system of labeling cannot begin to cover the possibilities for naming contained within the entities themselves. Referring back to the diagram, there are two classes circled that do not have their own term, blue objects and objects in Maryland. There is no inherent reason why English should not have terms for these two categories, but it does not. The potential places to draw distinguishing or categorizing lines are essentially infinite, and therefore, within a language the locations of the divisions between concepts are arbitrary human inventions.

1.2

We have established that individual entities are not classified according to a natural set of distinctions, and a result of that logic, the typical human notion of what constitutes an entity is equally baseless. The entities that people consider to be contiguous are undergoing constant flux, which calls into question the validity of describing an ever-changing object with only one, unchanging label. Returning to the great blue heron example, if one such bird were to lose a feather, or chip its beak, it would still be considered a heron despite being different, which feeds into a traditional nihilistic argument. One can strip away parts of a heron until there is nothing left, and somewhere along the way we will have stopped calling it a heron; but upon further

examination, we will not be able to determine the precise point at which the heron could no longer be called a heron. This scenario, a variation of the heap paradox, serves to illustrate that what we refer to as an entity is really a spectrum of unique snapshots taken at every instant in time, chronicling the variation of that perceived entity. So again, naming becomes a matter of categorizing a vast number of individual entities under a single label, according to a criterium that is not inherent to that which is named, and is often not even discernible to those performing the naming. In short, a title such as "great blue heron" is an arbitrary classification of a group of unique entities, and each of those unique entities is an arbitrary classification of yet another group of unique entities.

When considering the categorization of an entity, the case of proper names merits discussion, if just for its presence in historic writings on the nature of the sign. In the Abrahamic religious tradition, the Adamic Language, or the Language of Eden, contained proper names for every physical object, the true name of every entity. Every unique heron, and every other physical entity for that matter, had its own unique name. For the sake of discussion, one can extend this system of proper names to abstract entities as well, creating a language of proper names. French Algerian philosopher Jacques Derrida devoted much discussion to the untranslatability of the proper name, because he believed that a proper name was an exact title, unlike the approximations that are other words, whose signifieds and signifiers are arbitrarily connected. He writes, "a proper name as such remains forever untranslatable," because the term would be the same in every language (Des Tours 171). Of course, traditional proper names often became less than proper as they came to stand for, or apply to, things beyond the original singular entity (the name Hitler, for example, now typically evokes an image of evil as well as

representing the man himself), but that detail, as well as the whole question of the proper name, is irrelevant here because proper names in the traditional sense do not exist.

As previously discussed, the individual entities that could normally be labeled with a proper name are not distinct entities at all, but just another arbitrary collection of entities. A true proper name can only apply to those individual instances that comprise what we traditionally consider to be a contiguous entity. By virtue of this lack of inherent existence, entities, as we construe them, cannot have a true name, a perfect title that escapes human arbitrariness. It is the divide between the unnatural human concepts in languages that "*at the same time* imposes and forbids translation," as Derrida writes in "Des Tours de Babel" (Des Tours 170). In other words, it is the variety of invented human concepts within and between languages that requires and allows for translation, but also prevents the ideal transfer of meaning. Those constructed concepts define language, and more importantly perception, to the extent that every known individual entity only exists as the product of human artifice, and the variety permitted by this artificiality is what causes as well as precludes translation.

I would say more specifically that the artificiality of concepts makes them fluid, susceptible to change or difference. Changeable in the sense that the meaning of a term evolves over time, and different in the sense that perfect correspondence between two labels in disparate languages is always impossible. As already stated, proper names refer to concepts as unspecific and therefore fluid as all other labels, so they are as translatable as anything else. This certainly seems counterintuitive, especially when one considers that people do not typically translate their own names when communicating in a different language, so this statement merits further explanation. Take a traditional proper name, John Smith (for the sake of unoriginality), for example. This name applies to a set or spectrum of unique, instantaneous entities, and through

time this set accumulates more and more of these momentary John Smiths. This accumulation means that the signifier John Smith is being applied to an ever changing signified. To put more generally, the object that the "proper name" John Smith is referring to is in constant flux, so it should be subject to translation. That title can signify very different things at different points in time, so in order to properly express this meaning, one would need to translate it. Of course, we do not often translate proper names, but that does not mean that those names cannot be subject to translation. We just satisfy ourselves with imperfect transmission of meaning or significance as we do in so many other ways. The translation of proper names does occur however, in mundane but not necessarily obvious ways; for example, the person's official name changes when he receives a doctorate, and becomes Dr. John Smith. Perhaps more commonly, a person's referent can change as their context changes. A young child named Johnny might grow into John, and then become John Sr. upon having children of his own. This procession of names for what is intuitively, but not necessarily logically, a single entity constitutes a sort of intralingual translation. As strange as translating proper names may seem, it is possible and does occur more often than typically recognized.

To further complicate matters, proper names are infused with other elements of language such as symbolism and multiplicity that define them as other than perfectly true names. Derrida elucidates this mixed nature of proper nouns in "Des Tours de Babel" in regard to what could be considered the icon of translation theory: the Tower of Babel. As Derrida writes, the name Babel, which is today often considered a proper name, can be affixed to the name of the Biblical story which derives its name from the city or tower which in turn is derived from the Lord's proclamation of a name, a proper name, which destroyed the tower, scattered the builders, and confused language on earth (Des Tours 171). In this way, Babel, like most proper nouns,

represents both a human concept as well as multiple specific entities, thus it is not a pure proper noun in the sense discussed previously. As Derrida writes, the Lord scattered and divided the language of the Semites by stating a proper name that signified both proper and improper entities; he infused the title of a single entity with less than proper meaning. We can see then that so-called proper names necessitate translation as much as any other term for a number of reasons.

1.3

The argument thus far shows that human concepts are constructs of language; it is no stretch then to see that the connection between those concepts and the words that represent them is equally arbitrary, equally a product of language. Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure pioneered this idea in 1916 in his *Course on General Linguistics*, showing the utter randomness that pervades language. He breaks down language into three fundamental components: the sign, signifier, and signified (de Saussure 964). The signified is the entity or class of entities that is being named, while the signifier is the word or label that a language gives that concept. The sign then is the combination of the two. De Saussure notes that the signifier and signified are inextricably linked to those people entangled in a language. He uses the analogy of a piece of paper, in which the signifier is one side, and the signified is the other. One cannot separate the two sides, and any division of one half necessarily means a division on the other (de Saussure 967). So, the connection between the signified and the signifier is arbitrary, but also inseparable; the concept evokes the label, and the label evokes the concept.

This inseparability can be attributed to and explained by the artificial nature of an entity, or a signified. As we have already discussed, signifieds do not naturally exist in anything more than a purely ephemeral way, yet humans have managed to create coherent concepts out of all of

that chaos. It is language itself that serves this indispensable purpose. Words serve to order and limit the incomprehensible abundance of the universe into manageable entities; in other words, the systems of signifiers that are languages actively create the signifieds, bringing them into existence out of essentially nothing. So it is clear that the signified cannot exist without the signifier, and of course, the signifier cannot exist without the signified it creates without becoming meaningless. I should make explicit at this point that, while I have thus far only used nouns as examples of signs, all classes of words are arbitrary signs. Take verbs for example; a verb relays an action, and the lines that divide categories of action are as constructed as those that divide nouns. To English speakers, it seems utterly natural to divide verbs according to a temporal relationship, past, present, future, etc. While that characteristic may be common to many languages, it is not universal. Hebrew does not conjugate verbs according to the action's place in time, and Japanese does not conjugate verbs at all. Other parts of speech may be more subtle in their nature as a signifier, but they are equally invented and arbitrary; think for example of the multitude of meanings for the preposition *of*: possession, the territory of the Mongols, constitution, the cloak of silk, origin, Lawrence of Arabia, etc.

One can immediately recognize the import of the arbitrary nature of concepts and their connections with their labels to the practice of translation. It means that perfect transfer of concepts between languages is impossible. De Saussure gives many examples of this incompatibility in his *Course in General Linguistics*, one of which I will mention here. In English, there are the two concepts of *sheep* and *mutton*, each with its own word or label; in French however, the word *mouton* can mean either what English speakers call sheep or mutton. As de Saussure writes, the words *sheep* and *mouton* have different values because English has that second word *mutton*, which limits the concept being expressed by its counterpart *sheep* (de

Saussure 969). Clearly, the perfect transfer of meaning between English and French on this topic would be impossible because the linguistically defined concepts do not correspond between the languages. One might argue that this example represents a relatively special case in which the concepts are not aligned, but that they usually do correspond. Unfortunately for the translator, perfect or even adequate equivalence rarely if ever actually occurs, which helps to prevent perfect translation.

1.4

At this point, it should be clear that language is pervaded on multiple levels by the arbitrary human categorization of an inherently incomprehensible universe. This arbitrariness permits the potential for every person to have a unique language; after all, we are not bound to construct language around any concepts external to human thought, and human thought is infinitely variable. Because language essentially constructs and defines the way in which each person interacts with reality, language can be understood as not only a system for communication, but also as the perspective with which each person understands the world. Thought therefore occurs only in terms of and as a product of a person's language.

This concept of language informing thought is known as linguistic relativity and is not a new or radical idea. It was first elucidated in the early 20th century by linguists and anthropologists such as Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, and Benjamin Lee Whorf. In the one hundred years since its inception, this theory has experienced the expected variety of criticism and support, and it continues to receive support from the academic and scientific community to this day. I bring up the history of the theory not to go into a lengthy discussion of its arguments, refutations, and counter-refutations, but to show that there has been a variety of scientific evidence supporting it. It is not some wild philosophical concept that has little relevance or

connection to the real world. I will give one example of such evidence, but there are many other studies that provide comparable support.

