

“If you tickle us, do we not laugh?”

Yiddish translations of puns and wordplay in *King Lear* and *Merchant of Venice*

By

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פאַר די צוויי יידישע באַבעס מינע:
דבורהן- ווער האָט שטאַרק ליב געהאַט יידיש און וואָרט-שפּילן, וואָס האָט מיך באַגייסטערט צו שרייבן די
דאָזיקע טעזיס אַרבעט (און צו לערנען זיך יידיש)
און גיסיען- ווער באַגייסטערט מיך ממשיך צו זיין צו לערנען זיך יידיש, און באַווייזט טאַג-טעגלעך אמתע
שטאַרקייט

To my two Yiddishe Bubbes

Doris- whose deep passion for Yiddish and puns inspired me to write this thesis (and to
learn Yiddish)

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Abstract

In this thesis I will be drawing comparisons between the original Shakespearean plays and their Yiddish adaptations, specifically in their use of puns and word-play. I also will draw comparisons between the reactions to the plays in the Elizabethan and Yiddish-speaking audiences. In addition to the reactions of the audience, I will be looking into the critical reception of the plays. I wanted to see how Yiddish translators of Shakespeare understood the subtlety and humor of his word-play and if they could create equivalents in Yiddish. I wanted to see if I could discern from the translations if the translators were translating for the author or for the audience. I looked at five translations of *The Merchant of Venice* and three translations of *King Lear*. All of the translations of both plays had varying approaches to puns and word-play and to the plays in general. There were puns that were cut, those that missed the point entirely, and puns that were translated properly, but lost their humor. There were puns that were missing because the entire scene was cut out. As I looked into these plays further, I realized that some of them were more adaptations than translations since there were scenes cut, moved around, and shortened. The Yiddish translators would have probably claimed their versions were “*fartaytsht un farbesert*” — translated and improved.

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Introduction

There is a dissonance between the “high-brow” literary experience of William Shakespeare’s works, and the perception most people have about the American Yiddish stage. Yiddish audiences were known to hiss at solemn poetry and enjoy being “cajole[d] with comic stories and songs,” (Berkowitz 10). How could such an audience have a proper appreciation for the beauty and poetry of Shakespeare’s work? The truth is that Shakespeare’s plays and sonnets have been translated and adapted countless times in numerous cultures, languages and time periods, and his ideas and stories resonate with people the world over, not just English-speakers. There were some particular elements of his work that Yiddish-speaking immigrants found meaningful. The first was tragedy. Yiddish-speaking immigrants were no strangers to tragedy. Many of them came to America to escape the pogroms and anti-Semitism of their home countries. Most came to escape their impoverished lifestyles and to seek their fortune in the States. Many had to leave behind family and friends whom they might not see again. They moved across the ocean to a country that also had anti-Semitism (although less of it). Some of them lost family members and friends to disease on the way over. When they got to America they worked day and night to make ends meet.

And yet, Yiddish immigrants were also appreciative of Shakespeare’s humor. Yiddish-speaking audiences loved bad jokes and puns. The audience that Shakespeare himself addressed also loved bad jokes and puns- particularly bawdy ones- so his plays are filled with them. His plays were also written for an unruly audience that liked to participate in his shows and talk back and yell at the actors in the middle of scenes, traits that matched the Yiddish speaking audience. For example, at a Yiddish production of

Hamlet, the actor playing Hamlet delivered the famous “To be or not to be” soliloquy and one audience member shouted out “Let it so be!... That’s what we paid for!” (qtd. in Alter 145). The Yiddish theater audiences were “...wholehearted, and no doubt quite as keen and imaginative, as an audience in the little world of Elizabethan London,” (qtd. in Berkowitz 47).

Several of Shakespeare’s plays were translated into Yiddish, but the two I focus on for this thesis are *The Merchant of Venice* (*MV*) and *King Lear* (*KL*). For the sake of contrast I chose one of Shakespeare’s tragedies (*KL*) and one of his comedies (*MV*), although the Yiddish audience tended to view *MV* as a tragedy. I chose them because they were “...the only Shakespeare plays that became staples of the Yiddish stage” (Alter 147). *The Merchant of Venice* is regarded as one of Shakespeare’s “problem plays”. The traditional definition of a problem play is attributed to playwright Henrik Ibsen. His definition of a problem play was one that dealt with social, moral issues that were not necessarily resolved in the play. Theater critic Fredrick Boas adapted the meaning of the term by applying it to several of Shakespeare’s plays as well, but with a slightly different meaning. A Shakespearean “problem play” is a play that does not so easily fit into one of the categories of comedy, tragedy and history. *The Merchant of Venice* was originally categorized as a comedy, and since the story ends happily for all the characters except Shylock, the “villain”, it could still be considered such. However, given the dark undertones of much of the play, it is more of a tragicomedy and therefore it can be hard to place. At the time that *MV* was labeled a “problem play” it was done so not only because it was hard to place in the categories of tragedy, comedy and history, but also because it dealt with complex themes such as revenge and usury. In more modern times

it is considered a problem play because of the anti-Semitic aspects of the show. It should not be "...unexpected, given the value of Shakespeare as an icon of cultural acceptability, that his singular treatment of Shylock the Jew would also fascinate," (Alter 148). Many of the Yiddish translations of *The Merchant of Venice* were renamed *Shylock* because most of them wanted to make Shylock a more prominent, sympathetic character.

"Shylock...appears in only five scenes out of twenty in the first place, making the power of his presence all the more remarkable. To make him the central character in terms of stage time requires a reworking of the plot, a restructuring of the text," (Berkowitz 176). The reworking of the plot is what made this play more appealing to the Yiddish audience.

The Yiddish audience particularly related to Shylock's predicament with Jessica, his daughter who elopes with a Christian man and converts. The theme of disobedient, ungrateful children was familiar to them. This is the reason that *King Lear* was such a hit with Yiddish-speaking audiences as well. "Given the significance of the family as a primary agent for determining Jewish survival during the long years of persecution and dispersal, it can hardly be surprising that *King Lear* becomes a subject for theatrical refashioning," (Alter 148). Childhood disobedience is a theme throughout the play. In fact one of the translation/adaptations that I used as a source is named *Der Kenig Lir-Oder, Di Undenkbare Kinder (King Lear, or, the ungrateful children)*. The "love test" that occurs at the beginning of *King Lear*, also appears in a classic Yiddish folktale that was collected in the 1920s from a storyteller in Poland. The story (sometimes called "How Much Do You Love Me?") starts with a rabbi asking his three daughters to tell him how much they love him. The elder two daughters give satisfactory answers, telling their father that they love him more than gold, silver or diamonds. The youngest tells her

father that she loves him more than food that is properly salted, and she is banished from home (Weinreich 85).

In this thesis I will be drawing comparisons between the original Shakespearean plays and their Yiddish adaptations, specifically in their use of puns and word-play. I also will draw comparisons between the reactions to the plays in the Elizabethan and Yiddish-speaking audiences. In addition to the reactions of the audience, I will be looking into the critical reception of the plays. I wanted to see how Yiddish translators of Shakespeare understood the subtlety and humor of his word-play and if they could create equivalents in Yiddish. I wanted to see if I could discern from the translations if the translators were translating for the author or for the audience. I looked at five translations of *The Merchant of Venice* and three translations of *King Lear*. All of the translations of both plays had varying approaches to puns and word-play and to the plays in general. There were puns that were cut, those that missed the point entirely, and puns that were translated properly, but lost their humor. There were puns that were missing because the entire scene was cut out. As I looked into these plays further, I realized that some of them were more adaptations than translations since there were scenes cut, moved around, and shortened. The Yiddish translators would have probably claimed their versions were “*fartaytsht un farbesert*” — translated and improved.

Chapter 1

The Audience

The Yiddish-speaking audience liked melodramatic, cheesy plays, and farces. There was "...criticism of its role as merely a purveyor of *shund* (trash)," (Alter 142). How did the Elizabethan theatergoers compare? The stereotype that goes along with each audience type is "rowdy and restless". To what extent is that true? Does the audience's taste and behavior have anything to do with the economic class the majority of them were in? What were the economic class similarities? It is hard to find audience reaction to specific plays that I'm studying. However Berkowitz writes, "...more than one visitor to an American Yiddish theatre made the connection between the spontaneity of [the Yiddish speaking audience] and the rambunctiousness of the groundlings who had occupied the pit of the Globe three centuries earlier," (Berkowitz 220). To make comparisons between our two audiences we must first examine them.

The Yiddish-speaking audiences would "vary in character from night to night rather more than in an uptown theater... poor workingmen and women with babies of all ages fill the theater" and the theatergoers would "skip lunch to save money for theatre tickets," (Alter, 142; Berkowitz, 30). We can discern that theater was an integral part of the Yiddish-speaking culture from the fact that audience members would save up to go to the theater by missing meals, and spend much of their hard-earned money there. The Shakespearean theatergoer was far less favorably described in 1603 by author Henry Crosse, who said that they were "the very scum, rascality, and baggage of the people, thieves, cutpurses, shifters, cozeners; briefly, an unclean generation and spawn of vipers," (qtd in Harbage 4). Outsiders and wealthier German Jews also thought of the Eastern

European Yiddish audience as “...subhumans who lacked the rudiments of civilized behavior,” (qtd in Berkowitz 5). Alfred Harbage believes that Shakespeare’s audience was “‘ascending by degree from potboy to prince’ but dominated by the ‘working class’” (Myhill & Low 9). Both the Shakespearean audience and the Elizabethan audience were made up of primarily hardworking people who spent their money by going to shows.

