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Introduction

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Introduction

Translation can be a dangerous act. Though translation may not be among the first acts that come to mind that elicit strong responses, translations frequently are among the most central texts in changing, rupturing, and overturning worldviews. The cover image of this volume illustrates the extent to which translation can provoke strong responses: it depicts the preparations to burn the body of William Tyndale, an early sixteenth-century reformist and one of the first to translate the Bible into English, an act which led to Tyndale's conviction as a heretic and ultimately led to his execution. Tyndale's goal in translating the Bible, like the writers of vernacular theology in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, was to make the Word available to all—something taken very seriously in England after the promulgation in 1409 of Archbishop Thomas Arundel's repressive decrees aimed especially at outlawing vernacular translation or commentary on scriptural texts without express license from the episcopate.¹

Yet, if for Tyndale translation was a lethal occupation, more than half a millennium earlier it was used as an expression of nation-building on the very same soil. Translation was an important aspect of the Anglo-Saxon King Alfred's (ruled 871-99) comprehensive program of reform. One of the earliest extant English translators, King Alfred allegedly translated Gregory the Great's *Cura Pastoralis*, Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, Augustine's *Soliloquia*, and the first 50 Psalms. In his *Preface* to Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis*, Alfred writes, "Therefore it seems better to me, if it seems so to you, that we also should translate certain books which are most necessary for all men to know into the language that we can all understand..."² King Alfred writes that the state of learning had declined so badly in Anglo-Saxon England that very few could even translate a letter written in Latin. His educational program, the first of its kind in

¹ Cf. Nicholas Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409," *Speculum* 70 (1995), 822-864.

² Alfred, "Preface to the Translation of Gregory's *Pastoral Care*," *Old and Middle English c.890-c.1450: An Anthology*, Third Ed., ed. Elaine Trehearne (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2010), 14-15.

the English-speaking world, would help build the English nation by promoting the vernacular as a useful and dignified medium.

So, translation can be dangerous, political, useful, community-building—what else? Translation is an art form but can also be a highly technical philological exercise. If I may, as a medievalist of Britain and Ireland, be permitted to give one more Anglophone example (the contributions of this volume will broaden the geographical reach and theoretical scope), while Seamus Heaney's translation of *Beowulf* won the Whitbread Book of the Year award, was lauded by literary critics, and revitalized interest in *Beowulf* among the general populace, academics and specialists in Old English bemoaned that Heaney did not do a sufficient job emulating traditional aspects of Old English verse, like apposition and style, while also criticizing translation decisions. Since translating Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, Gayatri Spivak has continued to assert that translation is the "most intimate act of reading."³ Translation is personal, it is full of choices—whether to be literal or simply paraphrase, or whether to "domesticate" or "foreignize." Translation is everything all at once, something we do without realizing it, every time we speak or listen—a central activity which structures our daily lives.

Given the effect of the twenty-first century's heightened globalization, translation is a necessary facet of everything we do. As a hermeneutical process in understanding elements of a culture different from one's own, intellectuals from the ancient to the modern and the postmodern have addressed the theoretical practices and practicalities of translation. As such, translation is a vital exercise for student-scholars.⁴ As each translator comes at his or her work from a unique angle based on the experiences of his or her life, translation and translation studies provides a vehicle for student-scholars to contribute unique scholarship to their fields, while also learning a great deal about their first language and themselves. This volume addresses many issues of translation—from papers which explore and practice the "best" methods of translating to intersemiotic translations of film. The papers of this volume are collected from two separate conferences, The Third

³ See, for example, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translation as Culture," *Parallax* 6.1 (2000): 13-24, at 20.

⁴ See Nicholas Kupensky's paper "Students of the Foreign" in this volume.

Annual Comparative Humanities Review Conference at Bucknell University and a conference entitled From a Foreign Point and held at the Russian State University for the Humanities. Although separated by many miles, both conferences had similar goals: to bring together a number of top student-scholars working in the humanities to comparatively study the importance of translation in the twenty-first century by turning to the multiple meanings that the act of translation has had in the past. Each paper investigates the border spaces between languages, uncovering the crevices which allow the translation of the “source text” into the “target text.” The volume as a whole presents the coming together of two conferences, conferences set in very different locations but which arrive at very similar conclusions: that translation studies is a burgeoning field that can teach us a great deal about a wide variety of disciplines and that student-scholars are very much at home within its bounds.

The Third Annual Comparative Humanities Review Conference

In her “Translation and Film: Slang, Dialects, Accents and Multiple Languages,” Allison Rittmayer explores the introduction of language into film and the resulting nuances associated with this technological advance. Fundamentally a matter of translation, Rittmayer surveys the types of multiple language version films and how each attempts to translate the dialogue, plot, emotions, etc. of each movie. She then discusses issues in film translation, including the translation of slang, dialects, accents, and use of multiple languages within a single film, revealing the difficulties associated with film translation and offering insights into these problems.

James Rickard’s “Philosophy, Abstract Thought, and the Dilemmas of Philosophy” presents the problem of translating the abstract vocabulary of many philosophical works. By examining terms like *nomos*, *Epochistik*, and *Dasein*, Rickard explains the “untranslatable” quality of many key philosophical concepts. In a further analysis of Nietzsche’s writings, Rickard reveals how language works in conjunction with Nietzsche’s philosophy, rather than as a vehicle for meaning. In this circumstance, the translator must carefully tread the line between faithfulness to content or form. In this discussion, Rickard asks the question of whether

philosophical translation should be primarily vocabulary based or include the philosopher's thought as a whole.