It has been noted in the United States, often with sighs of resignation, that East Asian students tend to be much better at math than their Western counterparts. As Malcolm Gladwell writes in his book Outliers: The Story of Success, "On international comparison tests, students from Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan all score roughly the same in math, around the ninety-eight percentile. The United States, France, England, Germany, and other western industrialized nations cluster at somewhere between the twenty-six and thirty-six percentile" (Gladwell 231). Gladwell attributes this discrepancy to the difference in the "number-naming systems in Western and Asian languages" (Gladwell 228). Think about English numbers for instance; sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, and nineteen all follow a pattern, but then eleven, twelve, and thirteen do not. Beyond that, in the two-digit numbers twenty and above, English speakers construct the number by saying the tens digit first followed by the ones digit, but in the teens, the reverse is true. The number system does not adequately follow logical patterns, so it is counterintuitive and linguistically "clumsy," which means that it is more difficult for westerners to count, and by extension, to do math than it is for speakers of Asian languages (Gladwell 230). If the simple convention of naming numbers affects mathematical thinking, more fundamental differences in language surely have widespread effects on thought. For more, and perhaps more generally applicable, examples of such effects, see Sapir's work with Native American languages and their impacts on thought.

Derrida discussed this concept of linguistic relativity in his work *Monolingualism of the Other or The Prosthesis of Origin*. He proffers the following pair of seemingly paradoxical statements as an argument on the nature of language (Monolingualism 7).

1. We only ever speak one language.
2. We never only speak one language.

The meaning of the first statement is fairly clear, when one understands language to be a perspective; a person can only ever have one perspective on the world, and therefore only speaks one language in the sense that Derrida is using. Derrida uses himself as an example in *Monolingualism of the Other*. He speaks French, but was born and raised as a Jew in Algeria. The combination of those three disparate identities, French, Jewish, and Algerian all contribute to his perspective of the universe, but they do not allow him to have more than one perspective. He maintains just one perspective that is a result of the conglomeration of those three influences, and others as well. We can apply this more specifically to languages as well; an American English speaking person could learn Mexican Spanish, for example. At that point, we would consider that person bilingual, but according to Derrida's view of language, that person still has only one language, or perspective, which is now a mix of American English, Mexican Spanish, and a vast number of other contributors.

The second statement is a bit more problematic. The ever-obfuscating Derrida seems to be making the point that people do not possess or otherwise control their language or perspective in any way. We are essentially helpless because we cannot operate outside of the framework of our language. This framework is the result of social and experiential factors rather than any sort of personal thought or intent. To put rather crudely, we do not speak our one language, it speaks us. One could make the counterargument that a person can select to some extent the experiences that befall them. That is quite true, but the person cannot truly control the effect that those chosen experiences have on his or her perspective or identity.

This statement could also be interpreted another, more literal, way as saying that a person never speaks the standard that represents a language. No one speaks pure French, for instance, despite the efforts of the French Academy of Language. The previous paragraph discussed the multitude of elements that define and constitute a person's language or perspective, and it is this multitude that precludes the possibility of speaking a pure language. The labels and ideas behind terms such as French or Chinese are analogous to lines of latitude and longitude. These lines do not represent any natural phenomenon, they are simply human superimpositions placed over the planet to allow people to locate their relative position. Similarly, when a person is said to speak French, that term means not that they speak "pure" French, but they speak a language closer to "pure" French than to our concept of another language. Language names are used to approximate one's linguistic and therefore identificatory position, not to exactly pinpoint or define it.

In the previous few paragraphs, I have made the claim that because thought occurs in terms of language, and language is largely dependent on infinitely varying experience and other factors of identity, human thought is infinitely variable. Prominent linguist Noam Chomsky's theory of universal grammar could conceivably derail this argument since it posits that all human languages share common fundamental characteristics. Every language has the parts of speech that serve the functions of nouns and verbs, for instance. A natural extension of this theory is that the human mind has a certain limited capacity to function differently in the realm of language, and by virtue of being limited, some components of language are shared by all people. The theory of universal grammar is by no means without criticism, but for the purposes of this thesis, I will not go into them because I have no need to attempt to refute this theory. The idea that all languages share some fundamental characteristics seems to disprove the concept of

language as infinite that I have argued thus far. However, the existence of shared characteristics does no such thing. Even if every language is built upon the same foundations, they are free to develop from there according to an infinite number of variables. Every language may have verbs, but their systems of conjugation, or lack thereof, could vary tremendously; every language might have nouns, but the categorizations defined by these terms could constrain reality in any number of ways. Considering the number of potential avenues for languages to differ, some shared elements do not make them any less variable; subtracting from infinity still leaves infinity. To use an analogy, a child could be first given a pot of blue finger-paint, but if she is then given thousands, or millions, of other colors to mix with the blue in various combinations, she will be able to make a functionally infinite number of colors. Subtracting from the infinite variables of language still leaves an infinite number of ways in which languages can differ. Even if Chomsky is correct in his theory of universal grammar, that does not take away the potential of language to be infinitely variable.

1.5

The point that the entire thesis thus far has been attempting to illustrate is the fairly mundane idea that language and perception are infinitely variable. There is no comprehensible nature of the universe that guides and informs every person's world. People have that world defined for them according to an unlimited number of standards. This vast pool of possible components of perception and identity means that every person experiences the universe uniquely. The mothers who repeatedly told their toddlers that everyone is special were correct, in a roundabout way. That idea is relevant to the practice of translation because it means that one cannot translate with the intention of mimicking the effect of a work on the original readership. First, there is no original readership, just as there is no great blue heron; there is only

a scattering of unique and separate entities, that are each only a spectrum of unique and separate entities.

One might proffer the counter-argument that, in this case, the defining characteristic of the so-called readership is that they are all English or French or Chinese speakers. A translator might even narrow the focus of the original readership to something like intellectual, college educated, English speakers. The readership may very well share this characteristic, but one cannot presume, given the infinite possibilities for perception, that the members of that readership reacted to the original text in a similar way. To use an easy example, the child of a business tycoon who danced through college largely on his surname would likely react to a text differently than a poor man who paid his way through school with scholarships, even though they both fall within the translator's criteria for the original readership. It is presumptuous of a translator to assume that a text's original readership reacted in a similar way just because they can be labeled under a few general categories; therefore, one cannot aim to produce a good translation by attempting to mimic its effect on a readership. I should explicitly state at this point that, when I say a good translation, I mean a translation that as well as possible transfers into another language the properties of the original that have the potential to elicit or aid in eliciting a reaction. That seems an appropriate definition since the entire purpose of translation is the transfer of such properties. For the remainder of this thesis, I will refer to those properties as the text's meaning.

1.6

I propose that the approach to translation which best permits the transfer of meaning is one which translates for the text as an entity, rather than for the imitation of an imagined readership reaction or for some real or presumed authorial intent. As has been discussed at

length thus far, the reaction of the original readership cannot be replicated because identity and therefore perception are necessarily infinitely variable. One could make the argument that, while a translator cannot predict the reaction of individual audience members on either side of the translation, he or she may in fact be able to approximate the perception of the readership as a whole. Returning to the analogy of the lines of latitude and longitude, a translator could, according to this argument, produce a work in a language aimed at the equator or the Tropic of Cancer based on the presumed similarities between the people that share that location or identity. In other words, a translator of Cantonese into English, for example, could estimate the conglomerate nature of the Cantonese speaking population based on the intricacies of the Cantonese system of thought, gauge that conglomerate's reaction to a text, and then attempt to mimic that reaction in the conglomerate of English speakers. Indeed, much of the corpus of modern American translation seems to have been completed more or less according to this method.

I would argue against this practice, however reasonable it may seem, because whatever limited similarities are shared by the multiplicities that are the collective speakers of a language are dwarfed by the differences. As Derrida discussed at length in relation to his own identity as a Jewish, white, French-speaker born in Algeria, his perception of a text would be vastly different than a Parisian French-speaker's, or that of a speaker born in French Vietnam, or French Guiana. This variety of intralingual identity is not only the case with the languages of various parts of imperialist nations, such as France. If one were to walk the length of America's east coast, or west coast for that matter, he or she would find cultural and individual identities that are more similar to those of other languages than to those of their own countrymen. For example, an English-speaking lawyer living in Long Island, New York, would likely have an identity more

akin to a French-speaking lawyer in the suburbs of Paris than to an English-speaking methamphetamine cook in the Appalachians. Variables such as profession, income, and religion all contribute to identity like language, so making assumptions about identity and perception based solely on language is as meaningless as doing so based on race, which is obviously frowned upon in modern America. Yet somehow, these reductive practices have become the relatively unquestioned norm in American publishing.

The third possible approach to translation, the first two being for the readership and for the text itself, is to focus on authorial intent. However, this strategy is as nonsensical as translating to mimic a reaction. For one thing, the author is only involved in the early stages of a work; once it has been published, it is, with a few exceptions, out of his or her hands entirely. Once this separation has been achieved, no author can predict the future significance of the piece. Take for example the film *The Birth of a Nation*. It was intended by the filmmakers to be seen as a tale of heroes defending their people and homeland from evil, but now it is just considered by most people to be racist propaganda, which attempts to make the Ku Klux Klan seem like the triumphant champions of the noble Southern way of life. If one attempted to translate according to authorial intent the entire modern meaning of the piece would be lost, and the translation would be scorned according to modern moral norms. An author is an irrelevant figure in the practice of translation because it is the text that is in question, not one person's view of that text, no matter how integral to the text that person may have once been.