Yiddish-speaking audiences preferred material that “generally appeal[ed] to the lower and less educated classes, to local rather than cosmopolitan interests, to the values of the community rather than of the individual...performance over verbal subtlety, show over literature, feelings over ideas, the actor over the author...a unity between performers and audience,” (Alter 142). The kinds of shows that were being performed on the Yiddish stage did not appeal to everyone. There were theater critics, specifically Yiddish theater critics, who were of the opinion that “The Yiddish theatre has fallen into dirty hands, with people who have no understanding of dramatic and of real life. It is in the hands of people who consider the Jewish public as stupid fools... Those dramatists take away hard-earned money from the poor Jewish workers. Instead of the theater they give a circus. They profane the dramatic art and do not allow real authors to approach the stage,” (Alter 142-3). Jacob Adler saw the appeal of Shakespeare’s work and brought plays like *MV* and *KL* to the repertoire “for the purpose of lifting the Yiddish theatre to a higher level,” (Alter, 148). It was said that at Boris Thomashevsky’s performance of a translation of *Hamlet*, the audience enjoyed it so much, “that at the final curtain cries of ‘Author! Author!’ were invariably heard,” (Alter 145). Some believe that this story proves the “naïve inadequacy of the uneducated immigrants” however, more optimistic scholars believe that, “it proves that ‘[Hamlet], this unequalled *tour de force* of passion

and intellect *reached* them... it is harder to imagine a finer response from any audience in the world!” (qtd in Alter 145). Based on this response it would seem that Adler was successful in “lifting the Yiddish theatre to a higher level”.

Since Elizabethan theater reviews are lacking, there are not too many sources that tell us directly what the audience liked, unlike in Yiddish theater where we have critic reviews and actor biographies. Prior suggests that the way to find what sort of material the audience liked is to look in the plays themselves. In Shakespeare’s plays there are a number of “scenes of brutality... and this observation may suggest that the Elizabethan audience must have been especially marked by a taste for brutality,” (Prior 103). Elizabethans were often exposed to “bearbaiting and public executions” in their everyday life, so, “...it must be concluded that dramatists had to provide strong plots and excessive bloodshed to please these violent spirits [their audience],” (Prior 103). So, while there is not any specific text that implies that the Elizabethans had a particular taste for the schmaltzy, melodramatic shows that the Yiddish speaking audience was so partial to, both audiences seemed to appreciate “show over literature”.

One actress for the Yiddish stage, Bertha Kalich, said that each member of the audience would “[approach] the theater with great love, particularly for his favorite player. He listens attentively. More than that, he is figuratively on the stage in the very scene, a tense spectator. If a line or a situation doesn’t ring true, he shakes his head. If it gets him down where he lives, he is silent or yells as the reaction takes direction,” (qtd in Alter, 142). Indeed it was not uncommon for loud crying, shouting and applause to take place in the middle of a scene during Yiddish shows. The empathy felt by the audience stemmed from the loyalty that the Yiddish fans felt towards their favorite star. The stars

themselves were the main attractions of the Yiddish stage, bringing out many of their *patriotn* (fans) to the theaters. The *patriotn* were known for being rowdy and enthusiastic. There was an etiquette manual published in 1910 that even encouraged actors to discourage their *patriotn* from applauding them in the middle of a scene because it was disruptive. There was even an incident during a performance of *Der Yiddisher King Lear* where an audience member, one of Jacob Adler's *patriotn*, "...stood up and walked toward the stage, and as he walked he said at the top of his lungs: 'My dear Yankl¹, that daughter of yours, that evil woman...you see now, that you won't get anything to eat from her today. She truly has a stone instead of a heart. Spit on her, Yankl, and come to me! My wife will give you a wonderful dinner. Come, Yankl! Let her choke, that awful woman, your daughter. Come to me!'" (qtd and translated by Berkowitz 46). Intense fandom was also a feature of American theater in the nineteenth century. The Astor Place Riot of 1849 is an example. The Astor Place Riot was "...the deadly culmination of years of squabbling between fans of American actor Edwin Forrest and his English colleague William Macready," (Berkowitz 13). This particular riot was over which of these actors gave a better portrayal of Macbeth. Superstitious theater-people believe this to be further evidence that the play is cursed. The difference between the Astor Place fans and the Yiddish stage *patriotn* is that while it was not unheard of for *patriotn* to violently disagree, they were not disagreeing over a matter of nationality but rather over a matter of the style and technique of their favorite actors.

Elizabethan fans were also not immune to starting "frays and riots" and their theaters had their own "traditional rowdiness" (Harbage 5). It was not uncommon for

¹ Yiddish diminutive for "Jacob"

Elizabethan theaters to have prostitution, pick-pocketing and occasionally, according to Harbage, a murder occur during a performance. The concept of *patriotn* coming to cheer on their favorite actor is less likely. Actors in those ages were not well known. The first celebrity actors would appear a little later, in the 1600s². The audience showed up to see the play itself. The actors, like Yiddish actors, still would be greatly effected by the audience's reaction to their performance. A "Player is much out of countenance, if fools do not laugh at them, boys clap their hands, peasants open their throats, and the rude rascal rabble cry excellent, excellent" (qtd in Harbage 116). Yiddish actors also reveled in their audience's reactions. Bessie Thomashevsky said that "An actor without *patriotn*, was like a meat market with dogs: sha, quiet, no one to shout and clap," (qtd in Berkowitz 14). While there are not any specific incidents of the audience interacting with the players in the Elizabethan era, there are recorded incidents of audiences laughing and crying. Harbage writes that the historian "Nashe speaks of the 'tears of ten thousand spectators'" and that "'in the Theaters they generally take up a wonderful laughter, and shout altogether with one voice..." (qtd in Harbage 115). If an Elizabethan "...play failed to please, it was uncompromisingly mewed and hissed," (Harbage 115). So while there may not be any specific accounts of player-theatergoer interaction, we know that the audience was expressive.

Considering that "The Yiddish theater as a popular cultural institution" was only "born in Jassy, Romania" as recently as 1876 the Yiddish speaking audience may have been going through a normal audience development process (Alter 141). Yiddish speaking audiences "would have had only slightly more familiarity with the theatrical

² Nkanga, Mbala. "Some Background Information: English Theatre to 1800." University of Michigan THREMUS 322. Walgreen Center, Ann Arbor. January 14, 2013. Lecture.

fourth wall than they did with Shakespeare, and the annals of Western theater are filled with the naïve spectators who break the actor/audience barrier when their emotions get the better of them,” (Berkowitz 221). The Shakespearean audiences were rowdy and loud during performances. Even 19th century Europe saw incidents of riots in the theaters³. In terms of audience participation, the Yiddish and Western theater-going traditions were not so different.

While there are not any recorded reactions to *Merchant of Venice* or *King Lear* to specifically compare between the two audiences, there is a lot to compare between the two over all. Both audiences consisted of primarily lower or working class people who clearly were passionate enough about the theater to spend their hard-earned money on it. Both audiences were rowdy, loud and reactive during the plays themselves. It is likely that it was not considered rude or shocking in Elizabethan theaters to be loud and rowdy, and certainly it was not unexpected in Yiddish speaking theaters. But there were no Elizabethan etiquette manuals published to tell their readers not to make noise in the middle of a scene. Both audiences also preferred a spectacle over prophetic words in their shows. The similarities between these two audiences that existed more than 300 years apart are fascinating, especially considering that the Shakespearean audience would likely not have been fond of all the Jews in the Yiddish speaking audience. Given the similarities found between Elizabethan and Yiddish speaking audiences, it is no surprise that the phenomenon of Yiddish Shakespeare exists. Successful writers know their

³ An important 19th century theater-related riot was the Riot of *Hernani*, a battle between the classicists and romantics in 1830 in France. The play *Hernani* by Victor Hugo is a strong example of Romantic drama and was one of the first examples. The followers of the two literary movements showed up at the premier of the show and fought throughout the whole performance, the romantics fighting against the classicist literary tradition.

audience and write what they believe will elicit a response. A Yiddish author who read Shakespeare would have known that it contained plot devices and comedic elements (such as puns and bawdy humor) that would have been meaningful to his audience.

Chapter 2

“*Fartaytsht un farbesert*”

Each Yiddish version of a Shakespeare play falls into one of two categories- adaptation or translation. Some of these Yiddish authors chose to simply translate Shakespeare without taking creative liberties with the plot or characters. By translating instead of adapting, the author brings Shakespeare to his audience by giving them a glimpse of the original work. Authors that chose to adapt rather than translate did so in order to bring an element of *Yiddishkeit* into Shakespeare to make the plays more relevant to their audience. Jacob Gordin, for example, “[borrowed] the broad outlines of Shakespeare plays but [made] the characters and situation Jewish” thereby “[turning] his Shakespearean sources into dramas that explored the challenges of contemporary Jewish life,” (Berkowitz 28). Not all of the authors who chose to adapt rather than translate made the characters Jewish in order to make the shows more relevant to their audience. Some kept the original characters and setting, but moved scenes around or cut out characters or scenes in order to provide more of an emphasis on characters and themes that would have had more of an effect on their audience. For this thesis, I will be focusing specifically on the adaptations and translations of the puns and word play present in the plays. Tables 1 and 2 are Yiddish translation comparison tables for *King Lear* and *Merchant of Venice*. A given scene and act such as Act 1, Scene 1 will be represented by 1:1.