In "The Great War Seen Through the Comparative Lens," Steven L. McClellan comparatively reevaluates World War I by arguing that to fully understand the First World War we must examine the collective response of the national communities that fought it. The paper is an exercise in "cultural history," exploring multiple processes of signification revolving around the War and the social identities affected by it. McClellan explores the concept of Modernity from various perspectives and the connection between WWI and the "Modern." He goes on to suggest that the language of the national community, although supposedly singular to the specific community, is in reality a universal logic aimed at totalizing. From this perspective, different translations of meanings can be uncovered when thinking about the Great War.

Hallie Stebbins' "A Translation of Lu Xun's '阿Q正传'" is an exercise in both the theory behind translation studies and a practical translation. Surveying the different methods of translating Lu Xun's work by William Lyell and Xianyi Yang, Stebbins analyzes the problems in their translation methods while beginning to enunciate her own theory. In her translation, she seeks to foreignize rather than domesticate, choosing a passage from the source text which she did not understand in translation. Translating this passage herself, she makes the passage clearer while also encountering the many problems associated with Chinese translation.

In "Transference and the Ego: A (Psycho)Analysis of Interpsychic Translation," Lauren Rutter explores how translation is a necessary part of ordinary psychological development. By reading transference as a type of interpsychic translation (from the drive into language within the self and then again from language of the self into an outward expression to the analyst), she reveals how the unconscious is a language to be unraveled. However, simultaneously, the analyst can mistranslate the analysand's unconscious and/or get caught up in counter-transference. This not only puts the patient at risk, but could become too involved in the patient.

In Joey McMullen's "Overstepping Otherness: Christine de Pizan and Letitia Elizabeth Landon's Genealogical Retranslations

of Canonized Text,” he explores what he calls “genealogical retranslation:” how the anxiety of influence forces authors to retranslate their predecessors in order to move forward and try to eclipse those of the past. In this paper, he explores how Christine de Pizan (a medieval French writer) and Letitia Elizabeth Landon (a Romantic poet) broke the bounds of not only the male canon but also patriarchal definitions of women and embraced, in the process, what Kristeva would call “feminine genius.”

From a Foreign Point of View: Student Readings of Russian and American Culture

In “Do Russians and Americans View Space in the Same Way?” Evgeny Makarov explores the function of language as mediator of ideas in terms of conceptual categories of space as reflected in Russian and English. A distinction is made between *coordinate spatial relations* (distance, speed of motion and size, and mostly processed by the right hemisphere) and *categorical spatial relations* (mostly processed by the left hemisphere and categorized in languages). The paper focuses on categorical spatial relations, especially preposition use, descriptions of location with reference to body parts, and specific frames of reference. Makarov also discusses the importance of cardinal directions and explains spatial deixis. It is noted that deictic references in English are far more rigidly defined by the speaker’s position than in Russian. For Makarov, English does not allow the speaker to shift the deictic center to any point other than where they are physically located, whereas Russian tends to portray spatial scenes in fine detail.

Kseniya Bychenkova’s “‘May the Force Be with You:’” The ‘Animatistic Minimum’ in the Mythological and Religious Consciousness,” examines the belief in an omnipresent force which fills the world and connects all human beings to everything else in the world. In a broad survey of non-Western cultures, Bychenkova discusses the different understandings of this force and many of its anthropological implications. Bychenkova also linguistically analyzes the many words which come to signify this impersonal force, mapping the evolution of these words across diverse cultures. The paper then, after revealing the broader suggestions of how the concept of “animatistic minimum” can be used to understand American religion today, reveals how George

Lucas translated this age-old spiritual concept in his *Star Wars* saga as The Force.

In Mark Winek's "Radio as a Tool of the State: Radio Moscow and the Early Cold War," he examines the role of Radio Moscow's broadcasts as a part of Soviet foreign policy from the end of the Second World War to the 1960s. By looking at the role of radio broadcasting, he explores a scantily studied, yet influential battle in the frigid war between Washington and Moscow. Beginning with the birth of broadcasting in the Soviet Union, he inspects the evolution of the state broadcasting apparatus up to the Khrushchev years, when it truly came to be a staple of the Soviet Union's international propaganda campaign. By analyzing the rapid evolution and massive government funding for Radio Moscow, Winek shows that the service was vital to propagating Moscow's foreign policies through its carefully honed message.

In "Tom Stoppard's *The Coast of Utopia* in Russia: Cultural Adaptation," Clara Leon explores the reception of Stoppard's Tony winning trilogy of plays. She argues that preunderstanding is an important hermeneutic device in appreciating the trilogy. The translation of understanding then, in Stoppard's plays, is highly reliant on the viewer's/reader's level of engagement with the source culture. Her analysis engages with various Russian perceptions of *The Coast of Utopia*, giving the plays a cultural context within her discussion. Further, she discusses the rift between preunderstanding and actual perception, noting the translation process which occurs when the play is viewed or performed.

Nick Kupensky's "Students of the Foreign" reaffirms the mission of the Comparative Humanities Review: allowing for the growth of the Student-Scholar through intellectual discourse and writing. By reading the differences between Student and Scholar as paralleling an authoritative meaning found in any text, Kupensky accepts the plurality of meaning and validates the research of Student-Scholars. He then asks what it means to be a Student of the foreign and reveals that for those of us who study that which is not our own – that which is alien, strange, different, or, simply, foreign – we are to be constantly reminded that we are going to be lifelong consumers of the knowledge of the other.