Instead of using such rash generalizations or presumptions as the basis for translation, one should use the text as an entity in and of itself as the foundation. A text, like any other entity, can be seen as a spectrum. It began its existence in the mind of the author, was written, edited, and then published, all the while undergoing changes to its nature, just like a blue heron

as it ages. However, once the work has been published, its changes become limited to superficial physical modifications. Of course, there could be subsequent editions of the book, which would contain a variety of changes; however, each copy of a book from each publication is essentially an individual entity. It will eventually be destroyed like all entities as the paper and binding wear and disintegrate, but until that time the text will remain fixed, possessing a set of characteristics that can elicit a reaction from a reader.

The common argument against the idea of a text as its own entity revolves around the concept of a changing and necessary readership. The thought is that without an audience or the possibility of an audience, a work would merely be ink on paper in a strange pattern. It is the audience that adds the layer of significance and meaning to that otherwise purely physical entity, and because the audience is ever changing, the significance of the text is ever changing. This argument is similar to the old cliché "does a tree falling in the woods make a noise if there is no one there to hear it?" While we cannot say for certain that the existence of sound does not require the presence of an ear, there is no causal linkage between the ear and the noise that a tree makes as it falls, so it is valid to assume that a sound is indeed produced despite the absence of an attentive readership. Benjamin comments on this problem writing,

> One might, for example, speak of an unforgettable life or moment even if all men had forgotten it. If the nature of such a life or moment required that it be unforgotten, that predicate would not imply a falsehood but merely a claim unfulfilled by men, and probably a reference to a realm in which it *is* fulfilled: God's remembrance (Benjamin 76).

"God's remembrance" can be understood figuratively to mean the state in which everything is understood. It is equally valid to assume that the text exists as more than just a physical entity. A work is like a wall in an elementary school playground; during recess kids come and throw balls against the wall, and the wall bounces them back to the kids. The wall may be fluid, but

balls are bounced back to the kids differently primarily depending on the nature of the kids who threw them. A text, like the wall, has certain properties inherent to it which dictate the way that it can be received by a reader, and those properties never change. If the kids throwing the balls all disappeared, if mankind went extinct, the nature of the text would not change; it would not lose the properties that allowed it to bounce balls. Unfortunately, the reason that the question about the falling tree is a famous cliché is that, while the answer seems obvious intuitively, it cannot definitively be proven true. One could certainly argue that a text only exists as we know it because people exist, and they could be proven neither right nor wrong.

So, thus far we have covered three possible approaches to translation which can be described as for the audience, for the author, and for the text. I should note at this point that I have assumed that the intent of the translator is to, as best as possible, facilitate the transfer of the original meaning of a work to a readership of a different language. Those three approaches listed above correspond to three opinions regarding the source of meaning in a work: essentially whether it is the author, the audience, or the text itself that contains the text's significance. However, if one's goal is not to best transfer the original meaning, then there are many other approaches to translation as well. I will devote no more time beyond this section to analyzing these methods because they lead to perversions rather than translations of the originals. A "translator" could, for example, "translate" a piece to serve some kind of political or personal agenda, subtly or not so subtly twisting the original to serve some agenda that is not native to the piece. *The Diary of Anne Frank*, for instance, was translated from Dutch into German by one particular translator in a way that "[toned] down all instances of descriptions of Germans…that could be construed as insulting. As a result, the plight of Jews in the Netherlands is, correspondingly, made to appear less harsh than it actually was" (Lefevere 66). While this may

be one of the more heavy-handed instances of such modification in place of true translation, smaller, but equally inappropriate, injustices often occur. Again, these sorts of approaches produce bastardizations rather than translations, and will therefore be discussed no further here. I will assume, perhaps naively, that translators have in mind the best interests of preserving a work's meaning.

Returning to the three conceivably correct approaches outlined and argued above, we have yet to reach a final, definite conclusion about which is best for achieving the aforementioned goal. Translating for the audience has been the focus of much of this thesis thus far, and it should be clear at this point that it is a ludicrous and borderline offensive tactic. It reduces the individuals within both the original and target readership to one dimension of their identity, one dimension which, although shared with the other members of that language, could comprise only a small portion of the factors that determine perception, and therefore reception, of a work. Translating for the audience is definitely not the way. The second option, translating for the author, is just as misguided. The author is just another person who has a perception of the piece, and that perception may be, not wrong, but foolish by most standards. Consider the theoretical example of an author writing a simple murder mystery about a child who kills his parents. Upon publication, readers might understand the plot to be representative of the author's repressed anger at his own parents. A translator who is only considering authorial intent might produce a work that contains none of those triggers that caused the audience to reach such a conclusion. This would therefore be a poor translation, not because it superficially did not replicate an audience reaction, but because it did not contain the elements necessary to produce that reaction. It changed the properties of the wall such that it could no longer bounce balls in a particular way; the inherent properties of the text were changed. An author is typically just as

ignorant of the full significance of his or her work as anyone else, so translating according to that limited perspective is a flawed approach.

Which brings us to the final possible tactic for translation: translating for the text itself. As already discussed, the question of whether or not the meaning of a work persists without a potential audience is unanswerable. We can, however, assume that, because the nature of the text as an entity does not change with the impossibility of reception, a work does exist in its own right. This assumption is not unimpeachable, so this tactic does not transcend all doubt, but translation by its nature is not a pursuit that ever involves certainty or decisions that are beyond reproach. Translators are always faced with the dilemma of choosing the best option out of a collection of imperfect choices. Translating for the text itself is the best of these options because, unlike the other possibilities, it is not theoretically indefensible. Translating for the readership or for the author's intent simply cannot work. One could argue that a text does not have an independent existence, but even translating for an imagined construct of that entity permits better results. There is a text that is being translated, a physical, albeit fluid, chain of meaningful symbols, and that is enough for a translator to begin to approximate this entity that may or may not exist. An absolute adherence to the words in a text, to the entity of a text, maximizes the likelihood of preserving the characteristics of a work that elicit its varied receptions, therefore translating for the text itself is the best approach to translation.

It may seem strange that I am forwarding the notion of the text as an independent entity because this thesis is based on the idea that entities are the unreliable and arbitrary products of language as a system of perception. The signifiers on a page have no inherent characteristic that separates them from, say, a rock or a Great Blue Heron; they are as artificial an entity as any other. I would argue that basing a translation on an entity that does not exist as we know it, is

still better than basing it on some illusionary perception of an imagined readership or author. Even if the author is alive to give his or her input, he or she still has only their own inaccurate opinion of what the text is. In other words, the text is an arbitrary human construct, but the author's opinion is a skewed perspective on that construct, and the translator's opinion on the author's opinion or audience's reaction is a skewed perspective on a skewed perspective. There are fewer divides between actuality and the translation when translating for the text rather than for the author or for the audience.

The idea of a text as its own entity may, for those familiar with translation theory, seem to echo Walter Benjamin's writings on what he calls sacred texts. His ideas, however, focus on religious texts, primarily the Bible, which can be considered sacred in the more traditional sense of the word. He writes "It is vouchsafed to Holy Writ alone, in which meaning has ceased to be the watershed for the flow of language and the flow of revelation. Where a text is identical with truth or dogma, where it is supposed to be 'the true language' in all its literalness" (Benjamin 83). To sum up his arguments, texts like the Bible are an embodiment of unimpeachable Truth, since they are the divine word, the word of God. They cannot be modified or reinvented without loss of meaning because they contain Truth in every word and phrase. I extend this attribute of Truth to every work, not just religious texts. Every text is not imbued with Truth by God, as Benjamin argues is the case for the Bible; they embody a Truth solely by virtue of being a snapshot of a specific perspective at a specific point in time. They contain a human Truth, which is just as easily lost to careless modification and translation. Every work should be treated as sacred, because the human Truths within it is well worth discovering, and can be outright destroyed by poor translation practices.

1.7

Accepting this approach as best, the important question then becomes: how does one best translate for the text, or how does one best reconstruct in another language the precise edifice that is the original work. The answer lies in what is known as "foreignization" among translation theorists. Lawrence Venuti, expanding upon the ideas of the German philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher, wrote that there are two types of translation: foreignizing and domesticating. Schleiermacher writes, "Either the translator leaves the author in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him [foreignization]; or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him [domestication]" (Schleiermacher 49). Practically speaking, a domestication involves sacrificing various details of the original in the hopes of producing a work that seems as though it was written in the target language from the beginning; it essentially values fluency in the target language above fidelity to the original text.

Foreignization, on the other hand, sacrifices this fluency or naturalness in the target language in favor of a closer adherence to the original. These types of translations can be awkward or seemingly ungrammatical in the target language. In an excellent translation of Jorge Luis Borges's works, which I will discuss at length later, the translator often combined the subject pronoun and the verb into one word because, in Spanish, the subject pronoun is often omitted since it is implied in the conjugation of the verb (Hurley 49). This translation reflects that nuance of meaning as best as it can, but in doing so constructs words and sentences that are technically incorrect in English. I advocate a particularly extreme version of this sort of foreignization.

I have been arguing thus far that one should translate to reproduce as closely as possible the productive characteristics of a text. These characteristics are contained in every minute element of that work. Every word, every syntactical detail, and even, for lack of a better term,

the music or sound of a text affects the overall significance. The meaning of Ernest Hemingway's novels would undoubtedly be different without their barren, simplistic prose, and on the other extreme, it would be difficult to imagine the significance of James Joyce's works without their convoluted, stream of consciousness writing style. Consider again de Saussure's example of "mutton" and "mouton." Each word has a different value or significance which could sway the implication of a phrase in a particular direction. A word that contains the meaning of both "sheep" and "mutton" would elicit a different response than a word that contains only the meaning of "mutton." Every tiny detail is an irreplaceable part of the text as an entity.