Translation Comparisons

Table 1

Merchant of Venice	Original	Adler	Blumberg	Bovshover	Prilutski	Zamler
Act 1 Scene 2 Line 37 <i>Portia</i>	“Ay there’s a colt indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse, and he makes it a great appropriation to his own good parts that he can shoe him himself. I am much afeard my lady his mother played false with a blacksmith...”	“This one has the nature of a young, wild horse. He does not talk about anything but his horses...” (“ <i>Dizer hot di natur fin eyn yungem vildem ferd, er shprikht nikhts anders, als fon zeyne ferde...</i> ”)	“This is a wild calf in his action. He speaks of nothing other than his horse...” (“ <i>Dos vet eyn vildes kalb un der tat. Er shprikht fon nikhts als zeyner ferde,</i> ”)	“There’s a true foal, he speaks only about his horse...” (“ <i>Dos iz an emeser zrebtshik, den er halt nor in eyn redder fun zeyn ferd</i> ”)	[Pun excluded]	“He is really a horse, that was bred in a stable; He doesn’t talk about anything else, only about his horses...” (“ <i>Dos iz an emes ferdl, vos iz gehodevet in shtal; er redt nisht fun epes andersh, vi nor fun zeyne ferd,</i> ”)
Act 2 Scene 2 Line 80 <i>Lancelot</i>	“... I am a Jew if I serve the Jew any longer.”	“I will also become a Jew if I serve the Jew any longer...” (“ <i>Ikh vell nokh oykh veren a yud, ven ikh vel nokh dienen lenger beym yuden</i> ”)	“I will also be a Jew if I stay with the Jew any longer...” (“ <i>Ikh vil eyn yuder zeyn ven ikh bei den yuden laenger bleybe</i> ”)	“... my name is Jew if I serve the Jew longer...” (“ <i>Meyn nomen iz yid, oyb ikh vell nokh dienen lenger beym yiden</i> ”)	[The character of Lancelot was excluded]	[Pun excluded]

<p>Act 2 Scene 5 Line 18 <i>Lancelot</i> <i>Shylock</i></p>	<p>“...My young master doth expect your reproach” “So do I his.”</p>	<p>“...my young master waits for you with impatience...” “It frightens my heart...” (“<i>Es shrekt mikh meyn harts</i>”)</p>	<p>[Pun excluded]</p>	<p>“...my young master is awaiting your arrival...” “Yes and I also await his...” (“<i>Meyn yunger herr vart oyf eyer onkumenem</i>” “<i>Ye, un ikh vart oykh oyf zeyn obkumenem</i>”)</p>	<p>[The character of Lancelot was excluded]</p>	<p>“...my master, Bassanio, awaits your person with impatience.” “Just like me, for his person...” (“<i>..meyn har, Basanio, vart oyf deyn perzon mit umgeduld.</i>” “<i>Azoy vi ikh oyf zeyn perzon,</i>”)</p>
<p>Act 3 Scene 1 Line 24 <i>Solanio</i> <i>Shylock</i></p>	<p>“And Shylock, for his own part, knew the bird was fledged, and then it is the complexion of them all to leave the dam.” “She is damned for it”</p>	<p>“And Shylock himself knows, that the bird creates the wings to fly when they have grown enough...” “God should hence give her penalties.” (“<i>Und Sheylok zeyner zeyts voste, dos dem fogel zind shakhn di fligel tsum flien gros genug gevaksen</i>” “<i>Gott zol zi derfar shtrofen,</i>”)</p>	<p>"And Shylock himself knows, that the bird flies away, and then leaves the area and the nest." “And therefore she must be damned!” (“<i>Und Sheylok, zeyner zeyts vuste, dos der fogel flegt oys, und dann hoben zi es alle in der ort dos nest tsu ferlasen</i>” “<i>Un gresten fal zi muzt ferdamnt dafur!</i>”)</p>	<p>“...and Shylock, on his side, knew that the bird had grown wings, and then it is their nature to leave the nest.” “May God leave her!” (“<i>Un Shaylok, fun zeyn zeyt, hot gevust, dos der foygel hot gehot dervaksene fliegel; un dan iz es zeyer teve tsu ferlozen dem nest.</i>” “<i>Ferlozen zol zi Got!</i>”)</p>	<p>“Of course,” joked the second, “I know even which tailor sewed the wings that allowed the bird to fly...” “Ah! She should be damned!” (“<i>Oh, fershalten zol zi zeyn</i>” hot oysgeshrien <i>Sheylok mit a veyton in hartsen</i>”)</p>	<p>“And you yourself, Shylock, must also know” Solario added, “that your bird already had fair feathers, and from nature we learn that grown birds leave their nests.” “Ach! She should be accursed!” Shylock roared. (“<i>Un ihr fun eyer zeyt, Sheylok, hot dokh oyf badarft visn</i>” hot Solanio tsugegebn: “<i>az eyer feygele hot</i>”)</p>

						<p><i>shoyn gehat shpore federn, un fun der natur lernen mir dokh, az oyfgevaksene feygl farlozn zeyer nest...</i></p> <p><i>"Akh! Farsholtn zol zi zeyn!" hot Sheylok gebrumt,")</i></p>
<p>Act 3 Scene 1 Line 29 <i>Shylock</i> <i>Solario</i></p>	<p>"My own flesh and blood to rebel!!" "Out upon it, old carrion! Rebels it at these years?"</p>	<p>"That my own blood and flesh should rebel, this is a crime!" "Old fool! Who has rebelled against you?" <i>("Meyn eygen blit in fleysh zol rebeliren, dos iz a ferbrekhen"</i> <i>"Alter naar! Ver hot den gegen dir rebelirt?"</i>)</p>	<p>"...that my only flesh and blood should so answer..." <i>("Dos meyn aygen fleysh un blut zikh do entfert")</i></p>	<p>"My own blood and flesh should rebel!" "Old carrion, it still rebels in these years?" <i>("Meyn eygen blut un fleysh zol rebeliren!" "Alte neveyle, rebelirt es nokh in dize yohren?"</i>)</p>	[Pun excluded]	<p>"She should be eradicated for my sorrow and pain!" Shylock further cursed and cried. "Are you not ashamed, you old beast?" Solario called him, "In your old years aren't you embarrassed to speak like that?" <i>("Oysroten zol es ihr, far meyn tser un peyn!" hot Sheylok veyter gesholtn un hot zikh tseveynt. "Shemen megstu zikh, du alte beheme?" hot</i></p>

						<i>Salanio zikh ongerufn "In azelkhe alte yorn shemstu zikh nisht azoy tsu redn!")</i>
Act 3 Scene 2 Line 220 <i>Nerissa</i> <i>Gratiano</i>	"What and stake it down?" "No, we shall ne'er win at that sport and stake down."	[Pun excluded]	[Pun excluded]	"...and immediately lay down?" "No, in this game we won't win by lying still..." (* <i>Un gleykh eynlegen?</i> *) "Neyn, in dem shpiel velen mir nit gevinen durkh eynlegen,")	[Pun excluded]	[Pun excluded]
Act 3 Scene 2 Line 248 <i>Gratiano</i> <i>Salerio</i>	"...we are the Jasons, we have won the fleece." "I would you had won the fleece that he hath lost,"	[Pun excluded]	[Pun excluded]	"We are now the Jasons, we have won the wool!" "I wish you had won the wool that he had lost" (* <i>Mir zeynen yetzt di Iazons, den mir hoben do di vol gevonon,</i> *) " <i>Halovay volt ihr di vol gevonon, vos er hot ferloren</i> ")	[Pun excluded]	[Pun excluded]

<p>Act 3 Scene 5 Line 35 <i>Lancelot</i></p>	<p>“It is much that the Moor should be more than reason. But if she be less than an honest woman, she is indeed more than I took her for.”</p>	<p>[ENDS WITH THE TRIAL SCENE]</p>	<p>[ENDS WITH THE TRIAL SCENE]</p>	<p>“it is true, that the Moor-lady should be more than understood. But if she is less than an honest woman, she is more than I counted on,” <i>(“Es iz fiel, dos Murin zol zeyn mehr vi fershtand; ober oyb zi iz veniger vi an ehrlikhe froyentsimer, iz zi virklikh mehr vi ikh hob gerekhent”)</i></p>	<p>[The character of Lancelot was excluded]</p>	<p>[Pun excluded]</p>
<p>Act 3 Scene 5 Line 41 <i>Lorenzo</i> <i>Lancelot</i></p>	<p>“Bid them prepare for dinner...”</p>	<p>[ENDS WITH THE TRIAL SCENE]</p>	<p>[ENDS WITH THE TRIAL SCENE]</p>	<p>...to prepare lunch” “That is done, sir, they have stomachs” “God in heaven, what a sharp big shot you are! So ...prepare/ arrange lunch” “that is also done sir, only ...(also to prepare) is the word” “will you then/also prepare the table, sir?” “that also no, sir. I know what I have to do” <i>(“Kheym zey zikh</i></p>	<p>[The character of Lancelot was excluded]</p>	<p>[Pun excluded]</p>

				<p><i>forbereyten tsum mitog-esen</i>” “<i>Dos iz shoyn geton gevoren, meyn herr: zey hoben mogens</i>” “...to <i>kheym zey tsugreyten mitog</i>” “<i>Dos iz shoyn oykh geton gevoren, meyn herr: nor ‘groyten’ iz dos vort</i>” “<i>Vestu also greyten dem tish, meyn herr?</i>” “<i>Dos oykh nit, meyn herr. Ikh veys, vos ikh hob tsu ton</i>”)</p>		
Act 5 Scene 1 Line 128 <i>Portia</i>	“Let me give light, but let me not be light. For a light wife doth make a heavy husband...”	[ENDS WITH THE TRIAL SCENE]	[ENDS WITH THE TRIAL SCENE]	<p>“I would want to make light, but not to be light. A light wife makes a heavy husband,” <i>(“Kh’volt velen leykhten, ober nit zeyn leykht. A leykhte froy makht zikh a shveren mann”)</i></p>	[Pun excluded]	[Pun excluded]

Table 2

King Lear	Original	Asen	Halkin	Halperin
Act 1 Scene 1 Line 12 <i>Earl of Kent</i> <i>Earl of Gloucester</i>	“I cannot conceive you” “Sir, this young fellow’s mother could...”	“I do not understand” “Sir, the boy’s mother could understand,” (“ <i>Ikh ken es epes nit farshteyn</i> ” “ <i>Meyn her, dem yungmans muter ober, hot es yo gekont farsteyn</i> ”)	“Something does not lay right in my head...” “With his mother everything lay right...” (“ <i>Epes leygt zikh es nit ayn ba mir in kop</i> ” “ <i>Derfar ober ba zany muter hot zikh alts ayngelaygt azoy...</i> ”)	[Pun excluded]
Act 1 Scene 4 Line 10 <i>King Lear</i> <i>Earl of Kent</i>	“What dost thou profess? What wouldst thou with us?” “I do profess to be no less than I seem.”	“What would you say to us? What do you want with us?” “I appear to be no less than what I am.” (“ <i>Vilstu vos zogn? Villstu vos fun unz?</i> ” “ <i>Ikh ze oys tsu zayn nit vayniker vos ikh bin</i> ”)	“...what do you request from us?” “What do I request? I should not be worse than I seem...” (“ <i>Mit vos farnemstu zikh un vos farlangstu fun undz?</i> ” “ <i>Vos ikh farlang? Ikh zol zayn nit erger vi ikh vayz oys</i> ”)	“As you can see, I am a man...” (<i>Lir hot ihm nit erkont un hot ihm gefregt ver er iz.</i> “ <i>Vi du zehst, bin ikh a mensh,</i> ”

Many Yiddish stories (particularly immigrant stories) are full of humor involving language and malapropisms. Puns and wordplay frequent many a Yiddish story, such as Sholem Aleichem's *Motl, the Cantor's Son*⁴. Knowing this, a reader might expect to see puns and wordplay in the Yiddish adaptations and translations of Shakespeare plays, especially since they exist in the original plays. However, this was not always the case.