The vital nature of this minutia means that to best reproduce the exact meaning of the original, a translator must replicate every detail, which entails extreme foreignization. Each word must be considered in regard to its meaning, sound, and context, among other factors, and be replaced with another word in the target language that best approximates these attributes. Languages are not even remotely corresponding systems of communication, so not only is this (and every other) approach to translation doomed to failure, but it will create translations that are exceptionally difficult to comprehend in the target language. Picture a sentence in which every word contains some trickery such as combining the subject pronoun and the verb into one word. These works would be in no way light reading. This is a regrettable consequence; however, it is the task of the translator to convey the meaning of an original work into another language, not to provide easy reading to his or her target readership. It is not the translator's responsibility to cater to the ignorance, and often laziness, of the readership at the expense of adequately representing the meaning of the original. A "translator" who writes for a purpose such as producing a commercially or culturally viable piece (any purpose other than the effective

transmittance of the original meaning) produces not translations but bastardizations. Extreme foreignization is the method that best achieves what is actually meant by translation and intended by capable translators.

1.8

Permit me a few final comments before moving on from the theoretical portion of this thesis to practical examples of good and bad translations. I asserted earlier that foreignizing translations are doomed to failure, and that is absolutely the case. It is impossible even to adequately transfer the productive characteristics of a work into another language. This inevitable failure does not mean that the pursuit is not necessary or noble, and certainly does not mean that it is permissible for a translator to forsake this approach for a lesser vehicle. The fact that good bastardization is possible to accomplish, for it is clearly possible to produce a commercially successful and popularly acclaimed translation, does not legitimize it in any way. One should struggle with foreignization despite its futility because it will better convey meaning, even if it does not adequately convey meaning.

Finally, the demands and rigors of foreignization mean that certain works are untranslatable. Theoretically, all works are untranslatable, but even practically there will be some texts that simply cannot be transferred at all. These will typically be composed so completely or integrally of culturally specific elements that they could not be understood by a foreign readership. Culturally specific works of humor are a perfect example of this sort of work. Take a colloquial essay satirizing the history of Russia, for instance. It could contain such a variety of idiomatic expressions and obscure historical references that the translator would have to include a section of explanatory endnotes that would exceed the essay in length. This could be done of course, but the humor of the piece would be lost within a maze of explanations.

Such a translation would utterly fail to transmit the essay's significance despite perfectly done foreignization; a joke is rarely funny if it has to be explained. These kinds of pieces should not be translated at all, because such an endeavor would be useless.

Part 2: Examples

In the following section, I will analyze and compare foreignizing and domesticating translation choices in the works of professional translators, as well as one selection of my own. I would emphasize that these examples do not necessarily represent "good" or "bad" translations, and certainly do not necessarily contain the "correct" choices that one should make in translating a particular text. While I believe that foreignizing translations tend to be "better" (more reflective of the original) than their domesticating counterparts, I intend to simply put forward examples of both philosophies, without placing any judgment on their relative merit. Finally, it is important to note also that foreignizing and domesticating are relative terms, existing only in conjunction with one another, so each choice that I claim to be foreignizing or domesticating is only so compared to other translations.

The following selections are two translations of the short story "Las Ruinas Circulares," written originally in Spanish by Jorge Luis Borges. The first translation was completed by Andrew Hurley, and the second by Norman Thomas di Giovanni.

> Lo soñó activo, caluroso, secreto, del grandor de un puño cerrado, color granate en la penumbra de un cuerpo humano aun sin cara ni sexo; con minucioso amor lo soñó, durante catorce lúcidas noches. Cada noche, lo percibía con mayor evidencia. No lo tocaba: se limitaba a atestiguarlo, a observarlo, tal vez a corregirlo con la mirada. Lo percibía, lo vivía, desde muchas distancias y muchos ángulos. La noche catorcena rozó la arteria pulmonar con el índice y luego todo el corazón, desde afuera y adentro. El examen lo satisfizo. Deliberadamente no soñó durante una noche: luego retomó el corazón, invocó el nombre de un planeta y emprendió la visión de otro de los órganos principales. Antes de un año llegó al esqueleto, a los párpados. El pelo innumerable fue tal vez la tarea más difícil. Soñó un hombre íntegro, un mancebo, pero éste no se incorporaba ni hablaba ni podía abrir los ojos. Noche tras noche, el hombre lo soñaba dormido (Borges 62-63).

> He dreamed the heart warm, active, secret—about the size of a closed fist, a garnet-colored thing inside the dimness of a human body that was still faceless and sexless; he dreamed it, with painstaking love, for fourteen brilliant nights. Each night he perceived it with greater clarity, greater certainty. He did not touch it; he only witnessed it, observed it, corrected it, perhaps, with his eyes. He perceived it, he*lived* it, from many angles, many distances. On the fourteenth night, he stroked the pulmonary artery with his forefinger, and then the entire heart, inside and out. And his inspection made him proud. He deliberately did not sleep the next night; then he took up the heart again, invoked the name of a planet, and set about dreaming another of the major organs. Before the year was out he had reached the skeleton, the eyelids. The countless hairs of the body were perhaps the most difficult task. The man had dreamed a fully fleshed man—a stripling—but this youth did not stand up or speak, nor could it open its eyes. Night after night, the man dreamed the youth asleep (Hurley 49).

> He dreamed it throbbing, warm, secret. It was the size of a closed fist, a darkish red in the dimness of a human body still without a face or sex. With anxious love he dreamed it for fourteen lucid nights. Each night he perceived it more clearly. He did not touch it, but limited himself to witnessing it, to observing it, to correcting it now and then with a look. He felt it, he lived it from different distances and from many angles. On the fourteenth night he touched the pulmonary artery with a finger and then the whole heart, inside and out. The examination satisfied him. For one night he deliberately did not dream; after that he went back to the heart again, invoked the name of a planet, and set out to envision another of the principal organs. Before a year was over he came to the skeleton, the eyelids. The countless strands of hair were perhaps the hardest task of all. He dreamed a whole man, a young man, but the young man could not stand up or speak, nor could he open his eyes. Night after night, the man dreamed him asleep (di Giovanni 58).

The variety of foreignizing and domesticating choices available in a single sentence is evident in the opening line of this passage. The phrase *Lo soñó activo*, literally means *It he dreamed active*. Both Hurley and di Giovanni rearranged the word order to conform with the English syntactical convention that the subject and verb should precede the object. In English, the word order of the literal translation does make sense, although not at first glance, but both translators modified it to be more accessible to their target readership. Furthermore, Hurley replaces the direct object pronoun with the noun to which it refers (the heart), likely for the sake of clarity, and then rearranges the order of the subsequent string of adjectives, putting *warm*

before *active/throbbing*. Di Giovanni, on the other hand, maintains the direct object pronoun as well as the word order of the adjectives, making his choices in this portion more foreignizing than those of Hurley. However, after preserving much of the original in this part of the sentence, he radically alters the structure of the rest of it. In the Spanish, the sentence continues beyond this point, as one can see above, but di Giovanni chooses to divide the line into two sentences, ending the first after the string of adjectives. Hurley also modifies the structure of the sentence somewhat, replacing the comma linking *secreto* and *del grandor de un puño cerrado* with a dash. Both versions domesticate the syntax of the original, but Hurley does so less dramatically than di Giovanni. So in just one line, Hurley opts for more domesticating diction and word order, and generally more foreignizing syntax than di Giovanni.

Further into the passage, there is an example of combining the subject pronoun and the conjugated verb into one word that I mentioned in passing earlier in this thesis. The word he*lived*, in the fifth line of Hurley's translation, is a great instance of a dramatically foreignizing choice. I will not repeat the comparative intricacies of the Spanish and English languages at length, but in sum, a verb's subject pronoun in Spanish is often omitted because it is implied, to some extent, by the conjugation of the verb, and further by textual context. In this particular case, the original verb *vivía* is the past imperfect conjugation of the English verb *to live* in the form for which he, she, or it is the subject, here the unspecified subject. By combining the subject, identified through contextual clues, with the verb in English, Hurley communicates the linguistic difference between the two languages, without sacrificing intelligibility. This is an excellent foreignizing decision, and one which should be more widely practiced by translators of Spanish into English.

Instances of Hurley's more domesticating choices can be seen in the previous two lines, which are reproduced below with the Spanish original.

> Cada noche, lo percibía con mayor evidencia. No lo tocaba: se limitaba a atestiguarlo, a observarlo, tal vez a corregirlo con la mirada.
>
> Each night he perceived it with greater clarity, greater certainty. He did not touch it; he only witnessed it, observed it, corrected it, perhaps, with his eyes.
>
> Each night he perceived it more clearly. He did not touch it, but limited himself to witnessing it, to observing it, to correcting it now and then with a look.

The Spanish can be translated literally to mean:

> Each/Every night, it he perceived/sensed with higher/utmost evidence/cogency/palpability. It he did not touch/feel/handle: himself he limited/restricted to witnessing/attesting it, to observing/watching it, perhaps/maybe/perchance to correcting/righting/amending it with the look/gaze/glance.