King Lear was performed starting in the 1890s and spanning into the late 1940s. The most popular versions of this play were Jacob Gordin's *The Jewish King Lear* (originally performed in 1892) and *The Jewish Queen Lear*, which was also known as *Mirele Efros* (originally performed in 1898). Jacob Gordin (1853-1909) came to America in 1891, when he was already 38 years old. In Russia he was a journalist and when he came to America he continued to write plays for the Yiddish stage. His work was not accepted anywhere until Jacob Adler took an interest in his *Jewish King Lear*, which he wrote in 1892.

The other versions of the play examined for this thesis are translations, not adaptations. The first, by A. Sh. Halperin, is named "*Der Kenig Lir- oder Di Undankbare Kinder- bearybeytet nokh Shekspirs tragedye*" (*King Lear, or, the Ungrateful Children, adapted from Shakespeare's tragedy*). It was published in 1898 in Warsaw. It is unlikely that this version was actually performed because it switches back and forth from story format to script format. This means that one paragraph will be written in third person narrative and then the next few lines will be written as dialogue in script format.

⁴ The two-volume novel written by Sholem Aleichem in the early 1900s. It was his last work before his death in 1916. The book chronicles the life of a boy named Motl and his family's journey to America from their shtetl and their life as immigrants once they arrive in the States.

The second translation, *Der Kenig Lir (King Lear)* was done by Shmuel Halkin (1897-1960), and was published in 1937 in Moscow. Halkin was commissioned to write a translation of *King Lear*, which was produced in 1935 (Veidlinger 140). The other translation was *Kenig Lear (King Lear)* by Avrom Asen (1886-1958). It was published in 1947 and its performance date is unknown. The versions of the play that are translations keep the same name as the original, but Halperin's adaptation expands on the title.

King Lear is not a play known for having a lot of word play. The first example is found in Act 1 Scene 1 when Gloucester and Kent are talking about Gloucester's bastard son, Edmund. Gloucester says that he's not embarrassed to admit that Edmund is his son anymore (because he is a bastard), to which Kent responds "I cannot conceive you". Gloucester's next words are "Sir, this young fellow's mother could," (*KL* 1:1). Here we find a perfect Shakespearean example of wordplay. He is using both meanings of the word "conceive" (to conceive a meaning, and to conceive a child) and one of them has sexual implications. Asen's version translated the pun to have Kent say "I do not understand" and Gloucester replies "Sir, the boy's mother could understand," ("*Ikh ken es epes nit farshteyn*" "*Meyn her, dem yungmans muter ober, hot es yo gekont farsteyn*") (Asen 29). This translation uses Kent's meaning of the word "conceive" and directly translates it as being "to understand". Since "understand" does not have any sexual connotation to it, the original innuendo was lost. The sexual implication is still there but it is not quite as strong.

The next version of the play was translated by Halperin. This version downplayed the whole Edmund-Gloucester-Edgar subplot, and really just focused on the aspect of the

plot involving Lear and his daughters, so any clue that the pun ever existed was omitted from this version. There were also a few pages missing from the microfilm from the New York Public Library so it's possible that the pun could have existed in this version originally. In Halkin's translation of *KL*, the pun keeps the sexual implications. Halkin translates Kent's line as "Something does not lay right in my head" and Gloucester as saying "With his mother everything lay right," ("*Epes leygt zikh es nit ayn ba mir in kop*" "*Derfar ober ba zany muter hot zikh alts ayngelaygt azoy...*") (Halkin 16). By using the verb "lay" Halkin keeps the sexual humor of the line.

Asen and Halkin's translations illustrate interesting examples of an essential translation issue: is it more important to keep the meaning and sacrifice the words or is it better to keep the words as they are and potentially have the meaning lost in translation? On the one hand we see Asen's version, which prioritizes the words over the content. He chooses to translate both of Shakespeare's "conceives" into "understand" or "*farshteyn*". Walter Benjamin calls this kind of translating "transmitting" and says "...any translation which intends to perform a transmitting function cannot transmit anything but information-hence, something inessential," (*Task of the Translator* 69). Halkin is much more successful in keeping to the original text and the meaning of the words. He changes the words slightly so that the phrasing is not the same as Shakespeare's, but he still uses a pun, and the pun he chooses is still sexual.

The only other pun in *KL* is in 1:4. Kent has been banished by Lear for coming to Cordelia's defense. Not wanting to be parted from his master, Kent dons a disguise and goes to find Lear to rejoin his service. When Lear first sees him, he does not recognize him and asks, "What dost thou profess? What wouldst thou with us?" to which Kent

replies, “I do profess to be no less than I seem...”. In Elizabethan English, the question “what do you profess” could either mean “what is your profession” or “what do you declare or claim?” Asen’s translation of this pun is confusing. In this version, the king asks Kent “what would you say to us? What do you want with us?” and Kent responds, “I appear to be no less than what I am” (“*Vilstu vos zogn? Villstu vos fun unz?*” “*Ikh ze oys tsu zayn nit vayniker vos ikh bin*”) (Asen 52). Unfortunately, this translation does not work very well. In the English version, Kent’s response does not answer the king’s question, but it at least acknowledges that he heard it. In this version, his answer does not follow the original words and does not refer to any of the words that the king used. So while the meaning is still there, the pun is not and the wording is confusing.

Halperin’s version does not offer us much with this pun either. The whole first part of the scene is in story format. It tells us that Lear runs into a disguised Kent and Lear asks Kent who he is. Then the text says that Kent responds, “As you can see, I am a man,” (*Lir hot ihm nit erkont un hot ihm gefregt ver er iz. “Vi du zehst, bin ikh a mensh,*”) (Halperin 12). Halperin kept Kent’s evasiveness to the question, but did not bother with the pun.

Halkin’s version, like Asen’s version, struggled with keeping this part of the script a pun. Halkin’s Lear asks Kent “...what do you request from us?” Kent answers, “What do I request? I should not be worse than I seem,” (“*Mit vos farnemstu zikh un vos farlangstu fun undz?*” “*vos ikh farlang? Ikh zol zayn nit erger vi ikh vayz oys*”) (Halkin 43). Again Kent’s answer does not make sense as a pun or as an attempted word-for-word translation. Halkin’s Kent acknowledges the question that was asked, and he

evades the question as well, but he does not slyly redirect the conversation so much as say something completely random.

For this pun we have a much greater variety of translations. This raises Benjamin's question; does the nature of this pun "...lend itself to translation?" (70). The extent of the faithfulness of a translation "... is determined objectively by the translatability of the original," (81). With all of the different wordings of this joke, one wonders how translatable it actually is. The question of content versus words becomes even more complex when humor is added to the mix. A translator could be faithful to the words and to the content but lose any humor that may have come with the line. Asen chose to translate this pun for intent and not for the words. Halkin and Halperin seemed to translate the line focusing just enough on the intent to keep the story going. All of the translators lost the humor of the line. It would seem that this pun did not lend itself very well to translation.

While the translations tried with varying success to recreate Shakespearean humor in Yiddish, the adaptations of the *King Lear* story that I found added their own humor to the stories. *The Jewish King Lear* and *Mirele Efros* were written by Jacob Gordin who seemed to have a strong attachment to the story of Lear and his daughters. In both adaptations, the story omits any element that is not related to a parent being scorned by his/her children. The humor in these adaptations does not come from puns or wordplay, but from comic relief characters. In *Mirele Efros* (both the film and the script versions) the comic relief character is Reb Nachumtze, the father-in-law of the title character's son. He is a drunken bumbling sort of religious man whose comedy comes more from his mannerisms than anything clever or witty that he says. Nachumtze is not very smart, and

he makes a lot of business mistakes that contribute to his comic character. Yiddish-speaking audiences would likely recognize a character like Nachumtze because there are many characters like him in Yiddish literature, such as Menachem-Mendl⁵ and Tevye⁶.

In *The Jewish King Lear*, the comic relief character is named Shamai. Shamai's character is clearly based on the character of the Fool from the original story. His quips make fun of almost everyone in the story. He is quick with a retort and is always making side comments. His lines do not involve clever wordplay, just sassy comments. In his article on *The Jewish King Lear*, Leonard Prager says Shamai is "Like the Plautine comic servant, [he] is obsessed with thoughts of repletion and feels the blows of adversity chiefly in his stomach. This trait is skillfully exploited in Gordin's commingling of the serious and the comic, the most 'Shakespearean' element in the play," (Prager 512). Gordin also added humor to his show by poking fun at the two quarrelling Jewish religious groups, *Chasidim*⁷ and the *Misnagdim*⁸. Although "the conflict between *Misnagdim* and *Khassidim* was not crucial in the lives of immigrant New York audiences in the 90s... in Gordin's play it is a source of comedy," (Prager 511). While Gordin may not have attempted to use comedy in the same manner that Shakespeare did, he recognized humor's importance in Shakespearean stories, even in the tragedies.

⁵ The main character from Sholem Aleichem's *The Adventures of Menachem-Mendl*. The novel follows Menachem-Mendl through his various business ventures in his letters to and from his wife Shayne-Sheyndl.

⁶ Perhaps the most well-known of Sholem Aleichem's characters, Tevye is the main character of *Tevye the Dairyman*. At the beginning of his story, Tevye opens a dairy business and invests in the stock market, but it does not go well.

⁷ Jewish sect that emphasized prayer and mysticism over study. Founded in 18th century Poland by Rabbi Yisroel ben Eliezer (the Baal Shem Tov).

⁸ Jewish movement that opposed the rise of *Chasidism*. The most prominent leader was Rabbi Eliyahu ben Shlomo Zalman, more commonly known as the Vilna Gaon.

The Merchant of Venice may be a “problem play”, but it is still classified as one of Shakespeare’s comedies, so there are many more puns in the script. There are also many different versions of the Yiddish script spanning from the 1890s until the 1940s (perhaps even earlier or later since many of them are undated). The earliest translation I found was titled *Der Koyfmann fun Venedig: Sheylok: ertsehlung nokh Shekspirs komedy* (*The Merchant of Venice: Shylock: the tale of Shakespeare’s comedy*) by Tzvi Sholem Prilutski, published in 1898 in Warsaw. This version was likely not performed as is evident from the fact that, like Halperin’s version of *King Lear*, it is mostly written in the third person.

The next dated translation is by Joseph Bovshover (1873-1915), published in 1902 in New York. Bovshover titled his translation *Shaylok, oder, Der koyfman fun Venedik* (*Shylock, or, the Merchant of Venice*). Joseph Bovshover was born in White Russia to a “very Orthodox family, but left for America at age 18, and became a furrier in New York,” (laits.utexas.edu). He was a poet who wrote revolutionary, anarchist material. He would read his work out loud in the shop where he was employed. When he was fired he found work as a journalist. He knew English well and would translate his own work. Bovshover got his work published in English and his name was known in the non-Jewish world as well.

A third translator of *Merchant of Venice* was M. Zamler, whose version was published in 1929 in Warsaw. His version is called *Shaylok: Der soyher fun Venedig: roman fray loyt Shekspir’s tragedye* (*Shylock: the Merchant of Venice: a novel freely based on Shakespeare’s tragedy*). Dror Abend-David reveals that his real name was

Mortkhe Holtsblat (*Scorned My Nation* 220). His version, like Prilutski's, was written in the third person, and therefore it is unlikely that it was performed.

The other versions were anonymously translated. There was one version that had no date, but was from Jacob Adler's (1855-1926) collection of papers. The play also ends with the courtroom scene, which is when Berkowitz says Adler's version of *MV* ended and they have the same simple title: *Shylock*. If they are the same, then the Adler adaptation was performed in 1901. Another clue that points towards this anonymous transcript being one of the ones that Adler used is that the dialogue that is not spoken by Shylock is in German. Adler's production in 1901 featured all of the characters delivering their lines in German while Shylock spoke in Yiddish. The language difference helped Adler stand out even more from the rest of his cast, "...who [did] not know how to move on stage and speak in German the entire time" (qtd in Berkowitz 179).

Another anonymous translation, also called *Shylock*, comes from the Perlmutter papers. These papers are a collection of Yiddish theater materials that were collected by playwright Sholem Perlmutter. Perlmutter also founded the League of Yiddish Playwrights. The translation has no date attached to it, and no page numbers, but it was printed in New York and the only name (other than Shakespeare's) that is present in the citation is Julius Blumberg. So, for the purposes of this thesis, it is Blumberg's translation.

Similarly to the versions of *King Lear* that were examined earlier, it is interesting to see how the titles of the play varied. With the *King Lears* we saw that the two works closest to the original had the same name and the adaptation had an adapted name. For

The Merchant of Venice, every version changed the play's name. All of them added Shylock's name to the title somehow. As Shylock is the main attraction of the story for their intended audience, this is hardly surprising. It is also not surprising that the two versions (Adler's and Blumberg's) that adapted the story to end right after the trial scene named their adaptations merely *Shylock*. Clearly, ending the play after Shylock's defeat was an attempt to centralize Shylock's character, and changing the play's name to *Shylock* is another easy way of doing that. What is surprising is the number of ways that the title *The Merchant of Venice* was translated. The three versions that had the original words in their title each translated it differently. Prilutski's says *Der Koyfman fun Venedig*, Bovshover's *Der Koyfman fun Venedik* and Zamler's *Der soykher fun Venedig*. Perhaps these differences stem from the differences in their regional dialects.

The first pun in *MV* is in 1:2, when Nerissa and Portia are going over a list of Portia's suitors. The first man on the list is the "Neapolitan Prince". "Neapolitan" means that the Prince is from Naples, Italy, but there is also a Neapolitan breed of horse. Portia makes fun of the prince, saying "Ay, that's a colt indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse." It is likely that the Yiddish translators did not know the significance of the word "Neapolitan", but they did understand Portia's horse insults. In Yiddish the word *ferd* (horse) can also refer to someone who is stubborn, so calling the prince a *ferd* and saying that he was raised in a stable is a double insult. Based on the variety of translations, there are several different ways someone could be called a horse. Zamler's translation added in some details to the line that were not there before. He translates the line as "He is really a horse, that was bred in a stable; He doesn't talk about anything else, only about his horses," (*"Dos iz an emes ferd, vos iz gehodevet in shtal; er redt*

nisht fun epes andersh, vi nor fun zeyne ferd,”) (Zamler 26). Zamler’s translation has a little added cruelty to Portia’s line. It is disrespectful to imply that a prince was raised in a stable. It makes a statement about his upbringing and therefore the Neapolitan nobility and not just the prince’s personality. The Shakespearean Portia was making a pun because both a prince and a horse can be Neapolitan. By saying that the prince was bred in a stable, Zamler’s Portia implies that his personality is that of an animal’s. Zamler’s portrayal of Portia is more vicious than other Portias.

Adler’s Portia is also different from Shakespeare’s Portia. She is more descriptive in her insult. When talking about the Prince she says, “This one has the nature of a young, wild horse. He does not talk about anything but his horses...” (“*Dizer hot di natur fin eyn yungem vildem ferd, er shprikht nikhts anders, als fon zeyne ferde...*”) (Adler 26). Adler’s adaptation changes the pun by having Portia say that he is *like* a horse as opposed to just calling him a horse. Adler’s version is like Zamler’s in that it turns the pun into a comment on the Prince’s personality rather than keeping a pun on the word “Neapolitan”. As was said before, he most likely did not understand the significance of the word “Neapolitan”. Adler’s version is also different from the original because this scene does not occur until about halfway through the play. In the original, we are introduced to Portia in the second scene, establishing her importance in the play. Portia’s role in this translation is more limited by the fact that “the entire casket subplot is ...summarily executed (in both senses of the word)” (Berkowitz 177)⁹. Portia’s stage time has been shortened to her and “and her servant Nerissa evaluat[ing] the suitors,

⁹ In the original play, Portia’s father wrote into his will that when it comes time for Portia to get married, she will choose her suitor by putting them all to the same test. The suitors are shown three caskets. The suitor has to choose the casket that he believes contains Portia’s portrait. The suitor who chooses the right casket wins Portia’s hand in marriage.

Morocco and Aragon are omitted entirely, and Bassanio enters and chooses the lead casket without much deliberation. Such cuts do their utmost to limit not only the supporting characters' stage time, but their charm as well," (Berkowitz 177). In Adler's version this scene comes after Shylock and Tubal talk about how Antonio's ships are lost. This means that we do not meet Portia until after Jessica runs away with Lorenzo. This makes the Jessica-Lorenzo plotline seem more important than the Bassanio-Portia plotline, and enhances the disobedient child element and the Jewish element. Berkowitz confirms this by saying, "The Adler adaptation ...all but [eliminates] the double love-story plot and thereby drastically changing the tone of the play. This shift was surely intentional, for as problematic as Shylock is to a Jewish audience, a Jewish daughter abandoning her father and converting to Christianity is the stuff of tragedy, not comedy" (176). This tragic element also supports *MV*'s reputation as a "problem play" according to Boas's Shakespearean definition.

Blumberg's translation is similar to Adler's in its wording. Blumberg's Portia says, "This is a wild calf in his action. He speaks of nothing other than his horse" ("*Dos vet eyn vildes kalb un der tat. Er shprikht fon nikhts als zeyner ferde,*"). Blumberg's translation also uses the word "wild", but in this version it is used to describe the Prince's actions rather than the Prince. Blumberg does not use the word *ferd* twice in his translations as the others do. He uses the word "calf" instead. Blumberg's version attempts to keep the variety of words in Shakespeare's version, but is unfaithful to the words and changes the meaning of the insult. His Portia calls the Prince a calf instead of a horse. Did Blumberg mean to give more force to Portia's insult by switching the animal or could he simply not think of a better word?

Bovshover's translation stayed truest to the original words. His translation of the line is "There's a true foal, he speaks only about his horse," ("*Dos iz an emeser zrebtshik, den er halt nor in eyn redder fun zeyn ferd*") (Bovshover 18). Bovshover even used a different Yiddish word for a young horse (*zrebtshik*) at the beginning of the line, which helped preserve the variety of Shakespeare's language. The only change between these two lines is that the original says that "he doth nothing but talk of his horse" and Bovshover says, "he speaks only about his horse". Not a huge difference when you consider the line as a whole, but if you look only at the two fragments they are saying different things, even though the meaning of the line is not substantially altered.