One can see that, in the first sentence, Hurley was both more domesticating and more foreignizing than di Giovanni. Hurley retained the prepositional phrase structure of *con mayor evidencia/with greater clarity*, while di Giovanni changed the syntax into an adverbial phrase, *more clearly*, directly modifying the verb. However, Hurley follows this relatively foreignizing decision with the addition of the phrase *greater certainty*, which is not present in the original at all. Perhaps, Hurley thought that phrase was communicated in the intricacies of the one modifier in the Spanish, but found no single English phrase that could encompass this full meaning. However, this nuance is not inherent to the Spanish word itself without contextual clues, so Hurley was taking significant license with the original in adding it. In the following sentence, he modifies the syntax even further, changing the list of gerund direct objects to a list of conjugated verbs. *Himself he limited/restricted to observing/watching it, perhaps/maybe/perchance to correcting/righting/amending it* becomes *he only witnessed it, observed it, corrected it, perhaps*. Di Giovanni's translation more accurately reflects this syntactical detail, writing *but limited*

himself to witnessing it, to observing it, to correcting it now and then with a look, although he does change the two independent clauses linked with a colon into one independent clause and one dependent clause connected by a comma and a conjunction. Clearly, neither translator perfectly preserved the syntax and grammatical structures of the original Spanish, but di Giovanni's choices tend to be more faithful to the original than Hurley's, at least in maintaining sentence structure.

Below are two translations and the original text of the Julio Cortázar short story *Axolotl*, originally written and published in Spanish in "Final del Juego." The first translation was produced by American poet and translator Paul Blackburn, and the second is my own.

> Les temía. Creo que de no haber sentido la proximidad de otros visitantes y del guardián, no me hubiese atrevido a quedarme solo con ellos. «Usted se los come con los ojos», me decía riendo el guardián, que debía suponerme un poco desequilibrado. No se daba cuenta de que eran ellos los que me devoraban lentamente por los ojos en un canibalismo de oro. Lejos del acuario no hacía mas que pensar en ellos, era como si me influyeran a distancia. Llegué a ir todos los días, y de noche los imaginaba inmóviles en la oscuridad, adelantando lentamente una mano que de pronto encontraba la de otro. Acaso sus ojos veían en plena noche, y el día continuaba para ellos indefinidamente. Los ojos de los axolotl no tienen párpados (Cortázar 144).

> I was afraid of them. I think that had it not been for feeling the proximity of other visitors and the guard, I would not have been bold enough to remain alone with them. "You eat them alive with your eyes, hey," the guard said, laughing; he likely thought I was a little cracked. What he didn't notice was that it was they devouring me slowly with their eyes, in a cannibalism of gold. At any distance from the aquarium, I had only to think of them, it was as though I were being affected from a distance. It got to the point that I was going every day, and at night I thought of them immobile in the darkness, slowly putting a hand out which immediately encountered another. Perhaps their eyes could see in the dead of night, and for them the day continued indefinitely. The eyes of axolotls have no lids. (Blackburn 7).

> I feared them. I believe that without feeling the proximity of other visitors and of the guard, I would not have dared to remain alone with them. <You eat them with your eyes>, said to me laughing the guard, that he must have supposed me a little unbalanced. I did not give him the story that it was they that devour me slowly with their eyes in a cannibalism of gold. Far from the aquarium it was not much to think on them, it was as if they influenced me at a distance. I came to go every day, and at night I imagined them unmoving in the darkness, advancing slowly one hand which soon found that of the other.

> Perhaps their eyes saw in full night, and the day continued for them indefinitely. The eyes of the axolotl don't have eyelids.

Even at first glance, my translation reads less fluently in English than Blackburn's. It contains phrases such as "I came to go" and "that he expected me a bit unbalanced," which are choppy and much less logical in English than their alternatives "It got to the point that I was going" and "he likely thought I was a little cracked" (Blackburn 7). See the comparisons with the Spanish below:

> Llegué a ir
>
> It got to the point that I was going
>
> I came to go

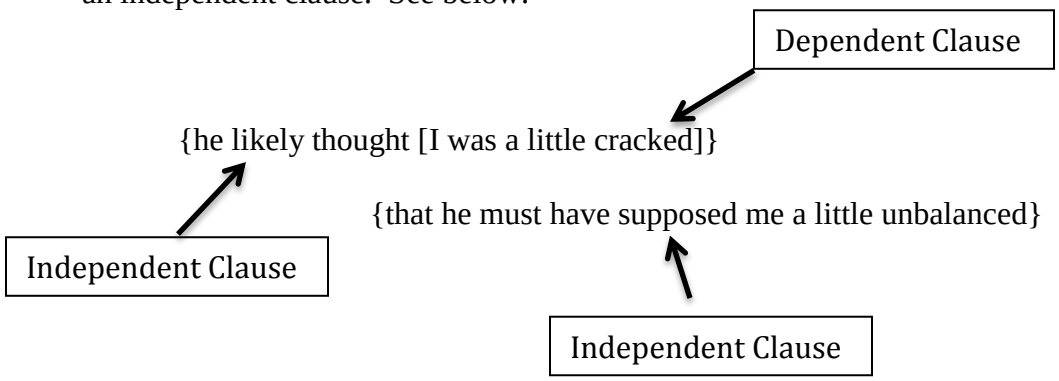
The verb *llegar* in Spanish means to arrive/to reach/to come, and in the case above is conjugated in the first person preterit tense (non-habitual past action), and the phrase *a ir* means literally to go. Clearly, my translation mirrors more closely the Spanish and does make sense in English; however, the significance of the expression is more easily accessible to English readers in the form translated by Blackburn. It does not require a second thought to comprehend the significance of the phrase in that first version, as it does in the second.

> The second phrase in question is reproduced below.
>
> que debía suponerme un poco desequilibrado
>
> he likely thought I was a little cracked
>
> that he must have supposed me a little unbalanced

In Spanish, *que* is a common conjunction, typically meaning that; *deber* is a verb meaning should/ought/must, and in this case, is conjugated in the third person habitual past tense. *Suponerme* is the combination of the infinitive *suponer*, meaning to suppose/to presuppose, and

the direct object *me*, corresponding to *me* in English. Finally, the words *un poco desequilibrado*, mean a little/short/lesser unbalanced/lopsided, respectively.

Again, my own translation is much more literal, and more difficult to follow, than Blackburn's. He removes the transition word *que*, which is needless and obfuscating in English, and simplifies the combination of a verb and an infinitive into just a verb, imparting the uncertainty of the word *debía* with *likely* rather than the more literal *must have*. Then, in the case of the final word, *desequilibrado*, Blackburn uses an English colloquialism, *cracked*, which is a mark of a domesticating translation, since it changes the text not only into English words, but also into an English context, or system of expression. He also changes the structure of the sentence, turning one independent clause with a direct object into a dependent clause couched in an independent clause. See below:



All of these changes to the diction and syntax of the original Spanish show Blackburn's translation to be domesticating, at least in comparison to my own. Undoubtedly, most readers would prefer Blackburn's piece, since it does not fly in the face of the conventions of the English language, but it does not as faithfully reproduce the original.

There are a number of ways in which my apparently foreignizing translation does not conform to the original as thoroughly as possible. You will note, for example, that I did not combine the subject and verb into a single word, as Hurley did in the Borges piece above.

Beyond that, the conjugated verb *debía* can actually mean *he/she/it/I must/should have* in Spanish. The subject is only understood through context. You might notice that *debía* was translated with two words into English, which would seem to be a deviation from a totally faithful reproduction. This is because the verbs *must* and *ought* do not have a past tense conjugation that is a single word. Perhaps a more foreignizing decision would have been to translate it as *musthave* or perhaps *must've*, although that second option would enter into the realm of English colloquialism which foreignizing translators should avoid. One should glean from this last discussion that there is not one perfect foreignizing translation of a text. This form of translation is not some kind of simple word replacement that a computer could perform. In any given phrase, there could be a number of foreignizing options, and it is the task of the translator to select one that he or she believes best walks the line between faith to the original and being minimally logical in English. Again, I want to emphasize that the definitions of foreignization and domestication are quite fluid. I found Blackburn's translation above to be more foreignizing than many other translations that have been published, such as Ezra Pound's translation of Chinese poetry (see below). My own work is more foreignizing than his, and yet it does not contain a number of foreignizing choices that Andrew Hurley made in his translation of Borges. Foreignization and domestication can really only be determined by analyzing the ways in which specific choices within a translation relate to corresponding choices in another translation.

Up to this point, I have focused on translation practices as they apply to translation between two distinct languages. However, there is another common form of translation: namely, when one translates intralingually across time in a single language. The English language is rife with such works; high school students, for instance, often read versions of Shakespeare's plays in

which the original language is juxtaposed with a modernized translation on the opposite page. Perhaps a less extreme version of such temporal translation occurs in the eighth edition of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*'s treatment of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. I find their approach refreshingly foreignizing, although they can afford to be so because of the relatively small language gap between modern and Middle English. A section from the general prologue of that classic text is reproduced below, with the formatting of Norton's version preserved as best as possible (Chaucer 221).