These four translations of this pun uphold the general meaning of the line. There are some of them that added in a few words to change the intent slightly. Adler's version, Blumberg's version and Zamler's version change the words of the line slightly and therefore the meaning changes as well. Adler and Zamler's translations add in words to make the insult seem like it applies more to the Prince's upbringing and behavior as opposed to having the line insult the Prince based on where he is from and his interests. They also both overuse the use of the word *ferd*, which diminishes the poetry of the words. Blumberg's version, in an attempt to not overuse a word, translates the line incorrectly. Benjamin questions whether or not poetics is "...something that a translator can reproduce only if he is also a poet" (70). Benjamin warns his readers that it is possible to go the other way and try and translate something too poetically, which he calls the "inaccurate transmission of an inessential content," (70). It seems that Adler and Zamler's versions are in conflict with this idea. On the one hand they add words and imagery to the already existing words and imagery (perhaps unnecessarily), while on the

other hand they diminish the poetry of their translations by overusing a word. Perhaps the added words are meant to act as a juxtaposition for the overly used words.

Blumberg's version, however, sacrifices meaning for form, which is an "inaccurate transmission". Benjamin says, "This will be true whenever a translation undertakes to serve the reader" (70). Was Blumberg focusing translating for his readers/audience as Benjamin believes, or was he translating to try and do justice to the text?

The Merchant of Venice has a lot of anti-Semitism in it, which was interesting to see translated into Yiddish. One of the puns from the play is very anti-Semitic. Lancelot is talking to his father about how he wants to stop working for Shylock the Jew, and wants to have a Christian master, Bassanio. He says "...I am a Jew if I serve the Jew any longer," (*MV*, 2:2). The reason this is a pun is that according to the Norton Shakespeare, Elizabethans would use the word "Jew" to mean a "cruel, grasping person," (*The Norton Shakespeare* 1134). The Yiddish translators approached this anti-Semitic remark in a variety of ways. Zamler and Prilutski did not include the line in their versions at all. Zamler's version of *MV* switches from story format to script format in the same way that Halperin's *King Lear* did. Zamler just has Lancelot go up to Bassanio and ask to be his servant, no mention of Jews at all. Prilutski takes this a step further. He writes Lancelot's whole character out of the story. Lancelot's character is very anti-Semitic, so perhaps he was written out so that Prilutski did not have to try and translate his offensive lines. Or, maybe he just thought that Lancelot was not important to his interpretation of the story.

Adler and Blumberg's translations acknowledge the double meaning of the word "Jew". Adler's Lancelot says "I will also become a Jew if I serve the Jew any longer," (*"Ikh vell nokh oykh veren a yud, ven ikh vel nokh dienen lenger beyem yuden"*) and

Blumberg's Lancelot says "I will also be a Jew if I stay with the Jew any longer," (*"Ikh vil eyn yuder zeyn ven ikh bei den yuden laenger bleybe"*) (Adler 11; Blumberg). These interpretations are faithful to the original pun and imply that Lancelot thinks that he will become like Shylock if he continues to work for him. The meaning behind Bovshover's translation is more-or-less the same, but his version is phrased slightly differently. He has Lancelot say "... my name is Jew if I serve the Jew longer," (*"Meyn nomen iz yid, oyb ikh vell nokh dienen lenger beym yiden"*) (Bovshover 34). By having Lancelot say, "my name is Jew" as opposed to having him say that he will "be a Jew" or "become a Jew" his Lancelot seems to be more worried about what other people think about him working for Shylock. Bovshover's Lancelot is more fearful that people will call him a Jew (as an insult) if he keeps working for the Jew, than he is of actually becoming "a Jew". Adler and Blumberg's Lancelots are more concerned with what will happen to his personality if he continues to work for Shylock and Bovshover's Lancelot is more concerned with what other people will say.

This pun clearly lends itself to translation since it is short and does not have that much variety in the ways it was translated. All of the versions maintain the words, the content of the pun. But since it is an anti-Semitic pun that is being performed for a Jewish audience, did it retain any humor? Would it have been better to change the pun to make it more relevant to the reader/audience? Benjamin would disagree since "No poem is intended for the reader, no picture is for the beholder, no symphony for the listener," (69). It is also an important translation and adaptation choice to leave in anti-Semitic remarks for a Jewish audience because it enhances sympathy for the character that these offensive remarks refer to.

The next pun is a great example of malapropism. Lancelot, having switched masters, goes to his old master, Shylock, to escort him to his new master, Bassanio. Lancelot tells Shylock to hurry, "...my young master doth expect your reproach," (*MV*, 2:5). Instead of correcting him or laughing at his mistake, Shylock responds sarcastically, "So do I his" (*MV*, 2:5). Although Lancelot meant to say that Bassanio expects Shylock's *approach* and not his *reproach*, it is true that Shylock likely expects Bassanio's reproach. The Yiddish translators *approached* this pun in several interesting ways. Adler's translates Lancelot's line as "...my young master waits for you with impatience," ("*Meyn yunger herr vart oyf eykh mit ungeduld*") and Shylock's response is "it frightens my heart," ("*Es shrekt mikh meyn harts*") (Adler 15-6). The overall meaning of the line is still there, but there is no pun. Shylock is still frightened or dreads Bassanio's reproach, but Lancelot does not make a mistake for him to play with. Blumberg also gets rid of the pun, but he does so by having Lancelot say that his master is waiting impatiently for Shylock and then goes on to his next line without any response from Shylock at all. The line is omitted. Perhaps Blumberg did not know how to translate the exchange in a witty way.

Zamler translates the line as being "...my master, Bassanio, awaits your person with impatience" "Just like me, for his person," ("*..meyn har, Basanio, vart oyf deyn perzon mit umgeduld.*" "*Azoy vi ikh oyf zeyn perzon,*") (Zamler 48). Lancelot's line makes sense and sticks to the general meaning of the original. Shylock's line does not. What did Zamler mean when he had Shylock say that he was impatient for Bassanio's person? Maybe there was a misunderstanding and that he meant to imply that Shylock was impatient for *Antonio's* person (aka, the pound of flesh), but that did not make sense

either, because they were not talking about Antonio. It would also put a really villainous, bloodthirsty and, therefore, anti-Semitic spin on Shylock's character, which would be surprising for a Jewish writer to do, particularly a Jewish writer who had probably experienced anti-Semitism. It also does not make sense for the line to imply that Shylock is excited to see Bassanio, since he talks about not wanting to go in the beginning of the scene.

Again, the closest translation goes to Bovshover. He even includes a little wordplay. Bovshover's Lancelot says, "...my young master is awaiting your arrival," ("*Meyn yunger herr vart oyf eyer onkumenem*") (Bovshover 42). The word in Yiddish he uses for arrival is *onkumen*. He then has Shylock reply "yes and I also await his..." and then he uses the word *obkumen* ("*Ye, un ikh vart oykh oyf zeyn obkumenem*") (Bovshover 42). *Obkumen* can mean to deviate/abandon/move away from something *or* it can mean agreement or deal. Both meanings are relevant to the plot. Shylock could be awaiting Bassanio's abandonment, meaning that he expects to be shunned at this party, *or* he could be looking forward to the money deal that he had just made with Bassanio. The former meaning is more likely because that definition fits with the original meaning of the sentence in Shakespeare, since the word *obkumen* is used as a verb in the sentence. The other notable thing about his choice of the word *obkumen* is that it is similar (albeit not in meaning) to the word *onkumen*. This was the most successful translation of wordplay that I found.

A good translator tries to make his translations "[seem] as if it were not in fact a translation, but a text originally written in English," (Venuti *The Translator's Invisibility* 57). Venuti believes "...the translation should 'fit' the foreign text 'naturally and

easily.” (*The Translator’s Invisibility* 58). In other words, the Yiddish translators try to achieve fluency in their translations. These three translations chose drastically different approaches to this pun, but only Bovshover’s came close to fluency. He was faithful to the words and the content and used a very successful example of wordplay. Zamler is decently faithful to the words and the content. His translation does not feel as fluent because he uses the phrase “awaiting your person” as a wordplay. It is confusing to see how what Shylock is saying is witty as opposed to merely being a clumsy attempt at wordplay. Adler’s version did not even come close to any of these. This version was not close to the original text at all, which also meant that the content of the line was different. Instead of Shylock responding wittily, he gives a fearful sort of response. There was no attempt at any kind of wordplay or clever writing in this version. The line just becomes melodramatic.

After Jessica runs off with Lorenzo, Shylock tries to find out where she went and who might have known about her betrayal. He seeks out two of Antonio’s friends, Solanio and Salerio, to confront them about it. They admit to knowing about Jessica’s plan but their defense is that Shylock should have seen it coming. Solanio tells him “And Shylock, for his own part, knew the bird was fledged, and then it is the complexion of them all to leave the dam,” to which Shylock responds “She is damned for it,” (*MV*, 3:1). The pun here is obviously that Jessica is damned for leaving the dam. More of the translators attempted to keep some wordplay in this line, but not all were successful. Adler’s translation was probably least successful in this task. Adler’s Solanio says “And Shylock himself knows, that the bird creates the wings to fly when they have grown enough,” and Shylock responds “God should hence give her penalties,” (“*Und Sheylok*

zeyner zeyts voste, dos dem fogel zind shakhn di fligel tsum flien gros genug gevaksen”
 “*Gott zol zi derfar shtrofen,*”) (Adler 21). There is no wordplay in this translation, but the meaning is preserved. This translation has religious tones to it. Adler’s version uses a Yiddish word for “create” and he has Shylock mention God. His response also sounds more fatherly than the other versions of the line where he damns her. In this version he asks God to penalize her, not to damn her. She is his daughter, after all.

Prilutski also does not have wordplay in his version. Instead he omits a line in the scene. The line before Solanio’s is Salerio saying that he knew the tailor that helped make Jessica’s disguise that she ran away in. Prilutski translates this line and right after this line, he writes “‘Ah! She should be damned!’ screamed Shylock with an ache in his heart,” (“*Oh, fershalten zol zi zeyn*” *hot oysgeschrien Sheylok mit a veyton in hartsen*”), leaving out the “And Shylock, for his own part, knew the bird was fledged, and then it is the complexion of them all to leave the dam,” (Prilutski 15).