A Yeman hadde he[8] and servants namo°	no more
At that time, for him liste[9] ride so;	
And he[1] was clad in cote and hood of greene.	
A sheef of pecok arwes,° bright and keene,	arrows
Under his belt he bar° ful thriftily; °	bore/properly
Wel coude he dresse° his takel° yemanly:[2]	tend to/gear
His arwes drouped nought with fetheres lowe.	
And in his hand he bar a mighty bowe.	
A not-heed° hadde he with a brown visage	close-cut head
Of woodcraft wel coude° he al the usage	knew
Upon his arm he bar a gay bracer,[3]	
And by his side a swerd° and a bokeler,[4]	sword
And on that other side a gay daggere,	
Harneised° wel and sharp as point of spere;	mounted
A Cristophre[5] on his brest of silver sheene; °	bright
An horn he bar, the baudrik[6] was of greene.	
A forster was he smoothly,° as I gesse	forester/truly

8. I.e., the Knight. The "Yeman" (Yeoman) is an independent commoner who acts as the Knight's military servant.
9. It pleased him to.
1. I.e. the Yeoman.
2. In a workmanlike way.
3. Wrist guard for archers.
4. Buckler (a small shield).
5. St. Christopher medal.
6. Baldric (a supporting strap)

As I have already said, I think that this style of translation is admirable, although not generally applicable. It is obviously foreignizing, since it produces the original text without integral modification, but the occasional translated word provided to the right of the text allows it

to be considered within the realm of translation. The practical problem inherent to this type of annotated translation is that most languages, past or present, are not similar enough to allow for simple annotation of the original text, without complete translation throughout. *Beowulf*, for example, is an Old English work which must be translated in its entirety to be understood by modern English readers. I include *The Canterbury Tales* in this thesis less as an example of what translation should or should not be, and more as an example of what American English readerships, at least fairly academic ones, are willing to wade through in reading a work.

Lawrence Venuti, in his book *The Translator's Invisibility*, samples a variety of professional reviews of translated works in order to get a sense of the general receptions that greet various approaches to translation in the United States. He concludes from these examples that "fluency" in English is the primary standard against which translations are judged. As Venuti writes,

> A fluent translation is written in English that is current ('modern') instead of archaic, that is widely used instead of specialized ('jargonisation'), and that is standard instead of colloquial ('slangy'). Foreign words ('pidgin') are avoided, as are Britishisms in American translations and Americanisms in British translations. Fluency also depends on syntax that is not so 'faithful' to the foreign text as to be 'not quite idiomatic,' that unfolds continuously and easily (not 'doughy') to insure semantic 'precision' with some rhythmic definition, a sense of closure (not a 'dull thud') (Venuti 5).

Essentially, audiences want the foreign to be removed from a text and replaced with the domestic. However, this expectation is not levied against *The Canterbury Tales*, which appears in a respected anthology full of archaic terms and colloquialisms and sentence structures that are idiomatic to Middle English. American publishers and audiences are willing to accept all of these elements in a work that walks the line between being a translation and an unmodified text, but they are not willing to accept them in a full translation of a foreign language. Could the difference be that these readers are more open to the foreign when it comes in the form of an

ancestor of their own language rather than an entirely different culture and language? I have no means with which I could begin to answer this question, so I must limit myself to simply raising it. However, the acceptance of the foreign in one medium and the rejection of it in another slightly, and only arguably, different one certainly does merit consideration.

While most of the translations previously discussed may seem fairly domesticated, there are works that eclipse them in regard to liberty taken with the originals. One of the most famous examples is the translations of Chinese poetry completed by Ezra Pound in the early 20th century. Pound spoke no Chinese at the time he completed these translations, so one can imagine that a precise adherence to the original would have been impossible. He was able to gain some insight into these works primarily through the notes of the then deceased Japanese art historian Ernest Fenollosa. Yet despite lacking any immediate access to the original poems, Pound was confident in his work, calling his poems in *Cathay* "unquestionable," for example (Cathay 32). This example strikes me as a particularly unique case because Pound was both unable to read Chinese and was a poetic genius in his own right. Many translations have been completed by established artists with a corpus of original work to their names; Paul Blackburn, the translator of the Cortázar piece above, was such a figure. However, these artists were typically fluent in the original language. The fact that Pound was not means that he was largely producing his own original work out of the scraps of knowledge he could glean about the Chinese. He was creating his own original work rather than modifying the work of another for a new readership. It is therefore a complete misnomer to call these poems translations; they are originals inspired by the works of others.

Thus, Ezra Pound's translations of Chinese poetry would be more appropriately labeled as "based on" the original poems, rather than as translations of them. There is a precedent for

this sort of nomenclature in the realm of translation, and that occurs within what theorist Roman Jakobson calls intersemiotic translation. Jakobson, in his article "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," writes that there are three categories of translation: intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic. These categories are discrete types of translation, and the approaches discussed above can be applied to each one. The terms are somewhat self-explanatory:

> 1. Intralingual translation or *rewording* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same language.
> 2. Interlingual translation or translation proper is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.
> 3. Intersemiotic translation or transmutation is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems (Jakobson 145).

While the concept of intersemiotic translation may seem strange at first glance, it is a commonplace practice. Perhaps the most omnipresent type of intersemiotic translation, in the United States at least, is the adaptation of novels, comics, video games, etc. into films. It seems that every classic or bestselling book has a movie version these days; for instance, there have been nine screen adaptations of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, including three television series, as well as a movie currently in development called *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, based on a recent novel of the same name (Results).

Few people would consider these versions to be translations of the originals, but they do fall into Jakobson's category of intersemiotic translation in that they transfer the story (or some other aspect) of the original into another medium. I have yet to see a film presume to label itself under the title of the original without some sort of subsequent note stating that it was based on the novel by X, or something of the sort. They do not pass themselves off as the original itself, simply placed into another medium. I bring up this example not to argue that every interlingual

translation should be considered to be based on the original, rather than as a translation of that work, but to say that exceptionally liberal translations, such as Ezra's Pound's *The Book of Odes*, should do so. If translators are going to take such license with the original works to the extent that they strip them of the foreign context in which they are written, then they are creating a distinct work based on that original, rather than modifying it. Ezra Pound is an extreme example of these domesticating practices, but that sort of approach, as I have shown, is the *modus operandi* of the current American publishing industry. More literal translations are more deserving of the title of translation, although not necessarily any more valuable, than fluent translations. Fluent translations certainly have their place; Pound's poems for instance, are art of the highest caliber, but they should be considered to be inspired by or reinterpretations of the originals. I have included for your reference one of the poems from *The Book of Odes* below, along with the original Chinese, and a literal translation of each character in English. The relatively literal translation comes from the work of linguist Bernhard Karlgren, and is followed by Pound's translation.

七月流火
九月授衣
一之日觱發
二之日栗烈
無衣無褐
何以卒歲
三之日于耜
四之日舉趾
同我婦子
饁彼南畝

田畯至喜

In the seventh month there is the declining Fire-star
in the ninth month we give out the clothes
in the days of the first, there is a rushing wind
in the days of the second, it is bitterly cold
if we have no robes, no coarse-cloth (garments), wherewith should we finish the year?
In the days of the third we go to plough
in the days of the fourth we lift the heels
all our wives and children carry food (to us) in those southern acres
the inspector of the fields comes and is pleased. (Karlgren 97)

August sees the heat break
In October we take our winter wear
gainst New Year's wind and March' cold air,
lacking serge of wool and hair
how 'ld we last till harvest time?

third month: out the plows;
fourth: toe to field, childer and spouse
carry our snacks to the south sectors
where we prepare to meet the inspectors. (Songs 74)

Part 3: Implications

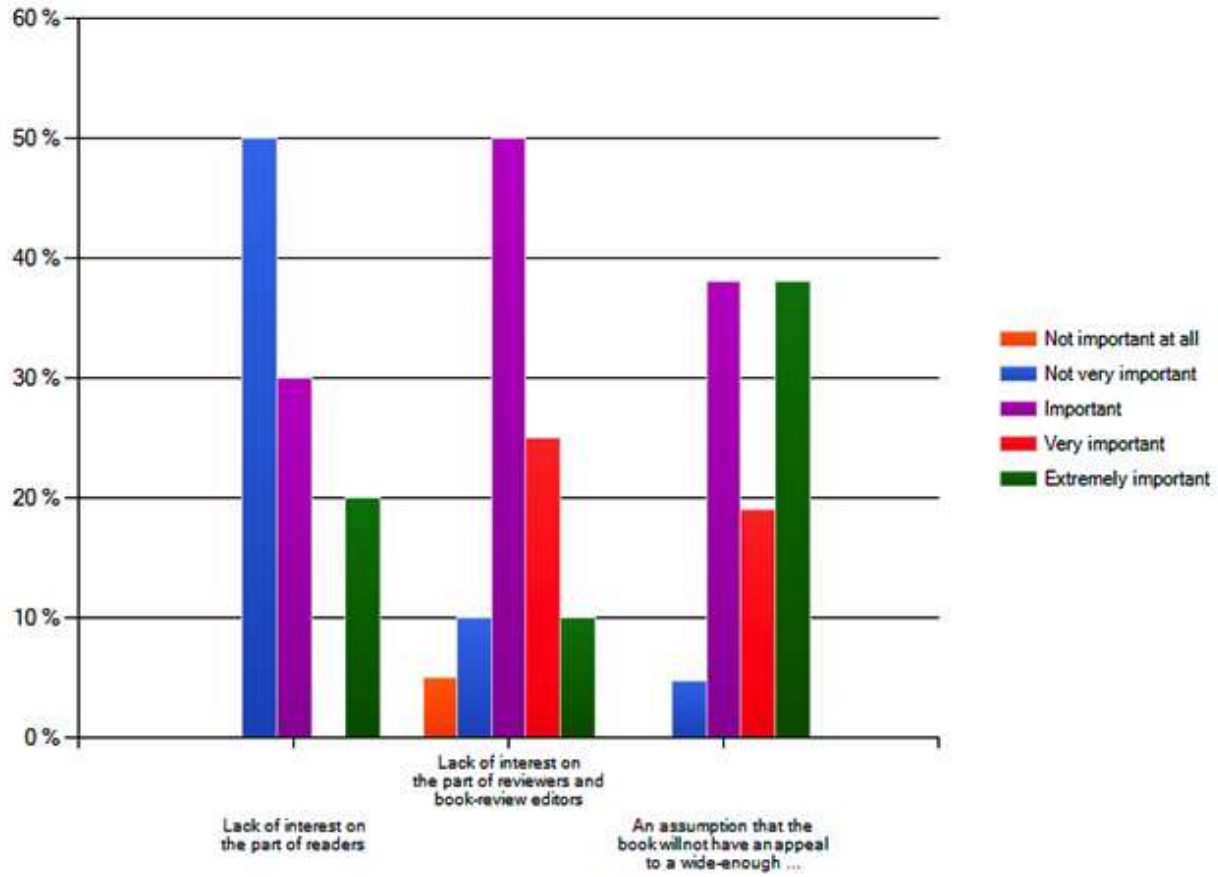
Many translation theorists, including Derrida, have made mention of the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, with good reason, for that parable defines a metaphorical origin of translation. In the story, mankind united under a single language becomes knowledgeable and powerful enough to aspire to reach the heavens, so the people begin to build a tower whose apex would culminate in the realm of God. Of course, according to a traditional reading, the wrathful Lord of the Old Testament takes issue with this irreverent pursuit of self-elevation and descends from the Heavens to cast the uncompleted tower to the ground, and to scatter humanity by means of a variety of languages, so that humans could no longer be the powerful unified force that attempted to exceed its God-given status.

I would propose a different reading of this story, one in which God's scattering of the people is a blessing rather than a punishment. If one accepts Derrida's concept that language is not only a means of communication, but also a means of understanding and operating within the universe, then the present multitude of languages is more than just a barrier to perfect communication. It is the origin of the foundation of human diversity. Language is the first attribute that allows for difference in thought and comprehension; subsequent factors of identity, such as religion, can exist only in terms of that attribute. If that is the case, then God's actions at Babel served to eliminate the myopic single-mindedness of man, the single-mindedness that brought them to transgress against God in the first place. Even if one does not attach deeper religious meaning to the Bible, within the confines of the story, acting against God is understood to be bad, so God's intervention is good. The variation of language and identity is a positive development for man, despite the challenges with communication and divisions between lingual groups that resulted. Indeed, few people who do not pledge allegiance to a dead German dictator or run around disguised in outfits that look like a toddler's ghost costume would argue that human diversity is a bad thing.

Language is both the starting-point for our diversity and a medium through which other contributors that contribute to variety find expression and definition. Therefore, the preservation of world languages is fundamental to the preservation of human diversity in general. I belabor this point because modern translation practices, in America at least, do not reflect a desire for linguistic and cultural variety. The Dalkey Archive Press conducted a survey in March of 2011 that enquired into the current state of translation in English speaking countries, which are: the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. They write, citing the *Three Percent* blog, that "It is a widely accepted estimate that 2-3% of all books

published in the US are translations, with only a small percentage of those, perhaps 2%, being 'literary' works "(Research). As further evidence of English language bias against translation, the survey presents data from 22 media organizations from the countries mentioned above. They asked why so few published reviews are of translations. That data regarding the responses is reproduced below (Research).

Why are translations less often reviewed?



The label for the last column should read "An assumption that the book will not have an appeal to a wide enough audience" (Research). All three possible responses show distaste for translated works, and one can see above which factors are considered to be important by each of these organizations. To compound the effects of the English speaking anathema for translation, English language literature is translated into other languages disproportionately frequently. See

the specific examples also from Venuti citing C.B. Grannis (1991) (Venuti 14). One should note that these data are close to thirty years old, so it is not ideally up to date. However, it is likely that the trends that are reflected in the chart below still exist today, so the message imparted by this data is still relevant to the contemporary situation.

World Translation Publications: from selected languages, 1982-1984.

	1982	1983	1984
English	22,280	24,468	22,724
French	6,205	6,084	4,422
German	4,501	4,818	5,311
Russian	6,238	6,370	6,230
Italian	1,433	1,645	1,544
Scandinavian*	1,957	2,176	2,192
Spanish	715	847	839
Classical, Greek, Latin	839	1,116	1,035
Hungarian	703	665	679
Arabic	298	322	536
Japanese	208	222	204
Chinese	159	148	163
World Totals	52,198	55,618	52,405

*Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, and Islandic

These data alone show a clear imbalance between the flow of cultural works in and out of the United States and other English speaking countries. English speaking countries are exerting a sort of cultural imperialism upon other regions, while at the same time absorbing only a negligible, and easily ignored, sum of foreign cultural influence.

To compound the inequality of cultural influence caused by the disparate flow of translated texts in and out of the United States, the works that do manage to be translated into American English are typically forced through the wringer of American domestication and emerge as more a reflection of America than of the original culture. This process serves to

"provide readers with the narcissistic experience of recognizing their own culture in a cultural other" (Venuti 15). Looking back at the specific translated texts discussed in the previous section, this transformation should be clear, but I think that one more example would show the extremity to which America in particular has taken the practice of domestication. *The Harry Potter Series* by J.K. Rowling is among the bestselling and most adored series of novels ever written. It has inspired in the mainstream audience the sort of behavior that one would expect from the fans of a cult classic. It can be considered one of the most important works of English writing in recent memory, although perhaps not by those whose literary snobbery precludes them from including children's books as a part of the literary canon. However, these culturally noteworthy works of English writing were actually translated for the American audiences. The title of the first novel was published originally in London as *The Philosopher's Stone*, but was subsequently published in America as *The Sorcerer's Stone*. Beyond that, small translations were made throughout the texts, such as changing the word "shan't" to "won't" (see the example below). The first version is from the original English text (although the actual text was published in Canada), while the second version is from the American publication.

> She told him over dinner all about Mrs Next Door's problems with her daughter and how Dudley had learned a new word ('Shan't') (Philosopher's 10).
>
> She told him over dinner all about Mrs. Next Door's problems with her daughter and how Dudley had learned a new word ('Won't') (Sorcerer's 6).

It is quite disturbing that American society has become so culturally ignorant and unaccepting that we now find the need to translate English into English. British English is now too foreign to enter the United States without modification; only American English is acceptable for American readerships.

This American ethnocentrism has led modern translators to aim for "invisibility," a term and idea put forward by Lawrence Venuti in his book *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. Venuti describes this concept by saying,

> A translated text … is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers, and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent, giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer's personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text- the appearance, in other words, that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the 'original.' (Venuti 1)

This process is the cultural wringer that I mentioned above, and its absurdity should be readily apparent. Even if one flat out rejects the content of the theoretical portion of this thesis, it must be accepted that a work undergoing any form of translation, is being "transformed," as Venuti writes (Venuti 1). An entity that has undergone a transformation will necessarily be different from its original form, so a "transparent" translation may give the illusion that it mirrors the original, but it cannot. In fact, in the struggle to create a farce of a perfect copy, the translation will be removed farther from the original work than it would have been had the translator opted for a less domesticating approach. A so-called "invisible" translation is less a transparent window into the original, and more an opaque concealment that hides that work behind a bastardized replacement.

The cultural implications of this approach were touched on earlier in this section, but their gravity should not be understated. By insisting that translations read fluently in English, even American English, American readerships and publishers are essentially insisting upon the removal of the foreign in a text. This superimposition of an American context above the original context creates, or perhaps perpetuates, a hierarchy in which foreign cultures and languages are seen to be subservient to those of the United States. A fitting analogy would be New Yorkers insisting that someone with the southern drawl of Savannah, Georgia speak with a Brooklyn

accent. The unfortunate southerner would likely be offended, justifiably feeling that his identity was being looked down upon. Indeed, that feeling of cultural superiority is displayed by the American policy of domesticating translation. In rejecting such foreignness, Americans reveal their breathtaking xenophobia, and yet these practices are considered perfectly mundane. Few people bat an eye at this level of blatant ethnocentrism, which would cause an uproar in a context other than translation. The American policy on translation is certainly in need of a dramatic reversal from extreme domestication to some form of foreignization.

These American, ethnocentric translation practices are a part of the ongoing process of cultural imperialism that is working to homogenize the world's people. Politically powerful nations, like the United States, are propagating their social and cultural identities at the expense of less politically dominant cultures. As Venuti writes, "foreign publishers have exploited the global drift toward American political and economic hegemony in the postwar period, actively supporting the international expansion of Anglo-American culture" (Venuti 15). Consider the international popularity of McDonald's and Starbucks, for example. The consumption of American products, in this case restaurants, involves the consumption of American culture, rather than more local fare. It seems that one of the major aspects of cultural variety, language, is adversely affected by this cultural imperialism. For instance, approximately 155 Native American languages are still spoken in the United States, after many, perhaps hundreds, were lost during the European colonization of the continent (Krauss). Of those 155, linguist Michael Krauss states that 135 are spoken only by adults, who are not teaching the language to the younger generation (Krauss). To make the term absolutely clear, a language is extinct when it no longer has any fluent speakers. Even more concerning is a claim by Chinese professor and poet Luo Qingchun which predicts that 90% of modern languages will be extinct by 2050 (Qingchun).

The projected loss of 90% of the world's languages is startling, but it becomes even more so when one considers the concept of the nature of language explored by Derrida and Sapir and Whorf. If language is indeed the fundamental basis for identity and perception, then we stand to lose not only hundreds or thousands of systems of communication, but also hundreds or thousands of perspectives on the universe. In terms of my reinterpretation of the Babel story, we will lose the gift of diversity bestowed upon us by God. I cannot overstate the horrifying nature of the prospect. One could argue that this dramatic homogenization of humanity would be beneficial, that it would break down the divides between societies that contribute to the instigation of war and other forms of conflict, and that it would lead to a more mutually understanding world community. I will not deny that as a possible consequence, although I think that humans will always find a reason to fight each other, but that discussion is not particularly relevant to this thesis, so I will pursue it no further.