Zamler and Blumberg’s versions use this pun to emphasize that Jessica is leaving, making her an example of the disobedient child character that resonated with the Yiddish speaking audience. Zamler’s translation says “‘And you yourself, Shylock, must also know’ Solario added ‘that your bird already had fair feathers, and from nature we learn that grown birds leave their nests’ ‘Ach! She should be accursed!’ Shylock roared,” (“*Un ihr fun eyer zeyt, Sheylok, hot dokh oyf badarft visn*” *hot Solanio tsugegebn: “az eyer feygele hot shoyrn gehat shpore federn, un fun der natur lernen mir dokh, az oyfgevaksene feygl farlozn zeyer nest...*” “*Akh! Farsholtn zol zi zeyn!*” *hot Sheylok gebrumt,*”) (Zamler 64). Zamler does not have a direct pun in his translation, but he uses the word “leave”. By translating it this way, Zamler is emphasizing that Jessica left Shylock. Blumberg’s

translation was barely legible, but it may be translated “‘And therefore Shylock himself knows, that the bird flies away, and then leaves the area and the nest.’ ‘And therefore she must be damned!’” (“*Und Sheylok, zeyner zeyts vuste, dos der fogel flegt oys, und dann hoben zi es alle in der ort dos nest tsu ferlasen*” “*Un gresten fal zi muzt ferdamnt dafur!*”). Blumberg’s translation is even more emotional, with its talk of leaving the area and the nest. For an audience that was struggling with their children assimilating and even, in some cases, converting, these are both powerful ways to translate this line.

Bovshover’s version is not wordplay but he does use his words cleverly. His translation has Solario saying “‘and Shylock, on his side, knew that the bird had grown wings, and then it is their nature to leave the nest’ ‘May God leave her!’” (“*Un Shaylok, fun zeyn zeyt, hot gevust, dos der foygel hot gehot dervaksene fliegel; un dan iz es zeyer teve tsu ferlozen dem nest.*” “*Ferlozen zol zi Got!*”) (Bovshover 58). Bovshover has both Solario and Shylock use the word “leave”. This shows Shylock using Solario’s own words to express his anger. It is wordplay in the sense that the same word is used to different effects, but not in the traditional sense. Bovshover’s version has the emotion of Zamler’s version by again using the word “leave” to appeal to the audience members with children who have left and then has the added religious effect that Adler’s version had by mentioning God.

Each translation of this pun contained the bird-wings-nest imagery and provided a translation that worked, with varying degrees of faithfulness to the original words. None of them, however, attempted to keep the wordplay aspect of the line. This could be because “...the basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the

foreign tongue,” (Benjamin 81). For this pun in particular, the translators do not allow their language to be “affected” enough by the English to try and keep in the wordplay. In addition, the translations lose their fluency. Bovshover again tried, but using the word for “lose” twice as a translation of the play on “damn” and “dam” removes a lot of cleverness from the line.

Later on in the same scene, Shakespeare sees fit to throw in another bawdy joke. Shylock is still fuming at Solario and Salerio about Jessica’s betrayal, saying “My own flesh and blood to rebel!” (*MV*, 3:1). Solario responds to this by saying “Out upon it, old carrion! Rebels it at these years?” (*MV*, 3:1). Despite Shylock’s despair over his daughter, Solario still felt that it was appropriate to make a joke about the rebellious flesh of the male sexual organ. After reading the translations of the lewd joke in *King Lear*, it is interesting to see how this joke translates. Bovshover’s translation was faithful as always. It was the same, word for word (“*Meyn eygen blut un fleysh zol rebeliren!*” “*Alte neveyle, rebelirt es nokh in dize yohren?*”). He even used a Yiddish word for carrion (*neveyle*). Since it is possible to translate that joke so perfectly it was a wonder to see that it was translated in so many different ways. Zamler’s version says, “‘She should be eradicated for my sorrow and pain!’ Shylock further cursed and cried. ‘Are you not ashamed, you old beast?’ Solario called him, ‘In your old years aren’t you embarrassed to speak like that?’” (“*Oysroten zol es ihr, far meyn tser un peyn!*” *hot Sheylok veyter gesholtn un hot zikh tseveynt. “Shemen megstu zikh, du alte beheme?” hot Salanio zikh ongerufn “In azelkhe alte yorn shemstu zikh nisht azoy tsu redn!”*) (Zamler 64). This version has the same feel as the original but not only is the pun gone, the original meaning of the line is gone as well. Shylock does not mention his flesh and blood, which

eliminates the possibility for the joke, but by Solario asking if Shylock is embarrassed to be talking like that, it implies that an embarrassing joke was still made. But since there was no joke, it makes the line confusing.

Adler's version keeps the first part of this line intact but changes the second part. His translation of Shylock's line is "That my own blood and flesh should rebel, this is a crime!" to which Solario responds, "Old fool! Who has rebelled against you?" ("*Meyn eygen blit in fleysh zol rebeliren, dos iz a ferbrekhen*" "*Alter naar! Ver hot den gegen dir rebelirt?*") (Adler 21). So Adler's version sets up the joke, but then does not have it come through. Solario could have easily made the "rebellling flesh" joke, since this version keeps that aspect in the line, but instead has Solario ask who is rebelling against Shylock. This could still have sexual implications but it would be unlikely. Solario asks Shylock who is rebelling against him even though he knows that they are talking about Jessica. But he does not put in any innuendo so that killed the joke.

Blumberg's translation falls short of the pun in a different way—it does not include it. But, strangely Shylock's line is still there. Blumberg's version has Shylock say, "that my only flesh and blood should so answer," ("*Dos meyn aygen fleysh un blut zikh do entfert*"). Solario then goes on to his next line. Why did Blumberg choose not to translate it? It could not have been for the purpose of building Shylock's story line, because Shylock is in this scene.

Zamler and Adler's translations of this pun show more loss of fluency. The translations sound foreign. This sort of thing happens because "Fluency is impossible to achieve without close or 'verbal' translation, which inhibits the effect of transparency, making the translator's language seem foreign," (Venuti *The Translator's Invisibility* 58).

Zamler's translation of the line focuses more on the "embarrassment" aspect of the bawdy joke that is not there. It seems like Zamler read Shakespeare's penis joke, made the prediction that Shylock would be a little embarrassed by that statement, and then took that feeling and put that into the line, without properly translating the line. Adler's version is not much better. This translation focuses on the "rebellious" aspect of the joke, but whoever translated it seemed to have missed the pun and therefore did not make this version funny either. The curious thing about this pun is that Bovshover managed to translate it so closely and maintain all of its original meaning, and since there was clearly a way to do this, why did the other two translators choose not to translate their lines this way, and one not at all? The translators all translated similarly before, why not do it for this one?

The next joke in *MV* is also a joke about erections. Gratiano proposes placing a bet to see who can have a son first, he and Nerissa or Bassanio and Portia. Nerissa asks Gratiano "What and stake it down?" to which Gratiano replies, "No, we shall ne'er win at that sport and stake down," (*MV*, 3:2). Nerissa is talking about staking down money for the bet, and Gratiano uses the word "stake" as a euphemism for his penis, saying that if his "stake" is down, then they will never have a son. Zamler, Blumberg, Prilutski, and Adler's translations do not have this pun. At this point in the story, Prilutski and Zamler switch back into story format and tell their readers that Bassanio and Portia are getting married, and Gratiano and Nerissa are getting married. Neither of them went into any more detail concerning this part of the story. Bovshover made a very clever translation choice. His translation of Nerissa's line is "...and immediately lay down?" and then Gratiano says "no, in this game we won't win by lying still," ("*Un gleykh eynlegen?*")

“*Neyn, in dem shpiel velen mir nit gevinen durkh eynlegen,*”) (Bovshover 69). He keeps the sexual innuendo by using “lying” as his verb of choice. In Yiddish the word is *eingelegen*, which means to lie still. The root of the word is *legen* or to lay. The word can also be used colloquially to mean to bet or to put in money, so it works well to have Nerissa use this word. There is a connotation of laying down money, like placing a bet. In addition, the word can mean to put something into something else. Therefore the sexual connotation is still there. So the word works for both Nerissa’s question and Gratiano’s response.

Later in this scene, Salerio, Lorenzo and Jessica arrive at Portia’s home in Belmont. Gratiano is telling his friend Salerio about his and Bassanio’s success, saying “...we are the Jasons, we have won the fleece,” referring to the myth of Jason and the golden fleece (*MV*, 3:2). Salerio came to Belmont to tell Bassanio about the fleets of ships that Antonio lost so he responds sadly “I would you had won the fleece that he hath lost.” Salerio’s joke is on the fact that the words fleece and fleets sound similar. Salerio is telling his friend that he wished that they had won the fleets of ships that Antonio had lost at sea. Again Zamler, Prilutski and Adler’s version do not use this pun. Their versions merely have Salerio and Bassanio discussing Antonio’s letter and his grim situation. Blumberg’s version also does not include the pun, but it does have Gratiano’s line right up until the pun itself. Bovshover’s translation of this line does not contain a pun at all. True to the original, he has Gratiano say “We are now the Jasons, we have won the wool!” but since Gratiano says “wool” and not “fleece” the joke is omitted (“*Mir zeynen yetzt di Iazons, den mir hoben do di vol gevonnen,*”) (Bovshover 70). Instead Salerio says, “I wish you had won the wool that he had lost” (“*Halovay volt ihr di vol*

gevonen, vos er hot ferloren") (Bovshover 70). It would not have mattered even if Bovshover had used the word "fleece" (in Yiddish, "*fel*"), because the word for "fleets" ("*floten*") does not sound similar enough to make the pun. Instead the wool/fleece is used as a metaphor for all of Antonio's treasure that was aboard his ships.

Bovshover again manages to maintain the meaning and wordplay element and is relatively faithful to the words in this pun and the one mentioned before it. He is also the only one of our translators who translated this line at all. The other translators included this scene in their versions in some capacity, so their motivation for omitting the line could not have been to help build up Shylock's character or else they would have just written out the scene. Perhaps this was their attempt at making the scene shorter so that the story could return to Shylock.

The next couple of puns involve Lancelot again, which means that Prilutski did not translate them, because he wrote Lancelot out of his translation. We have just found out that Lancelot has impregnated a "Moor" who works for Portia. He responds to the news saying, "It is much that the Moor should be more than reason. But if she be less than an honest woman, she is indeed more than I took her for," (*MV*, 3:5). The wordplay here is on the homophones "Moor" and "more". Zamler's version again does not include this joke. His version only has the characters read Antonio's letter explaining his situation, and then it goes right back to Venice. We do not see Belmont (where Portia lives) again until Bassanio, Gratiano and Antonio return. Blumberg and Adler's versions are the same as Zamler's and the whole play ends with the trial scene. This scene is omitted from Blumberg, Adler and Zamler's versions. So we are left with Bovshover. His Lancelot says, "it is true, that the Moor-lady should be more than understood. But if

she is less than an honest woman, she is more than I counted on,” (*“Es iz fiel, dos Murin zol zeyn mehr vi fershtand; ober oyb zi iz veniger vi an ehrlikhe froyentsimer, iz zi virklikh mehr vi ikh hob gerekhent”*) (Bovshover 80). The pun is not included, but there is an asterisk next to the word “understood” in his version, which leads to a note at the bottom of the page that says (in Yiddish, of course), “this is a wordplay in the original that cannot be translated into Jargon,” (*“Dos iz a vort-shpiel in original, velkhen men ken nit iberzetsen in zhargon”*) (Bovshover 80). Jargon is the name that some Yiddish-speakers called the Yiddish language. It is interesting that he chose to include that note on this pun in particular, even though there were many other puns in his translation that worked with varying success. Perhaps he was aware of the fact that “...a ratio of loss and gain inevitably occurs in the translation process and situates the translation in an equivocal relationship to the foreign text, never quite faithful, always somewhat free, never establishing an identity, always a lack and a supplement,” (Venuti 67). Bovshover did not think that this particular pun lent itself to being translated so he did not even try. Or maybe he did try and wanted to have an excuse for why he was unable to translate the pun. At least the content of the line is still there (*Moor* or less).

The other Lancelot-related pun is actually a longer bit of dialogue between Lancelot and Lorenzo. Lorenzo and Jessica are left in charge of the house while Portia and Nerissa are out, so Lorenzo attempts to give Lancelot instructions about telling the servants to prepare dinner. The following dialogue ensues:

LORENZO Bid them prepare for dinner.

LANCELOT That is done, sir. They all have stomachs.

LORENZO Goodly Lord, what a wit-snapper you are! Then bid them prepare

dinner.

LANCELOT That is done too, sir. Only ‘Cover!’ is the word.

LORENZO Will you cover then, sir?

LANCELOT Not so, sir, neither. I know my duty.

MV, 3:5

Lorenzo corrects his mistake and Lancelot says the servants have already prepared dinner and are awaiting instructions to set the table or “Cover”. Lorenzo asks Lancelot if he will “cover” or “set the table”, and Lancelot interprets Lorenzo’s request to “cover” as being to cover his head. Since servants were not supposed to wear a hat in front of their superiors, he assures Lorenzo that he knows his duty. This is a complicated passage to translate, even if the translator does not attempt to keep the wordplay. Zamler, Prilutski and Adler’s version do not translate it at all. Bovshover does well with this scene. The first part of the scene retains the humor. Lorenzo tells Lancelot “Tell them to prepare lunch” (“*Kheym zey zikh forbereyten tsum mitog-esen*”) and Lancelot responds “That is done, sir, they have stomachs” (“*Dos iz shoyn geton gevoren, meyn herr: zey hoben mogens*”) (Bovshover 80). The second part of the joke, when Lorenzo tells Lancelot to “cover” does not translate well. Lancelot tells Lorenzo that “...only ‘Prepare’ is the word,” (“*...to kheym zey tsugreyten mitog*” “*Dos iz shoyn oykh geton gevoren, meyn herr: nor ‘groyten’ iz dos vort*”) (Bovshover 80). Lorenzo asks, “will you then prepare the table, sir?” and Lancelot answers “No too that also, sir. I know what I have to do,” (“*Vestu also greyten dem tish, meyn herr?*” “*Dos oykh nit, meyn herr. Ikh veys, vos ikh hob tsu ton*”) (Bovshover 80). The problem with this translation, apart from the obvious fact that he uses the word “prepare” instead of “cover” (which kills the hat

joke) is that Lancelot says that he “knows what he has to do”. Shakespeare used the word “duty” to mean “station” or “status” and not “duties” as in “tasks he has to accomplish”.

The line loses its humor and a little bit of its meaning as well.

There is cultural significance to this pun as well. It shows the opposing viewpoints on respect and covering one’s head in Christianity and Judaism. As was said before, a servant was not supposed to wear a hat or “cover” his head in the presence of a superior. In Orthodox Judaism, it is customary to cover your head at all times so that you are always aware of the power of heaven. Both of these customs require you to cover your head out of respect for a superior being. The pun does not translate into Yiddish and does not translate into Yiddish culture, so it is logical that it was cut.

The last pun in *The Merchant of Venice* is made by Portia. Bassanio comes home from Venice and tells Portia that she is so beautiful that if she walked outside at nighttime she would make it as bright as daytime. She responds by saying “Let me give light, but let me not be light. For a light wife doth make a heavy husband...” (*MV*, 5:1). The difference between “giving light” and “being light” is that giving light means that she provides light for people and being light is a euphemism for being loose or promiscuous. Again Zamler, Blumberg’s version, Adler’s version and Prilutski do not include this joke. Bovshover’s Portia says, “I would want to make light, but not to be light. A light wife makes a heavy husband,” (“*Kh’volt velen leykhten, ober nit zeyn leykht. A leykhte froy makht zikh a shveren mann*”) (Bovshover 108). Bovshover keeps the light vs. light joke, and the meaning is still there.

The last five puns are only translated in Bovshover’s adaptation. His translations are, as usual for him, faithful to the words and the content of the original and he

maintains fluency in all of his translations. This is no longer surprising coming from Bovshover. However, why was he the only one translating these puns? Some of the translators omitted these scenes altogether, let alone the puns. This was probably done to build up Shylock's character. A "script that drastically cut the original text" would "...heighten the... character's prominence... and your Hamlet or Lear [or Shylock] looms even larger,"(Berkowitz 176). As was mentioned earlier, this was many a translator's vision for his translation. So do we call these works translations or adaptations? By purposefully cutting text and moving scenes around, these translators are not being faithful to the original words and in some cases they are also not being faithful to the original content. Most of these translators renamed their version of the show "Shylock", but kept the authorship under the name "William Shakespeare". Whether these translators originally intended just to translate and then got carried away or this is what they considered to be translation is unknown.

Halkin and Bovshover demonstrate an ability to grasp the meaning and humor of each pun and are mostly successful at translating them properly into Yiddish. The other translators are not quite as successful with their translations, and many of their works are so altered that they ought to be considered more adaptations than translations. It would appear that these translators were, as Benjamin calls it, translating for their readers rather than trying to be faithful to the original text. However Shakespeare "...knew whom he was writing," so perhaps by translating and adapting for their audience, these other translators understood Shakespeare's motives better than Bovshover and Halkin did, even though Halkin and Bovshover understood the English better and were better writers (Berkowitz 49).

Conclusion

Yiddish Shakespearean translations are varyingly successful depending on who wrote the translation or adaptation. Bovshover demonstrates that Shakespearean can be translated very well into Yiddish. There were many translators of the bard who took their own creative liberties with the plays and thus made their translations of the plays more into adaptations. These translators, much like Shakespeare himself, knew the audience they were writing for and thus, their interpretations of the puns are justified, even if they are not as funny. Jacob Gordin wrote a reasonably faithful rendering of the *King Lear* story for his Yiddish audience with great success. *The Merchant of Venice* was a success on the Yiddish stage due to its central Jewish character. This shows us that the Yiddish audience had the capacity to understand and appreciate Shakespeare's works as plays to which they could relate. These two shows presented a theme that was familiar to them, the theme of ungrateful children, and since they had a connection with the theme, they saw the show as being an inherently "Yiddish" show. These shows helped to shape the repertoire of the Yiddish stage and bring new genres into the Yiddish theater.

Immigrant communities are stereotyped due to their traits that differ from the majority and the traits that are similar to the majority are often overlooked. The Yiddish immigrant community was "othered" just like other immigrant communities. What Americans at the time did not realize is how similar the Jews were to them. One way to see those similarities would have been to go to the theater. Their audience members were just as faithful and excited to see their favorite actors perform as American audiences were at the time. While they may not have started a bloody riot over which actor was better, there were heated disagreements about acting quality which demonstrates that they

had an appreciation for the arts just as their fellow Americans had. They may have been a little rowdier than most American audiences, but many earlier Western European audiences were just as rowdy in the earlier years of their theater. Yiddish theater is a recent occurrence compared to the entirety of the history of theater in the West. The Yiddish theater's audience was as interactive as Western audiences were during the 15th-19th centuries. The Yiddish audience's reactions to Shakespeare on stage was reminiscent of the behaviors of the original Elizabethan era audience. The Yiddish-speaking audience was even more well-behaved since there were not as many incidents of prostitution, pick-pocketing and other crime happening in the Yiddish theaters as there were in the Elizabethan and Jacobean theaters.

The comparisons between Yiddish and original English Shakespearean texts and the comparisons between the two audience types shows a sophistication and appreciation for art that is usually neglected when thinking about the Yiddish immigrant and shtetl culture. The stereotype of the Yiddish theater is of melodramatic, schmaltzy shows and a loud, rowdy audience. The information covered in this thesis reflects the artistic sensibilities of a significant immigrant community in American history. America is a center for diasporic communities. By examining this topic we uncover issues of immigration, multi-lingualism, race and ethnicity. It gives us a window into experiences of exile and the diasporic appropriations of dominant cultures.

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