Accepting that these benefits will indeed occur, they will be achieved at what cost? The projected diminishing of conflict will occur as a result of the eradication of the cultural variety. If this process were to be carried to its theoretical end, then there would be peace only because everyone is largely the same. Of course, language is only the foundation of variety; even if the planet was monolingual, there would be variety based on other, more superficial, factors, but those factors would all be understood according to the same set of parameters. Some diversity would clearly be lost if that were the case. The consequences of such a thorough loss of cultural variety would extend to essentially everything, to art, cuisine, music, film, philosophy, and etc. The boundaries of human thought would shrink as these identities were lost. One could still argue that a more peaceful world outweighs these costs, but I believe that the fundamental diversity provided by language is well worth increased conflict based on cultural differences.

Certainly the minor benefit of increased ease of communication is dwarfed by the importance of diversity.

These widespread cultural and imperialistic implications of translation may seem farfetched to some readers, but they are quite real, and their import has been recognized by people for centuries. The Spanish missionaries and conquistadors in the island system that is now known as the Philippines very consciously utilized the relationship between the Spanish and native languages (Tagalog for instance) to further their religious and cultural conversion agendas. It is important first to establish that these missionaries were not merely attempting to spread Christianity, but also the European ideals and way of life that they brought with them. For example, the indigenous people on the islands that these early explorers and missionaries encountered lived primarily in small decentralized villages that survived on subsistence farming. As John Leddy Phelan writes in his 1959 book, *The Hispanization of the Philippines*, "As heirs of Greco-Roman urbanism, the Spaniards instinctively identified civilization with the city…It was only through this daily social contact with other men that he might hope to achieve a measure of his potentiality" (Phelan 44). In accordance with this system of values, and in part to increase missionary accessibility to the people, the Spanish attempted to institute a program of mass relocation, moving people from their homes in these small villages to city centers (Phelan 45). This goal met with only limited success, but the culturally imperialistic intentions are clear.

Now that we have established that the Spanish desired both religious and cultural conversion, the role of language can be analyzed. The missionaries were quick to recognize that success in conversion would be dramatically advanced if sermons and lessons were given in the local vernacular, so they developed guides to the local languages, particularly Tagalog, that discussed grammar and vocabulary. However, in these guides Latin and Castilian were "the

principal points of reference in reconstructing Tagalog grammar" (Rafael 324). In other words, the grammatical and other linguistic structures of Tagalog were defined and expressed in the framework of the romance languages of the missionaries. As Vincente L. Rafael writes in his essay *Confession, Conversion, and Reciprocity in Early Tagalog Colonial Society*,

> In order to use Tagalog as a tool of conversion, the missionary writers, it seems, had first to determine its parts. But they did so precisely by relocating the native language in the complex grid of Latin and Castilian discourse. The linguistic apparatus of Latin and Castilian were made to act on Tagalog, precipitating it as a useful instrument for evangelization (Rafael 324).

The Spanish were essentially attempting to transform local religion and culture into something close to their own by means of first appropriating the local language and putting it in their own terms. Language was the first aspect of cultural identity to be converted, and was then used as a tool to convert the others. This same process is mimicked, perhaps less intentionally, by the imperialistic powers of today. Linguistic imperialism is the precursor of and the foundation for cultural imperialism. To emphasize this point one last time, I have included the frontispiece of the work *Conquista de las Islas Filipinas*, by Gaspar de San Agustin. It illustrates the Spanish notion that the Word of God was reflected or refracted by the Spanish missionaries and conquistadors for the consumption of the people of the Philippines (de San Agustin).

Venuti advocates for this shift in translation policy towards foreignization based largely on the need to curb rampant cultural imperialism. He focuses primarily on these political ramifications of translation, writing "insofar as foreignizing translation seeks to restrain the ethnocentric violence of translation, it is highly desirable today, a strategic intervention in the current state of world affairs" (Venuti 20). I have no issue with his advocacy of the advancement of foreignization; however, I believe that such a political motive should not be the sole basis

upon which translation practices are instituted. A translator should be concerned only with placing, to the best of his or her ability, a text into the words and terms of another language while remaining faithful to the original. He or she should be answerable only to the text itself, and should not bear in mind political considerations while attempting translation. Let theorists, researchers, and politicians be concerned with the political and social implications of translation practices; the translator should focus solely on the texts. However, the best translations must necessarily be foreignizations, so the beneficial political consequences would just be a nice bonus for the adherence to foreignization.

From an analysis of the aim of the translator, the question of the precise status of the translator is raised. Venuti correctly asserts that translators in America today are essentially expected to rewrite the original text, while the artisanship that is required of such a pursuit is entirely ignored, and translators are often recognized only in a footnote on the dust jacket or inside cover. They are expected to be artists but are treated as practicalities. Venuti argues that translators should be regarded as artists in their own right, to the extent that they should be considered co-authors of their works. I would dispute that proposition on the grounds that every bit of the translator's authorship that is manifested in the translation is an unacceptable departure from the original work. The translator should therefore aim to be the medium through which the original passes through without modification. This is of course quite impossible in perfect form; a translator can as much remove him or herself from the translation as an author can remove him or herself from the original. That being said, the translator should still aim to be a perfect imitator, rather than the creator that marks the standard conception of an artist. However, I would argue that this sort of sophisticated imitation requires an extraordinary level of artistry

when done well. In sum, a translator should be considered an imitator, not an author, but that function places the translator well within the profession of an artist.

After all of this discussion of the potential for destruction and ethnocentrism inherent in translation, not to mention the impossibility of a perfect translation, one may doubt whether people should translate at all. The answer is, of course, yes we should translate. Translation, in a general sense, permits communication across language barriers. Without it, there could be no fruitful interaction between cultures with different languages. Interlingual communication is indispensable to the modern world. It may be a better question to ask whether or not literature should be translated. Again, the answer is a definitive yes. The translation of literature allows for an understanding of another culture that could not otherwise be gleaned by those without personal access to that group. It would certainly be ideal if these readerships learned the languages of the original works, but that is clearly not feasible. So, we are stuck with translation if we want any insight into foreign perspectives at all, and it is of course desirable and admirable to broaden one's own perspective by investigating that of others. To mitigate the damages linked to translation, humanity, particularly the portions of it that reside in the United States, should improve their policies on translation. They should cease the current practices that insist upon the removal of the foreign in a work, and instead practice a form of foreignization, which would best serve both the transmission of the original work, as well as the promotion and enrichment of the more macroscopic interactions between cultures and languages.

Conclusion

I considered ending this thesis with some sort of call to action, a discussion about possible ways to correct this burgeoning, destructive, English speaking hegemony. But after a moment's thought, I realized that it would take nothing less than a complete modification of the

way people think of diversity to fix this problem. People would need to reject the omnipresent humanism that makes them presume that the people of other cultures and languages are like them in some fundamental way. The popular concept of language, which holds that the varied languages are just different ways of expressing the same concepts, must be overthrown. It is language that defines concepts, so one language could not be equipped to communicate the concepts defined by another. Accepting this, one can see that the way in which speakers of different languages view the universe as essentially different. The humanism that informs an English speaking perspective on other cultures is baseless, but changing something so ingrained in the thinking of a group is likely a lost cause.

It would perhaps be more realistic to first tackle one of the consequences of such thinking, one that perpetuates that ethnocentric perspective, namely domesticating translation. If translators, and the publishing industry as a whole, became more accepting of foreignizing translations, that would be a big step towards addressing America's cultural imperialism. First, more foreign works should be translated into English; that imbalance of cross-cultural consumption, as outlined by Venuti and the Dalkey Archive Press's Report quoted above, must be the initial step. Even if those translations undergo the disfiguring process of domestication, it would still be progress in the right direction to expose American readerships to even adulterated versions of foreign works. Accomplishing that, the actual translation practices that do so much damage to the original works must be corrected. This would of course require the American audiences to become more accepting of foreign elements in their reading. In the examples section of this thesis, I discussed various choices and approaches that I considered to be foreignizing, and several of them could be instituted without major disruptions to the understanding of the audiences. For example, changing the word order of sentences in order to

reflect the original Spanish might lead to slight loss of clarity in English, but not irreparable loss of comprehensibility. The transition would certainly need to be a slow process, allowing for an acclimatization of sorts for the English readers, but it does not strike me as infeasible.

The consequences of not addressing this cultural imperialism have been argued at length in several sections of this thesis. Languages will continue to die, leaving only prominent world languages such as English, Chinese, Arabic, and Spanish. This mass extinction of language will correspond to a cultural mass extinction as well, and together those two destructions will cause significant homogenization within humanity. Antagonists, real and fictional, would smile at the seeming inevitability of people growing to think and perceive more and more uniformly. Putting aside the simple distress of seeing the widespread death of once thriving cultures, the decrease in human diversity will have many unforeseeable consequences. Few people would argue that diversity is not of eminent importance, so this ongoing series of extinctions must be fought.

I suppose then my call to action, if that expression is even appropriate, is that people, Americans in particular, must stop valuing convenience and familiarity above diversity. I think that it is particularly telling that American readerships would rather have a work that is easy to read, that does not challenge their notions of identity and perspective, than a work that informs them about the views of another culture. Languages and cultures are being lost because of this laziness and arrogant, self-assured ignorance. The issue at the core of all of these problems is the ethnocentric complacency of the English speaking powers; to completely and permanently fix everything discussed in this thesis, it is this aspect of the English speaking identity that must be eradicated.

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